



Roger Casement Branch of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

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Honorary Branch President: James Nolan

New Chairman Elected

Denis Barry was unanimously elected as the new Branch Chairman to replace the outgoing Chairman Michael Delaney.

Denis was a member of the 29th Apprentice Class (1965) and later spent 2 years as an instructor in the Technical Training Squadron following which he was posted to the Helicopter Squadron. He left the Air Corps in 1974 to join Aer Lingus where he remained until his retirement in 2005. Denis has been an active member of the Roger Casement Branch and is a member of the Museum working party.

We wish him every success in his new position as Branch Chairman.



BRANCH AGM

The Roger Casement Branch AGM was held in the NCO'S Mess Casement Aerodrome on Thursday January 16th, 2020. There were a good number of members in attendance. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Chairman Paddy O'Meara in the absence through illness of Chairman Michael Delaney.

The meeting was attended by the Branch President Jim Nolan and by the CEO of ONE Ollie O'Connor who addressed the meeting and gave an interesting account of developments and innovations proposed to improve the general conditions being put in place by ONE to assist disadvantaged former members of the Defence Forces.

As the outgoing Chairman was stepping down, a new Chairman, Denis Barry was elected. All the other outgoing officers were willing to continue in office and were unanimously re-elected. The new Chairman thanked the outgoing Chairman Michael Delaney for his hard work and dedication during his three years in office.

Pat Behan was elected Procurement Officer and will manage all requests for uniform items.

Obituary: Sgt Archie Raeside

Archie was a member of the 1955 Air Corps Apprentice Class later joining the Drawing Office of the Aeronautical Engineering Section at Air Corps Headquarters.

He had an interest in movie-making having learnt the techniques from his Dad.

Having filmed some events in Baldonnel such as "Wings" presentation ceremonies he came to the notice of Col. W.J.Keane

OC Air Corps which led to his selection as the first Irish Airman to serve with the United Nations. Archie was the first official Military photographer with the 32nd and 33rd Battalions in the Congo.

In July 2004 Archie's book The Congo – 1960 was published and launched by Brig-Gen. Ralph James and provides a graphic and historical account of the role of the Peacekeepers at the time.

Archie was a keen musician as a trumpet player and was a founder member of the Airchords Showband. He later founded and promoted the first Air Scouts troop in Weston Airport and was active not only in the Roger Casement Branch where he used his skills as a graphic artist and designed the Branch's Blazer Crest as worn by the members, he was also President of Post 27 Portlaoise IUNVA. He was involved with the design and provision of the UN Peacekeepers Memorial in Portlaoise and with the memorial ceremony for Col. James Fitzmaurice a former OC Air Corps.

Archie clearly touched many people during his lifetime and will be greatly missed by his former colleagues and friends but particularly by his wife Bernie, their Children and Grandchildren. Archie was buried with full honours in Mountrath Cemetery Co. Laois on January 14th, 2020 with graveside music being provided by a piper from the Air Corps Pipe Band. Ar dheis lamh Dé go raibh a Anam dílis.

Paddy O'Meara

Archie designed the Roger Casement Branch Blazer Crest



Branch Clothing Price List

Branch Blazer Crest	€10.00
ONE Ties	€20.00
Branch Head-dress	€25.00
Cap Badge	€10.00
Epaulette Sliders	€08.00 pair

Contact:

Pat Behan, Procurement Officer.
087 663 2076

Upcoming Events

Annual Mass for deceased members:

Sunday May 10th, 2020, Casement Aerodrome at 1000 hrs.

Annual Trip to the Somme

Members of the Branch will participate in the annual Memorial Service in Guillemont, Somme on July 1st. This will be the 11th year of participation. There is one vacant place available at this time. Contact the Branch Secretary if interested.



Edition sponsored by a member of the 1950

Apprentice Class and a

member of the 1953 D/E Class

Gormanston Air Station - Part 1 - Denis Barry (1965 Apps)

For every Apprentice leaving the Apprentice School after two years and for every DE after completing initial training, it was like a dreaded sentence to be told by a higher authority that you were being posted to Gormanston or "The Burg" as it was referred to by some, unless of course you were originally from the area before joining up, then you were going home.

We were all regaled with the stories of Gormanston, how isolated it was from civilisation, how derelict the buildings were and how primitive the conditions were, it was like a backwater with little going for it.

However, anyone who served their time there grew to appreciate what it really was and wouldn't have swapped it for anything. Here was heaven away from prying eyes, military duties at a minimum, a great bunch of comrades and of course a certain "Red Coat" holiday camp a short distance away where it was possible to supplement the meagre pittance of army pay by taking a part-time job.

So far so good, now let us examine what Gormanston Camp was and how it came about;

When WW1 broke out on August 4th, 1914 the airplane which was in its infancy was recognised as a potential boost to the armed inventory of both sides. On the British side the RFC (Royal Flying Corps) which was basically a combined army/navy unit was charged with the responsibility of introducing the airplane into the order of battle which it did with great success over the battlefields of France. The progression of the war saw a great expansion of the RFC both in machines and manpower. To feed this expansion, training facilities were required and as Ireland was somewhat removed from the conflict area, bases were developed throughout the island, three near Dublin namely Baldonnel, Tallaght and Collinstown and others at Gormanston, Fermoy Castlebar, Oranmore and Aldergrove. Gormanston (Riann Mhic Ghormain) or to give it its official name No 22 Training Depot Station was one of the sites chosen for the establishment of one of these training centres on a site which would eventually cover an area of approx. 260 acres.

Construction work on the levelling of the airfield for the grass runways and building of three large "Belfast" airplane sheds and a smaller one with attached workshops for the Maintenance Unit began in 1917 and continued into 1918. The "Belfast Airplane Shed" was built with red brick walls with corrugated iron sheet roofing supported by wooden internal lattice work. Unfortunately, all these "sheds" have been dismantled or collapsed; the only hangar remaining today is used by the AAIU for aircraft accident investigation.

Flight training commenced with the RFC in the second half of 1917 before the construction was completed with personnel being accommodated in temporary structures. A little-known fact is that as the USA had entered the war in 1917, a squadron of United States Air Service flew out of Gormanston on anti U-Boat patrols.

On April 1, 1918, the RAF (Royal Air Force) came into being and with it the RFC was condemned to history, No. 22 Training Depot became RAF Gormanston. The value of the station decreased with the cessation of hostilities on Nov 11th, 1918 and the RAF was moved to Baldonnel by Jan 1920 and the airfield was retained on a care and maintenance basis.

The RIC were the next occupants of the camp who used it as a training barracks for new recruits from the latter half of 1920 until the handover to the Free State Army in 1922. During this time, it also became the training centre for the notorious "Black and Tans" who were involved in the infamous "Sacking of Balbriggan".

The Free State Army took over Gormanston and the Tricolour was raised on Sunday Oct 8th 1922. The Army remained in occupation until 1928 when most personnel were withdrawn, and the camp was put on a Care and Maintenance basis once again its only use being the holding of summer camps under canvas.

The Air Corps first started using the Air Firing Range around 1935, a practice that has continued to this day.



The next activity occurred in 1940 when the camp was occupied permanently by personnel who were part of the huge increase in the military establishment called up to defend our shores on the outbreak of WWII otherwise known as the "Emergency" in Ireland.

On May 1, 1945, Gormanston became an Air Corps Station when "No 1 Fighter Squadron" left Rineanna (now Shannon Airport) and moved in to its new home in Co Meath. It is interesting to note that not only did the Squadron move all its men, machines and equipment up to their new base but they also brought with them the hangar that they had used in Rineanna, this being dismantled, transported and reassembled on the site of the old No 2 hangar which had collapsed some time previously. When No 1 Fighter Squadron moved they were equipped with Hawker Hurricane aircraft which found that the landing and take-off distances required, were rather confined resulting in the purchase from local farming families of some extra land to ease the situation. The Hurricanes remained in Air Corps service until they were replaced by de-navalised Seafires in 1947 which flew on until the introduction of the D.H.Vampires in 1956. As Gormanston could not accommodate jet aircraft No 1 Fighter Squadron moved a second time to Baldonnel which had recently acquired concrete runways. From 1955 to 1973 Gormanston became home to the BFTS utilising the D.H.Chipmunk turning out a steady stream of pilots for both the Air Corps and for a while Aer Lingus.

1969 saw a completely new departure for Gormanston when due to civil unrest in Northern Ireland a steady stream of refugees came south to escape the violence that was prevalent at the time. The Camp was designated a "Refugee Camp" and processed up to 12,000 persons over 1969 to 1971 for onwards transport to other locations.

The Air Corps had taken delivery of eight Cessna FR172H aircraft in 1972 and the following year these aircraft were located to Gormanston and the remaining Chipmunks went to Baldonnel.

On July 1, 1980 under the new establishment, the Air Corps Unit at Gormanston was designated No 2 Support Wing, this was to last until June 1986 when the Wing was reduced again to Squadron status (Army Co-op Squadron) and the Camp came under the control of the Gormanston Camp Company and thus ended the Air Corps responsibility for running the Base.

The airfield was officially closed in 2002 but the Air Firing Range is still used, both grass runways are unserviceable (originally three runways), the tarmac runway is still in reasonably good condition and could be used in an emergency.

Part 2 of the Gormanston story will be continued in the next edition of the Newsletter which is due to be issued in June 2020.

Gormanston Air Station



CUIMHNIMIS

~ *Let us remember those who have died.* ~

Noel (Spike) Ryan

Martin Dunne

Archie Raeside

Tom Purcell

Michael Bannon

Chris Cahill

P.J.Crowe

Don Rynhart

William Rogers

Annual Christmas Lunch

The very enjoyable annual Christmas Lunch was held on December 5th 2019, in the West County Hotel, Chapelizod. Approximately 100 Branch members and guests some having travelled from the USA and the UK for the occasion. Guest of Honour was GOC Air Corps Brig-Gen Rory O'Connor. A good time was had by all on this ever popular reunion event.



Brig-Gen O'Connor with Chairman Michael Delaney and the Vice-Chairman Paddy O'Meara



Addie Patterson and Bernadette Nolan



Enjoying meeting old friends, Andy Coleman, P.J.McCaffrey, Charlie Wren, Brian Rabbite.

Helicopter Conversion Course:

The 55th Helicopter Conversion Course commenced in November 2018. Ground-school subjects included Helicopter Principles of Flight and an in-depth course on the EC135P2 helicopter, learning about the aircraft structure, engines and all of the systems on board. Once exams were passed the flying commenced. Initially students practiced the basics of helicopter handling on the airfield. The instructor took control of the aircraft and hovered to a quiet corner of the airfield before handing control to the student and teaching how to take off, land, hover and turn on the spot.

Quickly the students progressed to flying circuits – that is, taking off along the runway, circling back around the airfield and approaching the runway again for a landing. Actions-on emergencies such as engine failures and other system failures were also rehearsed. On completion of a pre-solo check flight with the Squadron Commander, the students flew solo in a helicopter for the first time.

Following this milestone the course progressed on to VTOL procedures, further emergency procedures and more advanced flying, all of which culminated in the Basic Handling Test (BHT). The BHT was the 50th flight in the course and signaled the end of Phase A. With all 4 students successfully passing the test Phase B commenced.

Phase B of the course contained a number of operational disciplines such as poor weather navigation, mountain flying, heli-sniping, cargo slinging and lots more. The students flew 'round-the-houses' during Phase B also. These flights took place over 2 weeks whereby the students navigate to and land at hospitals, lighthouses and airports all around the country. Operational Tests were conducted shortly afterwards, whereby students were given a short-notice realistic tasking, and directed to complete the mission from start to finish including planning & decision making, all under the watchful eye of 302 Squadron Instructors.

Phase B culminated in the Final Handling Test, a long flight with the Type Rating Examiner requiring students to display proficiency in handling the helicopter in all phases of flight including ground handling, circuits, VTOL procedures, mountain flying including landings in randomly selected sites in the mountains, and of course emergency procedures.



Pilots were trained on the EC135P2 (Eurocopter)

On passing the Final Handling Test and receiving the handshake from the Examiner the students were officially qualified helicopter pilots and so concluded the 55th Helicopter Conversion Course. The course involved over 80 sorties and approximately 110 hours of flying. The four students of the course are now assigned to 302 Squadron, No. 3 Operations Wing.

Congratulations to the new Helicopter pilots Lts. Hickey, Delaney, Treacy, Quirke.

