



Roger Casement Branch

of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

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Message from the Chair....

Little did I know that when I was elected Chairman of the Branch last January that within a few short months we would be in the middle of a global crisis. The "normal" times would now become a distant memory as we were pitched into a period of COVID-19 lockdown with many of us now experiencing a new set of "normal" in our day to day lives.

We are all being affected by COVID-19 and the restrictions caused by social distancing. Families and workplaces are having to adapt, and it looks like restrictions will be with us in some form for some time yet.

I am glad to have this opportunity to write to all the members during this time of crisis, I hope you, your family and friends are keeping well, my thoughts and prayers are with you and especially with anyone who may be sick or suffering at this moment. We know that the months ahead will be tough for many of our members and they will be depending on encouragement from us all.

Needless to say, as a branch we have not been physically meeting everything is in abeyance and all plans and activities have been adversely affected.

In conclusion I ask you to please mind yourselves, to mind each other and to stay safe.

Denis Barry, Branch Chairman

My Memories of the Don

Paddy Mullen (1956 Apps) has been making a name for himself writing poems about topical items which regularly appear on Facebook and in the Former Aer Lingus employees (XEL) newsletter.

MY MEMORIES OF THE "DON"

IT WAS A COLD OCTOBER MORNING IN NINETEEN FIFTY SIX, THAT I HEADED FOR THE "BIG SMOKE" HAVING FINALLY LEFT "THE STICKS" THE BUS TO DUBLIN WAS INFREQUENT, SOMETIMES IT NEVER RAN. SO **PAT McDONALD** AND MYSELF, GOT A LIFT IN A LOCAL BREAD VAN.

HE DROPPED US IN PARNELL STREET AND TOLD US WHERE TO GO, HEAD ON DOWN TO O'CONNELL BRIDGE, IT'S PAST THE G.P.O. WE ENQUIRED FROM A POLICEMAN, AND HE PUT US STRAIGHT, GET THE NEWCASTLE BUS FROM MCBIRNEY'S, IT'S THE NUMBER 68.

TWO OTHER FELLOWS JOINED US, ONE OF THEM WAS FROM CORK, I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD HE SAID, ON OUR MILE LONG WALK. WE FINALLY REACHED BALDONNEL CAMP AND THERE WE MET THE REST, AS WE ALL SIGNED THE DOTTED LINE, GIVING NINE YEARS OF OUR BEST.

WE WERE THEN ISSUED WITH OUR UNIFORMS AND BE YOU SHORT OR TALL, IT WAS LIKE MODERN DAY ADVERTISING, WHERE ONE SIZE FITS ALL. SOME CAPS WERE SO BADLY FITTING AND HERE I'M TRYING TO BE KIND, IF IT WASN'T FOR THE SIZE OF OUR EARS, HALF OF US WOULD HAVE BEEN BLIND.

The First of the new Pilatus PC-12 aircraft, AC 280 has now entered service with 104 Sqdn. Further aircraft will follow. The aircraft are fitted with a single PT 6 Turbo-Prop engine. The new striking livery marks a departure from the previous military style which will be more adaptable to its multi-purpose use.



THE NEXT VISIT WAS TO THE BARBERS, YOU COULD CALL IT
THE SHEEP SHEARERS HUT,
WITH FERGIE AND LEFTY HACKING AWAY TO GIVE YOU YOUR FIRST ARMY CUT.
WHEN WE STARTED PLAYING SOLDIERS, IT WASN'T ALWAYS FUN,
WITH YOUR BACKPACK AND YOUR RIFLE ON A TENMILE CROSS-COUNTRY RUN.

AT THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT, I WAS FEELING COCK-A-HOOP,
WHEN I GOT TO PLAY THE WASHBOARD IN THE "PYTHON SKIFFLE GROUP."
PADDY O'MEARA AND **MYLES MOONEY** STRUMMING GUITARS
WITH SOME GRACE,
WHILE **CLIVE GERAGHTY** ON TEA CHEST WITH BROOM HANDLE WAS THE BASS.

THE TWO YEARS OF OUR APPRENTICESHIP WAS GONE BEFORE WE THOUGHT,
MANY TOOK IT IN THEIR STRIDE BUT SOME WERE OVERWROUGHT.
TO BE "UP CAMP" WAS OUR AMBITION AND SOME WERE VERY KEEN,
TO GO DRINKING WITH THE OLD SWEATS IN THE WET CANTEEN.

THE EARLY MORNING CALL COULD LEAVE A FEW WITH SORE HEADS,
WHEN **TOM DUFFY** BANGED THE LOCKER YELLING, "GET OUT OF THEM BEDS."
IF YOU WERE FEELING OUT OF SORTS THE ANSWER TO YOUR PLEA,
WAS A GOOD SHOT OF QUINNINE AND A DOSE OF "M AND D."

THE "SHORT ARMS" MONTHLY INSPECTION, I CAN STILL FONDLY RECALL,
THE BLOKE WHO HAD ALWAYS BEEN BOASTING, HIS WASN'T SO BIG AFTER ALL.
DOING GUARD DUTY WAS NEW TO US, BUT IT WAS NEVER A CHORE,
YOU DID TWO HOURS ON SENTRY DUTY AND THEN YOU SLEPT FOR FOUR.

THE NICKNAMES WERE CLEVER AND FUNNY, MANY YOU ALREADY KNOW,
MUCKY AND **FLASH**, **BUTTS** AND THE **WADS**, **POM**,
THE **BIG DRUM** AND THE **CROW**.
THE HARD, AND **BUSTY**, **HONKER** AND **COWBOY**, ALL WORKING IN THE HANGAR,
ALONG WITH **THE KILLER**, THE **SAUSAGE** AND **SCOUSE**, **NOBBY**,
THE **SCREW**, AND THE **LANGER**,

MANY OF MY COMRADES ARE NOW DEAD AND GONE, ALAS THEY ARE NO MORE,
BUT I HOPE TO SEE THEM ALL ON PARADE ONCE AGAIN
ON FAR OFF HEAVEN'S SHORE.
WHERE WE WILL RETELL THE OLD STORIES, OF ALL THE GOOD TIMES
AND THE BAD,
MOST OF MY YEARS WERE VERY HAPPY, I HAD NO TIME TO BE SAD.

THE MEMORIES COME FLOODING BACK OF TIMES WE HAD BACK THEN,
AND IF ANYBODY SHOULD ASK ME, **YES**, I WOULD DO IT ALL AGAIN.

PADDY MULLEN JUNE 7TH 2020

Gormanston Air Station Pt. 2.

Continuation from Pt. 1. which appeared in the last edition of the Link with some personal memories of staff who served in the camp.

On Friday the 16th August 2002 the Air Corp's 57 years association ended in Gormanston when the Air Corps finally pulled out of the Military base. There was a colourful Stand-down ceremony and flypast attended by the GOC Air Corps Brigadier General John O'Brien. The outgoing and final Air Corps CO was Comdt Gerry O'Sullivan OC Support Sqdn.

The remaining 120 Air Corps Personnel were moved to the Main Base at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnel. Up to 30 former Air Corps members who were settled in the Gormanston area remained as part of the Gormanston Camp Company.

The following is a brief summary of life in Gormanston provided by RSM Peter Donagh who served in Gormanston from 1962 to 2000. Peter was previously a member of the 1960 Air Corps Apprentice Class. He retired in 2004.

Life in Gormanston Camp

RSM Peter Donagh

In the summer of 1962 the Tech Stores weekly run from Gormanston to Baldonnel returned with some extra cargo. Six fresh faced apprentices and six DE's all just out of training sat anxiously in the back of the truck for our journey into the unknown. I was one of those twelve. A notable character from Gormanston was our driver, Dinny Cullen and Pat (Red) Collier the Meath All Ireland footballer was the store-man in charge.

On arrival, the camp was buzzing with FCA summer camps and the weather was lovely. We were shown to our Billet and told tea was at 4.30. Food was always good in Gormanston. It took a while to settle in, but all the lads there were very friendly and we were made to feel welcome.

For entertainment, we had the beach and the Mosney Holiday Camp (Butlins) just down the road. Dancing in the Abbey Ballroom Drogheda or the Beechmount Ballroom Navan were favourites at that time. We soon forgot about City Life and enjoyed the carefree more relaxed freedom of the countryside.

The Air corps was very busy with the continued flight training in BFTS of Aer Lingus trainee pilots along with the regular Air Corps pilots. This training was carried out in the DH Chipmunk aircraft.

There was always a special buzz about flying at night. We had to lay out flare pots along the duty runway in the evening and hoped the wind did not change. (Flare pots were filled with paraffin oil and had a wick) They were lit before the flying commenced for the night.

The break for supper was great; at about 10.30 a big fry awaited you in the Mess which you could smell all over camp; some who were not on duty that night would turn up for supper anyway. Back to work finished up about 12.30 --- 01.00.

When the Cessna FR 172H aircraft came in 1972 our role changed considerably as we were carrying out escort duties for the Army and the Garda.

The Cessna could be fitted with under-wing rocket pods for the 37mm rockets. Air firing was now part of pilot training. The aircraft were also used for drogue towing for the Army and Navy exercises and were also modified for parachute training. These were great courses in summertime. The camp Commanding Officer was rotated every two years so staff had to adapt to a variety of CO's pet topics including Grass cutting, cleaning, inspections and of course flying.

On winter nights most attended night courses in Bolton Street. Getting home and cooking sausages in a mess-can on the pot belly stove with a mug of Cha- club tea is a good memory.

A lady called Ma Murray had a little shop in Camp and this was a favourite meeting place on a summer evening, the fact that she had two lovely daughters had little to do with it. We drank gallons of milk just to be there.

Gormanston Memories Paddy Behan (The Doc)(1967 Apps.)

I went to Gormanston in 1967 after completing 2 years in the Air Corps Apprentice School. At that time Gormanston was the Basic Flying Training Squadron (BFTS) which operated 10 D.H. Chipmunk aircraft. Air Corps cadets received their ab-initio flight training including night flying. During the 60's the Air Corps also trained classes of Aer Lingus cadets on a contract basis. Gormanston was a very busy place, lots of flying and maintenance to maintain the maximum number of aircraft in flying condition. Flying was very weather dependant as there no hard-surface runways and in very wet conditions the aircraft frequently got stuck in the ground.

In 1969 after the troubles started in Northern Ireland refugees from the North were housed in the wooden huts in Gormanston. This created a lot of changes necessitating a lot of extra military duties, like assisting Gardai at checkpoints on the Boyne bridges in Drogheda and Slane.

Many of the Gormanston staff worked at some sort of a nixer, some as barmen in various pubs and of course a lot of people worked in the famous Butlins Holiday Camp in Mosney. One incident that springs to mind is that all around Balbriggan, Skerries and Lusk a lot of farmers grew potatoes on contract to Tayto. One day some of the lads bunked off to pick spuds on a farm, the farmer was looking at the weather forecast and figured that if he had a few more people he would get all of the spuds picked before the weather broke. He asked some of the lads if other people were available, so they gave him the phone number of Gormanston but omitted to give him a name of someone to look for, and when he rang, he was put through to the Orderly Room. The flight-sergeant got the military police and a few Land Rovers to go out when the lads were rounded up and brought back to camp, leaving the farmer with no spud pickers.



Gormanston personnel who attended the stand- parade on 16 August 2002 with GOC Air Corps John O'Brien.



Flypast of Cessna and Marchetti aircraft at the stand- down parade



Interesting picture of Air Corps personnel taken somewhere in Co. Cavan in the mid 70's. Included (Officers) B. McMahon, H.O'Donnell, M.Cassidy, J.Connelly, M. Hipwell, F.Condon, J.P.Kelly, J.Kirke, P.O'Shea. M.Egan (NCO's) T.Robinson, J. Doyle, F.Garry, D.Murray, P.Carey, G.Coughlan, M.Bonner, M.Costelloe, J.Manning, A.Carey, B.Mahoney, S.Duke, N.Cummins. Plus Transport drivers. Note-B.Mc Mahon and J.M.Connelly later became GOC's Air Corps.



The funeral of Michael (Whacker) O'Neill (1966 apps) took place in Camp, Co. Kerry on 25/05/20 it was attended by his former colleagues John Kearney, Sean Collopy, Patrick O'Connor, J.C.O'Sullivan (2nd from left, 1959 Apps).



Members of the Branch attended the Annual Mass arranged by the Dublin Airport Fire and Rescue Service. L/R Finnbar Lyons, Richard Murphy, Paddy Goodman, Frank Donnelly, Mike, Delaney, Denis Barry, Chairman.



Left Photo: Brig-Gen Rory O'Connor, G.O.C. Air Corps, visited the Shannon Aviation Training Centre and Museum. Picture includes Paddy O' Meara, Guest Lecturer and Edward Ryan the founder of the Centre. All started their Aviation careers in the Air-Corps Apprentice school.

Tom Allen
Patrick Gleeson
Peadar Dignam

Raymond Kelly
Philip Carolan
John Burke

Michael O'Neill
Michael McCarthy

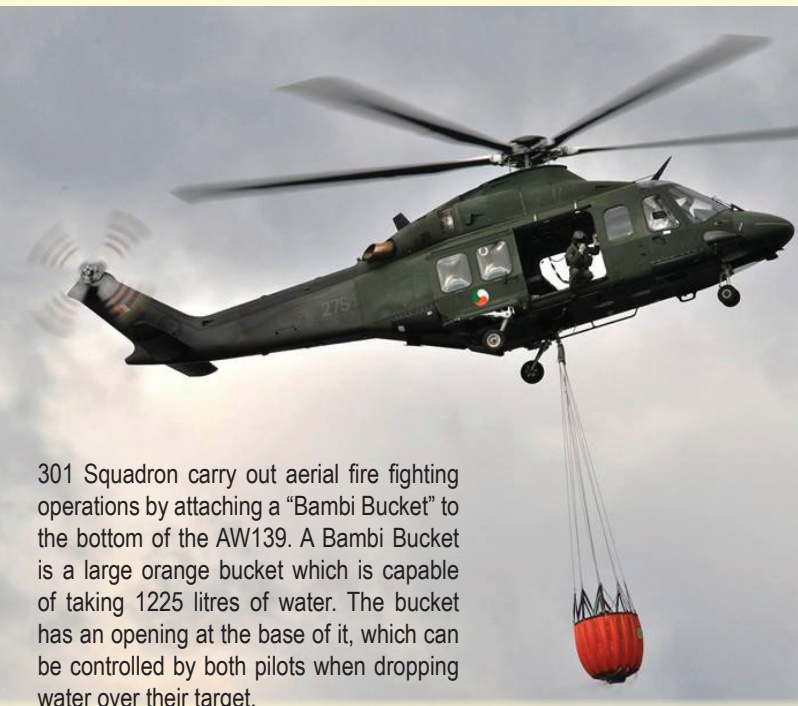
Frederick Murray
Pat. Carpenter

Air Corps News

Irish Air Corps Bambi Bucket Operations... Lt.Jamie Bray

No 3 Operations Wing is the helicopter unit of the Irish Air Corps. No 3 Operations Wing is made up of 4 Squadrons:

- 301 Squadron – which consists of 6 AW139s, primarily used for state and military operations;
- 302 Squadron – which consists of 2 H135s, primarily used for training;
- 303 Squadron – which is the maintenance squadron for the unit;
- 304 Squadron – which provide pilots to fly the Garda Air Support Unit.
- 301 Squadron carry out a wide variety of operations, ranging from military operations (such as freefall and static line parachuting, sniping, air gunnery, troop transport, formation flying and fast roping), VIP transport, air ambulance, Emergency Aeromedical Service (EAS) and Aerial Fire Fighting operations.



301 Squadron carry out aerial fire fighting operations by attaching a "Bambi Bucket" to the bottom of the AW139. A Bambi Bucket is a large orange bucket which is capable of taking 1225 litres of water. The bucket has an opening at the base of it, which can be controlled by both pilots when dropping water over their target.

The Bambi Bucket is physically attached onto the helicopter by a hook beneath the helicopter. It is then electrically attached to the helicopter in order for the pilots to drop the water.

For aerial fire-fighting operations, a minimum of three (3) aircrew is required. This is made up of two (2) pilots and one (1) crewman. The role of the pilot flying is to handle the aircraft, controlling the helicopter to pick up the water and drop it over the target. The role of the pilot monitoring is to ensure that the aircraft remains within its limitations, and advising the pilot flying of his/her heights, speeds and limitations throughout. As aerial fire fighting operations are very taxing and require a lot of concentration, the pilots usually share the role of pilot flying and pilot monitoring throughout the flight.

The crewman in the rear cabin is the eyes of the aircraft throughout the operation (like in all other helicopter operations). Since he pilots cannot see underneath the helicopter, the crewman advises the pilots of where they need to move to when picking up water in the bucket and dropping

water off. For water pick- ups, they tell the pilots when they are fully above the water, how much they need to lower the bucket to submerge it, when to stop lowering the bucket when it's submerged and when they are clear of all obstacles to fly away from the water source. While en route from the water source to the fire, they will monitor the bucket to ensure that it has not opened, and that everything is secure. When they are approaching the fire, they will ensure the pilots are on the correct track for the fire (taking into consideration the wind direction and speed) and tell the pilots when to drop the water and if it was on target.

Since a lot of flight is over water, the crew are all required to wear lifejackets during the flight. These are safety measures in the event of an emergency and the helicopter is required to ditch into the water. The AW139 also has built-in floats which are designed to deploy once the helicopter lands in water (for emergencies only). Each crew member also carries a Helicopter Emergency Egress Device (HEEDs) bottle. This is a miniature breathing system which allows the crew to take up to 30 breaths of oxygen, in the event the helicopter ditches in the water.



During the water drop off, the helicopter can be as low as 100ft (33m) and 50knots (92km/hr). This allows them to have a good impact on putting out the fire. However, there are a few considerations and risks that the crew need to be aware of when in the vicinity of the fire, such as how high the flames are, how much smoke is there, what direction is the wind coming from, will the smoke obscure their visibility, what are the weather conditions, what obstacles are nearby, are there any other aircraft or helicopters operating in the area. This is why it is vitally important that there are no drone operations in the area as they could add another layer of risk to the operation.

