



# Roger Casement Branch

## of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



# The Link

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Members of the Roger Casement Branch, Patrick Sarsfield Branch and the Lower Ormond Branch, Nenagh who attended the commemoration parade on the Dublin Rd, outside Limerick at the memorial to the three Air Corps members who were killed in a tragic road accident in December 1940.

### Editors Note

The featured articles in this edition of The Link include a contribution from

**F-Sgt Ollie Mc Keown** on the present day Air Corps Apprentice technical training programme which can take the apprentices to Degree level. This item will be of great interest to former Apprentices. Also included is an article contributed by **Clive Geraghty** into the various Parades and Inspections which were part of Life in the Air Corps in times past.

Other news items concern the enjoyable Annual Christmas Lunch and the Annual Memorial Parade in Limerick for the three Air Corps members which were killed in a tragic road accident in 1940. The regular Air Corps News item has been kindly provided by **Capt. Sean McCarthy** and a short report on the Branch AGM is provided by **Branch Secretary Noel Murphy**.

Many thanks to **Capt. Sean McCarthy**, Air Corps Press Officer and to **F-Sgt Willy Barr**, Photo Section for their continued support.

**Annual Christmas Lunch:** A very enjoyable reunion and Christmas lunch was held in the West County Hotel on December 10, 2015. The GOC Air Corps was represented by Lt-Col John Maloney. We were delighted that Fr Jerry Carroll was able to attend following his period of duty with the U.N. in the Middle East.



Fr Jerry Carroll with Branch Chairman Finnbar Lyons.



Members of the 1956 Apprentice class who will celebrate their 60th anniversary in 2016

L/R :  
**Paddy Donnelly**,  
**Paddy O'Meara**,  
**Noel O'Kennedy**,  
**Noel Madigan**.



Branch President **Jim Nolan** presents **Mrs Addie Patterson** with her Certificate of Associate Membership of the Branch.



Finnbar Lyons with Lt-Col John Maloney.



**Paddy Kennedy** who returned from New York for the event and **J.J. Murphy**.



# Baldonnell Apprentices

Flt-Sgt Oliver McKeown

If you happen to be visiting Baldonnell on a working day you might see a group of young men and women marching their way up or down camp all dressed smartly in the dark blue work uniform of the Air Corps each carrying an issue backpack. You might wonder who they are and where they might be going, the chances are that you have just seen one of the Air Corps apprentice classes making their way to or from lectures.

If you were also at one time an Air Corps apprentice you might fondly recollect your training at the start of your aviation career and try to imagine how it might compare with today's training, if so read on. Currently there are three apprentice classes in training with Technical Training School (TTS) with a fourth class (73rd) undergoing their military training in the Military Training School (MTS)

Class Number	Number of Trainees
70	20 trainees
71	6 "
72	14 "
73	23 "

The Training School (TTS) in Baldonnell now develops comprehensive practical and theory based training programmes for Air Corps apprentices and maintenance personnel compatible with the sophisticated modern aircraft operated by the Air Corps, these programmes are designed to meet the high quality and procedural standards required of maintenance personnel so ensuring they meet the quality requirements of the Air Corps.

The programme consists of a range of modules (34 in all) covering a broad spectrum of theory subjects such as Thermofluids and Rotor Wing Aerodynamics, Structures and Systems interspersed with practical training within the TTS environment and also with an operational unit on active aircraft during the period - June, July and August of each year. The theory and practical based training course conducted within the apprentice training scheme is delivered and managed by TTS over a 3½ - 4 year period, and is designed to achieve interoperability of maintenance personnel within the Air Corps fleet of aircraft.

At the successful conclusion of their training the successful students are awarded a B.Eng. Degree in Military Aviation Technology (DT011M) the awarding body being the Bolton Street College of Technology with whom TTS maintain a high degree of alignment. The awarded degree which is on a par with the Bachelor of Engineering Technology degree awarded by the Faculty of Engineering, Bolton Street College of Technology, allows progression to a higher level within the higher level education system an example being the Masters programme in a speciality, and can also lead on to civil EASA Part 66 qualification. At the conclusion of TTS training the apprentice is deployed to an active squadron however prior to taking up that deployment a technical interview of the individual is conducted by Air Corps Quality Assurance to ensure their suitability to that posting.

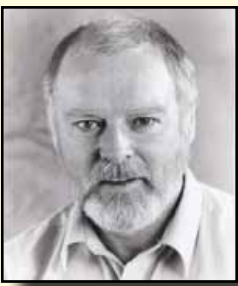
Your comparison of training then and now might allow you to concur that a very defined and high level of training is conducted, and that such training and resultant qualified personnel are required to efficiently maintain the airworthiness of the aircraft so ensuring their availability to fulfil the Air Corps commitment to the security of the state.

**NOTE:** Some confusion has arisen over the system of class numbering when ex apprentices are experiencing difficulty in comparing a class number to the year of intake of that class, it must be remembered that in some years no apprentice classes were recruited, in that situation the last class number allocated was frozen until the next batch of apprentices entered the Air Corps (which may have been a number of years after the previous class entered), when the next sequential class number was then allocated, this results in a situation where in some cases the class number does not appear to "line up" with the year of intake.

***The Air Corps will shortly begin a recruitment programme for apprentices and cadets. Keep an eye on [www.military.ie](http://www.military.ie) and on the Facebook and twitter pages for details.***

## Apprentices undergo intensive technical and military training during their period in the Technical Training Squadron.





## ON PARADES AND INSPECTIONS Clive Geraghty

Because Óglaigh na hÉireann is relatively young as armies go, there hasn't been that wealth of tradition built up that older armies acquire over the centuries. This may be no bad thing: it means that most of our stories and folklore has been built on personal contacts and recent event in living memory, rather than on the exploits of previous generations of servicemen. Our national army hasn't attained its century yet while there are regiments in the British, French and other armies that may be more than three hundred years old.

But when I joined the Air Corps in the fifties it seemed to me that it had always been there. The way things were done were a complete mystery, and the first year of one's apprenticeship was so full of activities that there wasn't time to think or to analyse. You just did what you were told, when you were told.

One aspect of life in the Corps then, were the parades we took part in. Every morning we fell in for the **breakfast parade**. This was fairly straightforward in the apprentice hostel, we lived under a strict regime, so when the corporal shouted to fall in, we did so with alacrity. But it was a different matter up-camp. It was always a difficulty for the poor unfortunate corporal who happened to be Orderly Sgt to get enough of the lads out of bed in the morning to make up decent numbers for presentation to the Orderly Officer. Corporals would beg, threaten, cajole, appeal to the better nature of the bed-bound: usually to no avail. Absolute bastards had no problem in this department at all, only the soft-hearted and soft-spoken were ignored. Of the many hundreds who lived-in, in Baldonnell in those days, maybe half would assemble for breakfast parade, and that would be on a fine summer morning.

Do they still have breakfast parades? Do they still have breakfasts? Probably not: all except the youngest seem to live out nowadays.

Then there was the **work parade**, held at 8:45 am, where all except those reporting sick mustered on the square and were then inspected and marched to work. Much the same sort of parade happened after lunch, usually about 1:45: we fell in, and then were marched to our respective places of employment, in case we had forgotten how to get there.

One welcome parade every week was Friday's **Pay Parade**. Held at the unit office, either in the hangar or workshops, we formed an orderly queue, then when your name was called you stepped smartly up to the table, saluted, while the officer in command of the money counted out your pittance; a couple of notes and some change; he signed your paybook; you stepped backwards, saluted, about turned, and pocketed the dosh. I presume that nowadays payment is made electronically, by credit transfer. But I'm sure they miss the personal touch. Or do they?

It would be a mortal sin not to mention the **Church Parade**. These became most obvious during the annual Mission week, when the church would be full of reforming sinners, (first three rows reserved for officers). I had no interest in matters Catholic beyond my 20<sup>th</sup> year but choice was not on the menu; on holy days and Sundays the army was in Loco Parentis so we were marched to mass; conscientious objectors were not encouraged.

The highlight of the week or month was the **CO's parade**. Or maybe nadir would be a better term. These were Saturday morning affairs, and were totally pointless. I suppose they maintained discipline and good order in the ranks, but were a dreadful waste of time. The preparation was the worst part: Friday nights were spent polishing boots, buttons, and every bit of brass in your kit. Your webbing had to be blanched, your rifle cleaned and oiled, and your pants had to be ironed. Now ironing bullswool trousers was like ironing canvas. One redeeming factor was there was a great deal of camaraderie in the billets, so friends could be coaxed into cleaning more than their own gear.

One had to be careful however; practical jokes were not unknown. Gerry (Mitch) Millar once asked a mate to iron his pants for him (Gerry lived out), but when he got dressed for parade on the Saturday morning he discovered that the creases ran from east to west and not north to south as was normal.

The most annoying, the most hated item on our monthly or bi-monthly schedule was **'The Kit Inspection'**. You laid out your kit on your bed; all your clothes, boots, spare socks, greatcoat, coarse underwear that you had been issued with the day you joined up. Everything had to be as spotless as the day they were issued and your service number had to appear somewhere on each item. And if the layout did not meet the

approval of the examining Officer or N.C.O it was not unknown for the whole lot to be tipped over on to the floor and the order given to do it again. Your brushes for polishing boots had to be without a trace of polish, on either the bristles or the wood.

A custom that shy young chaps found strange was being told to show their penis to someone they hardly knew. This was called a **'Short Arm Inspection'**. If memory serves me well there was only one of these a year, where you dropped your pants so the Medical Sgt or orderly could check your gear and make sure you were not suffering from what is now called an STD. Apparently the term 'Short Arm' dates back to the First World War, and originated in either the American or Australian army.

Some of the terms that new recruits had to learn were not native to Irish culture: one such was the word **'Jildy'**. Now my memory tells me that we used it to describe a well turned out soldier, in a slightly mocking way, usually someone on secondment from the Curragh, everything spick and span, boots, buttons and chinstrap shining. This was a word that transferred from the British Army, but they used it in a slightly different way. To them it was used to denote urgency. It is a Hindi word and means 'Hurry up'. 'Jildy jildy' meant 'Get a move on'. Rudyard Kipling uses it in his poem about the water-carrier Gunga Din, but he spells it 'Juldee'

**'Buckshee'** was another word passed down from the days when many Irishmen served in the British Army. It meant something extra or left over, like an extra ration, that could be obtained free of charge. How often was Felix Connolly or Anthony Kelly asked if there was any buckshee bread or dessert? Again, it seems to have its origins in WW1, but its first recorded use was in 1760. It is derived from 'baksheesh', Hindi and Urdu words derived from Persian 'Bakhshish'.

**Dixies** were large 12 gallon pots, used for cooking or making tea. Again the name seems to have come from India via the British Army, and the word was Anglo-Indian, coming from the Hindi 'degci'; originally from Persian 'degca': a pot.

And what about every soldier's friend, his **'housewife'**. Again, they were issued on the first day, but contained little or nothing of value. According to some sources the 'Housewife' issued to soldiers of the Imperial Army contained 'all that a soldier would require to carry out any repairs to his clothing when necessary'. It would have: a thimble, two balls of grey darning wool (for socks), 50 yds of linen thread wound round card, needles, brass dish buttons (for battledress) and plastic buttons for shirt'. That doesn't sound like the inoffensive little bundle I knew.

The day you were discharged from the army, you were expected to hand back your kit in the pristine condition in which you had received it. Not many passed that test.

I am reliably informed that almost all the parades mentioned earlier are a thing of the past: that only apprentices or groups under instruction are required to endure some of what we suffered on a regular and annoying frequency.

\* With thanks to Kevin Brady and Michael Whelan.



Church Parade for the Camp Mission in 1947.

## New Chairman and Committee elected at the AGM

The Roger Casement Branch Annual General Meeting took place on Thursday 21st January 2016 at the NCO's Mess, Casement Aerodrome and the following were elected to officer positions:

Outgoing Chairman Finbarr Lyons stated that he would not be seeking re-election, and Mick Delaney was elected Chairman unopposed. Noel Murphy remains in position as Hon. Secretary and Peter McGlynn remains PRO. Patrick Lynch who has been Acting Treasurer for 2015 was formally elected Hon-Treasurer unopposed.

The following were elected members of the Committee: John Clarke - Health & Safety Representative

General Committee: Gerry McCann, Tony Roe, Frank Donnelly, PJ Brennan, Finbarr Lyons, Richard Murphy, Brendan Murphy, Ed Browne, Michael Whelan.

*I would like to thank all the Branch members who give their time and energy in participating in collections, parades and events. This year, 2016, is an important Centenary year, and members are encouraged to attend and participate in as many events and functions as possible. The Branch has accepted the invitation to lead the Rathcoole/Saggart St. Patrick's Day Parade. Nine members of RCB will take part in the upcoming National Parade in Dublin on Easter Sunday 27th March. Noel Murphy Hon-Secretary*

## Air Corps News

### Easter Parade 2016

2016 is a special year in Ireland's history and there is a significant programme of events planned to honour the Volunteers of 1916. The Flags for Schools initiative began in September. Its aim is to deliver a National Flag to every National School in the country so they can take part in Proclamation day on the 15th of March. The Air Corps has delivered the National Flag to over 200 schools in the Dublin and some of the Islands, including Tory and Inisboffin. The initiative has sparked an interest in the school children to learn more about the events of Easter 1916.

The year began with a State Ceremony in Dublin Castle in which the Air Corps took part. Every day, at 12:00, two members of the Defence

Forces take part in a small flag raising ceremony on O'Connell Street in front of the GPO. Pictured is Lt Frankie Mohan and FQMS Tracey Walsh.



*Flag Raising Ceremony at the GPO.*

### PC 9 Aircraft In Training.



Preparations are underway for the Easter Parade. The Air Corps will take part on the ground, and of course in the air. Training flights are now under way to prepare for the Flypast element that will see a large number of Air Corps aircraft take to the skies over the capital as part of the celebrations.

### Winter Storms

The Winter Storm period is thankfully coming to an end. The Air Corps has been quite busy supporting the OPW in surveying the effects of the floods and providing animal feed for animals isolated by the rising waters.

Pictured is the AW139 surveying the flood damage South of Athlone.



### Emergency Aeromedical Service

The Emergency Aeromedical Service (EAS) has been involved in a number of significant missions over the last number of weeks. One good news story was that of a young footballer who suffered a cardiac arrest during an inter-county football match in Lanesborough. Due to the quick reactions from the team physiotherapists and local ambulance crews, along with access to an Automated External Defibrillator the patient was resuscitated. EAS was tasked to the scene and arrived 15 mins from receiving the call. The patient was transported from Lanesborough to University Hospital Galway in 23 mins where he has since made a full recovery and returned home.

AW139 Helicopter completes another EAS mission



The Air Corps will soon begin a recruitment campaign for Cadets and Apprentices. Details will be available on [www.military.ie](http://www.military.ie) and our Facebook Page.