



Roger Casement Branch

of Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta (ONET)



The Link

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Branch Chairman: **Denis Barry** 087 297 0929

Hon. Secretary: **Noel Murphy** 087 6342941 Treasurer: **Patrick Lynch** 083 147 0659

PRO: **Peter Mc Glynn** Phone: 086 401 1154

Link Editor: **Paddy O'Meara**

E: onerogercasementbranch@gmail.com

Honorary Branch President: James Nolan

www.oneaircorpsbranch.com



Branch Annual Mass.

We regret that the Branch Annual Mass and wreath Laying Service which is held in honour of all deceased members of the Air Corps and is scheduled to be held during May 2021 has again been deferred until May 2022 due to the covid pandemic restrictions.

Ar dheis lámh Dé go raibh a nanamacha.

Message from the Chairman.....

Hello again, I hope everyone is well and that we have all avoided the effects of the pandemic that surrounds us. I know the isolation and social distancing we have endured over the last fifteen months or so has had a certain bearing on the lives we used to know but, looking to the future we have a good chance of resuming our normal lives once again thanks to science, medicine and the great efforts of our front-line workers to whom we all owe a great deal of gratitude.

It's hard to believe that we have now entered the second quarter of 2021 and as I mentioned in the last issue of the LINK, we as an organization have had a curtailment of all our activities. 2020 would have had some major commemorations in which we no doubt would have been invited to participate, but unfortunately that was not to be. 2021 to 2024 will have commemorations and celebrations relating to the centenary of the foundation of our State and Defence Forces so hopefully we will have a part to play in these events, both locally and nationally once we return to normality.

I will once again, encourage everyone who may know someone who is leaving the Air Corps/Defence Forces at the end of their service engagement to consider taking up membership of the ONE, we need new blood to keep the organization going and to foster our primary aim and that is to ensure that no ex-member who may have fallen on lean times doesn't have somewhere to seek help.

Fan slán.

Denis Barry, Chairman



ONE ROGER CASEMENT BRANCH MEMBERSHIP DETAILS.

The Roger Casement Branch which is comprised mainly of former members of the Air Corps is affiliated to Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann.

Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann (ONE) provides Support, Comradeship. Advocacy and Remembrance (SCAR) for Irish Veterans.

ONE is a company limited by guarantee (328824) and a charity registered with both the Charities Regulatory Authority (RCN 20044268) and the Revenue Commissioners (CHY 13868).

ONE has a board of directors elected by members, which in turn is led by a Chairman. As with all boards the legal person responsible to ensure all governance and procedure is adhered to is the Company Secretary.

The Chief Executive Officer reports to the board and is responsible for the overall day-to-day administration of the company and the management of its staff, The Head Office is located in the ONE flagship Homeless Hostel, Brú ns Bhfiann, Smithfield Market, North King Street, Dublin 7.

ONE OBJECTIVE

The main objective of ONE is to ensure the welfare of ex-servicemen and women by way of providing accommodation to homeless, elderly or disabled members in need of such domestic accommodation and shelter and other assistance that may be required. We also promote social cultural and sporting activities in order to develop a spirit of comradeship between serving and retired members of the services, as well as provision of information in the area of pensions, social welfare benefits and other entitlements.

Membership Requirements

Membership of the company is open to any person who has served in the Permanent Defence Force, Reserve Defence Force, L.D.F. AN Slua Muiri, F.C.A. Maritime Inspection, L.S.F. Coast Watching Service, Construction Corps, Irish Red Cross or Civil Defence providing such person has had at least one year's satisfactory service and has been honourably discharged, To become a member of the company a person must be accepted as a member of a branch and must sign a written declaration of acceptance of the Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Handbook of Rules. Contact the following with full address and contact details. Onerogercasementbranch@gmail.com

The 60th Anniversary of the Air Corps Pipe Band's Service in the Congo.

The following article was written by Sgt Paddy McLaughlin who was a band member and originally appeared in the Air Corps 75th Anniversary Souvenir Brochure. Paddy is a member of the ONE Roger Casement Branch.



*Back Row (l-r) A/M.E.Murphy, A/M. E.Roche, A/M P.Lynam, Cpl.C.Higgins,A/M. J.Grant, A/M.M.Coveney,Cpl.J.Colbert.
Front Row (l-r) A/M P.Mulcahy,A/M.M.Ledden,A/M.M.Mooney, Cpl. P.McManus, Sgt,P.McLoughlin,Cpl. F.Donnelly,
A/M T.Mulcahy,A/M.Galway (Missing from Photo: A/M T.Kilcoyne)*

My earliest recollection of Air Corps personnel providing their own Marching music was in the mid 1950's or when "The Bridge on the River Kwai" film was being shown in the cinemas of Dublin. The lads from Maintenance Unit (MU) were parading back to workshops and hangars after lunch on that particular day, when some of them decided to lift the spirits of their comrades by whistling the air to "Colonel Bogey" as in the film, It was an instant hit and all joined in, The Flight Sergeant in charge was not too pleased and proceeded to the front of the column and called on the leaders to cease this irregular conduct. When he was at the front of the parade, the music switched to the rear of the unit. Try as he did, the high spirits induced by the music could not be subdued. I have no doubt that the morale boosting value of the music registered with the authorities of that time, because some time later, the decision to form a pipe band in the Air Corps was taken.

A sergeant and a corporal from the Army School of Music were posted to Baldonnell to instruct Air Corps personnel in the playing of pipes and drums. Progress was good and quite soon after, the first pipe band was formed in the Air Corps. From then on the sound of the pipes and drums echoed off the hangars on the Saturday morning CO's parade.

The value of the pipe bands as morale boosters was recognised by military authorities when Irish Battalions were sent on UN duties to the Congo in the early sixties. Pipe bands were scarce in the army at that time, so much, so that in 1960, two bands were serving in the Congo at the same time, one with the 32nd Battalion and another with the 33rd Battalion. When the 34th Battalion was forming to relieve the earlier Battalions, there was no infantry pipe band available to accompany them, The Officer commanding the Battalion was to be

Col, Owen O'Neill, whose love for pipe bands was legendary. For Col. O'Neill to lead an Irish Battalion to the Congo without a pipe band was unthinkable.

At that time, the only pipe band available in Ireland was the Air Corps Pipe Band. For various reasons the Air Corps band was low in numbers and as UN duties were voluntary at that time, the prospect of forming a band was bleak.

Some enterprising members of the Air Corps saw this as an opportunity to get a trip to the Congo. They joined the band classes and volunteered for service in the Congo. Intensive training commenced straight away. Practice chanters and drum pads were worked day and night by the new pupils. In a very short time it was possible to form a band which could play a tune on the pipes. The name of the tune was "Let Eireann Remember".

When the new band arrived in the Curragh for training, Col O'Neill lost no time in sending for the Band Sergeant to present him with some sheet music, which he said would be the Battalions marching tune.

"Cremona" was the name on the top of the sheet, what was below it was lost on the Sergeant who was not a piper and a doubtful drummer to boot. The Col made it clear that this tune was to be played on all occasions when the Battalion was on parade and that no time was to be lost in learning it. He also informed the Sergeant that while the troops were travelling to the Congo, he expected the band to lead the troops from the aeroplane to the terminal building at each airport in which we landed on the way to the Congo. How could you inform a man with such enthusiasm that what he had, was a band that could only play "Let Erin Remember"!

The Sergeant went back to his band with the orders. Tactics had to be discussed. Some of the trainee pipers had not quite mastered "Let Eireann Remember", so matchsticks would be placed in the appropriate reeds. Before playing, all the pipes had to be tuned. This was a long tedious process guaranteed to drive even the most patient of officers to despair. With any luck the troops would be marched to the terminal building without the help of the band. By the time we reached Kamina, our destination in the Congo, a journey which took two days, "Let Erin Remember" was well practised and the quality of the playing had improved immensely.

By this time, it occurred to Col. O'Neill that his pipe band was not destined to be quite the showpiece he had expected. The Sergeant was again summoned to the Colonel's office. The Col. made it quite clear that he wanted a top quality pipe band and that no effort was to be spared night or day to achieve this end. By the time our six months in the Congo came to an end, the band the band had a repertoire of some twenty tunes and were proficient in figure marching, counter marching and all the normal skills of pipe bands. In fact, when we returned to Ireland, we entered the All Army Pipe Band Competitions in Cork. The Air Corps Pipe Band won the Championship and was proud to bring the trophy back to Baldonnell where it remained for many years after.

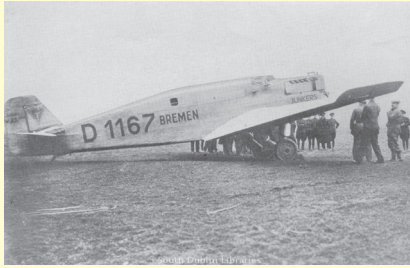


On patrol in Katanga: L-R A/M Myles Mooney, Cpl. Charlie Higgins, Cpl. Frank Donnelly A/M. Terry Mulcahy, at rear Cpl. Jim Colbert



The Bremen Remembered

On This Day 12th April 1928, aviation history was made, and this year marks the 93rd anniversary of the Junkers W33 "Bremen" D-1167 flight from Baldonnel to Greenly Island, Canada which was the first successful East-West crossing of the Atlantic Ocean by air. The three crew members included Major James Fitzmaurice of the Irish Air Corps, along with Captain Hermann Köhl and Baron Günther von Hünefeld.



No 3 Ops Wing Support to Covid-19 Response

In March 2021, 302 Squadron assisted our HSE colleagues in the fight against Covid-19 by helping to deliver shipments of the Moderna vaccine to the Aran Islands.

Our EC135 helicopter departed from Casement Aerodrome, Co Dublin and routed to Inisheer, Inishmaan and Inishmore to hand over vaccines over to local GP's.

On a number of dates in April 2021, 302 Squadron were tasked with vaccine delivery flights to offshore islands in counties Mayo and Galway,



on behalf of HSE Ireland. The squadron deployed two EC135 helicopters to deliver batches of the Pfizer vaccine and medical supplies to Inishturk, Inishbofin, Inishbiggle and Clare.



No 1 Ops Wing Support to Covid-19 Response

In January 2021, Ireland experienced a significant upsurge in daily COVID-19 cases. As a result, the Irish Air Corps completed multiple operations transporting COVID-19 test samples to Germany for laboratory testing. In this mini-documentary, we joined 104 Squadron on one of these missions, where we got to see the significant step up in capabilities of this Squadron since their acquisition of the Pilatus PC12NG aircraft.

Video link: <https://youtu.be/HP2WTDTMGaQ>

The Defence Forces Joint Task Force (JTF) coordinated the deliveries to the islands.

New Irish Air Corps Officers

On the 25th March 2021 the 96th Cadet Class held their commissioning ceremony in the National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts & History, Collins Barracks, Dublin. We wish these 10 new Irish Air Corps Officers the very best of luck in their new career's.



Air Corps College - Recruits/Apprentices

Our current Apprentice/3 Star platoon recently completed Exercise "Concrete Jungle". This exercise tested their ability to respond to an escalating security situation and encompassed internal security, public order and culminated in two raids, in Dublin City and Dublin Docks. The exercise was supported by a number of assets including an Airbus EC-135 helicopter, Army snipers and the Defence Forces Diving Group RHIBs.



CUIMHNIMIS

~ Let us remember those who have died. ~

Thomas Hugh O'Boyle
Paddy McDonald
Tadgh (Ted) Murphy
Harry Donnelly
Bernard Kane
Michael Egan
Tom Cole
David McCormack
John(Tony) Higgins
Shay Byrne
BG James Flynn DSM

Cyril Hynes
P.R.Duffy
James Bolger
Dan Doolin
Pete Maguire
Jim McKenna
Tony Kearns
Con Boyle
Declan Ryan
Mick Forde