



ROGER CASEMENT BRANCH

OGLAIGH NAISIUNTA na hEIREANN

The Link



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Secretary's Notes

The Company Annual Convention and AGM were held in Galway over the June Holiday weekend. Delegates and observers from the 44 Branches from around the country were present. Most of the workings in the Convention were taken in Workshops where the present and future operation of the organisation was keenly discussed. A large contingent from the Company participated in the Military Annual Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

Members of the Branch are asked to support the bar facilities in the Bru na bhFiann.

This facility can be reserved for private parties.

A successful tour to the Passage Graves at Newgrange was arranged by the Social Committee on April 15th. A good day was had by all. Treasurer.

From the Chairman...

Since the introduction of the blue uniform for the Air Corps it has been an aspiration of the Roger Casement Branch for some element of the Air Corps colour to be incorporated into the ONE uniform as worn by Branch members at ceremonial events. The Branch considered the introduction of a Blue forage cap to be appropriate.

A motion was submitted to the recent convention for the ONET rules to be amended to facilitate this request. Unfortunately the motion did not proceed as submitted for technical reasons. I am glad to say however, that the CEO arranged for the Roger Casement request to be considered at the workshop stage and later at the plenary session.

The response from many of the delegates was encouraging.

Air Force personnel have always worn a distinctive uniform and this situation was very evident at the recent military pilgrimage to Lourdes where Air Force veterans from many countries could be identified by their distinctive head-gear.

Almost 100% of the members of the Roger Casement Branch are former members of the Air Corps and most have continued their careers in

aviation following the basic training they received in the Air Corps. The members are also proud of their association with the present Air Corps and fully appreciate that the highest international standards are being maintained in terms of personnel training and equipment.

The Branch fully supports the primary aims of ONET in supporting needy ex servicemen and women and many of our members join the Branch also to keep in touch with former classmates and colleagues. The link with the Air Corps is also important as it continues to strengthen the bond between the former members and currently serving personnel.

The Branch with over 100 members is one of the largest in the ONE system. The more members in the Branch, the greater the annual contributions which can be made to central funds.

The introduction of a distinctive head-dress as proposed will certainly help to attract further members which will not only be good for the Branch, but will also be good for ONET.

It is clear at this stage that the international military associations recognise the unique Air Force identity. This identity is also recognised by the Irish Government and the Department of Defence. I believe that the time has come for ONET to also give due recognition.

Paddy O'Meara
Branch Chairman



Members of Roger Casement Branch and the RAF Association who attended a lunch in Casement Aerodrome hosted by Brig-Gen Ralph James.

Also included, Col. Paul Fry and Col. Tom Moloney



Edition sponsored by the
1953
Direct Entrant Class

Morane Incident

During the filming of *The Blue Max* a request was made by Tim Philips of Ballyfree Farms for an aircraft from the set to attend and do some displays at an air-show at his airfield in Co. Wicklow.

The aircraft selected was the Morane Parasol, that beautiful silver high winged monoplane in which (according to the script) Lt. Bruno Stachel was to die at the end of the story. The Parasol had two tandem open cockpits and was powered by a nine cylinder air-cooled radial engine. Early on the Sunday morning the pilot, Pat Cranfield, (later Brig-Gen) and mechanic, Tony Roe, arrived at Baldonnell and having made the necessary preparations took off for Ballyfree. The aircraft was flown from the rear with Tony sitting up front holding his toolbox across his knees. It was a nice summer morning and after a smooth flight the aircraft landed in Ballyfree.

Tony explains, "having completed the day's flying with no problems of any sort we once again planned to return to Baldonnell and roared off down the runway. As we lifted off and climbed tight and high to the left to avoid trees and farm buildings there was a "cough" from the engine, just a cough or two as one might clear ones throat, and once again smooth running. From my front seat I could see from my set of instruments that oil pressure and revs were all ok. I managed to turn

my head and gesture to Pat that my instruments showed AOK and he acknowledged with the standard thumbs up signal.

During the half hour trip back to base I kept an eye on the instruments and all was in order. Some tiny spots of oil were evident on the small Perspex screen in front of my cockpit but no problems were to be found. Oil pressure and revs remained in limits. Having landed and pushed the Morane back into the hanger we spoke briefly about the cough decided to leave it till the morning when I would get a chance to check things out.

During a break in filming on Monday morning I got an opportunity to do some checks. While doing compression checks, starting at No. 1 cylinder, everything was fine until I got to No. 6 (bottom cylinder at 6 o'clock position) where I found zero resistance as I pushed the prop through TDC on the compression stroke.

The valve gear on this engine was totally exposed and easy to check clearances etc. It was all in place, though clearances were tight. I decided to drop the cylinder, (quite an easy job on this engine) and having removed the nuts from the crankcase studs, I put my arm around the cylinder expecting to wrestle it a bit to break the seal, but found that it came away quite easily, too easily! Where I



should have had to pull down hard against the suction of the piston, I found that the whole assembly came away with only a slight effort.

The piston (4 to 5 inches across) was simply not there, and 5 to 6 inches of con-rod had also gone missing!

The opening in the lower section of the annular crankcase allowed me to put my hand in and collect bits of metal (like gravel at the seashore) from the lower reaches of the engine. Had the collapse of the piston occurred in one of the upper cylinders I'm not sure what the outcome would have been.

Having reported to Pat Cranfield and showed him the condition of the engine that got us back safely to base, we were both only then beginning to realise the possible consequences of our "near miss", and like the legendary black cat (symbol of Fighter Squadron) we had lost one of those nine lives".

Reunions and Anniversaries – Class Reunions

The 1949 Apprentice Class joined with the 1950 Class and held a joint reunion in Casement Aerodrome on 13th June. Twelve members of the 1949 class and five members of the 1950 class attended. The reunion Mass was offered by a former member of the class, Rev Denis Lynch.

After the Mass the group was taken on a tour of the camp.

The 1958 Apprentice Class will celebrate their 50th anniversary this year and will hold a reunion in Casement Aerodrome on Sunday

October 12th. Contact Jerry McCarthy, (01 8401045)

The 1958 Direct Entrant Class is also planning its 50th reunion. More details later.

The Apprentice Class of 1945 will be holding a reunion lunch in early October.

Reunions are a good way of keeping in touch with former colleagues

1945 Apprentice Class Reunion:

Nine of the twelve surviving class members recently held a reunion to celebrate 62 years since their enlistment. The 1945 Class was the first to hold a reunion in 1955. The practice has now been followed by many other classes of Apprentices and D/E's.



1945 Apprentice Class

Included: Jim Killian, Gus Cummins,

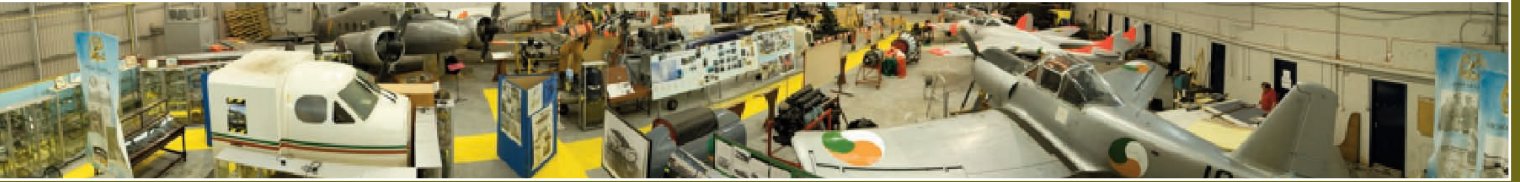
Paddy Mc Donald, Eddie Cotter,

Johnny Fitzpatrick, Ben Downey, Mick Forde,

Stan Hogan, Geoff Rogan.

The Air Corps Museum

By: Michael Whelan MA, Curator



The Irish Air Corps Museum & Heritage Project at Casement Aerodrome Baldonnell, County Dublin was set up in 2001 to collect as much documentation and artifacts relating to Irish Military Aviation in all its forms as possible and to conserve and display this heritage as an educational tool to both the military and the public alike. Since 2001 thousands of visitors have passed through the museum and sampled the rich heritage of the Air Corps and learned of its importance in Ireland's historical narrative. The collection contains almost a dozen intact airframes including the Avro XIX, DH Chipmunks DH Vampire, Fouga Magister, Marchetti trainer, a full scale replica of the Wright Brothers Flyer and an Allouette III and parts of many others. As well as airframes it contains a collection of engines and hundreds of other artifacts including logbooks, uniforms and photos. The collection is being restored and maintained by the Air Corps with the unique assistance of a team of Roger Casement Branch O.N.E. members (Ex Air Corps). Access to the museum by permission of Air Corps Head Quarters.



Members of the Roger Casement Branch with Museum Curator A/M Michael Whelan on recent 'fatigues duty' in the museum

L-R A/M Michael Whelan, Mick Egan, Mick Reddy, Eamonn Tierney, Kevin Maye, John Mahon.

LOURDES PILGRIMAGE 2008

2008 is the 150th anniversary of the Apparition at Lourdes. It is also the 50th Anniversary of the first pilgrimage by the military in 1958.

As expected, this year saw the largest number ever of military personnel, family members and friends participating, over 25,000 in all, of which 1,500 traveled from Ireland.

Two members of our Branch, Jim Canavan and Wally Walsh who were on the first Military Pilgrimage in 1958 were a centre of attention.

A large party from ONET led by the CEO Ollie O'Connor and Chairman Gerry McMahon took part.

In the town, there was a carnival atmosphere with the personnel from different countries in uniform, some of which were very colourful. Most countries had their military bands with them. The Irish pipe band and the Army no.1 Band made a great impression with both the military and civilian pilgrims.

There were lots of parades as the various armies marched to and from the ceremonies at the Grotto. The Irish contingent was enhanced by the presence of Uachtaran Mary McAleese who attended many of the military ceremonies

In spite of the rain it was a memorable event.



President Mary and Dr. Martin McAleese with members of ONE at the Grotto.

Also included, Jim Nolan National President ONET and Ollie O'Connor CEO.



Members of Roger Casement Branch, Jim Nolan, National President ONET with Jim Canavan and Paddy Mc Loughlin



Retired Air Corps members, Wally Walsh, John Hughes, Al Dooley, Paddy O'Meara and Joe Clavin at the Grotto.



Members of the Branch with Chief of Staff Lt-Gen Dermot Early:



Flying Films Reunion

A reunion of personnel who participated in the making of such movies as *The Blue Max*, *Darling Lily*, *VonRichtofen* and *Browne and Zeppelin* is planned to take place in Casement Aerodrome on Thursday September 18th 2008.

Full details will be announced later. Admission will strictly be by invitation only.

To obtain your invitation send details of position held, name and address to:

Flying Films Reunion Committee, C/O Station Adjutants Office

Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel, Co. Dublin. Email : flyingfilms@gmail.com

ONET News

The Annual Convention and Company AGM took place on 7/8 June in the Connemara Coast Hotel, Galway. The convention took place on Saturday and following the Agreement on Standing Orders, the Chairman proposed that the various motions which had been previously submitted by the branches would be referred to the workshops for further discussion and comment.

This was the procedure followed at the 2007 convention in Athlone. The delegates were pre-assigned to the various workshops which covered the following topics:

<i>Profile Development</i>	<i>Organisational Development</i>	<i>Financial Growth</i>
<i>Draft Handbook of Rules</i>	<i>General Rules</i>	<i>Ceremonial and Dress</i>

The motions which were submitted by the Roger Casement Branch in advance were not included due to a technicality with the existing rules. As the Branch submissions referred to the area of Ceremonial Dress, the Roger Casement Delegates participated in the Workshop on this topic.

The proposed rule 12.1.5: Head Dress: proposes "the wearing of Black Berets only as authorised by convention"

It has long been an aspiration of the Roger Casement Branch where almost 100% of its members are former Air Corps personnel that the traditional Air force type Blue side/forage hats would be worn by its members in line with veteran organisations internationally. This case was put forward at the workshop by the Branch Chairman and later at the plenary feed-back session. Branch delegates were encouraged with the support for the proposal offered by many of the delegates and Board members present.

The matter will be further reviewed by the ONET Board and the Branch looks forward to a favourable conclusion.

The AGM took place on Sunday and the main item on the agenda was the election of the new President to replace Jim Nolan in 2009 and also to elect five new members to the Board to replace retiring members.

We congratulate Martin Coyne of the Mullingar Branch as the new President Designate and also the newly elected Board members.

Congratulations also to the Mullingar Branch on being assessed as the best branch.

CUIMHNIMIS

Let us remember those who have died recently;

**Frank Nolan
Finian Farrelly
Sean Hurley
Adrian Harkins
Leslie Mc Lysett
Ruben Wells
John Finn
Peter Mc Manus**

For Your Diary

Sunday July 11th

National Day of Remembrance
ceremonies

at Royal Hospital Kilmainham Dublin at
11.00hrs

Sunday October 12th

Annual Mass of Remembrance and wreath
laying ceremony in Casement Aerodrome
at
10.00. hrs.

Wednesday December 10th

Branch Christmas lunch West County
Hotel
Chapelizod, Co. Dublin at 13.00hrs.



Air Corps News

**PRESENTATION OF WINGS, COMMISSIONING & AWARD OF
DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDALS**

At a ceremony at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel on the morning of Thursday 19th June 2008, graduates of the of 26th Air Corps Cadet Class were presented with their military pilots wings by General Office Commanding Air Corps, Brigadier General Ralph James. The Minister for Defence, Mr. Willie O'Dea T.D., accompanied by the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Dermot Earley also attended the commissioning ceremony later that afternoon whereby in addition to the commissioning of the 26th Air Corps Cadet Class, Distinguished Service Medal's (DSM's) with honour were posthumously awarded to the crew of Dauphin 248.

The eight new pilots, seven of which have graduate qualifications already, had been in military and flight training since September 2005. During their flight training they successfully completed 750 hours of ground school and 200 flying hours on the Pilatus PC-9M and Beechcraft Kingair 200 to qualify to very stringent military flying standards. In receiving this Presidential commission the new officers took an oath of allegiance in which they swore to be "faithful to Ireland and loyal to the Constitution".

Minister O'Dea also presented DSM's (with Honour) posthumously to the crew of DH 248. The families of the crew received these posthumous awards "for displaying outstanding qualities of bravery, devotion to duty...while remaining on station over a stricken vessel...in hazardous conditions." The helicopter crashed near Tramore, Co. Waterford in the early hours of 02nd July 1999 while conducting a Search and Rescue mission off the Waterford coast with the loss of the four crew, the late Captain Dave O'Flaherty, Captain Michael Baker, Sergeant Paddy Mooney and Corporal Niall Byrne.



Lt Peter Smith being presented with the ARCO sword by Col Mick Lucey, President of ARCO. The sword is awarded for best overall Cadet on the course.