



Roger Casement Branch

of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

www.oneaircorpsbranch.com

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Annual reunion of 1955 D/E Class

Front L-R: Andy Coleman, Finnbar O'Toole, Don Rheinhart

Back L-R: Brian Rabbite, John A. O'Brien, Pat O'Connor, Mick Egan, Dan Doolan, Charlie Wren, Bob Gallagher.

HON-SECRETARY'S REPORT

2011, so far has been a good year for the Branch with the membership still the highest in the ONET system. Some members however have overlooked payment of their annual subscription. Immediate payment is requested.

Attendance at the Branch monthly meetings is very good, the meetings being open to all members who wish to attend.

The return of the Lotto tickets was 25% of the tickets sent to members. There were 4 winners from the tickets returned.

The Branch held its first Flag Day at the end of April in the Clondalkin Shopping Centre. Support from the local community was very good and much appreciated. These fund raising activities provide for the on-going costs of the Branch Administration and the issue of The Link.

We welcomed some new members who have transferred from other branches. A very enjoyable and interesting visit to the Curragh Military Museum was organised by the social committee.

Delegates from the Branch will attend the ONET AGM and Convention which will be held in Kilkenny in June.

Brendan Downey

FROM THE CHAIRMAN....

This year the Air Corps Apprentice School will celebrate its 75th Anniversary. It is estimated that in excess of 2000 Apprentices have passed through the hallowed gates of Baldonnell and crossed the main square.

From the foundation of the State, Military and Civil Aviation were closely entwined. Civil Aviation was very much the junior member until the mid/late thirties when Government policy supported the foundation of Aer Lingus. The military of course had a looming war in Europe to concentrate on.

It is hardly a coincidence that the foundation of Aer Lingus as the State Airline and the Apprentice Training school in Baldonnell both commenced operations in 1936 and are now celebrating their 75th Anniversaries. Aer Lingus operated their initial flights from Baldonnell and its first Managing Director was an Air Corps Officer released on secondment.

Generations of Former Air Corps apprentices subsequently joined Aer Lingus and other Airlines and paid a major part in supporting the growth of Civil Aviation in Ireland and abroad.

Many of the Roger Casement Branch members are former Air Corps apprentices and have subsequently held senior positions in the State Airline. The links between both airlines remains very strong. Elsewhere in the newsletter mention is made to the Aer Lingus Shield which is awarded to the best Air Corps Apprentice annually.

The Branch members are hopeful that the opportunity will arise for this special Anniversary year to be celebrated.

Paddy O'Meara

This edition is kindly sponsored by a member of the 1959 Apprentice Class



75th Anniversary of Apprentice Training

The Air Corps Apprentice School celebrates its 75th Anniversary in 2001, The first Apprentice class commenced training in Baldonnell on 19th March 1936 and the terms of enlistment included a minimum of 9-12 years service.

On enlistment, the apprentice usually did eight weeks Military Training which was followed by their Technical training. This introduced the boys to the subjects such as fitting, welding, turning, sheet metal work, electricity, mechanical drawing, theory of flight, airframes and engines. An Army schoolmaster Sgt. Meehan also taught general education subjects such as English, Irish, History and civics.

In the second year of training, the boys were given more advanced training in these subjects and were usually by this stage earmarked for certain trades. Training was provided for fitters, riggers, carpenters, fabric workers, electricians, instrument repairers and draughtsmen. The period of training in the Apprentice school lasted for two years. Mr John Hogan was the woodwork instructor in the Apprentice School from the start of the scheme. In the 1930's he was responsible for building the first glider in Ireland. This legendary craftsman retired in the 1970's.

APPRENTICE CLASS 1936



1936 Class notes: Tom McNerney became supervisor in charge of the Hydraulic and Propeller shop in Aer Lingus and later was appointed as Head of Aero-Engineering in Bolton St. College. Joe Humphries appointed Chief Aeronautical Inspector In Dept of Communications. E. Dempsey and P. Geoghegan appointed inspectors in Dept of Communications. D. Stapleton became Head of Overhaul and Maintenance in Aer Lingus. Malachy Skelly left the Air Corps and set up a chain of book-maker shops.

Aer Lingus Shield

In recognition of the contribution made by former Air Corps personnel to the development of Aer Lingus, a trophy to be known as the "Aer Lingus Shield" was presented to the Air Corps for presentation to the best Apprentice on an annual basis. The Shield was first awarded in 1955 to Apprentice Tom Doyle a member of the 1953 class. Subsequent winners included App S. Byrne 1956; App. T. Murphy 1957; App. G. McKeivitt in 1958 and to App W. Walsh in 1959. (Walter Walsh left the Air Corps to join the Priesthood and later served in the greater London Area until his retirement). The original shield was replaced by a larger trophy in 1977. The most recent recipient in 2010 was App. Daniel Carroll.

Apprentice Training in the 1930's



Original Aer Lingus Shield was awarded to App. Dermot Egan in 1963. Also included, Apps. Niall Crowley, Brian Donoghue and Jim Wardwick.



New Shield introduced in 1977. Being awarded in 2010 to App.Daniel Carroll by Mr.Martin Forde of Fas.

Present Status

Today the Air Corps Apprentice on enlistment is likely to have their Leaving Certificate. He/She will study subjects such as Mathematics, Physics, Electrical/ Electronic Fundamentals, Digital Techniques, Materials and Hardware, Maintenance Practices, Aerodynamics, Human Factors, Aviation Legislation, Aeroplane, Helicopter Systems, Propulsion, Gas Turbine and Propellers.

Training will be carried out in a modern well equipped school under the guidance of experienced military and civilian technical instructors. This reflects 75 years of continuous progress and adaptation to the complexities of modern aircraft design and technology.



The 68th Apprentice Class graduating 2010

Apprentice Hostels ~ First Apprentice Hostel

In 1936, the decision was finally taken to enlist and train Boy Apprentices in Baldonnel although up to that time a small number of serving personnel had been sent to the U.K. for training.

A building which was being used as a stores at the South East corner of the camp next to Johnny Haugh's field and behind the garage for the officers married quarters was refurbished to provide the required accommodation for the new apprentices who duly arrived on 19 March 1936. The building was originally built as accommodation for the WRACS who were stationed in the camp during the time of the British occupation. It was known as the Women's Hostel.

The attached photo shows two buildings, the one on the left was the original sleeping quarters for the women. It consisted of



First Apprentice Hostel

twin rooms with each having a fireplace. The long building in the centre was the dining hall and recreation room. The women were unhappy with the sleeping arrangements so the layout of the buildings was changed. The long building was refurbished as a billet and the old sleeping rooms were converted into a kitchen and dining hall. The fireplaces in the original sleeping quarters were removed but the chimney stacks were left in place as can be seen in the picture.

The first class of Apprentices were accommodated in the long building and on completion of their first year they were moved to a billet in the upper camp which was referred to as Up-Camp. This was to make way for the next intake which became known as 'The Juniors'. However, because of the age of the apprentices, there were grave reservations about having them billeted 'Up-Camp'. A new building was erected at the back and at right angles to the long building to accommodate the 'Juniors', the 'Seniors' remaining in the long building. This situation continued until 1947. The original Hostel has long since been demolished.

Second Apprentice Hostel 1947-1984.

In 1947 the Apprentices moved to a more modern building close to the public road which was originally built to accommodate the Sergeant Pilots. It was a luxury compared to the old apprentice quarters. Two apprentices were accommodated in each room which was fitted with hot/cold wash hand basins and heating. The Hostel also had its own dining and recreation facilities. The Apprentices moved to a new custom Built Hostel in 1984 which was located at the rear of the existing building



Second Apprentice Hostel



Third Apprentice Hostel

Third Apprentice Hostel - Present apprentice Hostel

A new custom built hostel was located to the rear of the existing building and was occupied in 1984. 120 persons can be accommodated in double and triple rooms. Senior apprentices are provided with single rooms.

The complex contains a modern lecture theatre/cinema with capacity for 170 students. Laundry, recreation and library facilities are also provided. The accommodation now reflects the high academic standards which are being achieved by the apprentices in their aeronautical training.

CUIMHNIMIS

Let us remember those who have died.

Jim Enright Tony Gaffney
Gerry O'Donovan
David Sterritt
Denis Perry Wally Walsh

Obituary: We were saddened at the recent death of Sqdn-Leader David Sterritt who was a very supportive member of the Roger Casement Branch. David was Hon Secretary of the Royal Air Force Association, Republic of Ireland Branch. We extend our sincere condolences to David's family and to his fellow members in the Royal Air Force association

Obituary: The Death has occurred of Wally (Walter) Walsh on 14 May, 2011. Wally was a founder member and former Chairman of the Roger Casement Branch.

He joined the Air Corps as a member of the 1953 D/E Class and retired with the rank of Flight Sergeant in 1977. Beloved husband of the late Eileen he will be sadly missed by his loving sons Paddy, Peter, Michael, Brendan and Des, sisters, brother and his extended family. He will especially be missed by his former colleagues in the Air Corps and the Roger Casement Branch. Ar dheis De go raibh a Anam.



Daara - Paddy Harte Memorial Golf Classic - 01 July 2011

The Daara Golf Society is organising a Golf Classic to honour the memory of the late Paddy Harte, who was Hon. Sec. Of the society for many years. Proceeds from the event will go to the Beaumont Hospital foundation at the request of the Harte Family.

It will take the form of a three-ball, best-ball, scramble. Open to men and women. (It's a fun day)

The date is Friday July 1st with an afternoon tee time, 12.00 Until 4 pm. The venue is Hollystown golf club. Teams of three cost €100, this includes green fees, a goodie bag and a meal. So grab a couple of friends and get on the time sheet.

Paddy was from Roscarberry Co. Cork. He was in the air corps for 5 years and then went to Aer Lingus. He worked in the hangars, then maintenance control and fleet control. He was well known in hurling, hockey and badminton circles and was involved extensively with Sutton tidy Towns Committee.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, Paddy Mullen - Organising Secretary - 086-8415000/01- 8402082 14 Pinegrove Park, Swords, Co. Dublin e-mail: paddy_ann@yahoo.ie

Visit to the Curragh Museum

On April 27th a group of members including some spouses paid a visit to the Military Museum in the Curragh Camp.

The museum is located in a newly restored building and contains many interesting artefacts from the time of the foundation of the State.

The tour of the museum was very interesting and was conducted by guides Simon Shanahan and Christy Walsh who were very knowledgeable and well informed.

Following lunch in the NCO's Mess in Kent Barracks, the group formed a Guard of Honour for the laying of a wreath by the Branch Hon-Secretary at the Curragh Military Memorial Garden.

On the way back to Dublin the group visited Donnelly's Hollow and also had an enjoyable visit to the Newbridge Silverware Museum.

The Branch is very appreciative of the help received from Michael Carroll of the St. Conleth's Branch who ensured that everything ran smoothly on the day. A very pleasant day was had by all.



Air Corps News

Air Corps Fire Fighting, Bambi Ops

The Defence Forces deployed Army and Air Corps assets to assist fire-fighting efforts in the North West of the country. An Air Corps AW 139 helicopter fitted with a specialist under slung Bambi Bucket dropped water on fires in the Dungloe area. The Bambi bucket has a capacity of 1,200 litres. A second EC135 helicopter flying in support of the operation with a fire safety qualified Army Engineer on-board surveyed the Donegal and North West Mayo areas.

The Army Engineer provided advice and information to the fire-fighting effort on the ground based on an assessment of the fires from the air. A third helicopter (AW 139) was prepared for deployment to the Foxford / Pontoon area of North West Mayo in order to assist in fire-fighting efforts in that location. This helicopter was also fitted with a Bambi bucket.



Air Corps AW 139 helicopters in action during the recent Fire outbreaks.

