



Roger Casement Branch

of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

www.oneaircorpsbranch.com

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Branch Chairman Finnbar Lyons and Tony McCormack
at the Fuchsia collection in the Omni Shopping Centre, Santry.

From the Chairman....

As your new branch chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the branch members for their attendance and support, at our AGM. I would also like to welcome our new secretary Noel Murphy on to the committee.

I am fortunate that I am inheriting a very active and vibrant branch in the ONET organization. This is mainly due to the efforts of our previous committee under the chairmanship of Paddy O'Meara, so hopefully our new committee can maintain the momentum.

One of the issues that were discussed at a recent branch meeting was that we should endeavour to increase branch membership by approaching some of the PDF people who have taken discharge this year. Our PRO Peter McGlynn has taken some action on this, but we all need to assist. If any branch member has any friend, relative or neighbour who has taken discharge from the PDF recently, please advise him /her that we are in existence and would be glad to have them as a member.

Currently we have approximately 170 paid up members. There are some lapsed members also in our branch membership listing that we should try and get back into the organization. These are challenging times for all charitable organizations, and there is a risk of funding cuts by local councils and government agencies over the next few years. It is therefore, most important that we have a strong and active membership base to support our organization. Ni neart go cur le cheile

Finnbar Lyons

Branch members attending the Annual La na bhFiann ceremonies in Arbour Hill; L/R. E.Tierney, T.Roe, P.McLoughlin, J.Clarke, Lt-Col.Kevin O'Ceallaigh, Rev.Tom Carroll, P.McGlynn, J.Savage, F.Lyons, P.Goodman, N.Murphy.

Secretary's Report

Since the last report there has been a lot of activity in the branch, the branch now has 170 fully paid up members.

Members attended the ONET Annual Convention in Cavan also Annual Branch Masses at St. Conleths, Carlow, Cobh and the INUNVA No 1 Post at Arbour Hill.

The Branch was represented at National Day of Commemoration in Collins Bks.

Approx.10 Members attended the Annual Ceremonies at Arbour Hill on 22nd July.

On 29th.June seven members of the R.C.B. joined by two spouses, A/m. M.Whelan (curator of museum) and one guest travelled to Brussels to participate in the annual WWI ceremonies in Ypres and the Somme. Members paraded at Guillemont and at the Menin Gate and received a great welcome.

As M.Whelan was not in attendance at the museum on 29th, members of the Branch were asked to attend at the museum for the Air Corps family day and to celebrate the anniversary of the first aircraft to land at Baldonnel.

Branch members took part in the Fuchsia appeal during the Month of July. Collection points were set up in various venues in Clondalkin, Santry, Swords, Newcastle, Churchtown, and the N,C,Os. Mess.

Four members will be travelling to Edinburgh and Glasgow during August to attend the annual Military Tattoo and World Pipe Band Championships.

The Branch has entered a team in the ONET Golf Classic, and has also supported the prize fund and has sponsored a tee box. Good luck to the RCB team.

Noel Murphy,



This is the 4th year that Roger Casement Branch members have travelled to the Western Front for the celebrations concentrating on the exploits of the 16th Irish Division and the 36th Ulster Division at Guillemont / Ginchy and Thiepval respectively during the Great War of 1914 – 1918. We also visit various locations on the Somme and in the Ypres Salient of interest to those exploring the input of the Irish Regiments.

Day 1:

Seven uniformed members of the branch, (one a Piper), plus two wives, one member of the Dublin Fusiliers Association, and the curator of the Air Corps museum (as a guest) assembled at Dublin Airport for an early afternoon flight to Brussels.

On arrival we had some delay when collecting our vehicles as the minibus had a badly cracked front screen and no replacement minibus was available. We eventually settled for a 7 seat car and set off for Ypres (Ieper in Flemish) about two hours later than planned.

Having arrived and booked in to our hotel we only had time to go up the town on an orientation walk, and get some food.

Day 2:

Depart at 0900hrs for visits to various sites around Ieper / Ypres on a 15Km radius starting to West South West at Loker, and swinging clockwise in a semicircle towards Sanctuary Wood and Hill 62.

- (i) First stop was Loker where Maj. Willie Redmond is buried in a separate grave in a field outside the normal War Graves Commission Cemetery. Our piper played a lament and a recorded version of Last Post and Reveille was also played.
- (ii) On then to Popperinge to visit the execution post and the cells where the "Shot at Dawn" men spent their final hours.
- (iii) Next stop was Brandhoek Cemetery to visit the grave of Sgt. Henry McKenna who has a connection to Branch member John Clarke
- (iv) From Brandhoek we travelled to the Francis Ledwidge Memorial where the Irish tricolour flies every day, and then to his grave in nearby Artillery Wood cemetery where Michael Whelan read his poem about Ledwidge which he had composed when he came home from a trip to Gallipoli in 2011
- (v) Then to Essex Farm, First Aid Post and cemetery, where Lt. Col John McCrae wrote that famous poem "In Flanders Fields". This was of special interest to Am. M. Whelan (Air Corps) who is an avid student of Military History and a poet in his own right.
- (vi) Next to the German Cemetery at Langermark where some 20,000 men are buried in mass graves.
- (vii) On then to the cemetery at Polekapelle where the youngest recorded soldier to die in WW1 is buried. This man is Pte. John Condon of Waterford who died aged 14 years while serving with the Leinster Regt.
- (viii) Passed through Passendale area, the scene of many battles but mainly the last big push against the German lines in 1918.
- (ix) On to Tyne Cot Cemetery, the largest on the Western Front, with some 11,000 graves; of which 40% are unnamed, and another 34,000 names of the missing on the surrounding walls: these to be added to the 54,000 names on the Menen Gate.

Day 3:

July 1st and we leave early to travel south to the Somme area.

- (i) Our first stop was the town of Albert to visit the underground museum which stretches from beneath the famous cathedral for about half a kilometre and has many revealing exhibits on the living and dying in the trenches of the Somme.
- (ii) We then went on to nearby Grove Farm Cemetery to visit the grave of Sean Ryan's relative Pte. John Fullerton of 2 Bn Royal Dublin Fusiliers. It was here that Sean gave us potted history of this soldier. We played a Pipers Lament and once again the recorded version of No. 1 Army Band's Last Post and Reveille.
- (iii) We then went to eat at Poppy's Restaurant La Boisselle and after that headed off to Guillemont for the ceremony there.
- (iv) At Guillemont and along with the Friends of the Somme Association, members of 2 Bn Royal Irish Regiment, the Mayors of Guillemont and Ginchy, Minister Dinny McGinley TD, representing the Government, and Brig. Gen. Tom Behan, representing the Defence Forces, we took part in the wreath laying ceremony.

We also had the distinction of our own Paddy O'Meara repeating, in Irish, the last two lines of the Ode of Remembrance. This Exhortation which is the central prayer of all Remembrance ceremonies is traditionally recited at the Guillemont ceremony by the Officer commanding the 2 Bn Royal Irish Regiment in Northern Ireland. It was a significant honour that the Roger Casement Branch shared in this Exhortation.

- (v) From there we headed back to Possieres to visit the Lochnagar Crater, a great hole in the ground that once was the German front line, where a mile long tunnel was dug, the end filled with explosives, and detonated at 07.30hrs on July 1.
- (vi) Thiepval Memorial was next. This is the largest and grandest of all the memorials on the Western Front where 74,000 of the missing men from the Somme area are remembered, each by name rank and number plus regiment, battalion etc. Included here are the poet Tom Kettle, and two uncles of our own branch member, Frank Donnelly. Both brothers joined up together, and were killed together, when a shell hit their machine gun post.
- (vii) On then to the Ulster Tower which is built as a copy of St. Helens Tower in Antrim, and which commemorates the exploits of the 36th Ulster Division in the taking of the Swaben Redoubt on July 1st 1916. They took their objective and held it for a few hours but as none of the other units, left or right gained any ground, the Ulster-Men were left unsupported and eventually had to withdraw.

Day 4: South of Ieper/ Ypres

Note: Ieper is the Flemish name for the town, and Ypres is the French version. The Flemish people, like the Basques in northern Spain are strong nationalists and one has to be careful not to speak French in their presence.

- (i) We set out this morning to visit Wijtschate where the 16th Irish Division cleared the German forces off that portion of the Messine Ridge and paid our respects at the memorial and cemetery.
- (ii) From Wijtschate to Messine village to see the local church, dating back to the 12th Century, and where, when the Germans were in control they had a First Aid post in the crypt. It was to this location that a certain Pte. A. Hitler was brought in suffering from the effects of a gas attack. The medics managed to sort him out and return him to duty. What if they had not???
- (iii) The Island of Ireland Peace Park is just outside Messine. It is here that we see the various quotations from poets and others regarding the horrors and futility of war. The park also has the Round Tower built from masonry recovered from the demolition of an old workhouse in the Irish midlands. It also contains a replica of a Ring Fort, the centre piece of which is a granite pillar with, on the front face a plaque with an exhortation to peace, and on the back a list of the 32 counties on the island of Ireland starting with the first A of Antrim and ending (without a full stop, comma, or break) with the last W of Wicklow.
- (iv) From the Peace Park 1Km down the road we find Prowse Point Cemetery where respects were paid to Pte. James Moore, 2 Bn Dublin Fusiliers who is the adopted soldier of Tony Roe. Tony makes a point of visiting James on any trip which brings him near to this particular grave.
- (v) Just 200m up the lane from Prowse Point is the site memorial to the Christmas Truce Football Match; quite an emotional place to stand and think of the "result".
- (vi) It was now back to Ieper / Ypres where the group split up. Some went shopping, others to Flanders Fields Museum, some to Sanctuary Wood and Hill 62 to see the preserved trenches and museum, while the remainder went up to the town of Roeselare to visit a grave and take photographs for a family back in Dublin

Conclusion: The highlights of this trip were

- (i) Meeting up with Brig. Gen. Behan, the 2 Bn Royal Irish Regiment, Minister Dinny McGinley TD, Friends of the Somme Association, etc, at Guillemont. Sharing the "Ode of Remembrance" as gaeilge" was indeed a "breakthrough" thanks to Paddy O'Meara.

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- (ii) Our piper Jack Power playing a lament at the Menin Gate Last Post ceremony along with the laying of a wreath
- (iii) Michael Whelan reciting his Gallipoli Poem at the grave of fellow poet Francis Ledwidge.
- (iv) The visit to Essex Farm where the "In Flanders Fields" poem was composed by Lt. Col. John McCrae a Canadian Medical Officer.
- (v) Sean Ryan visiting his relative Pte Fullerton, the first family member to do so in 97 years.
- (vi) While other members of the group will have their own memories of our visit to the battle areas of the Somme and the Ypres Salient, all the above are this writers recordings of the events.



Attending the Ceremony at Guillemont; Tony Roe, Piper Jack Power and Gerry Mc Cann.



General view of the Ceremony in Guillemont.



Minister Dinny Mc Ginley lays a wreath on behalf of the Irish Government at the Guillemont Memorial



Michael Whelan at the site of the famous football match at the trenches in 1914



Con displaying his FAI and IFA caps.

basketball match playing against the American Forces.

Con won a Leinster championship medal with Dublin in 1941 the year that Dublin went on to win the All Ireland. He didn't receive an All-Ireland medal that year as he was spotted playing soccer for Drumcondra FC by a member of the Vigilantes Committee. Con was recommended to Drumcondra by Capt Frank Reade the Sports Officer at the time. He eventually received his provincial medal once the ban was lifted thirty years later at a ceremony in Donnycarney.

Con was bought out of the Air Corps in 1946 to join Glentoran when he was first called up for Ireland.

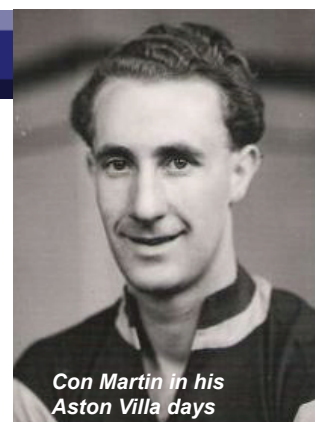
During his football career he played for Drumcondra, Glentoran, Leeds United, Aston Villa and finally with Waterford from 1956 to 1959. He later managed Dundalk FC, Shelbourne and Cork Hibernians.

Uniquely, Con was a dual international and played and captained both Ireland teams – the FAI and the IFA. In 1949 he was a member of the FAI XI that defeated England 2-0 at Goodison Park, becoming the first non-UK team to beat England at home.

Profile . . . Con Martin

Con Martin, one of Irelands sporting Legends joined the Air Corps in Baldonnel as a Boy Apprentice in 1940. He later played for many Air Corps Gaelic football teams and even represented the Corps in boxing and in a

He played in nearly every position during his soccer career. Although he played mainly at centre-half, the ball handling skills he developed playing Gaelic football also made him a very useful goalkeeper. He actually made his international debut with the FAI XI as a goalkeeper and despite turning down the chance to sign for Manchester United as a goalkeeper, he later played nearly a whole season in goal for Aston Villa.



Con Martin in his Aston Villa days

Con played on 30 occasions for the FAI scoring six goals in the process. He received six caps for the IFA.

Con is living in North Co. Dublin with his wife Vera where they have reared seven children. His son Mick Martin played for Manchester United and for other leading Clubs receiving over fifty caps for Ireland. As both Con Snr. and Mick, both had the honour of captaining the Irish International team this unique event was honoured in football circles. Another son, Con Junior, played for several clubs in the League of Ireland.

Con was born in Rush, Co. Dublin on 20th March 1923 and will celebrate his 90th Birthday in March 2013.

His surviving Air Corps colleagues and a wide circle of fans and admirers wish him many more years of enjoyment with his extended family and friends.

News Items

Link Newsletter Members are reminded that The Link which has been produced on a quarterly basis in its present format for over five years depends on voluntary donations to cover the production costs. Previous editions have been sponsored by (1) private individuals (2) collections made at class reunion functions and (3) from some aviation companies.

The Link fund is now in urgent need of replenishment so any donations would be gratefully received. Contact the Hon Treasurer.

Fuchsia Collection Preliminary information shows that the annual Fuchsia collections which were carried out in various locations by members of the Branch have collected over €2600.00 in support of the ONET Hostels. Full details in the next edition.

Shannon AirVenture Centre

Eddie Ryan invites members to attend the Open Day which will take place on Sunday August 26. A great family day out.

CUIMHNIMIS ~ Let us remember those who have died. ~

JOSEPH BRADLEY JARLATH CONERNEY EAMONN MAHER GERRY MC CABE KEVIN RUSSELL JACK BAGNALL

JARLATH 'JACK' CONERNEY 1945-2012

Those of us who were lucky enough to have had Jack Conerney as a friend were a privileged group. It is only now that he is gone that we may realise Jack's greatness, as a person and as a friend.

Ruskin said that the first test of a truly great man is in his humility. Jack passed this test with flying colours. I for one never heard Jack take credit for any accomplishment. He always placed himself in the background of any organization of which he was a member, even though his work may have been the reason for the success of that organization. He was the driving force behind the Royal Aeronautical Society Irish Branch for many years, and with scant resources at his disposal, the society flourished. Hard work, diligence, caring deeply about something can often compensate for any lack of material resources.

It would be impossible to assess Jack's contribution to the continuing success and high standards of the Air Corps Apprentice School. The Corps was lucky on two counts: the first was that someone of Paddy O'Meara's perspicacity spotted the latent talent of the young A/M. Conerney from Depot, and went to some trouble to ensure that those abilities were brought into the technical area of the Corps, that he was trained and nurtured, albeit in the rough and ready system of the bullswool sixties. Nevertheless, all Jack needed was a start, a foothold, his own earnest endeavours, intelligence, flair and sheer dogged determination to work harder than most are prepared to do ensured that Paddy's gamble paid off. Jack later obtained an Aircraft Maintenance Engineers Licence in the College of Technology.

The second stroke of luck for the Air Corps was that someone else spotted Jack's potential as a teacher and mentor and had him transferred to the Apprentice School. The rest, as they say, is history. Jack nurtured the young minds of class after class of apprentices for a quarter of a century. Not many of us who knew Jack when he was a young lad, dropping into the hangar during his lunch break, asking technical questions in his quest to become a technician could ever have imagined that one day he would be a Sergeant, and eventually the Senior Civilian Technical Instructor.



He had an abiding interest in space travel. He travelled to Russia in pursuit of his passion, and he was welcomed to NASA meetings in Houston, Texas. At one of these meetings he was presented with an original Apollo 13 flight plan, which he treasured.

I know that Jack hated being in the limelight, but I must comment on the position that Jack occupied in our lives. The word most frequently used in tributes to Jack was 'a gentleman', and that he certainly was. To say that he was liked by all who knew him is an understatement. He was admired, respected and held in the greatest affection by all. One of his great virtues was that he gave the same respect to everyone, it didn't matter if you were a Brigadier General or a junior apprentice, Jack gave you his undivided attention. He was as straight as a die, he was loyal, warm, always encouraging, steadfast, and most of all, he was a kind man. He personified the traits that lift some people above the rest of us. But he would deny vehemently every word of the last two sentences and laugh them off as nonsense. That was Jack.

There is a line in the play 'The King of Friday's Men' by M.J. Molloy, a good man dies and it is said of him "He's in God's pocket from now on". God better have big and interesting pockets to accommodate our friend Jack. Jarlath is survived by his wife Mary, daughters Mary, Sabina and Carmel.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis C.G.

Air Corps News

90th Commemoration of the First State Aircraft to Land at Casement Aerodrome. On Friday 29th June, the Irish Air Corps invited its friends and families to Baldonnell to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of first State aircraft to land in Casement Aerodrome.

The historic day was remembered with the opening of the Air Corps museum to the family of serving members and availing them the opportunity to explore the Air Corps' heritage with a Military Archives exposition.

The day also allowed the Air Corps to show the families of its members some of the Air Corps' capabilities and giving them opportunity to meet to our modern fleet.

The proud history of the Irish Air Corps started with the purchase of the Martinsyde Type A Mark II for the safe and speedy evacuation of General Michael Collins from London in the event that the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations broke down in 1922.

But as events turned out it was not required for this purpose and instead it arrived to Baldonnell on 16 June 1922 in a crate, having been transported by sea and road transport from the UK.

Although it was the first aircraft for the new Irish Air Service, it was not a fighting aircraft, and lack of priority meant a delay of four months in its assembly.

It was eventually assembled and test flown on 13 October 1922.

The actual first State aircraft to land in Baldonnell happened in July 1922 when three Bristol F2B Fighters were delivered to the Air Corps.

The first aircraft to arrive was Bristol Fighter BF I, an ex. RAF aircraft, no.E2411 flown by Capt. Charles F Russell and was flown into Baldonnell from the RAF at Collinstown on 5 July 1922.

This landing started a proud history of service to the State, and over the last 90 years the Air Corps has matured into a highly professional organisation currently operating Service Level agreements with several State Departments and Agencies to fulfil its role for the Irish people.

Air Corps Medivac Three Casualties from Croagh Patrick Pilgrimage

On Sunday 29th July, an Air Corps AW139, operating in support of Mountain Rescue Ireland, medivaced four casualties off Croagh Patrick.

The helicopter, 'AW 279', relocated to Murrisk in the early hours on Reek Sunday morning and was on standby with members of the Irish Mountain Rescue for the 12,000 pilgrims who travelled to climb Croagh Patrick.

At approx 11.00am an 83 year old woman was airlifted from the mountain side and brought to the Order of Malta field hospital operating at the base of the mountain.

Almost immediately after transferring the first patient a second call was received to medivac a teenage boy. The boy was medivaced off the summit and brought directly to Castlebar Hospital.

At approx. 2.00pm an Italian male was airlifted from half-way up the mountain and brought to the Order of Malta field hospital operating at the base of the Mountain.

The final medivac was of a 74 year old woman from the summit of Croagh Patrick to the helicopter pad in Castlebar Hospital.

In addition to the two Air Corps pilots and crewman the helicopter carried a Mountain Rescue Doctor and Paramedic on board and remained ready for the call until last light.



Casa CN235 performed at the Bray Airshow.

PC9 Formation at the Bray Airshow.

