



# Roger Casement Branch

## of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hEireann Teoranta (ONET)



# The Link

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

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*Branch Members, Frank Donnelly,  
Noel Murphy and Frank Walsh*

### ANZAC DAY 2012

Wednesday, 25th April, its 06.30hrs in Grangegorman Cemetery on Blackhorse Ave, just up the road from McKee Barracks, and quite a crowd has gathered in this very historic graveyard. The weather was cold and overcast with rain and wind forecast.

It's the 97th anniversary of the Allied landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula (i.e. that European little bit of Turkey) and the day that Australians and New Zealanders celebrate their nationhood. About two hundred have turned up, along with many other nationalities, to celebrate the occasion.

Members of ONET, (Roger Casement Branch, and others), IUNVA, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 7th Bn Assn, etc, were in attendance. The Australian Ambassador, Military Attaches from Aus and NZ were present. The UK was represented by their newly arrived Ambassador. The ceremony was conducted by the Head Chaplin of the Defence Forces as all present took part in the ecumenical service which concluded with wreath laying, Last Post and Reveille. All were invited to breakfast in the old coach house and adjoining marquee.

*Group visiting the Air Corps Museum:  
L/R. E. Tierney, M. Reddy, P.J.McCaffrey, Ed Lally,  
S.Tierman, M.O'Regan with the helmet, Con Cronin,  
Mick Egan, Bob Gallagher, F. Donnelly.*



### Secretary's Report

As this is my first report for the link, I hope to keep up the high standard of the previous secretary Ben Downey.

The branch has now 139 fully paid up members, and 1 new member since the last issue – welcome to Martin Murphy.

The branch meetings have been well attended.

In February, four members attended the LAC AGM. In March, representatives attended the Saint Patrick's Day parade in Rathcoole and in Cobh.

The Branch held a flag day during April at Liffey Valley Shopping Centre and the support from the local community was excellent. The next flag-day will be at the end of May.

A number of branch members attended the ANZAC memorial ceremony at Grangegorman cemetery, where representatives from the Australian and New Zealand embassies were present. Mons.Tyne, Head Chaplain, a colour party and a trumpeter from the Defence Forces and the Minister for Defence were also in attendance. Branch members also attended the New Zealand memorial service at St. Anne's church on Dawson Street on the same day. Delegates from the branch will attend the ONET AGM which will be held in the Cavan Crystal Hotel, Cavan on the 15th, 16th and 17th June 2012.

Noel Murphy,





Back row L to R : Peter King, Simon Grace, Connie Walsh, Sean O'Meara, Maurice Ryan, Mick O'Brien, Mick Conroy, Fintan Cooney, Christy McCarthy.  
 Centre row L to R : Eugene McCarthy, Billy O'Neill, Tom Coveney, JohnJoe O'Donnell, Sean Lakes, Harry Gough, John Mulvey, Jack Hogarty.  
 Front row L to R : Brendan Noone, Mick Strappe, Paddy Kiely, Col. P. Quinn O/C Air Corps, Sean Treacy, Rev. Fr. Fagan, Capt. Jack Carroll, Mick Curtis, Pat O'Callaghan.

## Blast From the Past

### STILL NOT THE RETIRING TYPE

A few years ago I wrote a piece called 'Not the retiring Type' in these pages, about my first years experience as a university undergraduate. I had retired from the Abbey Theatre a couple of years earlier, and having achieved a Diploma in Modern Irish, enrolled as a full-time student in NUIM. I am sure that my friends will forgive the not too subtle boast in the two letters immediately after my name, but it is a way of showing that I finished my Double Honours degree in Modern Irish / Medieval Irish and Celtic Studies.

If first year was tough, things did not get easier in the following two years. Every few weeks another essay had to be handed in, sometimes three or four would be due in around the same time. And of course there were exams in January and May. The pressure involved on students, those that take the opportunity to attend university seriously, is considerable. I was lucky that I was studying for the sake of study, my young colleagues were engaged in the work in order to create a life for themselves. Many of them intended to be teachers, Irish being a necessary subject for that vocation, and it was all too evident that it had not been well-taught to them in Primary and Secondary school. Indeed, one would have to wonder what on earth they were doing for twelve or thirteen years, they could not speak Irish with any degree of fluency and their grasp of grammar was slight. But they worked very hard, and most of them had a great grá for the language, difficult and all as it is. But if Modern Irish is tricky, Old Irish is infinitely harder. Our modern tongue has 5 declensions, old Irish has 14. I spent two years studying this fascinating subject and enjoyed every minute of it. It is interesting to note that Irish is the oldest vernacular written language after Greek. Every week I had homework to do, reading and analysing the grammar of our heritage of old prose and poetry. We had modules on the history of the Celts in Europe, the riches of the Hallstatt and Le Tène cultures in Central Europe were examined, and the disaster of Caesar's conquest of the Celtic tribes was read and regretted.

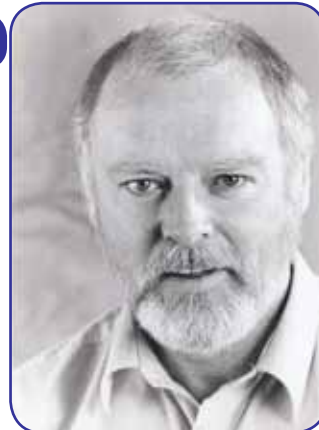
Our own history and archaeology was studied, dating back to the earliest settlers who came here thousands of years before Christ, pre-dating even the coming of the Celts to these shores. We read and examined the mythology and literature of pre-Viking Ireland, and the changes that were wrought by their arrival and the influence of the Norman invasion on our society.

One of the great pleasures for me was finding the vast treasure trove of modern Irish literature. It is an extraordinary achievement when we think that the writing of novels in Irish only really started in the early years of the 20th century.

Despite the fact that the numbers buying and reading Irish novels is small, the willingness of writers to persevere and produce world standard books is inspiring. We have poets creating work that is as good as anything being written in English, and when we think of the energy, money and effort spent in trying to wipe the Irish language off the face of the earth as a spoken language, well, we can only be truly grateful to the men and women who saw the beauty and value of our native language and who took on powerful foes in order to preserve it for us.

So although the work was hard it was always interesting and usually fun. I made great friends, all of them younger than me, and I must say that I was proud to stand with them on our graduation day, being presented with our degrees by the President of the university. It made not the slightest difference to anyone that I was fifty years older than most of my fellow graduates, I had done the work, enjoyed the company of my lecturers and classmates for three years, and was now equipped to move on to the next stage of my life.

Clive Geraghty B.A.



### NEWS ITEMS

#### AN COSANTOIR

The May edition of the Defence Forces Magazine An Cosantoir contains a full page feature on the Roger Casement Branch. The magazine is available in bookshops and in Tesco Super stores.

#### REUNION / ANNIVERSARIES

The 1962 Apprentice Class will be holding their 50th Anniversary celebrations at a Dinner in the Louis Fitzgerald Hotel, Clondalkin on May 31 at 1930 hrs. Contact Bill Delaney 087 1228605.

The 1955 D/E Class celebrated their 57th anniversary in the Aisling Hotel on April 26.

Andy Coleman advises that 12 of the 13 surviving members of the class attended.

#### SHANNON AIR VENTURE CENTRE

Eddie Ryan invites all former Air Corps Members to visit the Shannon Air Venture Centre during the open day on Sunday August 26. A great family day out.



# Recollections of a former NCO's Mess President.

## F/S Retd. Paddy O'Meara recalls his period as Mess President.

I was a sitting Duck to be appointed NCO's Mess President in Baldonnell when the next vacancy occurred following my promotion to Flight-Sergeant in Christmas 1964.

During that period, the senior NCO position within the Air Corps was sparse with One RSM (Bobby Gallagher) and only eight Flight Sgts in the entire Corps. My appointment was in Fighter Squadron, which at that time operated the DH Vampire aircraft. Other Flying-Wing F/S's were in GP Flight (Tom Duffy) and Heli Flight (Peter Sheeran). There were two F/S's in Technical Wing (Johnny Mangan and Joe Kavanagh). One F/S in the AE Section (Billy Mahon) and one F/S in the Apprentice School, (John Hanton). There was one F/S in Gormanston (Ken Loughheed). In addition there was one C/S in Air Corps Signals (Paddy White).

The appearance of an additional Flight Sgt increased the eligible candidates by approx. 20%

When I was duly appointed Mess President for the customary six months term in 1965, I was 24 years old with eight years of service and was somewhat overawed with the task.

At that time, all NCO's dined in the Mess with the vast majority 'living-in'. Only married staff were allowed to reside out of camp. Most NCO's were former Apprentices or D/E's completing their contractual 9 or 6 year service period. The Mess also accommodated a number of single old-time sergeants who permanently occupied the bar stools.

The Mess bar which was then located in the room which is now the billiard room was in urgent need of refurbishment being a hangover from the emergency years. I was fortunate in obtaining the necessary budget and with the assistance of the Air Corps Drawing Office, the Camp BFW Section completed the renovations which included a new counter area with lockable and retractable panels. All went well until a decision had to be made regarding the floor covering. I favoured the provision of a carpet in line with modern lounge bar trends at the time. The old timers wouldn't hear of it stating that "Harper wouldn't be able use the bar".

This remark needs clarification. Jim Kenny (known to all as Harper) was a Boiler-Man in the days when the boilers were fed with turf. 'Harper' had the habit of attending the Mess each day at lunch time for a pint normally wearing his wellies and clothing befitting his occupation.



He was a very quiet and friendly old sweat and was popular with all ranks. Ironically he was the attendant in the boiler house in No 3 Hangar where Fighter Squadron Hangar was then located so I was well acquainted with him.

I managed to win the argument bringing the new bar into modern times and I regret that 'Harper' had to adjust his dress code but nevertheless continued to be welcome in the Mess.

Another item needing attention related to food preparation. At least 50/60 NCO's dined in the Mess each day. It is difficult to believe now in 2012 that there was no cold room or even a fridge located in the Mess at the time. Camp food was stored in a central cold room in the main dining area (now photo section) and transferred as required to the Mess.

I was able to obtain approval from the Mess Members to purchase a large second-hand catering fridge which was advertised for sale in the Evening Press. I travelled to Carrickmacross with another NCO and we purchased the fridge which was duly delivered to Baldonnell. I recall that the price was in the region of £80-0-0 (old money).

This proved to be a great asset both in food savings and improved hygiene.

The highlight of my term as Mess President occurred during the visit of the then Chief of Staff to Baldonnell.

Lt Gen. Sean McKeown was an International figure having served as Supreme Commander of UN troops in the Congo (ONUC). Baldonnell had a strong connection with the Congo campaign and Gen. McKeown was particularly welcomed. He had resumed his position as Chief of Staff and was completing a tour of inspection of Army Bases. I had the privilege of formally inviting him to inspect the NCO's Mess accompanied by OC Air Corps Col W.J.Keane.

Later in my Aviation career I visited Lubumbashi (previously Elizabethville) on a number of occasions and was reminded of that dynamic Congo period in Baldonnell.

My period as Mess President proved to be a very good training ground for senior management positions I which I held later in my civilian Aviation Career.

(Paddy was Chairman of the Roger Casement Branch from 1977 to 2012)

*Flight-Sgt Paddy O'Meara was NCO i/c Fighter Sqdn from 1963 to 1969. Preparing to assist on a routine DH Vampire Technical Check Flight*

## 2012 Trip to Lebanon - 12th to 19th March

On Monday 12th March, Roger Casement Branch Member Tony Roe, with Billy O'Brien (ex CS Tpt) and Patsy Dineen (ex Sgt Engrs) headed off, Dublin – London – Beirut, to visit the 106th Irish Battalion serving in Lebanon with UNIFIL.

Such trips bring back memories, some good and some not so good, of the tours of duty we had so many years ago. The main purpose of this venture was to visit locations where we had served, to meet again with locals with whom we had connections from our service and to bring out some much needed funds to the Tibnine Orphanage which the Irish Battalion had helped to establish way back in the early 1970s. On this visit we had raised the equivalent of \$2180. Many thanks is due to our friends in ONET (Cork and Casement Aerodrome) and also to IUNVA (Post 1).

The weather at the start was not good as rain and wind made it more like home, but we did manage to fit in trips to Tyr and Beirut. In Tyr there are many old ruins (apart from ourselves) going back to Byzantine and Roman times. The Hippodrome in Tyr was where the chariot races in the film Ben Hur were shot.

An ancient cave system just north of Beirut is quite fantastic and worth a visit.

Back down south we paid our respects at the site of the Quana massacre where the IDF shelled the Fiji Batt HQ where some 110 locals were killed while taking cover. This is also in competition with Caana in Israel to claim the miracle of "Water into Wine" from the Bible. The towns of Tyr and Sidon are quite often mentioned in the Bible.

*Tony Roe with Force Commander General Serra and Irish Comdt. McCorley at U.N.I.F.I.L. HQ Irish party for St. Patricks Day*



On Fri 16th we were guests of the Irish Component at UNIFIL HQ down on the coast of the Med. at Naquara. The weather was terrible with rain, wind, and thunderstorms, but the bar was open and all the other international staff came along to wet the shamrock. A good day was had by all.

17th we headed for the hills to Tibnine for the Medal Parade of the 106th. The day was bright and sunny, but the wind would cut you not just in half but in quarters. After the parade we were taken down to visit the orphanage and meet some locals that we knew well from way back. We met a few of the girls in the orphanage but most of them were off at the local schools.

On Sunday 18th we once again toured the operational area and saw the huge effort that UNIFIL is putting in to maintain stability in the south of Lebanon alongside the Lebanese Army. The weather now was more like what we had expected, bright and sunny and warm, and this on our last day.

Mon 19th saw us up at some unearthly hour to drive to Beirut for the 07.00hrs flight to London / Dublin but once again with some good memories.

## CUIMHNIMIS ~ Let us remember those who have died. ~

JACK BREEN PADDY KENNY TED O'CALLAGHAN JOHN LARKIN KEN KEEGAN TOM LEIGH MORGAN SPARROW



### THIS SCOUTING LIFE By Archie Raeside

A new book entitled THIS SCOUTING LIFE by Archie Raeside of Roger Casement Branch ONET was launched at the Mansion House in Dublin on Friday 13 April 2012.

John Lawlor, the Chief Executive Officer of Scouting Ireland made the launch in the presence of the Chief Scout Michael John Shinnick and a large turn out of past and currently serving scout leaders and members of ONET and IUNVA. The attendance also included Archie's wife Bernie and their extended family, friends and neighbours.

The story is about the experiences of just one of millions of people worldwide who have had the pleasure of being involved in an organisation which has been of immense benefit to individuals and local communities universally. It relates how an eight year old boy in 1947 decides he wants to become a Scout and how that desire becomes a reality.

The closing stages of the manuscript look at the writer's involvement at National level in the promotion, implementation and continued growth of air activities within the organisation. This relates to how Air Activities became a part of the National Programme, the setting up of the first dedicated aviation groups, the objectives, training and activities undertaken. The spread of interest Nationally and the links forged with air scouting in England and the progress made in implementing air activities for scouts in Ireland as well as the continuing involvement with mainstream scouting are recorded.

Editor: Archie was a member of the 1955 Apprentice Class and was the first Air Corps member to serve in the Congo as part of the 32nd Battalion in 1960. His book "The Congo-1960, The First Irish United Nations Peacekeepers" is highly regarded.

## Air Corps News

Air Corps Complete Eight Air Ambulances in Ten Days. 19/05/2012

This afternoon the Air Corps completed its eighth Air Ambulance Mission in ten days including six international missions, two of which were transatlantic transfers. This afternoon's mission involved the transfer of a patient by AW139 helicopter from Mayo to Dublin.

This morning an AW 139 helicopter completed a similar mission landing at 5am, just minutes after the CASA Maritime Patrol Aircraft had returned from an earlier Air Ambulance mission to Birmingham where a patient was transferred for specialist surgery.

On Monday 23 April and Tuesday 24 April, the Air Corps Gulfstream Jet completed a round trip transatlantic mission bringing a paediatric patient to Boston and returning with another paediatric patient following specialist treatment.

The Air Corps also completed three Air Ambulance missions from Dublin to London on the 17th, 20th and 22nd of April aboard the Learjet and CASA Maritime Patrol Aircraft. In addition to these operations another four air ambulances were completed since bringing the total number of successful air ambulance missions in 2012 to 43.



Michael Collins transport, Sliabh na Mban visits Casement Aerodrome with Avro Cadet C7 in the background

## In Memory of Comdt. Morgan Sparrow

On Thursday 03rd of May 2012, the Air Corps suffered a tremendous shock with the untimely passing of Comdt. Morgan Sparrow, who sustained serious head injuries in a tragic cycling accident in Co Meath and sadly never regained consciousness. Morgan from Moorefield Park in Newbridge, was 39 years of age and was Commanding Officer of the operational helicopter unit 301 Sqn.

Following in the footsteps of his father and his brother he joined the Defence Forces in November 1990 as a proud member of the 67th Army Cadet Class and received his Commission on 11 May 1992.

Over the course of his career Morgan has made an immeasurable difference to the lives of others through Search and Rescue Operations, Air Ambulance missions and his work with the Garda Air Support Unit. In addition to this Morgan was an avid cyclist and was also involved in numerous charity cycling events.

Morgan is survived by his parents, Gerry and Frances, his brothers David and Mark, his sister Carol, and his partner Anne. He will be profoundly missed by all his colleagues in the Air Corps and the wider Defence Forces. He was buried with full military honours in St. Conleths Cemetery close to his home, a fitting tribute to a remarkable young officer. **Ar Dheis Dé go raibh a anam dhilis.**

DH Rapide "The Iolar" visits Casement Aerodrome.

