



THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

AN COSANTÓIR

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SEPTEMBER 2015

STANDARD NCOS COURSE

MINURSO - WESTERN SAHARA

UNIFIL - MULTI-NATIONAL CRC EX

AIR INDIA DISASTER 1985

GASU - POLICING FROM THE AIR

ISSN 0010-9460



2013 Awards: EMPA Best Article & Media Pioneer Awards (UK) Shortlist



**Óglaigh
na hÉireann**
DEFENCE FORCES IRELAND

Defence Forces Veterans' Day
1100 Hrs - 12th September, 2015
Collins Barracks, Cork



All Defence Forces Veterans are cordially invited.
The Minister for Defence Mr. Simon Coveney T.D.
accompanied by Chief of Staff and the General Staff of the
Defence Forces will be in attendance.

Reception of guests in Collins Barracks at 1100hrs

Commemorative mass in Collins Bks garrison church at 1200hrs

Commemorative ceremony presided over by Minister for Defence Mr. Simon Coveney T.D. at 1300hrs

Display of military equipment, Military Archives and insignia from 1400hrs.

Food and refreshments in Collins Bks from 1500hrs

Defence Forces will provide a shuttle bus service for Veterans, from Cork Bus station and Kent Railway station, to Collins Barracks (and return) beginning at 1045hrs and continuing every 15 mins until 1900hrs.

Defend | Protect | Support

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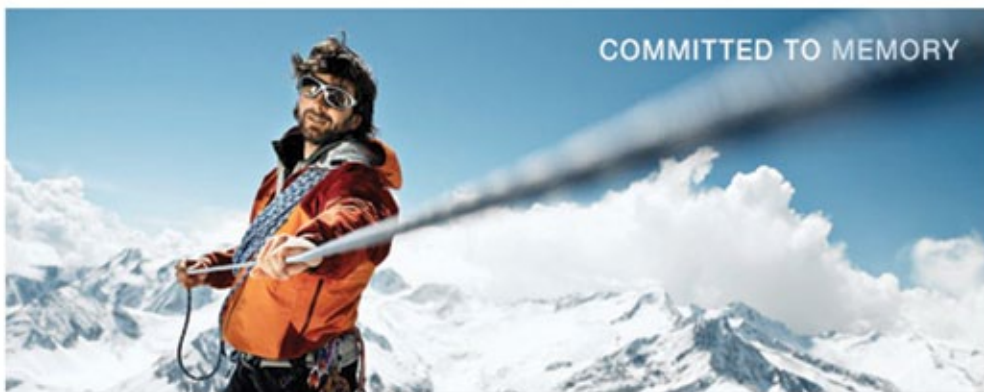
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Sport



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UPCOMING WESTPORT EVENTS & FESTIVALS

FOOD FESTIVAL

4 - 6th September

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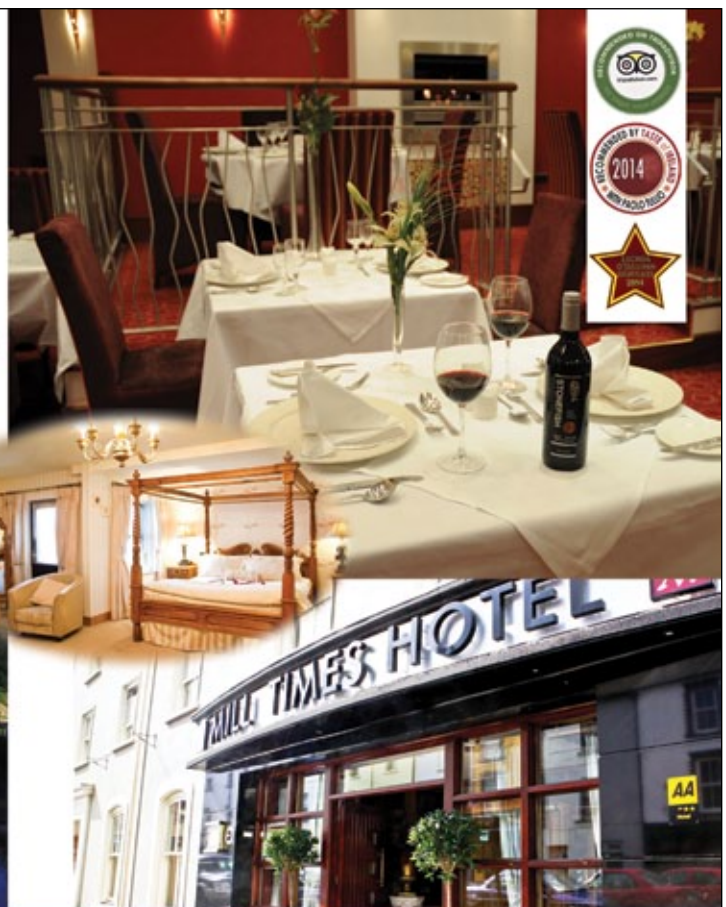
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WESTPORT DUATHLON

3 October

WESTPORT ARTS FESTIVAL

1 - 5th October



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Front Cover

Students on the Standard NCOs Course by Pte Aidan Gillespie, 28 Inf Bn.

For more Defence Forces photographs, checkout: www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine

Hello and welcome to our September issue, which sees us back with a full complement of staff, where we would like to welcome Cpl Lynn Ryan from 3 Inf Bn to PR Branch as an Information NCO.

My apologies to those whose photos didn't make it to this month's *On Parade*.

In Focus looks at two Veterans being remembered and honoured and a former FCA soldier who went to Vietnam in the 1960s. Cpl Lee Coyle visits the Irish United Nations Veteran's Association (IUNVA) AGM in Cork for our *Veteran's News*. Next up is a piece by Brian Hayes MEP congratulating us by saying the *DF Lead the Way in Social Media*. In our first main feature, regular contributor and aviation author Guy Warner brings us an extended feature on GASU: Garda Air Support Unit. In *MINURSO*, a little-known mission, DF Veteran Bertie Egerton talks to three officers currently serving in Western Sahara. Next up, Lt Conor Dunne briefs us on the recent *Multi National CRC Exercise* that members of B Coy 49 Inf Gp took part in at UNP 2-45 in Lebanon.

In *Strategic Review A/Sea* Jim Sperin (retired) who was a medic on *LÉ Aisling* reminds us about the *Air India Disaster 1985* off the south-west coast of Ireland on its 30th anniversary. In *Setting the Standard*, we welcome back Sgt Paul Millar, now an instructor in the NCOTW who wrote about the 3rd Infantry Platoon Sergeants Course accompanied by excellent photographs that were taken by the students of the 2nd DF PR Photography course. In *History*, Monica Crofton a Co Wexford historian brings us up to date on the 12th century Norman post still in use today - The History of Wexford's Military Barracks. In *Sport* Boxing Clever, Cpl Lee Coyle talks to Pte Packy Somers about his RDF career, a health scare, and his upcoming world championship title fight in the US. Plus we have all our regular features and reviews.

COMPETITIONS: Don't forget to check out our competition on Page 30. Winner of last Month's PROTAC €200 voucher was Stephen McElvaney, 2 Bde, MP Coy.

Wayne Fitzgerald

Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald - Editor

VETERAN HELPING VETERANS



DF veteran Bernard Hill, owner of Gutterman and constant advocate for ONE recently did work on the gutters and fascias on the ONE residential home in Athlone.

Visit www.gutterman.ie for more info or call Bernard for a free quotation: 087 6798 691.

MEDICAL SERVICES CUP

Pictured is Monsignor Eoin Thynne, HFC (recently retired) who presented the Medical Services Cup to Pte Rory Finn, 3 Inf Bn who beat 27 Inf Bn in the final.
Photo: Comdt Michael Doyle, PIO 1 Bde





AN CAMPA GAEILGE ▲

23rd Irish Language & Culture Training Camp took place in Galway from 24 - 29 May. Pictured are some of the participants from this year's camp. *Photo: Mick Wall, Ord Gp DFTC*



ONE SOUTHERN AREA COUNCIL ▲

The quarterly meeting of the ONE Southern Area Council (SAC) was held in the Naval Base, Haulbowline, and was hosted by the Cdr George Crosbie Br on 6th June. 10 branches attended the meeting and it was deemed a great success. *Photo: Martin Casey, PRO SAC*



NEW GOC 1 BDE ▲

Pictured on 14th July is newly promoted GOC 1 Bde Brig Gen Philip Brennan inspecting the Guard of Honour on his arrival in Collins Bks, Cork. *Photo by: Cpl Christine O'Leary, HQ 1 Bde*



100 BLOOD DONATIONS

Lt Col Bernard Markey, OC MP Gp DFTC is pictured receiving an award from Minister for Health Mr Leo Varadkar TD at Clontarf Castle on 14th June to mark his 100th blood and plasma donations. The award was presented on World Blood Donor Day. *Photo: Sgt JJ Ryan, HQ DFTC*



LTAV COURSE ▲

The 3rd Fitter Admin Driving Course, which is aimed at training civilian and military students who are maintenance fitter mechanics, in order to qualify them as drivers for the purpose of administrative driving on the BAE RG32M LTAV. The course took place in B Coy, 6 Inf Bn, Custume Bks, Athlone, from the 22nd - 26th June. The students are pictured along with their three instructors in front (L/R): Sgt Michael Pryce (Cse Sgt), Lt Johnny Holmes (OIC Cse) and Cpl Joey Horgan (Instr). *Photo by: Pte Aiden Sherlock, 6 Inf Bn*



COMDT DAN SHANAHAN RETD ▲

Pictured is Comdt Dan Shanahan Retd, who was given a presentation by Rear Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, DCOS Sp, in recognition of his 30-years service on the Defence Forces Canteen Board. *Photo by: Cpl Neville Coughlan*



WREATH LAYING CEREMONY TIBNIN MONUMENT ▲

On 13th June Irish peacekeepers serving as part of the Finnish Irish Battalion (FINIRISHBATT) conducted a wreath laying ceremony in Tibnin at the monument for Irish peacekeepers who have given their lives in the service of peace. Lt Col Ian Byrne, OC 49 Inf Gp and deputy CO FINIRISHBATT, laid the wreath to remember fallen Irish soldiers. This month's ceremony was in memory of Comdt Thomas Wickham, Pte Niall Byrne and CQMS Kieran Stokes. *Photo: Lt Conor Dunne, PIO 49 Inf Gp*



A GREAT DAY OUT! ▲

Pictured are members of the 7/65 Battalion Association and members of Fr James Gilmore and Royal Meath Branches of ONE who shared the trip to the Irish Military War Museum (IMWM) in Collon, Co Meath recently. *Photo by: Dessie O'Hara*

ONE NATIONAL FLAG DAY ▶

Pictured are Billy Fennell and Tommy Devaney taken during the National Flag Day collection on Main Street, Templemore. Both are members of the Pierce McCann ONE Branch, Templemore. *Photo by: Sgt Mick Burke*



THE BAND PLAYED ON ▲

The Army No 1 Band are no strangers to Áras an Uachtaráin, where they provide musical support to state ceremonial several times every year, including state visits and credentials ceremonies. They fulfilled a different role on Sunday 14th June when they performed a recital at the first summer garden party of 2015. With a 'Bloomsday' theme, a large crowd enjoyed the music and fine weather in the grounds of the Áras. *Photo: Captain Fergal Carroll, Conductor Army No 1 Band*



27 INF BN/ONE CHARITY RUN ▲

The Annual Charity run over the Cooley Mts by 27 Inf Bn took place on 17th June in aid of Mullaghbuoy National School and the ONE Michael McNeela Branch. The runners left Aiken Bks and on reaching the mast on Claremont cairn they met a group of children and teachers from Mullaghbuoy NS, where they released balloons to mark the event. From there they continued their run back to Mullaghbuoy NS to be greeted by OC 27 Inf Bn, Lt Col Mark Hearn, Sgt Major Joe Murray, ONE members and all the school children. The runners were piped in by the Bn Piper Vinny Murray, Lt Col Hearn presented a cheque for €2,300 to Principal Mairead Egan and Mick Reid of ONE. OC 27 Inf Bn then accepted a plaque on behalf of the members of the 27 Inf Bn from Principal Mairead Egan and Jim McEneaney of ONE. *Photo: Jim McEneaney, Michael McNeela Br, ONE.*



BQMS TOMMY IVORY ▲

Pictured is BQMS Tommy Ivory, 7 Inf Bn who was awarded a Stand Down Parade on 12th June, to mark his 38-year career in the DF. BQMS Ivory joined 2 Inf Bn in 1977 and remained there for his career, he was the last BQMS of the old 2 Inf Bn and first BQMS of the new 7 Inf Bn. He also completed eight tours of duty overseas. *Photo by: Pte David Hogarty, 2 Bde HQ*



O'DONOVAN ROSSA REMEMBERED ▲

Pictured on 28th June at Rosscarbery, Co Cork was Sgt Ken Griffin and Robert Cantwell, RDF of the 1 Arty Regt, Collins Bks who provided an honor guard at the unveiling of the new national monument to coincide with the centenary anniversary of O'Donovan Rossa's death on the 29th June 1915. *Photo by: Denis Boyle*

NEW ANTE ROOM IN MCKEE BKS

REPORT & PHOTOS BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

On 9th July 2015, ACOS Brig Gen Colm Campbell unveiled a new Ante-room in the NCOs Mess McKee Bks. The new recreational room fitted out with a large TV and comfortable sofas is intended for NCOs to avail of in a relaxing and homely atmosphere. The room was named after long serving and highly regarded RSM Johnny Keating (RIP) of McKee Bks. RSM Keating was renowned within the Defence Forces as a strict militarian whom everyone respected both commissioned and in the ranks below him. RSM Keating also had a large family, many of whom followed him into the DF, present for the unveiling where Arwm Debbie Keating, No 1 Ops Wing and John Keating formally of 5 Inf Bn, Collins Bks. ■



Pictured l-r: ACOS Brig Gen Colm Campbell, Arwm Debbie Keating, John Keating and Mess President CQMS David Morrissey.

TPR ANTHONY BROWNE *Remembered*

REPORT & PHOTOS BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

Congo Veteran Michael Monaghan



On 9th July 2015, Tpr Anthony Browne, the first recipient of the Military Medal for Gallantry (An Bonn Míleata Calmachta) – with Distinction, which was awarded for his exceptional bravery during the Niemba Ambush on 8th November 1960, which resulted in his death and of 8 members of No 2 Pln, A Coy, 33 Inf Bn. A fitting and homely tribute was paid to this young man by his home town of Rialto, who like many went on an adventure to the Congo with the Defence Forces' initial troop peacekeeping mission. To remember Tpr Browne members of his locality under Dublin City Council (DCC) set about by erecting a park bench with a copy of his MMG medal citation. Located in the new Flanagan's Fields Community Garden, situated on the site of the old Fatima Mansions Block where he lived. Tpr Browne's nephew Alan and his son Josh led the many wreath layers, which were placed on the bench. Military piper Sgt Anthony Byrne accompanied by a drummer and bugler

from the Army No 1 Band played, whilst Tpr Browne's former unit 2 Cav Sqn honoured him with a courtesy guard under the command of Lt Michael Conneely and Sqn Sgt Mick Doyle. Two long lines of military Veterans representing IUNVA and ONE saluted their former colleague as he was remembered by a Congo Veteran Michael Monaghan, who was on that faithful mission. Later on during refreshments in the F2 centre, the new Lord Mayor of Dublin, Sinn Féin councillor Críona Ní Dhálaigh spoke very highly of Tpr Browne, where she unveiled a portrait of him by a local artist. MC for the day was former DF member Fran O'Shea now Asst Community Officer for DCC, who thanked all those involved with the project and for making the day very special for the Browne family.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal - May his soul be on the right side of God. ■





A Military Life

BY CPL LEE COYLE

Harry O'Beirne was born in Irishtown, Dublin and like most young boys, looked up to and idolised his brother. Unsurprisingly then, when his brother joined the FCA Harry followed in his footsteps, enlisting in 42 Fd Arty Regt in Collins Bks, Dublin, in 1957, where he soon developed a taste for military life. Shortly after, however, he decided to head to America, making the long journey to New York in 1958.

After spending a year working in a life insurance company Harry got the chance to sign up with the military, enlisting in the United States Air Force (USAF) in 1959.

Although Harry wanted to serve with Special Forces, non-US citizens were restricted in what they could do, so he was trained as a medic. A couple of years later Harry heard about Pararescuers, troops whose role was to rescue downed airmen and injured soldiers, and recover crashed or stricken aircraft. Their motto is 'These Things We Do That Others May Live'. (Pararescuers were used during the 1960s Apollo space missions to secure the command service module after splashdown and to retrieve the astronauts and transport them back to base.) Harry applied and was posted to 38th Air Rescue/Para, as an airman 1st class.

Since 1955 America had been involved in South Vietnam, providing training and equipment, and this had escalated by 1960 to the deployment of troops. Within two years there were 9,000 US troops on the ground.

In December 1963 Harry was deployed to South Vietnam with Pararescue, travelling between Vietnam and Japan, with three-week stints in Vietnam interspersed with two- to three-week spells in Japan.

With the escalation of the war Harry volunteered for an extended tour of 15 months, despite the dangers and the difficulty of operating in the region, where jungle, muddy waters and very low visibility, made finding safe landing zones a difficult task. Harry and his crew faced constant danger while operating during many battles and often coming under fire while trying to help injured soldiers.

During his tour of just over two years, Harry carried out approximately 300 combat missions and witnessed at first hand the devastating effects of war on the local population.

Due to his medical background, after he was discharged in 1967 Harry decided to go back to college to study to become an anaesthetist. However, he still felt the call of the military and enlisted in the reserve as a staff sergeant in 1968.

In 1972 he qualified as an anaesthetist and 18 years later, in 1990, he brought his medical skills to Iraq when he was called up to serve with a field medical hospital during Operation Desert Storm, treating American, Coalition and Iraqi soldiers.

Once again Harry witnessed the brutal and horrific injuries that war brings and the toll suffered by the civilian population.

Having served in the jungles of Vietnam and the deserts of the Middle East he had accumulated huge combat experience. Speaking about the differences between the Viet Cong and Saddam's Iraqi army, Harry says the Viet Cong were incredibly loyal whereas the bulk of the Iraqi army, most of whom had been forced to serve, had ill feelings towards their leaders.

Harry retired with the rank of lieutenant colonel in 1996, having completed nearly 40 years in the military. He is currently living happily in the US with his wife Tommie and his three children, Kevin, Sean and Brian. ■



Harry O'Beirne in Vietnam, December 1963.

HH-43 Huskie with Parajumper in Vietnam.



Harry O'Beirne pictured recently.



A USAF Kaman HH-43B Huskie.

IUNVA GENERAL CONVENTION 2015

REPORT AND PHOTOS BY CPL LEE COYLE

In June, *An Cosantóir* attended IUNVA's annual general convention hosted by Post 5 at the Commons Express Inn, Cork. In attendance were National Chairman Eddie Robinson, National Secretary Dan Garland, National Treasurer BSM Mick Dillon, National Vice-President Mick Butler, representatives of 19 posts, and members of the association from around the country. Also present, as guests, were Lt Col Ray O'Lehan (representing GOC 1 Bde) and Lt Col Ollie Barber, Director PSS.

On the agenda were yearly reports from the secretary, treasurer, developments officer, welfare officer, chairman of the finance committee, director of ceremonies, purchasing officer, property officer, webmaster, and individual posts.

IUNVA, which was founded in 1990, has the approval of the minister of defence, and is non-denominational, non-political and non-sectarian. It currently has 1,170 members in 21 posts throughout Ireland.

Among the association's objectives are providing counselling to members and their families; providing help for those who have suffered as a result of their service overseas; keeping contact with other nations' UN veterans organisations; enhancing the public's understanding of the role of the UN; and promoting and protecting the interests of IUNVA and its members.

Membership is available to any Irish resident who is a serving or former member of the Defence Forces or An Garda Síochána, and who has served at least 90 days on an overseas UN mission.

Members range from 30-year-olds to 91-year-old former chaplain Canon Bob Jennings (retd), a member of Post 21 (Bray), who is a Korean War veteran, having served there with the British Army's Welsh Regiment.

Post 15 (Cavan), has the youngest average age, at 41, just under half of whom are still serving in the Defence Forces. Its members also include the only woman in IUNVA, Pte Michelle Tarpey, who is serving with McKee Bks Camp Staff, and Paul Coventry, the only living recipient of the Military Medal for Gallantry (with Merit).

The association is very important to its members and it is impressive to see their passion and dedication to helping and supporting each other and any other ex-servicemen or women who need their help.

'Comrade' is a term widely used by members and the genuine way in which it is used makes visitors feel very welcome and at ease in their company.

Listening to reports from the posts, quickly demonstrates how important IUNVA is to ex-servicemen and women and communities through the work and support they provide, such as cleaning memorials, painting special needs houses, and attending commemorations, parades and other events throughout the country.

A moving example of the practical work done by the association was given by a member of IUNVA HQ who told the story of an ex-serviceman found sleeping rough around Dublin Airport by two ex-servicemen who now work with the Airport Police. They contacted IUNVA HQ who arranged a house for the individual and gave him the support he needed.

On a sad note most posts experienced deaths of members during the last year and some posts are now experiencing low numbers. However, on the positive side a number of dormant posts have been reactivated over the last while, which is good news for the association.

IUNVA currently has a number of projects in the works, one of which is acquiring a Renault van with built-in shelving and displays, which can be used for doing military shows and school talks around the country.

An Cosantóir would like to thank the management of IUNVA for the invitation to attend their convention and we look forward to seeing and working with IUNVA members in the future. ■



IUNVA National Treasurer, BSM Mick Dillon, DFHQ.





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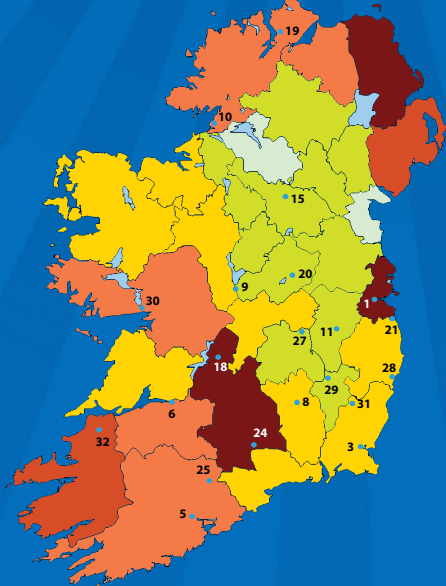
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I.U.N.V.A. is open to both serving and former members of the Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána who have served at least 90 days service on a U.N. mission in a foreign country.



INUVA POSTS


1. Dublin
3. Wexford
5. Cork
6. Limerick
8. Kilkenny
9. Athlone
10. Donegal
11. Kildare
15. Cavan
18. N Tipperary
19. Donegal
20. Westmeath
21. Dublin (Bray)
24. S Tipperary
25. Cork (Fermoy)
27. Laois
28. Wicklow
29. Carlow
30. Galway
31. Wexford (Buncloody)
32. Kerry

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DF Lead the Way in Social Media

BY BRIAN HAYES MEP

The Defence Forces have a proud tradition of entering and winning competitions. Whether it is boxing, athletics, team sports, equestrian or military competitions, the trophy cabinets have been filled year-in year-out. Now, social media has brought more awards to our military with the Defence Forces winning the Bórd Gáis Social Media Award three times in the last five years: 2011, 2013 and 2014.

While this new online landscape poses challenges for the corporate, media, sports and political spheres, the Defence Forces are leaders in the field and provide lessons for the wider civilian society.

Social media is becoming an increasing provider of news in Ireland. Research by the DCU's Institute of Future Media and Journalism revealed that 52% of the population use smart phones to access news content weekly.

News consumption is high in Ireland across all demographics, with 86% of people accessing some news every day. Digital migration is significant, with 41% of respondents stating that online is their main source of news. However, at 58% traditional news sources remain important and TV (37%) is the biggest player. Radio has 14% and Print 7%, meaning online is the biggest single provider of news. Social media is now seen as being more important than print news, particularly with the under-35s. This has major implications for the Defence Forces from a recruitment point of view.

Given the decades it took for radio to supplant newspapers and for TV to replace radio, the growth of online news and social media is remarkably quick. We can be proud that our Defence Forces have kept pace. It is important that the civilian community is aware and recognises the work of the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps.

The DFTC, the Air Corps and the Naval Service's Facebook pages have over 30,000 'Likes' between them, while the Irish Defence Forces Facebook page has over 70,000 and the Recruitment page has 44,500. We must also remember that several multiples of these numbers actually see the information as users 'Like', 'Share' and 'Comment' on the pages, thereby highlighting

them to their Facebook friends.

To put this into context it is worth noting that Leinster and Irish rugby star Jamie Heaslip (son of Col Richard Heaslip ret'd) has 56,000 followers on his Facebook page, and Jamie is a very active and competent social media user.

I believe that the innovative and informative approach taken by our military to social media is one that other sectors of Irish society can learn from.

Take for instance the recent Fathers' Day campaign on June 21st in which 19 pictures with Father's Day messages were posted. The messages were from different ranks and showed the diverse make-up of our servicemen and women. The images and text came from as far away as the Golan Heights, Kosovo and Afghanistan. There was a combined reach of 594,904 for June 21st and the page gained over 120 new followers on Facebook that day. (To put that reach in perspective the Irish Independent has average daily sales of 112,502 and the Sunday Independent sells approximately 219,007 copies.)

The campaign showed a different side to the Defence Forces and displayed military personnel as fathers, sons, daughters and grandchildren. It reminded families celebrating their own fathers at home about the commitment and sacrifice made by those who embrace the challenges of military life, highlighting the many family occasions personnel miss due to their duties.

This is a perfect example of best practice in social media. Without requiring a press release or a photocall, the 19 posts conveyed strong messages to the viewer. Key to this was the participation of rank and file members of the military. Their pictures and messages really engaged the audience in the individual story behind each uniform. This has been key to the success of the military's social media strategy.

We are told that in social media content is king. By involving members and posting their photos and stories the Defence Forces' social media intrigues and captures the imagination.

In recent times the images on the military's social media of LÉ Eithne's crew carrying out their humanitarian mission in the Mediterranean

have brought home the incredible work they are involved in. As commuters flick through their smartphones or parents pick up a tablet after putting the children to bed, they can get to see life through the eyes of our frontline servicemen and women. ■



POLICING *from the Air*

BY GUY WARNER

Air support units are a well-established feature of modern police work throughout the world, playing a valuable role giving police on the ground the ability to control operations and maintain communications over a much wider area than previously possible. Ireland is in a unique position in that the Garda Air Support Unit (GASU) is a joint police/military operation. The aircraft are An Garda Síochána (GS) owned and carry Garda observers but are flown by Air Corps pilots and have military registrations. Day-to-day command is exercised jointly by OC 304 Sqn, Comdt Philip Bonner, and Garda Sergeant-in-Charge Brian Coade. The unit, currently comprising three aircraft, is located at Casement Aerodrome, Baldonnell, in a purpose-built facility.

Prior to receiving their first aircraft in 1997, the GS was able to call on the Air Corps to provide aid to the civil community but no aircraft were routinely tasked or equipped to operate specifically in support of the gardaí. Eventually, funding was made available that allowed the purchase of one fixed-wing Pilatus-Britten-Norman 2T-4S Defender 4000, and one Eurocopter (EC) AS355N Squirrel helicopter.

Forward Observer and pilot in 272 over Dublin.



In 2002 an EC-135T1 (Serial '256'), was delivered. This was upgraded to T2 standard in 2006, before an EC-135T2+ (Serial '272') was purchased in 2007 to replace the Squirrel.

Both helicopters have thermal imaging devices and high-magnification digital cameras manufactured by FLIR Systems. Digital images can subsequently be used in court as evidence. A microwave downlink, the advanced onboard radio suite, and a loudspeaker system, enhance communications with the ground.

The introduction of the GS-wide TETRA digital comms system in 2010/11 has added considerably to the efficiency of air-ground radio contact.

The helicopters are fitted with moving Skyforce map displays that give for pinpoint tracking and location, and can illuminate an area with their powerful Nitesun searchlights – 15 million candlepower for '256' and 30 million for '272'.

The introduction of night-vision goggle (NVG) capability for all three crew members on '272' in 2008 has been another huge step forward. Comdt Bonner says: "NVG gives us good visual acuity in the urban environment, making it much safer when, for example, pursuing a stolen vehicle in poor weather conditions in darkness"; to which Sergeant Coade added: "...as many a joyrider has found out to their dismay."

Resistant to 'blooming' (an effect of excess light), these high-spec NVGs operate equally well over a brightly lit city as they do in a dark rural environment.

According to Comdt Bonner: "The EC-135 is a delight to fly, with instantaneous response to control inputs due to its rigid rotor-head design. It is a very stable platform and the airframe has been designed with a high degree of crashworthiness, which increases the crew's sense of wellbeing."

The Thales EFIS avionic suite is carried in a McAlpine-designed pod beneath the fuselage. The cockpit contains two multifunction LCD displays providing all necessary flight and navigation information; a caution and advisory display (CAD); and two vehicle engine management displays (VEMDs).

The CAD's automatic warnings/cautions require the pilot's acknowledgement and are accompanied by an aural warning. All power, temperature and speed parameters are encompassed in one VEMD, the FLI (first limit indicator), which means the pilot only needs to watch one screen to see how the engines are performing. The other VEMD includes electrical and hydraulic information.

Both helis are fitted with advanced digital autopilot, allowing them to be flown single-pilot IFR. Hands-off modes include heading, altitude, airspeed, vertical speed and navigation hold. Instrument approaches can also be flown by the autopilot.

A Trimble GPS can be coupled to the autopilot and a Honeywell Sentinel Multifunction Display, with moving map and TCAS, can download waypoints from the GPS.

The EC-135 is powered by twin Turbomeca Arrius 2B2 engines with a combined power output of 900KW. FADEC control auto-

mates all stages of operation from the start phase to fuel and power management inflight and remaining engine protection in the event of engine failure.

The forward Garda observer sits beside the pilot operating the thermal imaging and video camera, both of which are mounted on the nose of the helicopter. The Garda observer designated mission commander sits behind the pilot and controls the moving map display and the communications suite. It is his responsibility to decide the steps necessary for task fulfillment.

The density of radio traffic combined with a wide range of information from the aircraft's sensors and the need for constant vigilance in relation to the surrounding airspace and the ground below, can put huge pressure on the crew. For that reason crew resource management is a very important feature of ongoing training, development and discussion.

Comdt Bonner stressed that the closest co-operation and teamwork is required from all three crew members but added: "As the aircraft commander, the pilot is ultimately responsible for flight safety and dealing with air traffic control issues, which is no easy task in the Greater Dublin area as there is a lot of traffic, both fixed-wing and helicopters."

An experienced GASU pilot gave an example of a typical mission. "On a dark, damp winter's night over Dublin, with a lowering cloudbase and a moisture-laden atmosphere, '272' was responding to a robbery when we were advised that a getaway car had made off in a certain direction. I was assisted in navigating directly to the scene by our forward observer who had previously served in the area.

"Through my NVG, I spotted an individual acting suspiciously close to an abandoned car and passed this information to the

observer so that he could track the suspect with the camera and thermal imaging as he ran across some parkland and into a house. The mission commander was watching this on his screen and immediately communicated the information to nearby ground units, leading to the rapid detention of the suspect."

The Defender (Serial '254'), is a substantially upgraded version of the famous Islander, with an enlarged wing and lengthened fuselage. It has greater range and endurance than the helis and can operate from any of Ireland's regional airports and airfields. Its crew typically comprises the pilot and two or three Garda observers, depending on operational requirements.

Sergeant Coade says: "With its ability to loiter at very slow speeds and remain airborne for approximately four hours, it allows great flexibility and is a very important platform for a wide variety of tasks. Its main use is for pre-planned overt or covert missions."

The Defender is powered by two Allison 250-b17F/1 engines, capable of producing 400 shaft horsepower. Normal cruise speed is 140kts and it can loiter at 80-85kts with flaps.

Onboard systems include the Bendix/King KFC 325 autopilot and flight director, which interfaces with the Bendix/King KAS 297C vertical speed and altitude preselector. There is also a Bendix/King RDR 2000 digital weather radar.

A KMC 321 mode controller operates the flight control system and navigation is aided by a Bendix/King KLN 90B TSO GPS.

Mission equipment is broadly similar and complementary to that carried by the helicopters.

GASU is staffed by 20 Garda observers (three sergeants and 17 gardai) and 14 Air Corps pilots from 3 Ops Wing.

Eligibility to serve as an observer requires five years' service as



Mission Commander adjusting his screens in 272.

Sometimes a paper map is useful too.



EC-135 (256) at Baldonnel by Guy Warner.



EC-135 (256) over Dublin area.



EC-135 (272) over Garda HQ, Phoenix Park.



254 at Baldonnel by Frank Grealish.

a Garda and the completion of an aviation medical. Prospective candidates attend a two-week pre-selection course at the Garda College before undergoing the six-week Air Observers course at Baldonnel, which covers topics such as aircraft familiarisation, role and equipment, navigation, health and safety procedures. Next comes a two-week Aircrewman course with the Air Corps on the EC-135P2s of 302 Sqn, which covers basic military airmanship.

Successful students then fly operational missions with an experienced partner in order to work up to becoming fully effective observers.

For the pool of GASU Air Corps pilots, who serve a tour of duty of two years or more, the unit is regarded as providing a stimulating and challenging flying environment. Pilots are selected primarily on their previous experience on twin-engined aircraft and night-flying.

Sergeant Coade says that the doctrine of equal partnership between the gardaí and Air Corps personnel was a vital element in the success of the GASU, as was the harmonious dovetailing of personalities in a fast-moving and often stressful operational environment. "We have to shift gear rapidly, from sitting in the crew room having a cup of tea to being airborne in two minutes responding to a call-out," he says. "If at any time during a mission any crew member feels that flight safety is in danger of being compromised then the unit rule of 'three to go, one to say no' is applied.

Comdt Bonner regards continuation training as vital, "starting with the mandatory debrief after every mission in an open and honest no-blame culture." Recently qualified as an NVG instructor, he further asserts that "NVG training never stops", with internal training supplemented by annual proficiency checks carried out by US company, Aviation Specialities Unlimited.

Another key training component is line-oriented flight training (LOFT) carried out yearly in the EC-135 simulator at Airbus Donauwörth. "We aim for realism in each two-hour session," says Comdt Bonner, "testing command ability, decision-making skills and crew resource management. The first 30 minutes can be spent relatively quietly on a typical GASU task over a city, then we add in some complicating factors, such as lowering weather or operational pressure from the ground.

"We don't throw in random, and very rarely occurring, technical faults, as we can test these on other sim (simulator) sessions. Sim training is one the cornerstones of safe flight operations, allowing pilots to push their limits while supervisors assess their capabilities and ensure a safe standard is maintained."

He lays great stress on telling new pilots that while their job is to assist the gardaí, they *"are responsible for the safe conduct of the flight, which must not be compromised in any way by mission fixation."*

GASU's primary task is surveillance in direct support of gardaí on the ground. The work is very varied and can range from searching for suspects or missing persons, to the pursuit of vehicles, the containment of crime scenes, support to public order units, the policing of major events, ceremonies or protests, and aerial photography.

With GASU involved, gardaí spread over a wide area can be kept in touch with changes on the ground as a situation develops and appropriate guidance can be given. There is also a capacity to carry police dogs onboard for special operations and/or quick dispatch around the country if required.

Garda observers can also make arrests, and on occasions GASU helis have landed in remote areas to arrest and detain suspects pending the arrival of ground units.

GASU's availability for immediate dispatch, coupled with its high-tech equipment, mean it can also be a vital asset for the emergency services, as was seen over Bray Head at Christmas 2014 when the unit assisted the Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team.

While nature and population size of the Greater Dublin area (a quarter of the population) means that it provides the majority of GASU's work, the unit also receives calls for assistance from all over the 26 counties.

Detachments operating away from Baldonnel can be maintained for several days and tasks can be handed over in the air. This capacity allowed GASU to provide continuous overwatch during the visits of Queen Elizabeth II and President Obama in 2011.

Given the fact that much crime in today's world crosses national boundaries, GASU maintains close working relationships, not only with the PSNI and other UK forces, but also with many police forces in the EU, the USA and beyond.

Ireland can be proud of this joint Garda/Air Corps creation. The GASU is on a par with the best air support units in respect of its personnel, training, aircraft and equipment. Ireland spends its money wisely, invariably buying the best available, and is second to none in regard to the professionalism and dedication of its operatives.

Grateful thanks to Garda HQ and Brig Gen Paul Fry, GOC Air Corps, for authorising my visit, and to those from GASU with whom I spoke. ■

MINURSO

A LITTLE-KNOWN MISSION

BY BERTY EGERTON

Agwanit, Mijek, Tifariti, Bir Lehlou, these are just some of the places that Irish soldiers have been serving in as part of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). However, chances are that most readers of An Cosantóir have never heard of these places for this is one of the UN's least-known peacekeeping missions; yet it dates back to 1991.

Currently there are three Defence Forces officers serving as unarmed military observers (UNMOs) with the mission. Their roles vary from day to day and include daylight patrols, night listening patrols, and witnessing and documenting the destruction of munitions and mines. The aim of this article is to inform the reader about this little-known mission from the perspective of the UNMOs, Comdt Frank Colclough, from Kilkenny, and Capts Phillip Quinlan and Stephen O'Byrne, both from Dublin.



Comdt Frank Colclough

"In November 2014 I was appointed Senior Irish Officer for the Defence Forces' three-man military observer contingent to MINURSO. The deployment is for a six-month tour of duty in Western Sahara. This is my seventh tour of duty overseas, having served in UNIFIL (three tours), EUFOR, KFOR, and one other observer mission, UNIKOM."

"All three Irish UNMOs deployed in early January to the mission which is composed of personnel from 34 countries. Only the Irish, French and German contingents deploy for a six-month tour of duty, all other nationalities deploy for one year."

"The diversity of nationalities, cultures, traditions, and religions is quite unique for such a small UN mission, composed of 218 military personnel from the Americas, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Far East."

"All UNMOs deploy to one of the nine team sites, which cover an area of 266,000 sq km of desert, from where the UNMOs carry out the mission's roles to observe the ceasefire, conduct daily patrols, and establish both day and night temporary observation posts in the harsh environment of the desert. It is through these activities, spending two to three months at a time in a team site, that UNMOs develop great friendships and experience different cultures and foods, as well as varying methods of performing and fulfilling our daily operational and administrative tasks."

"After our initial induction programme in Mission HQ (MHQ) in Laayounne, Capt O'Byrne was deployed to the western side of the berm, where the Royal Moroccan Army is deployed, and Capt Quinlan and I were deployed to the eastern side of the berm where the Frente Polisario is deployed. (The berm is an sandy bank, or wall, constructed by Moroccan Army engineers and is the demarcation line between the two conflicting parties in Western Sahara.)"

"I spent the first three months in Team Site Tifariti, in the north-east sector of the Polisario region, only 12km from the Mauritanian border and a six-hour drive across varying desert consisting of soft sand, hard sand and very rocky and undulating terrain, to the nearest town of Smara. Following that I have spent the last three-months in the Joint Operations Centre, MHQ."

"MHQ brought different experiences, with a much more structured daily routine and set office hours, liaising with the team sites, and dealing with local and international UN staff and the key military figures."

"MINURSO works closely with the highest levels of the UN and the Head of Mission and Chief of Mission Support liaise daily in the Joint Operations Centre with UNHQ New York and the Office of DPKO."

Capt Stephen O'Byrne

"Prior to this tour I was working in DFTC TIS in Coolmoney Camp and my previous overseas experience was with KFOR and EUTM Somalia."

"MINURSO is based in the non-self-governing territory of Western Sahara and its mandate is to monitor the ceasefire between the Moroccan and SADR (Saharan Arab Democratic Republic) armed forces, which has been in effect since September 1991 when hostilities ended after 16 years of fighting. Both sides lay claim to the territory, with Morocco wishing to incorporate it into its territory, while the SADR wish to be recognised as an independent state."

"The Royal Moroccan Army (RMA) have built a defensive sand wall, the"



Capt O'Byrne using the UXO identification chart during EOR training.

During a desert patrol Comdt Frank Colclough learns how stubborn camels can be.



landline phone, both of which depend on satellite communications, as mobile phone networks don't extend that far into the desert.

"Given our proficiency in English, Irish UNMOs can quickly find ourselves in one of the team site's staff appointments: I filled the S1 appointment for the majority of my time here.

"Even though the heat can get into the 40°-50°C range at times I would say that it never really felt overpowering, as humidity is practically nil and there is an omnipresent strong wind. To me, the challenge of the mission came more from human factors than environmental ones. The MINURSO system has a constant turnover of UNMOs, which means that experience is continuously being lost with new UNMOs arriving, sometimes weekly; each requiring training on the conduct of patrols. Mixed into this, is the variety of ranks, branches, levels of experience and language capabilities.

"The remoteness and routine nature of the mission is offset by a generous leave arrangement, with all UNMOs receiving 15 days leave for a six-month deployment and compensatory time off that is accumulated in their team site. Given that Western Sahara is a stone's throw away from Gran Canaria, this provides Irish personnel with excellent opportunities to return home quite quickly or travel without too much fuss."

About the author: Berty Egerton is a former member of 2 Cav Sqn and is working as a driver with MINURSO's Civilian Transport Section. His duties include driving 6x6 trucks on re-supply convoys to the various team sites in the desert on journeys that can last for six days, with up to ten hours driving per day. ■

Berm, stretching 1,600kms along the entire territory and control c. 80% of the land. Along this wall, and to its rear, there are between 100,000 - 120,000 RMA troops in various strong points or posts.

"I am based on the western or 'Moroccan' side of this wall, in a team site near a town called Smara, working as an UNMO. Our main task is to conduct daily patrols to the RMA units in our AOR to ascertain that there has been no breach of the ceasefire. As a secondary tasking we check to ensure that they have not increased their numbers or equipment tables from the agreed levels or strengthened their positions.

"It is a challenging environment as it is mostly desert, with very little infrastructure. We are equipped with Nissan Patrols and the majority of our patrolling is conducted on desert tracks so vehicle wear and tear and flat tires are common problems. In addition, temperatures can reach up to 50°C, which can have quite an effect on the vehicles and the human body! "Furthermore, Western Sahara is very heavily mined, with a large quantity of unexploded ordnance still littering the territory. UNMOs are warned to be vigilant at all times regarding this problem and we spend a lot of time monitoring the destruction of these explosive remnants of war (ERW) by the RMA.

"Personally I have enjoyed working here, as it has been different to my previous overseas experiences. While I have worked in multinational units before, they have mainly been with other Europeans. This is far more diverse, with soldiers from all over the globe, which makes for an interesting, and at times challenging, working environment."

Capt Phillip Quinlan

"My home unit is 7 Inf Bn and MINURSO is my third overseas mission, having previously served in KFOR and EUTM Somalia. We arrived in Western Sahara in January and began a week-long administrative in-processing.

"I was deployed to a team site in Agwanit, 18km from the Mauritanian border, which is the southern-most team site on the eastern side of the berm. Life on the east and west sides differ in several ways. We are stationed with the Frente Polisario as opposed to the RMA, and life in the east is an altogether more Spartan affair when one considers that the only means of contact with home are the office computers and

The subsequent detonation of the UXO.



Capt Phillip Quinlan in the vastness and almost featureless landscape of the desert.

MULTI NATIONAL CRC EXERCISE



BY LT CONOR
DUNNE, PIO 115
FINIRISHBATT, UNIFIL

On the 10th July 2015 members of B Coy 49 Inf Gp took part in a crowd riot control (CRC) exercise at UNP 2-45 in Lebanon. The exercise had a multinational flavour to it as Finnish and Estonian troops were exercised alongside the Irish unit facing a group of rather loud and boisterous 'rioters' provided by Fijibatt. The exercise was the culmination of a week-long CRC course and was designed to simulate potential incidents that could occur in the UNIFIL AO.

The scenario, designed by the S7 cell, incorporated many interesting serials throughout the two-hour exercise. The scene was set and the action kicked off when a routine patrol was denied access to a village by an angry crowd. When some women (rather convincing actors) feigned injuries that were deemed to have been caused by a moving UN vehicle, the crowd approached the vehicle, voicing their anger.

After the patrol radioed for help a Finnish quick-reaction team (QRT) deployed to the area to monitor the situation. As the crowd heckled and threw missiles at them, the Finnish peacekeepers initiated the reporting process back to HQ so a proper picture of the unfolding scene could be delivered to other troops preparing to deploy.

The FinnIrish Battalion Mobile Reserve (BMR) was mobilised and arrived on the scene to aid those already in location. After a quick sitrep and ground orientation the Finnish troops deployed from their SISU armoured cars and began to move forward. A section of troops flanked the lead SISU as they inched forward trying to

disperse the crowd. Using the loudhailer attached to a SISU the on-scene commander ordered the crowd back, but to no avail. Instead, the crowd began to become more irate and missiles filled the air.

While the BMR tried to maintain control of the situation and succeeded in holding some ground, the CRC company was being readied.

As soon as the CRC force was deployed and ready to move the BMR pulled back. Another quick sitrep and ground orientation was given and command of the situation was handed over to Comdt Conor Gorey, OC B Coy, who quickly dispatched the Irish CRC platoon to gain the tactical advantage.

The platoon formed up quickly and advanced on the rioters, showing controlled aggression as they asserted their dominance in the village and pushed the rioters back. Under a constant barrage of missiles and with their lines being probed by more reckless individuals, the platoon remained steadfast.





Thanks to the training received during the week it was clear to all the onlookers that everyone knew their job. Strong leadership is vital for CRC and under the command of Lt Margaret Hogan the platoon was not left wanting in this regard. Firm and authoritative throughout, she quickly achieved her first mission in establishing a foothold in the village and pushing the rioters back. After coming to a road junction that had to be secured the Irish platoon found itself light on numbers and they prepared to allow the Estonian CRC platoon to move through their forward line.

From the outset it was clear that the Estonian platoon had different tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP's) from their Irish

used bricks and wire fences from building works on O'Connell Street as missiles and barriers.

At UNP 2-45 the Estonian platoon identified all the threats and reacted to them in a professional manner. They also ensured that those behind them also were aware of the possible dangers ahead.

Dealing with makeshift obstacles constructed by the rioters, constructed obstacles highlighted another tactical difference between the two platoons. At the first obstacle the Estonian platoon went straight over it and once the first serial was over they quickly disassembled it and threw it to one side. The platoons then rotated and at the next obstacle the Irish stopped short and sent a three-man team forward to remove some of the debris. This continued until a hole had been made in the obstacle and the platoon could push forward.

The Irish platoon now faced the rioters who were preparing to make their last stand.

The Fijian rioters had acquired a large amount of missiles and with great enthusiasm they quickly set to the task of launching them at the CRC troops, who remained resolute as the rioters came at them in waves.

Despite the increased aggressiveness, audacity and violence of the rioters, the CRC platoon remained calm and professional, slowly but surely inching forward to their next objective. In a last act of defiance and show of force the Fijian rioters put all their attention into performing a haka, the traditional warrior dance of Fiji and New Zealand. The Fijians roared their chant and danced aggressively while the Irish platoon held their line, staring back



counterparts, and it is from joint training like this that subtle nuances and differences in how nationalities operate are identified. This gives commanders an understanding of how best to deploy in a multinational environment and how other countries' troops will operate.

The Estonians moved quickly and efficiently to push the rioters further back into their village before they encountered a number of obstacles. Operating in urban environments means the commander on the ground has many tactical considerations. Complex manmade terrain makes it hard for CRC units to gain ground. As well as road junctions, which have to be treated as obstacles, the typical urban streetscape contains multiple entries and exits, blind spots and high ground that rioters can use to their advantage. Building sites can give rioters access to improvised weapons and objects to be thrown, as we saw in 2006 in Dublin, where rioters

intently and responding to the haka by banging their shields on the ground.

At this point the directing staff called 'end ex'. As soon as it finished both sides exchanged handshakes and the familiar greeting 'On the ball, Irish!' that has passed between the soldiers of both countries for decades as they serve side by side in Lebanon could be heard everywhere. It was a great ending to an excellent exercise.

In the exercise debrief everyone agreed that the co-operation between all involved was excellent and that the communication between all members of the CRC company was what made it such a success. As a result of this exercise, 115 FinnIrish Battalion has become a stronger, more cohesive unit, and a better understanding of the TTPs employed by the various nationalities was achieved. ■

THE BRAY A

BY LT COL KEVIN BYRNE PHOTOS BY PAUL KOLBE

The Bray Air Spectacular 2015 took place on Sunday, 19th July and proved itself worthy of the title as Ireland's most popular outdoor event. Now in its tenth year, the weather gods smiled on the show yet again, despite the forecast of high winds and blustery showers. In the end, no rain fell and the cloudbase was sufficiently high to permit all of the display participants to operate at their requested altitude: indeed, from time to time the sun made a welcome appearance and the requisite suntan lotion was applied liberally by many of the 90,000 strong crowd.

Down to earth there was much to amuse and entertain the vast crowd, especially the younger ones, including a healthy assortment of fairground attractions, food and craft markets, a wide variety of food and beverage outlets, including ice cream parlours, not forgetting the vehicles, weapons and equipment of the Defence Forces arrayed along the seafront.

The major airlines were well represented this year, including the RJ85 of Cityjet, the ATR72 of Air Stobart in Aer Lingus colours and, to the surprise of many, and the first appearance of a Ryanair Boeing 737. Having declined the urge to participate in the previous decade, the airline sent its rarest aircraft, the newly acquired 737-700, which is appreciably shorter than the rest of the fleet, and is generally reserved for training purposes. The Chief Pilot put on a spirited display, which was very well received by the appreciative audience. This may have been Ryanair's greatest secret, as many of the senior spotters present had never known of its existence, let alone seen this aircraft since its arrival just two months earlier. Rumour had it that the demand for the airline's services were such that this particular aircraft would be made ready for passenger service at Dublin Airport immediately after the Bray display.

Aer Lingus' appearance was much anticipated but the actual arrival caught many by surprise, even the commentary team, such was the secrecy surrounding the A319 operation, more of which later.

Parachutists have almost always opened the Bray display and 2015 was no different: the Black Knights, comprising four members of the Defence Forces, jumped from an Air Corps EC135 at about 4,500 feet and made light work of their final approach to the beach where they landed in the vertical position, formed up and saluted the crowd in military fashion; the latter appeared to love the theatricality of it all. Earlier, the civilian Irish Parachute Club group had jumped onto the beach as a precursor to the show proper from their attractive Pilatus PC-6 aircraft but sadly it departed at high altitude before it was noticed.

No less than three historical military jets appeared as solo acts during the afternoon: the diminutive but spectacularly noisy Strikemaster, smoking impressively at all times it seemed, the highly manoeuvrable Mig-15 trainer replete with Soviet stars and, my own personal favourite, the Hawker Hunter two-seater in proper military grey-green camouflage paint. Let's have no more of this psychedelic technicolor paintwork on genuine air force jets please!

In contrast to the fast jet brigade, the stealthy arrival of the Irish Historic Flight was a welcome sight and sound; the DH84 Iolar in original Aer Lingus markings was flanked by no less than three DHC Chipmunks, all of them in Irish Air Corps colours dating from the 1950s. The distinctive low-pitched hum of five Gypsy Major piston engines was a nice background with which to show the distinctive silvery shapes in the welcome sunshine. The solo Chipmunk aerobatic display was exemplary and illustrated why this type became so popular as a primary trainer with so many air arms over the years and why it remains common in myriad flying clubs even today.

The piece de theatre was certainly the unexpected formation arrival of the Aer Lingus A319 and the F-5 Tigers of the Patrouille Suisse.

AIR DISPLAY

2015



Ryanair displayed at Bray for the first time, using their new training Boeing 737-700, under the command of Chief Pilot Captain Raymond Conway.



It would be remiss of any account not to mention the father and son displays of Gerry and Harry Humphreys who flew two distinct types of aircraft over Bray, an Aviatka Mai 89 and a Vans RV7, the latter made by Gerry's own hand over a five year period. His was the initial Vans to be constructed and flown in Ireland and it sports a distinctive "Flying Cow" colour scheme because he has a fine herd of cows on his farm. Prior to becoming a farmer Gerry was pilot in the RAF, flying the Harrier with No 1 Squadron amongst other military types.

Harry's aircraft is a genuine Russian export, a pre-production open cockpit biplane powered by a Rotax water-cooled engine yielding some 65HP. It is painted in the subdued grey shades of an air superiority fighter but its cruising speed is a sedate 70 mph! As for the pilot, Harry received his PPL some five years ago at 16 years of age and is currently finishing commercial pilot training in Cork with the Atlantic Flying Training Academy.

Irish military flying was very much in evidence with an opening formation comprising a quartet of Rheims Rockets or Cessna 172s to most observers. Incredibly, the Air Corps' commentator reminded the crowd that these venerable aircraft entered service as long ago as 1972, implying that if they continue flying until next year they will have equalled the Alouette's record of forty-four continuous years. At 43 years old, they are twice as old as most of the young pilots who fly them! Rumour has it that there are no plans to replace them, even with the updated versions that are now in production.

The Cessna 172s of the Irish Air Corps were naturally sedate in display terms but have given sterling service over the decades as they first arrived in 1972.



The capable S-92 of the Irish Coastguard has become a common sight around the entire coastline as four examples are in service for 24 hours SAR work.



Other Air Corps types included the CASA CN235 maritime patrol aircraft, which itself is in service since 1994, but remains a very appropriate, not to say spritely, performer over the sea. Also on location from Baldonnell was Eagle Section, a foursome of Swiss-made PC-9s whose formation flying was second to none and from whom the singleton appeared and gave the finest Air Corps aerobatic performance for many years. It is no wonder that this type, or advanced versions of it are in widespread military service in all parts of the globe.

Helicopters had not been neglected on the programme, as the EC135 from Baldonnell was impressive, display semi-aerobatic manoeuvres that would have defeated older rotary-winged machines, not to mention

their pilots! Turns in excess of 110 degrees angle of bank seemed to be the norm, while nose-over “bunts” posed no problems at all, not mention flying backwards at high speed.

An “under the radar” arrival was the Irish Coast Guard’s S-92 search and rescue helicopter based at Dublin Airport. It literally popped up at sea level and almost caught the commentary team unawares. This new high performance type replaced the stalwart S-61 in service and is capable of conducting searches for a full four hours at a distance of 275 nautical miles from base in order to rescue four survivors and then return home with a 30-minute fuel reserve. By way of illustrating its capabilities, a demonstration winching exercise took

Pyrotechnics formed a large part of the Patrouille Suisse display to the surprise and later delight of the vast crowd, which was said to comprise about 10% of Dublin's population.



The Irish Historical Flight was a most welcome interlude and featured no less than four De Havilland machines in pristine condition.



Another helicopter performer was the remarkably agile EC135, one of two in service with the Irish Air Corps for training and liaison duties.

place across the seafront using the local RNLI lifeboat as the vessel in distress, which proved to be popular with the many children present.

The finale was a surprise and a welcome one at that! From the north a strange gaggle of shapes began to emerge at low altitude and it soon morphed into a formation of an Aer Lingus A319 followed very closely by six F-5E Tigers of the Patrouille Suisse. It was "Smoke on, Go!" as they crossed the display line. The most unusual formation seen for a long time, it was significant in that at long last, after a decade, Bray had seen its very own "First Division" national jet aerobatic team.

As the A319 broke away and climbed en route to Dublin, the Swiss visitors did not disappoint: from the

very beginning fluidity, panache and raw noise were the only watchwords. They performed precision formation manoeuvres with such charming names as the Tango, the Flirt, Synchro Rolls and lots more which involved aircraft inverted with extended undercarriage, opposition passes with smoke and flare discharges and noisy afterburners. The vertical bomb-burst finale was especially well received as it involved multiple colourful flare releases leaving pyrotechnical traces across the sky.

It was agreed generally that Bray 2015 was a great success and entirely free thanks to the sponsorship of the Irish Aviation Authority as part of the Bray Summer-fest. Let us hope that we see something similar in 2016; there's not much free in Ireland these days! ■

Ahakista

Air India Disaster 1985

BY JIM SPERIN, A/SEA MEDIC RETD
B&W PHOTOS COURTESY OF MILITARY ARCHIVES

A man chants a Hindu prayer and the smell of incense wafts gently on the breeze. In the early morning sunshine the mountain tops are shrouded in mist. The water laps gently at the shore and in the great stillness seabirds call. I could be at an outdoor yoga retreat in the Himalayan foothills but I am actually in West Cork, in Ahakista, attending the 30th anniversary memorial service for victims of the Air India disaster of 23rd June 1985.

On that day a jumbo jet carrying 329 souls from Canada to India via London was blown to smithereens off the south-west coast of Ireland by a terrorist bomb. At the time I was a 19-year-old medic on *LÉ Aisling*. All 329 passengers were lost that day and we pulled 39 corpses from the ocean. Like my crew mates and companions, I was completely unprepared and overwhelmed by what I saw around me; men, women, children and infants mutilated beyond recognition, broken beyond imagination.

A small, inflatable Gemini was put in to the water to retrieve bodies and when its crew had wrestled as many corpses from the ocean as the boat could hold they returned to the ship, their cargo covered in a bloody, white sheet. From the *Aisling's* afterdeck we watched them work and as the piles grew higher we dreaded their return.

Each time the Gemini was hoisted on board, a process of disentanglement would begin. A man at each end; a nod between them; lift the sheet; and away we go...

"I have the head, do you have the legs?"

"I can't find them..."

The day wore on and the dead piled up around me. Bat-

tered into submission and disbelief I grew numb. Over and over it went; 14 trips by the Gemini crew. For 14 hours we worked wrapping the bodies in sheets: there were no body bags. We made temporary mortuaries from the engineers' office and the carpenter's store. Hardened sailors spoke tender words to little babies as they laid them alongside women they hoped in vain might be their mothers.

The memorial garden at Ahakista, which is under the care of Cork County Council, is a place of sublime beauty and stillness: it holds the soul and the pain too. That pain and loss is etched deeply on the faces of the relatives and families of the victims who travel here every year on their lonely pilgrimage. They speak of it as a place of great healing, where a glimmer of light can be found in the bottomless pit of grief and agony caused by waking one Sunday morning to learn your entire family have been blown out of the sky at 33,000 feet; or that your children rained from the sky, falling like petals upon the great ocean below.

Many of those who come to the memorial are aged and stooped now, though the next generation is springing up to take their place. One woman, who was one year old when she lost her





DSM recipients (l-r): L/Sea J McGrath, Lt Cdr J Robinson, PO M Mahon and A/Sea T Browne.



The 30th anniversary gathering at the memorial garden at Ahakista

mother in the bombing, has been here every year since and this time she is pregnant. The circle continues.

For 30 years I have struggled to accommodate the events of that day. To find a space in my life for it where I am no longer defined, ruled, or marked by it forevermore. I haven't always been successful. Some hurts are just too great to get over; they leave a great wound, a hole in your soul. You can't fix it so you put a psychological plank across it or you walk around it. But it's too deep, and it never goes away. Some days it's full to the brim with nightmares and if you're not careful you can fall in; some days it overflows. I avoided the memorial service for so long because it terrified me, immobilised me and scraped away at old wounds I was already trying unsuccessfully to hide.

But last Tuesday in West Cork something happened, something I am reluctant to define, categorise or, even worse, intellectualise. There really isn't a name for it, and if there is I don't want to know it; that would minimise it, trap the magic and put it in a box. It began with a text message from an old crew member, "... got your number from Mick... Cork County Council are putting out invites to the service...looking for old crew members of the Aisling..."

After a few more calls a lift is arranged.

The evening before the service a few former comrades meet up, unplanned, in a hotel bar. Brian and Terry, and Ken and his wife are here, and Tom, Elton, Cha and Dermot too. "John is on site somewhere," Cha tells me.

It doesn't take long for the sailors' tales to begin: the night 'Chin Chin' brought the donkey on to the ship; the day the cook gave out Crisp & Dry to use as suntan lotion.

But as the night darkens, so does the mood.

"How were you after that day?"

"How have you been?"

"Haunted," comes the reply.

I feel the weight and I hear the sadness in the voice.

"Never told the wife" becomes a recurring refrain.

"Sure how could you?" the response.

At the service the following morning the sun shines and more old comrades appear; people not seen for 30 years are welcomed, hugged, respected. Old wounds and grievances reluctantly begin to ease. Something is moving, shifting imperceptibly; I can feel it, we all can.

More arrive: Willy, Pecker and Mossy. Friends traumatised, wounded, and profoundly affected by what they witnessed that day – but today we are here together. Someone suggests a photo and we line up. What begins as an impromptu photo takes on a life of its own; there are 27 of us now and the line is long. Suddenly we are faced with a barrage of cameras and I feel as though I am in a football team facing the press.

The day ends and as we say our goodbyes, there's a sense that perhaps some of the fear, uncertainty and guilt may have moved on just a little. As we begin the long drive home the seabirds continue to call and the sun continues to shine on the waters of West Cork but maybe, just maybe, there's a little more light in the sky; and maybe a little more good in the world too.

Perhaps Ahakista has worked its magic after all.

About the Author:

Since leaving the Defence Forces Jim worked in the media, both print and television, including directing a documentary for RTE in 1998 about children living in the sewers under Bucharest.

He has travelled extensively in North and West Africa, including walking for 10 days through the Sahara Desert in Morocco in 2004 and a 12-day journey by camel in the desert north of Timbuctu in Mali in 2006.

Since 2006 he has worked in the homeless sector, currently managing a homeless hostel in Dublin that caters for 60 men ranging in ages from 20 to 82. ■



Setting the STANDARD

BY SGT PAUL MILLAR, INSTR NCOTW, MIL COL
PHOTOS BY MEMBERS OF THE 2ND PR PHOTOGRAPHERS COURSE



The infantry are the core of the Defence Forces. All other units support or augment the effects of our infantry corps in some way. So it is fitting that the course designed to promote NCOs within the infantry is an all-encompassing and comprehensive one, testing the physical and mental limits of soldiering to an extent that no other career course comes close to. An intensive seven weeks of instruction, mainly in the best classroom of all, on the ground, brought the candidates on the 3rd Infantry Platoon Sergeants Course one step closer to promotion.

The course builds on the all-arms Standard NCO Course and develops the more advanced tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) that are applied by the infantry sergeant at home and overseas. The first two weeks' lessons dealt with the theory behind the actions and effects they would be achieving over the subsequent five weeks on the ground. Everything from patrolling, ambushes, defence, target grid procedure, casevac and combat service support (CSS) were covered.

A new standard in military fitness was established with the introduction of a lung-expanding, lactic acid-inducing, two-mile battle run in full fighting order. The purpose of this was to assess the different type of fitness required to undergo a course

of such robustness. It was a tough test that many found challenging, but it was essential to determine the quality and level of preparation that the students had undergone.

The next three weeks focused on the practical application of a number of diverse infantry tasks. Defence was examined through Exercise 'Black Light'. This was a delay operation, a mobile and difficult form of defence that tested the students' understanding of a commander's intent and how that translates in the field. It was a large exercise, using a full company, and it placed a lot of pressure on those in appointments, with liaison and communication between the platoons being the lynchpin for success. The exercise also helped the students appreciate their role in the bigger picture; how the platoon relates to the company and so on. This is an appreciation that cannot be garnered from theory, only from the sweat and effort of practice and rehearsals.

Exercise 'Immediate Action' is where the students really defined themselves. A patrolling exercise, set in an area unfamiliar to the majority of students, it tested their basic admin, field craft and resilience in one of the toughest tasks an infantry platoon sergeant has to get right. Having to motivate and lead fatigued and weary classmates is a job in itself; having to do it in an area you've just been landed in while trying to find an enemy, against the clock, is a whole different animal.





An engaging exercise scenario and lot of freedom of action in achieving their aims forced the students to rely on their own initiative and drive to find, fix and assault an enemy position and conduct a successful extraction.

The confusion of FIBUA and the complexity of OIWAF (operating in woods and forests) were captured in the last exercise, 'Belt Buckle'. These intricate operations represent the next level in infantry tactics, where command and control and tactical awareness can make or break a person's test appointment. If you include having to casevac a casualty from the centre of a built up area through safe lines and add in some CBRN later on, you have a recipe for a tasty week of command test appointments that examine students' decision-making process.

The students were continuously assessed throughout the course under a number of headings but also had both a major and minor test appointment. The minor test appointments were the key positions for the three main exercises described above.

On the Infantry Platoon Sergeants Course there is no hiding behind a GT or a submission to pass the course, and the major test appointment was the pass-or-fail command test during the last two weeks, which was done through an advance to contact (ATC) exercise. The ATC gains and maintains contact with the enemy. It's an aggressive form of advance that tests both a platoon commander and a platoon sergeant under great detail and time pressure.

Two weeks of platoon attacks after a tough three weeks on the ground really displays the calibre of an individual and the results accurately show how people react under mental and physical pressure. This test has to be experienced in full fighting order and body armour to be fully understood. In the end, all students passed, either as platoon commander or platoon sergeant.

Just as the situation in the world and our experiences overseas change, the Infantry Platoon Sergeants Course will continue to evolve. After a comprehensive series of debriefs, looking at the various aspects of the course, and involved, focused feedback from the students, the next step is to consolidate relevant points and incorporate them into the next course, which will continue to educate and train the junior leaders at the core of the Defence Forces. As Sgt Thomas Devereux, a long-standing instructor in the NCOTW said, *"I'm all over that."* ■

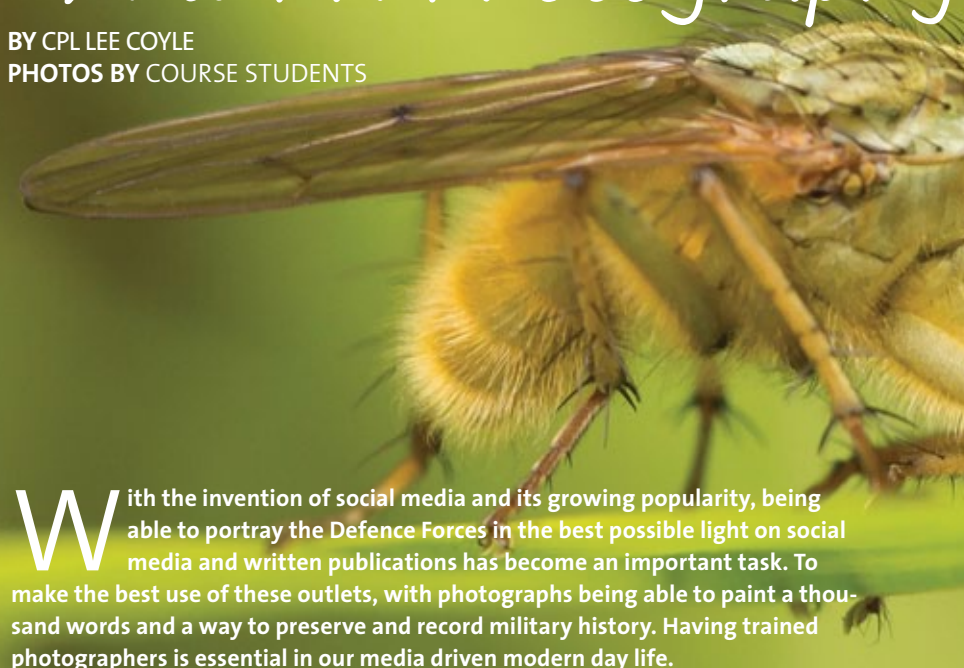


CAPTURING LIGHT

2nd PR Photography Course

BY CPL LEE COYLE

PHOTOS BY COURSE STUDENTS



By Sgt Karl Byrne

With the invention of social media and its growing popularity, being able to portray the Defence Forces in the best possible light on social media and written publications has become an important task. To make the best use of these outlets, with photographs being able to paint a thousand words and a way to preserve and record military history. Having trained photographers is essential in our media driven modern day life.

In June PR Branch, in conjunction with the MP School, conducted the 2nd PR Photography Course in the DFTC, for 2 weeks. 12 students from around the Defence Forces attended the course of knowledge base and practical instruction including training exercises – see their other work on our front cover and on pages 22/23.

The course syllabus covering a wide range of topics from tasks of a PR Photographer in the Defence Forces, Camera Handling, Exposure, Aperture, Shutter Speed and ISO. The course shows students how

the camera operates and how to set the camera to take photographs in different lighting conditions and different styles of photography. The students soon built their confidence behind the camera and learn some of the tasks of a PR photographer that can vary in a wide range of areas, from guard of honors to weapon displays.

We spoke to some students on the course to see what they had learned and about their background in photography:

Sgt Karl Byrne PR Branch *“Coming from a background in photography I had a very good working knowledge of what was presented on the course, but that didn’t stop me learning a few new tricks and ways around normal photography problems. A great course for the beginner and enthusiast as you’ll always learn something new.”*

Sgt Daniel Sheenan NBG/1 Bde *“As a complete novice going on the course, having only used my iPhone as a camera, I was impressed with the excellent use of skills and the instructors had a wealth of information to share. I’m now really confident with the camera and would highly recommend the course.”*

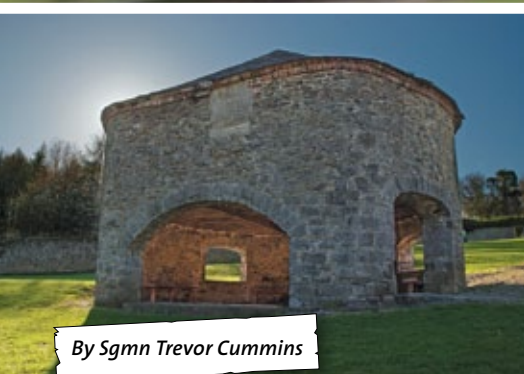
The students will return to their respective brigades/formations with the knowledge and skills to undertake various tasks allotted to them by PR Branch and their

own press and information officers (PIOs). ***If your unit has an upcoming event that it would like to have photographed you should contact your formation PIO or email info@military.ie.*** ■

By Cpl Ken Greene



By Sgmn Trevor Cummins



By Cpl Tom Duffy

By Sgt Don Sheehan





STRESS CONTROL FOR LIFE ^{Part 1}



Each person must assume the primary responsibility for his or her own stress control. No doubt, the Defence Forces can help to reduce stress in our personnel. However, no stress programme can be more important than the individual's own efforts.

1. DIET Poor diet and eating habits comprise performance, stamina and stress tolerance. Some substances intensify stress reactions. Limit or avoid caffeine, alcohol, refined sugars, fats and excessive salt.

CAFFEINE

Elevates blood pressure, heart rate, and the body's need for oxygen; Stimulates the cardiac muscle and central nervous system; Increases anxiety, sleeplessness and irritability; For less stress lighten up on the caffeine.

ALCOHOL

Negatively impacts performance, behaviour, judgement, and physical condition; Reduces the level of vitamins B and C in the blood and makes it more vulnerable to stress and disease; Suppresses rapid eye movement (REM) sleep that is vital for our ability to process traumatic experiences; If someone needs substance to manage stress, they also need professional assistance.

2. EXERCISE

Increase muscle strength, lung capacity, blood flow and stamina; Lowers blood pressure, weight, stress chemicals and cholesterol levels; Improves sleep and self-confidence; Reduces the potential for injury during a mission and may limit the severity of the injury should one occur.

EXERCISE TIPS

Choose enjoyable activities; Follow doctor's advice; Use proper equipment; Warm up and stretch muscles; Graduals build up of activity intensity and duration. Train, NOT strain; If exercise causes pain,

stop and get checked; Exercise 30 minutes every day; Walking only a mile a day reduces the risk of cardiac disease.

3. SMOKING

Please stop, if you never smoked do not start; Nicotine intensifies a stress reaction; Nicotine depletes vitamins C and E and makes the body more vulnerable to stress-related diseases.

4. POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

Stress is a challenge to be controlled and overcome; We have the powers to manage our stress. We think, categorise, remember, visualise, find humour and make decisions; Be flexible and do not take daily life too seriously; Find humour in difficult situations; Emotions should serve and not dominate us; Good thinking controls emotions; Do not jump to conclusions; get the facts; Avoid the distortions of self-blame and guilt; Admit mistakes and learn from them; Think first; do second; Get distress only about the important stuff; Stand tall; avoid pettiness; be a leader; Never do anything that would shame your unit, your family or yourself; Your conscience is a good guide.

5. SPIRITUALITY

A personal belief system is effective in stress control; People with a belief in a power beyond themselves cope with higher levels of stress for a longer time; Prayer, meditation and religious ceremonies are important for health.

6. RELAXATION

Not the same as rest; Deliberate, purposeful quieting of the mind and

body; Body chemicals produced by relaxation neutralise stress chemicals.

DEEP BREATHING

This effective relaxation technique can be performed virtually anywhere and at anytime. Here are some simple steps. Start with 3 very deep breaths as follows:

Bring in the very deepest breath possible. Hold it for 1 or 2 seconds and release it over 8 seconds; Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth; Pause for 5-10 seconds between each deep breath, breathing normally while resting; Relax the body as much as possible as you take the very deep breaths.

Proceed to 3 deep breaths.

These are smaller in volume (about one-half of a very deep breath); Inhale through nose and hold for 10 seconds; Continue to relax the body; Exhale forcefully through the mouth; Rest and breathe normally between breaths.

Finish with 3 normal sized, full breaths. Inhale through the nose. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Exhale forcefully through the mouth.

For more help and advice contact either the BPSSO, Chaplain or MAP or call one of the following:

Careline 1800 409388 | Samaritans NI 08457 909090 | Samaritans 1850 609090 | AWARE 1890 303302

THE HISTORY OF WEXFORD'S MILITARY BARRACKS

BY MONICA CROFTON AND COURTESY OF COMDT ENDA MCDONALD, OC E COY, 3 INF BN

According to Dr Hadden, founder of the Wexford Historical Society, Wexford Military Barracks began its life as a Danish fortress on a natural mound of earth, which at that time was bounded by the harbour on its east and southeast sides. The fortress commanded a good defensive position, high above the roadways and market place of the Celtic settlement that was centred near present-day Selskar. It also had a well of natural spring water, which made it the perfect place for a wooden fort.

In the 12th century the Normans built a stone castle on this same knoll. The exact date is not known but PH Hore, in his book *History of the Town and County of Wexford*, says it existed before 1185 when it is mentioned in Prince John's charter to his chamberlain as having a doorkeeper called Richard, who was probably the custodian of the hostages in the castle. Wexford historian Billy Colfer thought it more likely to have been built in the early half of the 13th century by William Marshall.

The castle was built outside the walls of the town, which was not unusual for the time as, according to Colfer, of the 36 towns with medieval castles only four were within the walls.

In 1317 the castle is described as being distinct from the borough with its own governor or constable.

In 1323-1324 we finally get a description: "A stone castle with four towers, and attached to it a roof with shingles and two other houses thatched (with straw)." A meadow below the castle was also mentioned, which must have been on the north-west side as the water of the harbour was on the south and east. It was there that the principal conventions, inquisitions and councils of both town and county were held.

The first constable was William FitzAldelm de Burgo, who died 1204-1205 to whom a fee of £5 to £10 was paid. There was a water mill near the castle, the name of which is still retained in present-day Mill Road.

The castle served as a jail, but it seems not to have been very effective, as when the Lord Deputy came to Wexford in 1579 he discovered that some of the prisoners had escaped. However, he executed those who remained.

In 1609, the charter of King James I granted use of the castle to the mayor and corporation of the town though it was still known as 'the King's castle'.

During Cromwell's campaign in Ireland Capt James Stafford was governor and constable of the castle, as well as captain of a foot company of 100 men. When Cromwell laid siege to the town in 1649 and negotiations were ongoing with David Sinnott, the town governor, the Cromwellian army gained access to the castle, where their appearance caused panic. The defending soldiers also panicked and abandoned their positions, allowing the Cromwellian army to breach the walls and gain entrance to the town. Stafford has traditionally been blamed for betraying the castle to Cromwell.

In 1651 Lt Col Thogmorton established a temporary barracks with stables and storehouses for the garrison and held courts-martial there. In 1656 its function as a gaol ended when that role was taken over by Stafford's castle at Stonebridge. A garrison was retained in the castle from 1659.

In 1662, the Duke of Albermarle was in charge of Wexford, and appointed Lt Sir Richard Clifton to garrison the castle. Also around that time the Duke of Ormond issued a recommendation to all mayors and chief magistrates of garrison towns to provide fire and candles for garrison guards.

In 1690, when the town declared for William of Orange, Col Butler, the Lord Lieutenant of the county, sent a letter to the garrison commander, Capt Kelly, to leave



at once with his company of foot to join up with King James in Duncannon, and to set the castle on fire before he left. However, the letter fell into the hands of an English merchant, who did not deliver it but just told Kelly that he was wanted at Duncannon immediately with his troops. As soon as Kelly and his company left, the message about burning the castle was disclosed to the Protestant inhabitants of the town who rose, disarmed the Papists and seized the castle.

The castle was sold early in the 18th century and was converted into a barracks. The demolition of the castle must have been a huge job as the walls were 17 feet thick. Mr Edward Sutton, the builder, stated that the building was ready for troops in 1725 and three years later three companies of foot were quartered there.

However, there were many complaints that the barracks was too small to accommodate 600 men, that rooms were too small, and ceilings too low. There were also complaints of a gasworks nearby and a fetid stream (almost an open sewer). Many men had to be billeted in the town, which the townspeople didn't like, and there was always a danger that the men could get out of the control of their officers.

Early in 1798 the North Cork militia took up residence in the barracks and the hunt for rebels began. Those found to have weapons of any kind were punished by pitch capping and half hangings. These activities and their right to free quarters made the militia the object of hatred and animosity in the town. On hearing that the rising had begun in Oulart, Lt Col Foote, who was in command at the time, led about 100 soldiers from Wexford barracks to face the rebels. They were completely defeated and only Foote and two or three privates survived. When the rebels captured the town the Wexford garrison fled to Duncannon.

After the defeat of the rebels on Vinegar Hill on 21st June the Crown forces retook control of the barracks.

The Wexford Militia remained in the barracks until 1882, recruiting for 8d daily pocket money; three good meals a day, butter and jam for breakfast, and a meat dinner with vegetables; a good pair of boots, shirt and socks to take home; and 'shillings for bringing in new blood'.

In 1882 the Cardwell Reforms were introduced in an effort to solve the problem of supplying new recruits to regiments stationed throughout the British Empire. These reforms linked militias or territorial units to form reserve battalions within regiments, not too dissimilar to the Defence Forces' model today, and the Wexford Militia became the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment.

Following the 1916 Rising, the homes of Sinn Féin supporters and other 'suspects' were raided and some of those arrested were imprisoned in Wexford Barracks until they could be sent to Dublin.

In September 1920, 40 members of the Devonshire Regiment stationed at the barracks ran amok on Wexford's streets, demanding to know where the Sinn Féin club was. When some local people were assaulted, the RIC tried to intervene and asked for assistance from the other troops in the barracks. This was refused. Fights broke out between locals and the soldiers in the Bullring and on Main Street and eventually the soldiers were driven back into the barracks.

In an incident during the Civil War in 1922, IRA men fired about 20 rounds at the barracks from a field near Distillery Road but there was no return fire from the Regiment.

In the summer of 1923 the barracks was handed over to Free State forces, who maintained a small presence there until the Emergency, when many regular units used the barracks as their HQ. This period was the first time 3 Infantry Battalion became associated with the barracks, where they were used to train the newly formed North Wexford, New Ross and Wexford LDF battalions as well as securing the south-east coastline.

In 1946 the LDF was replaced by the FCA and the barracks became HQ of the Wexford FCA Battalion. In 1959 five FCA battalions were amalgamated to form 10 Inf Bn FCA (O'Hanranhan Battalion) with HQ Coy and A Coy based in Wexford Bks.

After the reorganisation of 2006 the barracks continued in use as 33 Inf Bn RDF's HQ. In 2013, 33 Inf Bn RDF was subsumed into 3 Inf Bn as its reserve company.

Today Wexford Castle/Barracks, call it what you will, with its towering stone walls continues to stand proudly defiant and its centuries of history are carried lightly as the barracks square continues to echo to the commands and drilling of the officers, NCOs and privates of E Coy, 3 Inf Bn. ■



BOXING CLEVER

REPORT & PHOTOS BY CPL LEE COYLE



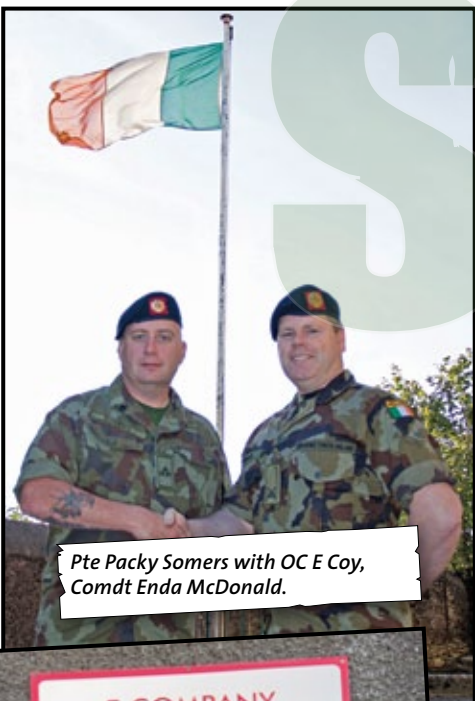
An Cosantóir visited Wexford Military Post to talk to Pte Packy Somers about his RDF career, a health scare, and his upcoming World Karate and Kickboxing Commission (WKC) Senior Veteran (90kg) world championship title fight in Orlando, Florida, this November.

Growing up I had family serving in the PDF, my brother Pte Derek Somers, served in the Curragh as a medic and my uncle, Sgt Major Paddy Waters, served in the Equitation School in McKee Bks. I enlisted in my local RDF unit, A Coy, 10 Inf Bn, in Wexford in the early '90s but due to work commitments I couldn't parade and left after three years. However, I re-enlisted in June 1996.

I had an interest in the Defence Forces, weapons, and fitness from an early age and sometimes think it's a shame I never enlisted in to the

"I was diagnosed with skin cancer, which was a harder blow than I ever received in the ring... I've always been a fighter so beating it was another great victory for me."





Pte Packy Somers with OC E Coy, Comdt Enda McDonald.



PDF. Having said that, I have enjoyed my years in the RDF, where there is always good buzz and banter, especially on summer camps and on exercises. One of my fondest memories in the RDF is the visit of the relic of Saint Thérèse in 2001, where we had the honour of carrying it through Wexford town.

Since the latest re-org of the RDF we have become more involved with the PDF, which has been very enjoyable and I have learned a great deal.

I come from a large family with 10 brothers and sisters, and after my father passed away when I was two years old, my mother, the great woman she is, raised us by herself. She encouraged me to go to kickboxing and to join the RDF.

I got started in kickboxing at the age of 11 in Wexford Academy of Martial Arts, under the tuition of the late Sensei Noel Clancy (RIP). I took to it well, liking the discipline and fitness aspects of the training. I went on to win the Under-16 (60kg) World Association of Kickboxing Organisations (WAKO) Leinster and all-Ireland titles, which I held until I went to senior level.

Within a year of turning senior, I won the WAKO Leinster and all-Ireland titles and have since lost count of my titles, but it's about 25 Leinster and 25 all-Ireland, at various weights and fighting scales (full contact, points fighting and continuous), at senior and senior veteran (35+) level.

Then, at 36 I was diagnosed with skin cancer, which was a harder blow than I ever received in the ring. I spent the next five years being treated for a melanoma on my spine, including three operations, before I was given the all clear.

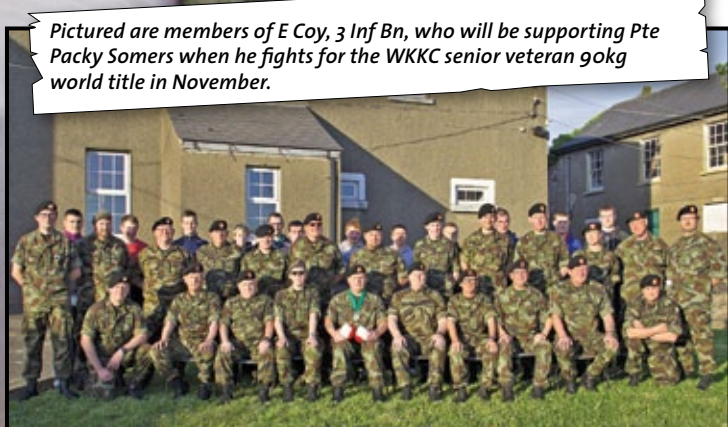
After my operations I had trouble walking and was worried I would never fight again. However, my love of the sport motivated me to get back into the ring and I came back hard and strong and reclaimed the WAKO Senior Leinster and all-Ireland titles. This led me on to the 2013 WKC Senior (90kg) world championships in Italy, where I won a bronze medal.

At the moment I'm training with Carlow Kickboxing Club, under the direction of Sensei Patsy Whelan, for the WKC Senior Veteran (90kg) world title in Orlando, Florida, this November. The draw won't be made until I arrive in the US but I'm not worried as I'm training hard and will be ready for whoever I get.

I would like to thank all my instructors over the years, with a special mention to Sensei Tony Clancy, Sensei Tom Clancy, Sensei Noel Clancy (RIP), Sensei Tom Dempsey, and Sensei Patsy Whelan, for their help and training; and also my fiancé Caroline and my kids Jamie and Stacie for their support.

I would like to mention and remember my father, James (RIP), and to really thank my mother, Josephine, for being the strong, brave woman, who raised us all under difficult circumstances - she truly is one in 10 million. Finally, I would like to thank Comdt Enda McDonald and all in E Coy, 3 Inf Bn, for their continued support. ■

Pictured are members of E Coy, 3 Inf Bn, who will be supporting Pte Packy Somers when he fights for the WKKC senior veteran 90kg world title in November.



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October, 26th 2015



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-Eoin Casey

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OAK & STORM



Purpose built and designed to appear subtle and inconspicuous, the COVRT 18 is a full-sized covert backpack that provides superior tactical utility and efficiency in a wide range of environments. Also perfect for off duty CCW use, the COVRT 18 features a Backup Belt System™ compatible hidden pistol pocket and a concealed Roll-down Assault Compartment (RAC) that can house a full sized firearm. QuickTact™ accessory straps at the shoulder integrate with other 5.11 Tactical Gear, a padded sunglass pocket keeps your eyewear protected, and a flip down ID panel allows you to go from covert to overt instantly. The main compartment provides a padded laptop sleeve and roomy main and secondary storage areas, while adjustable yoke shoulders, compression straps, and a reinforced grab handle ensure easy carry.

Overview: Full-featured covert backpack, Ambidextrous side-entry Back-Up Belt System® compartment, RAC conceals a full-sized firearm, Roomy main and secondary storage areas, Reinforced grab handle, QuickTact™ accessory straps, Sunglass pocket, Flip-down ID panel and Padded internal laptop sleeve.

Specifications: Durable, water-resistant 500D nylon, 19"H x 12.25"L x 6.5"D main storage area, 11"H x 9.25"L x 2.5"D secondary storage area, Comfortable compression straps, Adjustable sternum strap, Yoke-style shoulder straps, YKK® zippers and Duraflex® hardware.



5.11 PATROL READY BAG

€59.95



5.11 TACTICAL RECON OUTBOUND GYM BAG

€89.95



5.11 A.T.A.C SIDE ZIP - 8" BLACK

€109.99



5.11 RANGE READY BAG

€119.99



5.11 TACLITE PRO VEST

BLACK
€89.99



RAPID ASSAULT SHIRT

MULTICAM
€89.99



COMPETITION

For a chance to win the Backpack featured above worth €119.99, kindly sponsored by www.team-alpha.ie, answer the following question:

How much are the TacLite Pro Pants – Black 1272 on team-alpha.ie?

Send your answer along with your name, address & contact number to An Cosantóir's address or by email to subs@military.ie by the 19th September 2015. Winner will be the first correct entry drawn.

Last month's winner was: Sgt Jim Dwyer, Air Corps

NOTICEBOARD

Camden Fort Meagher

Camden Fort Meagher, Crosshaven, Camden Road, Co. Cork, Ireland. Internationally recognised as being "one of the finest remaining examples of a Coastal Artillery Fort in the world." Camden Fort Meagher is open every weekend and is an ideal family day out with lots to see and do, including underground tunnels and chambers, exhibitions and harbour view tearooms. 65% of Camden Fort Meagher is located underground in a labyrinth of tunnels and chambers.

Dates: Weekends from July to **September 14th** 2015.

Admission: €5 per adult, €4 for 4-18 years old and children under 4 go free.

Times: Open every Sat, Sun and Bank Holiday Mondays from 12 midday to 5pm last entry 4.15pm. Private tours are available for groups of 12 or more by calling 085 850 1483 or email: bookings@camdenfortmeagher.ie.

For more info see <http://camdenfortmeagher.ie/> **or follow them on Facebook!**

GPS: 51.809542 N, 008.279034 W

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Medal Mounting Service:

Competitive prices, contact Murty Quinn
087 9394680

Lanyards made to order:

Prices, contact Brian
087 2971982

WORD SEARCH

CROSS OFF THE WORDS IN THE LIST AS YOU FIND THEM.

Word searches are fun, they also bring benefits you may not realise and can play an important role in keeping you mentally fit.

Styer AUG Parts Bolt Group

D	E	V	J	P	H	P	I	E	C	E	Q	G	D	S
H	E	A	M	I	I	A	F	V	R	R	S	Q	K	L
H	B	V	S	F	S	U	B	O	Y	B	E	Y	Y	P
I	R	I	E	O	E	L	R	W	G	N	I	R	P	S
K	C	O	L	E	P	H	M	Y	Q	K	U	R	N	H
X	T	O	T	O	L	Z	X	V	H	G	N	H	S	V
L	Z	Q	Z	C	C	S	D	O	R	F	D	Y	H	L
L	Y	A	S	P	A	C	G	V	N	A	R	Z	V	E
A	W	K	Y	M	V	R	O	P	H	D	G	B	F	J
E	P	S	G	S	U	Q	T	M	W	F	N	Y	Z	E
Q	D	P	B	B	K	X	P	X	F	I	I	Y	Z	C
U	I	I	M	U	M	C	Z	P	E	U	K	M	I	T
N	D	C	U	H	X	Q	A	L	N	B	C	N	J	O
L	J	W	V	G	A	D	O	L	S	L	O	R	R	R
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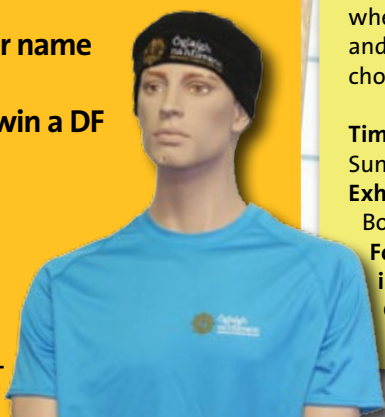
EJECTOR
EXTRACTOR
GUIDE
LOCK
LOCKING
PIECE
PIN
RODS
SLEEVE
SPRING

Q&A SEPTEMBER

WHAT YEAR WAS IUNVA FOUNDED (THIS ISSUE)?

Post your answer along with your name and address to us or email subs@military.ie for a chance to win a DF Dry Flo T-shirt and 'Goody Bag'.

Last month's winner of the An Cosantóir T-shirt and 'Goody Bag' T-shirt was Robert Taylor, Ongar, Dublin 15. Closing date is 19th September 2015.



TOY SOLDIER FACTORY

The world's largest battle scene of the *Battle of Waterloo* is currently on display at the Toy Soldier Factory in the village of Kilnamartyra, Macroom – 40mins from Cork City. The Toy Soldier Factory has become popular with all ages, from school tours, family days out to company team building, hen parties & active retirement groups, everyone is a kid when it comes to making toy soldiers, fairies, chess sets and Christmas decorations, they have a huge range to choose from.

Times: Open 7 days a week: Mon - Fri 9am to 5pm and Sat, Sun & Bank Hols 10am to 5pm (closed St. Patrick's Day).
Exhibit: Single €7.50, Family: €10.00 (2 Adults, 2 Children), Book online & save 10%.

For more info call 026 40222, or email info@princeaugust.ie **or see** www.toysoliderfactory.ie.
GPS: Long 9.0826 Lat 51.9006

IRISH DOCTORS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Authors: Patrick Casey, Kevin Cullen, Joe Duignan with a foreword by Kevin Myers
Publisher: Merrion (June 2015)
www.merrionpress.ie
ISBN: 978-1785370045
Price: €31.00
Pages: 526 H/B

This beautifully illustrated book is in two parts, the first part is an account of the various posts of the first world war, including some of the less well known theatres of the middle east – Suez Canal, Palestine, Syria and Basra as well as the campaigns in Salonika and Serbia; all areas familiar to some *An Cosantóir* readers. There are chapters on the war at sea, French warfare, medical care and casualty evacuation.

A chapter on Ireland includes a list of all the auxiliary military hospitals, including the Red Cross hospital in Dublin Castle, where many of the wounded were taken during the 1916 rebellion including

James Connolly. Strangely, the major military hospitals, some of which are still used by today's Defence Forces only receive a passing mention.

The second part of the book is a roll of honour of all the Irish doctors and students who served in the Great War. Amongst the famous was Sir Alfred Keogh from Dublin who was Director General of the Royal Army Medical Corps. He retired before the war but was recalled at the start of the war. Sir F. J. Morrin joined the RAMC in 1915, but left it after Easter 1916 and joined the French Army. He was decorated with the Legion of Honour. After his return to Ireland, he was surgeon in the Curragh Hospital at the height of the Civil War, then the Director General of the Army Medical Corps. He later became a distinguished surgeon in St. Vincent's Hospital and died in 1968.

This book is well worth reading, it's aimed at a wide general readership, not being full of military or medical jargon. Nevertheless, it will interest military and medical historians. **CJB**



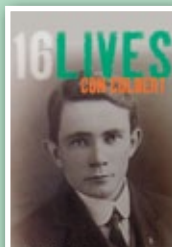
CON COLBERT 16 LIVES SERIES

Author: Dr John O'Callaghan
Publisher: O'Brien Press (March 2015)
www.obrien.ie
ISBN: 978-1847173348
Price: €14.99
Pages: 256 P/B

Dr John O'Callaghan's biography of Con Colbert is the latest volume in the 16 Lives series, edited by Lorcan Collins and Dr Ruán O'Donnell. The premise of the series is to record 'for posterity' the lives of the sixteen men executed after the Easter Rising. Accustomed to thinking of these men collectively as the 'leaders of the Easter Rising' it was disconcerting to realise that I couldn't name all sixteen without resort to a history book. Colbert is referred to as one of the lesser known leaders and in his introduction O'Callaghan asks if Colbert was not executed would it have been a glaring omission; if he was not executed would he warrant a biography and how significant was the element of chance in his case? He concludes that Colbert's execution was heavily linked to his prominent reputation prior to the Rising as well as his service during Easter Week.

O'Callaghan draws on a wide variety of sources in his work, particularly Colbert's own correspondence and the Bureau of Military History witness statements. He paints a detailed picture of Colbert's early involvement in Na Fianna and the Irish Volunteers, his excellent reputation within the movement and his self-taught expertise as a drill instructor and in organising training. He also illustrates Colbert's service during the Rising in Watkin's Brewery and Marrowbone Lane, pointing out that these posts were relatively quiet, he was not the senior officer at his post and that several higher ranking officers were not executed for their role in the Rising.

Despite the case O'Callaghan builds, I finished the book feeling curious rather than convinced by his argument. If Colbert had been tried a few days later would his sentence have been commuted? Who decided the order in which the court-martials would take place? Or was Colbert's one of the early court-martials because he was easily recognised? The rest of the books in the series will allow comparison with the other executed men which may help explain why Colbert paid the extreme penalty. **NG**



IMPREASIN NA GAELIGE A - H AND IMPREASIN NA GAELIGE I - Z

Author: Seosamh Mac Ionnrachtaigh
Publisher: AuthorHouse UK (June 2015), (www.authorhouse.com)
ISBN: 978-1496984166 / 978-1496984173
Price: €100 PB / €5.73 eBook
Pages: 460 & 452

Former army sergeant, Joseph R. Enright, has published *Impreasin na Gaelige A - H* and *Impreasin na Gaelige I - Z*.

These research books on the sound of the Irish language are based on native voices of the Gael from the Gaeltacht itself. The books are based on empirical work by two authors from County Clare. An tAthair Seóirse Mac Clúin based Réilthíní Óir on the Irish of the Great Blasket Islands. Réilthíní Óir comprised the native Irish of Tomás Ó Cíomhthain and the islanders of the Great Blasket Islands prior to 1922. The original title is revised in full with modern additions based on current native Irish (2007-2014). This combined research results in an Irish-Irish Dictionary of the Irish language with key explanations in English.

Joseph enlisted in the General Training Depot on 26th January 1977. He served overseas from 8th April 1980 with No 2 Irish Component, UNIFIL HQ, Naqura, South Lebanon. He served in the Army Ranger Wing on 27th February 1981, where he was promoted to sergeant. He was later posted to 1 Cn Cois (an Chéad Chath), on 23rd February 1983. He was discharged on 26th April 1985 after a total of 6 years and 91 days where his military conduct was Exemplary.

Seosamh Mac Ionnrachtaigh's dream is that every family in Ireland will have a copy of his book at home.



WHAT I DO

NAME

PAUL MULREADY

RANK

CORPORAL

UNIT

2 CAV SQN

I always had an interest in fitness, and wanted to be a fitness instructor when I left Fingal Community College in Swords. However, I also wanted to travel a bit and ended up going to Greece for a year as a club rep. After I came home I worked for Champion Sports but I still wanted something that would push my fitness; so when I saw an advert on TV for the Defence Forces I decided to enlist, which I did in Monaghan on 26th April 2004 as part of 38 Recruit Platoon.

After my recruit training I opted for 5 Inf Bn in McKee Bks as I was living in Kinsealy. During my first year I completed a 60mm Vector Mortar course and applied to travel overseas for the first time with 94 Inf Bn, UNMIL, in Liberia from November 2005. While on form-up with 94 Inf Bn I completed a Mowag Dismount course.

Being away from home was not new for me and I settled in well to life out there. However, I was shocked to see the poverty and living conditions of the locals in Liberia. My role out there with the QRF involved keeping the cookhouse and kitchen going with logs, rations and stores.

When I returned home I completed an 84mm Anti-tank course and a Recce course, which I found very interesting and a valuable course to have completed. I also completed a Basic Pipers course and joined the 5 Inf Bn Pipe Band, which I really enjoyed.

From July 2008 to February 2009 I successfully underwent a Pot NCOs course and shortly after that I had the privilege of travelling to Lourdes with the Defence Forces Pipe Band. This was my first time to travel to Lourdes and I enjoyed seeing different nations' armies and how spiritual the whole area is.

Later that year I did a civilian fitness course in Palmerstown called NCF Fitness. I found my army training helped me a great deal in completing the course, which also added to my instructional skills.

I travelled overseas again in 2010, this time to Chad with Recce Coy, 102 Inf Bn, MIN-URCAT. This was my first overseas mission as an NCO, and I prepared myself as well as I could, including completing a Mowag Commanders course.

I found the trip tough, with water shortages and long range patrols in the dry, hot climate, but it was also interesting, working with NGOs and doing mine clearances.

The trip got very busy at the end due to the mission closing down and the camp and ordnance having to be packed away for the journey home to Ireland.

On returning to Ireland I completed some more courses, including Infantry Mortar Instructor and C-IED Instructor.

With the re-org in 2012 I had the opportunity to move to 2 Cav Sqn. It meant a longer commute, as I am living in Lusk, but I was prepared to commit myself to learning new skills in a new corps. This led to me completing a Recce Commanders course and a Motorcycle Instructor course. These allowed me to be more involved with running courses within the unit, like the Dispatch Riders course, which I've just finished instructing on. Being an instructor on a course like this is very enjoyable, and knowing that you are teaching students who will go on to do an Escort of Honour for the president is very rewarding. Few people get to know that feeling, and how many hours of work goes into cleaning the bikes and rehearsing our drills.

While, at the moment I'm enjoying having recently become a father, after my wife, Caroline, gave birth to our son, Cooper. In the future I hope to continue to advance my career by becoming an armour driver instructor and completing a Standard NCOs course, which will hopefully allow me to be promoted in the future. ■



"Being part of an Escort of Honour for the president is very rewarding and only a few people will know that feeling."





Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen & Women

Support our Homeless Ex-Service Personnel

Buy a Fuchsia



FUCHSIA APPEAL LAUNCH

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD



Pictured l-r: Peter McGlynn, Ollie O'Connor (CEO ONE), Senator Lorraine Higgins (Labour), Tpr Jessica Slevin, Tpr Kevin Miller (both 1 ACS), Lt Gen Conor O'Boyle (COS) and Peter Byrne. Photo by: Sgt Mick Burke, PR Branch

On 30th June 2015, the Organisation of National Ex-Servicemen and Women (ONE) in conjunction with the Defence Forces launched their 7th annual Fuchsia appeal in Ceannt Bks, DFTC, Curragh Camp. The ONE requires serious funding on an ongoing basis, in the region of €600,000 per year to help fund the three residential homes and two drop-in centres around the country. The Fuchsia appeal has gradually grown from its inception in 2009, raising initially €14,000 to over €40,000 per annum in recent years.

The Fuchsia was chosen as their fundraising emblem, a badge of remembrance and a symbol to honour those currently serving in the Defence Forces as it is widely grown throughout Ireland and is commonly known as Deora Dé or God's Tears in the West of Ireland.

Launching the appeal, Ollie O'Connor, Chief Executive of ONE said, *"The Fuchsia appeal is vital for the organisation. It enables us to help former colleagues who are having a difficult time and without a home. Many of these people gave outstanding service to the State and to the United Nations and for one reason or another have not been able to make ends meet since leaving the service."*

At the launch Chief of Staff Lt Gen Conor O'Boyle said, *"This is a crucial aspect of ONE, those that are still serving recognise the work ONE does for retired ex-members of the Defence Forces. The new white paper on defence has a veteran's policy in it, and it is really important that these veterans' are recognised."* The chief finished by saying, *"I encourage you to continue what you do."*

The main drive of the appeal took place during the month of July, which is the month of the National Day of Remembrance. You can still help this very worthwhile and rewarding charity, which would certainly benefit from serving members of the Defence Forces, who may make a voluntary donation of 50 cent per week (€2 per month) deducted at source from your pay role. Retired members in receipt of DF pension can also make a voluntary contribution of €2 per month deducted at source. There are many ways to donate visit **www.oneconnect.ie** - And remember *"No donation is considered too small and all are welcome."*

The Minister for Defence Simon Coveney TD also called into the ONE HQ on the morning of the launch to lend his support. He is pictured here with (left) Ollie O'Connor, Chief Executive of ONE, and (right) Paddy Rooney (Chairman ONE). Photo by: Cpl Colum Lawlor, 105 Sqn



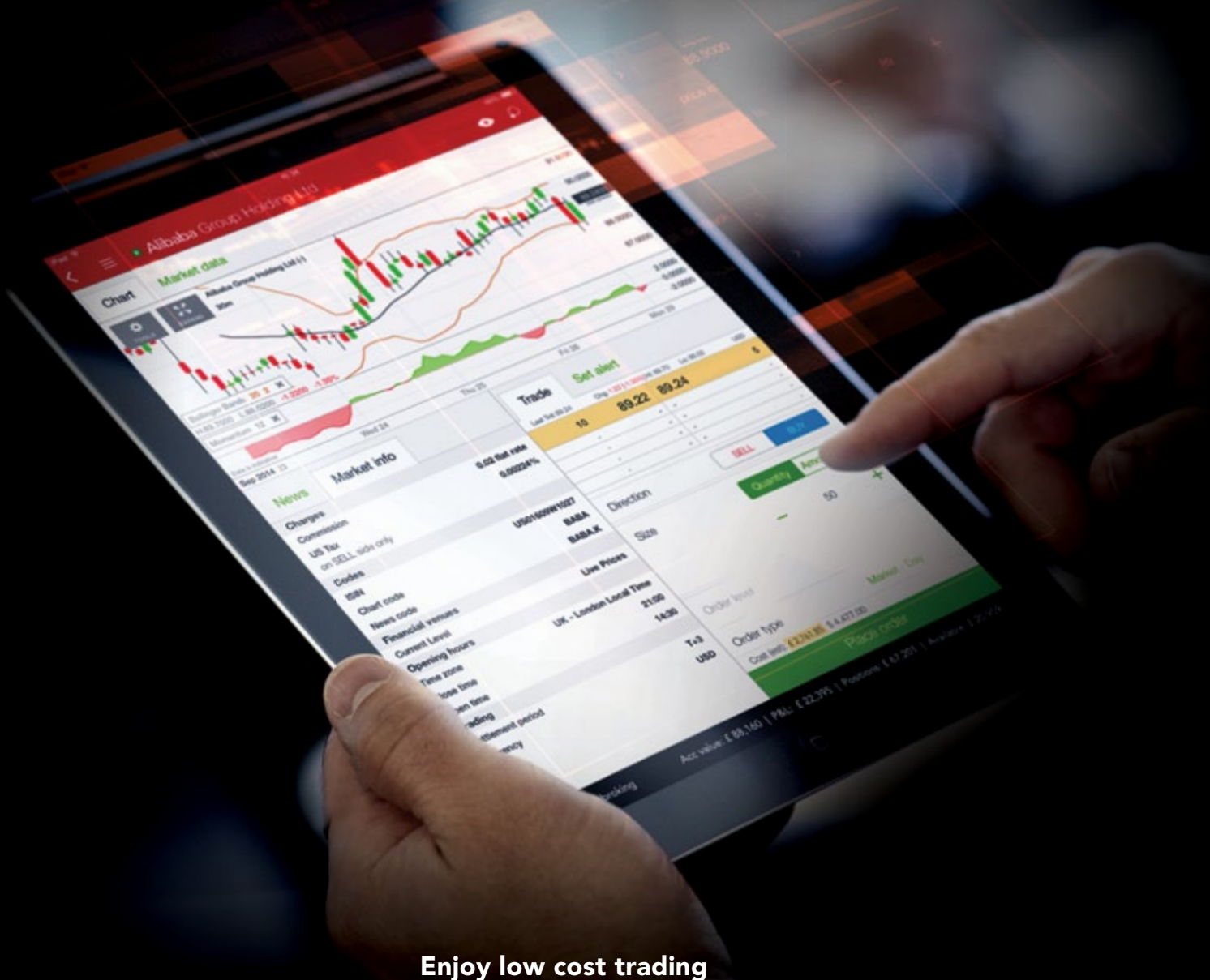
215 cuidiú leosan a dhéan seirbhís

Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann Teoranta, Brú na bhFiann, Smithfield Market,

North King Street, Dublin 7. CHY 13868 Tel: 01 485 0666

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