



ROGER CASEMENT BRANCH OGLAIGH NAISIUNTA na hEIREANN

The Link



Issue 01/08
January 2008

Branch Chairman: P.O'Meara. **Hon.Secretary : B.Downey.**
Ph. 086 8500316 Ph. 01 8420958
omeara.pa@gmail.com downeybp@eircom.net

Hon Treasurer : J.Berns.
Ph. 01 4589281
jbmillbridge@yahoo.com

PRO: J.Condon
Ph. 01 4504236



National President O.N.E. Jim Nolan & Paddy O' Meara Chairman, Roger Casement Branch

From the Chairman...

2007 year-end provided the opportunity for the activities of the Branch to be reviewed. The full picture will be discussed at the Branch's AGM which is due to be held in January but it gives me great pleasure to say that the Roger Casement Branch has played its full part during 2007 in supporting the aims and objectives of our parent ONE organisation which has as its primary priority, the provision of support for needy ex servicemen and women.

In addition, the Branch also provided a unique forum for all former Baldonnell men and women to keep in touch with old comrades. A number of notable reunions took place during the year which were well attended.

Communications between the members was improved with the introduction of the 'New Link' newsletter and I am greatly encouraged with the offers of sponsorship which have been received for future editions of the newsletter from several aviation companies, from former Air Corps classes and from a number of individuals. The committee attended a valuable meeting with the GOC and many members also attended various functions in Baldonnell throughout the year. Great assistance has been given to the Branch by Air Corps staff at all levels and I am happy to report that relationships between the Branch and the Air Corps are at the highest level.

Members of the Branch regularly attend the Air Corps Museum in Baldonnell and provide whatever assistance is required in support of this outstanding facility.

Having spent many years during the sixties working on Vampire aircraft, I am particularly glad to say that with the great help of the Air Corps that No 191 may shortly be located in the museum.

The Annual Mass held in October was again the highlight of the year. Many of our colleagues from other ONE branches attended and great credit is due to Fr. Gerry Carroll and the Air Corps staff that supported the ceremony and provided the friendly cup of tea later in the NCO's mess.

Finally I wish all our members a happy and prosperous New Year and look forward to welcoming a full attendance at the Branch AGM in January.

Paddy O'Meara
Branch Chairman

ROGER CASEMENT BRANCH

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 Baldonnell as its base. In this way, the Branch through the ONE organisation would provide help and assistance where necessary to the camp personnel at the time of their discharge.

With the kind permission of the GOC Air Corps at the time, the Branch was named The Roger Casement Branch and was permitted to hold their meetings in Baldonnell. From that meagre beginning 28 years ago the Roger Casement Branch has grown from strength to strength. The Branch is very prominent and is held in high regard in the overall O.N.E organization.

The success of the Branch stems primarily from the support and activities of the members and 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 following:

- The creation of the O.N.E Memorial Garden with the unique Monument to the memory of the deceased former personnel who have served with the Air Corps.
- 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 GOC Air Corps has allocated an office in the Museum area for use by the Branch. 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 former personnel who have served in Baldonnell to socialize and renew acquaintances with each other. This is a very popular event and has become a favourite reunion of former colleagues. Over 100 colleagues and friends attended the event in 2006

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 20.00hours in the NCO's Mess, Baldonnell.



**Edition Sponsored by
1957 Air Corps Apprentice Class**

Original Apprentice Hostel

A decision was made in 1926 that the Air Corps should have its own well trained technicians to maintain its aircraft. At that time all technical training took place in the U.K.

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

With the intake of the apprentices, there was a need to have suitable accommodation. 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. 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 above photo shows two buildings. The one on the left was the originals sleeping quarters for the women. It consisted of twin rooms with each having a fireplace. The long building in the centre was the dining hall and recreation room. At the rear (hidden in the photo) the wash room and toilets were located. 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 and can be seen in the photo.

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" remained in the long building. This arrangement prevailed until 1947 when the apprentices transferred to a more modern building close to the public road, which was built originally to accommodate the sergeant pilots.

The present Apprentice hostel was opened in 1980.

The original hostel has long since been demolished.

The O.N.E Monument



Unveiling of the monument by President Mary Robinson
July 1992

The O.N.E. Memorial Monument is located near the main entrance of the Church in Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel. It is a prominent edifice to the memory of the deceased personnel who have served with the Air Corps.

In 1987 the Roger Casement Branch of O.N.E. decided to erect an appropriate memorial to deceased former colleagues. Permission for the project was granted by the then GOC Air Corps Brig. General B. McMahon.

In 1989 the late Jack Lynch, Branch Chairman at the time and the late Kevin Whelan, Branch Secretary spearheaded the project. With trojan work by the committee and the members of the Branch sufficient funds were raised and so it was decided to proceed with the construction of the Monument. Col. K. Hogan provided invaluable support to the project.

The sculptor Joe Sloan was engaged to provide expert guidance and to design the monument. The stone used is granite which was quarried in the Dublin mountains.

The centre piece of the Memorial is in the form of a Roman Cross. The surface area surrounding the Cross and the pathways is covered with Liscannor Stone. Four pillars placed equidistant from the centre represent the four provinces. The general area around the monument is landscaped.

On a warm day in July 1992 President Mary Robinson unveiled the Memorial in the presence of a large group which included the National President of O.N.E. Pat Dunleavy, the Chairman of the Roger Casement Branch Jim Conway, the Chief of Staff PDF, Maj. Gen. L. Bergin, Brig. Gen. P. Cranfield GOC Air Corps, members of the Diplomatic Services, representatives from the Civil Service and local politicians. A large number of present and former members who served with the Air Corps and their families were also in attendance.

Each year on the second Sunday in October at the Roger Casement Branch annual Mass of Remembrance a wreath is laid at the Memorial by the Chairman of the Branch accompanied by the GOC Air Corps .

Profile: Wally Walsh

Wally remembers activities in the Gym.

Wally commenced his basic military training in the Curragh in May 1953 and was one of 49 young men who arrived in Baldonnell in August 1953 as members of the 1953 Air Corps Direct Entry (D.E.) Class. On completion of his basic technical training Wally was posted to M.U. (Maintenance Unit) and the engine shop.

Generations of young technicians have fond memories of Wally as they learned their basic skills on Rolls Royce Merlins, Gypsy Majors, Alvis Leonides and Cheetah engines not to mention the new fangled Goblin Jet engines which arrived on the Vampire aircraft.

As a young D.E., one of Wally's instructors Cpl. Rubeon Wells (Ruby) invited some of the D.E. class to visit the Gym to assist in the setting up of the stage for a forthcoming play. This was a real treat in those days as access to the Gym was strictly controlled by Sgt Billy Moore a Golden Gloves Champion who ruled with an iron 'Fist'.

The Play "Home is the Hero" by Walter Macken introduced Wally to the world of Wings, Fly Curtains, Backdrops, Exits,

Entrances, Footlights, Headlights and acoustics. He became hooked on stage settings and in time he set up the stage for such plays as Tolka Row, Bugle in the Blood, Is the Priest at home, Shadow of a gunman. His most demanding set was the creation of a millionaire's sitting room for a brilliant play called 'The Paragon' which he developed in collaboration with his old friend Capt Tom Desmond or Tomas Mac Deasioun as he liked to call himself cynically known by one and all as 'The Daschund'.

Wally recalls the various concerts at Easter and Christmas which were very popular and any talented singers or musicians in the camp were encouraged to display their skills. Many were given nicknames, Austin McGovern a fine violin player became 'Toscanini', Ted Callaghan a lovely tenor became 'Gigli'. Wally took part in many comedy sketches with Tom Long and Joe Parkes. Shay Noonan was a great comedian and Mick Prince known as 'His Highness' played his accordion. The Golden Harp Ceidhle Band which was made up of Mick Clarke, Mick Clancy, Frank Ryan, Paddy Mullins, Willy Gubbins, and Rev. Wally Walsh. The band played on the RTE Ceidhle House programmes. All plays in the GYM were



performed on a Thursday night and the entrance fee was

1 shilling (5p). Camp staff had an option to pay the entrance fee the following day (pay-day). With camp personnel having more access to cars and with the coming of television, the Final Curtain came down for good on this great institution which provided such enjoyment to camp personnel for many decades.

(Wally Walsh retired from the Air Corps in 1977 and was a founder member of the Roger Casement Branch ONE and served as the inaugural Chairman from 1979 to 1980. He still continues as a valuable member of the committee.)

REUNION and ANNIVERSARIES

2007 was a busy year for reunions and the committee will be happy to hear of plans for Class reunions planned for 2008.

Following the article which appeared in the July edition of *The Link* on the films which were made in Baldonnell during the sixties, interest has been expressed in having a 40th anniversary of this momentous period in the Air Corps.

Such a get-together would give all those who participated, the chance to share old memories and experiences.

The GOC has indicated his approval for the reunion to be held in Baldonnell.

We invite any person who would be interested in becoming involved in this venture to get in touch with the Branch Chairman. Time to start digging out old memorabilia and photos from the film period.



NOTICE

The Branch AGM will be held in the NCO's Mess, Baldonnel on Thursday January 17th, 2008 at 2000 hrs. All members are expected to attend.

ONET Dress Code

Suspension Bars for Service Medals (2 to 6 capacity)	5.50
Service Bars	4.20
Slide-on Ribbon Bars (1 to 3 capacity)	2.00
(4 to 6 capacity)	4.00
Replacement Ribbons Slide-on	2.00
Service Ribbons (Replacement IIcm.)	1.00
Miniature Ribbons	0.65
Miniature Medals (U.N.Type)	8.65
(O.N.E. Type)	15.25
Service Medal (O.N.E.)	21.60
Jubilee Medals	34.28
Lapel Pin	10.00
Ties	11.00
Name I.Ds	7.50
Rainwear	17.00
Hand embroidered Wire and Silk Blazer Crest (O.N.E.Type)	20.00

All above kit available from :

Jim Canavan, 66 St.Anthony's Crescent, Greenhills Estate, Dublin 12

CUIMHNIMIS

Let us remember those who have died recently;

Michael Greene



1956 Apprentice Class 50th Reunion

P.Donnelly ; Fr.Gerry Carroll, J.Dullea; F.Cavanagh;
J.Carpenter; J.Henry; P. Lynam



Air Corps News

ALOUETTE III RETIREMENT

After some 44 years of outstanding and unblemished service, the Alouette III helicopter was officially retired from service on Friday 21st September 2007. 542 lives saved, 1717 Search & Rescue missions, 2882 Air Ambulance missions and 77,000 flying hours later, the work horse of the Air Corps was given a well deserved and highly emotional send off by air and ground crews of No. 3 Operations Wing following large scale preparations for this once in a lifetime event.

The stand-down itself was a most impressive ceremony that truly befitted the outstanding and unique service record of the helicopter and of the personnel that flew and maintained it. As the General Officer Commanding, Brigadier General James, so eloquently said, the stand-down represents the end of an era, the aircraft's service record having spanned nearly 44 years, during which time not one fatality or injury occurred over a variety of extremely challenging missions. He commented that it would be hard to find one major event since 1963 in which the Alouette III did not play some part, either directly or in the supporting role. All major security operations, high profile visits, local and national tragedies saw the Alouette III on the scene. The Alouette III in Air Corps service had become a legend in the helicopter world for its longevity and versatility.

The ceremony itself was charged with emotion and nostalgia. Many former air and ground crews were invited to attend for one last look at the machine that had been part of their lives over so many years. The flying display commenced with four Pilatus PC-9Ms, followed by three Agusta Westland 139's. The finale was the display by six Alouettes, comprising tail numbers 195, 196, 211, 212, 213 & 214 operating as a formation under the callsign 'Rainbow Section'. The six aircraft thrilled the crowd with a series of flypasts before splitting into a two ship and four ship routine. The six Alouettes then reformed with the three Augusta Westland 139's for a nine ship flypast, displaying the 'old and the new' before the three AW139's broke formation and returned to the ramp.

The grand finale then took place, with the six Alouettes approaching the ramp from the East for a formation landing on the ramp, with 195 positioning itself to be the last to touchdown. After parking in a line on the ramp in front of the crowd, the crews were congratulated in turn by GOC Air Corps. The ceremony closed with a ceremonial 'putting to bed' of 195 for the last time, the helicopter being towed to the hangar behind the Air Corps Pipe Band having accomplished everything that was asked of it over its remarkable 44 years in service to the state.



The final approach to Baldonnel



Brig-Gen Barney Mc Mahon flies the Alouette again. (Then) Comdt McMahan delivered the first Alouette 111 in 1963.