



ROGER CASEMENT BRANCH OGLAIGH NAISIUNTA na hEIREANN



The Link

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From the Chairman...

The feedback from members following the issue of the new format of "The Link" has been positive. The newsletter aims to keep members abreast of ongoing developments within the O.N.E. and within the present Air Corps but most of all, former members are eager to hear the news about old comrades and of times past.

Unfortunately this service comes at a cost.

Some members may not be aware that only ?4.00 from the annual membership fee of ?20.00 is retained by the Branch. The balance is passed to O.N.E. headquarters to support the primary function of providing support for needy ex-soldiers. At present hostel accommodation is provided in three locations throughout the country. It is interesting to note that the Dublin Hostel, Bru na Bhiann was opened in 1978 following the death on the street of a homeless former member of the Air Corps.

Since its opening, members may be surprised to hear that 22 former Air Corps personnel have been accommodated in the facility. Presently two Ex Air Corps members are in residence. I am sure that members will agree that the Branch should continue to channel the majority of its funds to support these vital O.N.E. facilities.

In order to continue the circulation of a quality newsletter to members, the committee would be pleased to hear from any company or indeed from any individual who would be prepared to sponsor an edition of "The Link".

The cost of publication for each edition is ?200.00 and the associated postage is ?100.00.

Please contact any member of the committee if you are interested in sponsoring an edition.

Paddy O'Meara
Branch Chairman

SECRETARY'S NOTES BRANCH ACTIVITIES

The Company's week-end Convention was held in Athlone in June 2007. It was very successful under the Chairmanship of Gerry McMahon DSM. The main item discussed was the "The Strategic Plan Moving Forward" Following a series of workshops it was decide to set up a number of subcommittees to review various aspects of the operation of the Company. The following areas are to be reviewed: Finance & Internal Audit; Housing; Fundraising; Rules; Bar & Functions; The Lotto;

Ceremonial; and Branch Liaison. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to have "the grassroots" more involved in running the organisation. In August, twelve branches attended the meeting of the Leinster Area Council. The main item discussed was the Strategic Plan with special emphasis on the financing of the three homes. The Branch was represented at the Annual Mass for the Waterford Branch in Waterford and at the Annual Mass for the Mullingar Branch in Mullingar. Both events took place on on Sunday Sept 2nd 2007.

Some members attended the Blessing of the Fleet and Family Day in Casement Aerodrome on Aug 31st. Not only was the Fleet blessed but the day was also warm and sunny - unusual for Baldonnell. There was an excellent air display in the afternoon. The O.N.E had a display stand at the Branch office in the Air Corps Museum.

A number of members were invited to the event marking the retirement of the Allouette III fleet following 44 years and 77,000 flying hours in the service of the State.

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Profile: Johnny Boyle



Member of the Dublin All Ireland winning team 1958.

Johnny Boyle was born in 1931 at Arbour Hill Barracks in Dublin.

His father was an officer in the National Army and after serving some years in Dublin was transferred to the Curragh.

It was there that Johnny remembers spending the best years of his youth where so many of his role models in Gaelic football were serving in the army – legendary names like John Joe O' Reilly from Cavan, Danny Douglas from Laois, Joe Keohane from Kerry and Paul Doyle from Kildare who insisted that Johnny should learn to kick a football with both feet.

Johnny attended National School on the Curragh Camp and De La Salle College in Kildare town. He was Captain of the Kildare Minor Football team for three years. In 1949 he enlisted in the Air Corps as a member of the first Direct Entrants Technicians Course.

For the next six years Baldonnell was home to Johnny and it gave him a great excuse to play other sports which he had only read about. The Gaelic Athletic Association ban was in operation which banned the playing of Foreign Sports like soccer and rugby. A good friend, Con Martin, also serving in Baldonnell at the time and who later played soccer for Ireland was also caught up in

this ban. Con had to return a Gaelic Football medal which he won playing for Dublin. Fortunately the medal was returned to Con some forty years later.

Johnny Boyle was capped six times for Ireland in basketball and on one particular day had the honour of playing for Ireland in two different codes, Gaelic football against the Universities and later that same night against England at basketball.

He played for Kildare and still has the official programme for a game against Longford which was played over 50 years ago. The Dublin Team selectors saw his potential and as he was Dublin born he was eligible to declare for them. Johnny says that one of his biggest thrills was playing in the All Ireland Final against Kerry in 1955. Dublin lost that match but came back three years later to beat Derry and win that elusive All-Ireland medal to add to his Provincial Championship medal which he won with Leinster the same year. Johnny had the unique distinction of being the only non-St. Vincent's Club member on that team which included players like Kevin Heffernan, Ollie Freeney, Jim Crowley, Norman Allen, Cathal O'Leary and the Timmons Brothers. He was later to be joined on that team by another Air Corps

man, Tony O'Grady who was the goalkeeper.

In 1956 Johnny was selected to play in an exhibition Gaelic Football match against Kerry in the famous Polo Grounds in New York.

The well known radio commentator Micheal O'Muircheartaigh in his book "From Borroloola to Mangerton Mountain" recalls interviewing Johnny whom he met on a trip to New Zealand and described him as being energetic and entertaining. While in Baldonnell he met his future wife Peggy Kelly a local girl from Clondalkin. It turned out that both her sisters, Ann and Mary also met and married two Baldonnell guys, Christy Ryan from Tipperary and John Mahon from Cork.

Johnny worked in Dublin for a number of years after leaving Baldonnell and then decided to join his brother-in-law Christy Ryan who had emigrated to New Zealand. He secured a job with Safe Air Ltd. as an aircraft technician, the trade for which he trained in Baldonnell. He spent twenty years with Safe Air, a wholly owned subsidiary of Air New Zealand.

Johnny and Peggy are now living on the Gold Coast, Queensland Australia enjoying the climate.

REUNIONS and ANNIVERSARIES

1957 Apprentice class will celebrate their 50th anniversary on 6th, 7th and 8th October.

Contact Clive Geraghty for more information :Tel 01 8212886

The members and officials of the famous Air Corps Gaelic Football team featured in the "Golden Years" article in this issue of The Link will get together in Baldonnell on 3rd October to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their achievements.

5th SHORT SERVICE COURSE JULY 1958



BACK ROW: L: E. TWEEEDY, E. C. MOHARITY, E. B. CORR, E. K. TORMEY, E. K. GLENN, E. L. SMITH, E. N. MC GARRY
FRONT ROW: CAPT. YOUNG, COMDEE HEALY, E. J. O. DONNELL, E. S. J. CLOSKEY

GAELIC FOOTBALL – THE GOLDEN YEARS

By Tom Murphy, Member Roger Casement Branch



Air Corps, All-Army Champions 1957

The mid fifties were exciting years in Baldonnell, concrete runways had been laid there for the first time and on the 21st July 1956 the headlines in the papers read, "Ireland Enters the Jet Age" as the Air Corps flew in three deHavilland Vampire Jets from England.

A new exciting era had begun in the advancement of the role and capability of the Air Corps but this buzz was also taking effect in other aspects of life within the Corps. Gaelic football was about to launch and take-off into the record books starting in 1957 and continue until 1968, meriting the title of the Golden Years.

Up to then the Medical Services Cup was their greatest win, but the real turning point took place when the Corps won the All Army Championship Semi-final against the Western Command in Galway, bearing in mind the Western Command had six inter-county Players on their team. The Corps then went on to win their first All Ireland Championship when they beat the Eastern Command in the final at Baldonnell on 5th November 1957 – the start of the Golden Years. Final scores on the day, Eastern Command 1-6, Air Corps 3-7. Scores:

Harry Donnelly 2-5, Gene McCarthy 1-0, Johnny Digan 0-1, Jimmy Douglas 0-1. The team on that historic day merits to be recorded and lined out as follows:

Jimmy Leene

*Ger Gordon Frank Marron
Terry McConnon Ray Nugent (Capt)
Enda Smith P.J.McCaffrey
Mick Garrett Brian Rabbitte
Jimmy Douglas Gene McCarthy
Liam Shanahan Johnny Digan
Charlie Wren Harry Donnelly*

After this breakthrough, there was no turning back after winning five consecutive All Army Championships, including six doubles (*) with the Medical Services Cup, a record yet to be surpassed. The following Chart shows the range of great wins:

| <i>Championship</i> | <i>Medical Services Cup</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1957* 1964* | 1957* 1964* |
| 1958 1965* | 1959* 1965* |
| 1959* 1968* | 1962 1967 |
| 1960 1970 | 1963* 1968* |
| 1961 1972 | |
| 1963* | |

Added to this, four players had the distinction of playing in five All Army Championships.

They were: Harry Donnelly,

P.J.McCaffrey, Gene McCarthy and Brendan Barden. Resulting from these record breaking achievements, seven Air Corps players were selected to represent their own counties.

Seven seems to have had a significance in many of these successes, going back to an 1954/55 Air Corps team who played in the Dublin Minor Championships under the direction of Jerry McCabe and P.J.Barry, seven from this team played on the winning team in the 1957 All Army Championships.

Concurrent with the All Army Competitions, the Air Corps teams were playing in the Dublin Leagues and Championships with significant success as shown:

League Winners :

Div I - 1958; Div II - 1959

*Championship Runners Up;
1960 and 1961*

Minor Championship

Winners 1967; Runners-Up 1968.

ANNUAL MASS

THE ANNUAL MASS OF REMEMBRANCE
WILL BE HELD ON

sunday October 14th 2007 at 10 am

IN CASEMENT AERODROME,
BALDONNEL

A Wreath Laying ceremony will take place at the
Memorial immediately following the Mass.

Family members of the deceased, branch members,
families and friends are cordially invited.

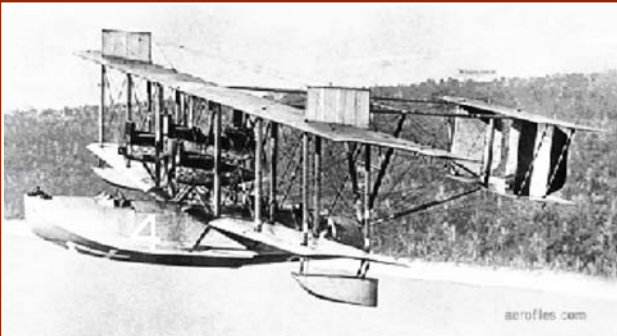
Light refreshments will be served in the Catering
Complex after the ceremonies have concluded.

CUIMHNIMIS

Let us remember those who have died recently;

John Keane

Michael Collins



Curtiss NC-4 Flying Boat

AIR CORPS MARCHING MUSIC

During the course of recent discussions between some of our members, agreement could not be reached as to whether designated march music has ever been assigned to the Air Corps.

Air Force marches exist for the US Air Force and for the Royal Air Force so why not for their Irish counterparts?

Many former members remember singing "We're a bunch of bad boys" from the back of a Bedford Truck on the way to the rifle range or to various sporting events.

We're a bunch of bad boys, bad boys are we

We are the Air Corps, the terrors of the Aeronautical Universe

We're a bunch of bad boys, bad boys are we

We'd rather live and fight for Liberty.

We're a grand old team to play for

We're a grand old team to know

When you hear our history, its enough to make you're heart grow sad.

We don't care whether we win loose or draw for all the hell we care

For all we know there's going to be a match and the good old Air Corps will be there

With the assistance of Comdt. Mark Armstrong, the present Director of the Army #1 Band, the melody to which the above anthem was sung was identified as being the trio part of the famous "Our Director March" by Frederick Bigelow. Indeed this march was played by the Army #1 Band on a visit to Baldonnel during the late 50's or early 60's.

Could this be the elusive "Air Corps March"?

Further investigation revealed that that the only other March of note composed by Bigelow was "The NC4 March" which was indeed written to commemorate the first ever transatlantic flight of any aircraft. In May 1919, three US Navy Curtiss-NC Flying Boats took off from New York bound for Lisbon via Newfoundland and The Azores. Only NC4 managed to complete the journey to Lisbon which took just under 3 weeks. This flight happened before the Alcock and Brown flight which ended up in Clifden and 8 years before the Lindbergh flight.

Any further information regarding the designation of an official Air Corps March for a Military Brass band would be welcomed. Nowadays the Air Corps has an outstanding Pipe Band and we look forward to hearing it play an appropriate Official Air Corps March in the near future. Perhaps "We're a Bunch of Bad Boys" could be adapted for the pipes?

Air Corps News

AVRO CADET 'C7' COMES HOME

The latest addition to the Air Corps fleet arrived in Casement Aerodrome from New Zealand on Monday 20th August. The Avro Cadet, serial no. 'C7' originally entered service with the Air Corps in September 1934 supplementing six Avro 631 Cadet aircraft which had entered service two years earlier in 1932. Throughout its 11 years in service, 'C7' was mainly used in the pilot training role before being withdrawn from Air Corps service in August 1945. Its last recorded flight was on 28th August of that year and had 957 hours flying time.

It was acquired by Mr. Albert Clarke, Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary and registered to him as EI-APO on the 10th November 1950, although no Certificate of Airworthiness was issued at the time.

It was re-registered as EI-AGO to K.P. Lawlor at Weston, but the aircraft remained in storage at Cloughjordan along with the wings of another former Irish Air Corps Avro Cadet, serial C5. It was eventually acquired by Mr. George Flood who took the aircraft back to Dublin where he stored it in a shed in his back garden. When inspected in 1974, the aircraft still bore Irish Air Corps markings and colours despite being sold almost 30 years previously.

It was subsequently sold in 1984 to Mr. Ron Souch of The Antique Aeroplane Company and arrived at Hamble, Hampshire on the 24th October 1984. Appropriate period marks G-ACFM were reserved for D. Ellis and the 1991 Air Britain Register stated it to be with Ron Souch at Salisbury Green. After a partial restoration, it was shipped to New Zealand, having being acquired by retired airline pilot Derek Ellis, and it was re-registered in New Zealand as ZK-AVR on the 30th October 1988.

Its restoration was completed in 1999 by Smith Tech Aire, North Shore Airfield, Dairy Flat, New Zealand at which stage it was owned by Mr. James Schmidt. It was restored to full Irish Air Corps colours, and the New Zealand Civil Aviation Authorities allowed it to fly with no external display of its registration ZK-AVR, thus making its appearance totally authentic. It was then based at Kaipara Flats, Warkworth, New Zealand, and had been on offer for sale for some time before the decision by the Minister for Defence earlier this year to purchase it on behalf of the Irish Air Corps Museum and Heritage Centre and return it to its original home some 73 after its initial acquisition.



*C7 airborne again over Baldonnel on
24th August after 62 years.*



*Capt Stan Smith hands over
C7 to Brig Gen Ralph James.*