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ARMED FORCES TRAINING

[STRENGTHEN THE NATION]

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na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

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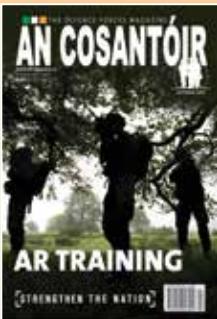
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STRENGTHEN
THE NATION

Contents

VOLUME 79
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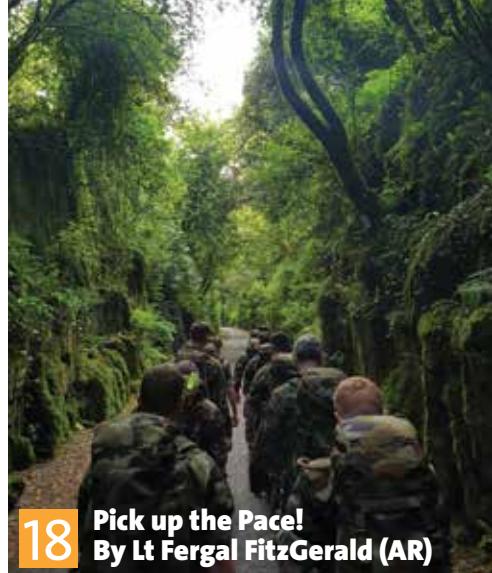


CONTENTS

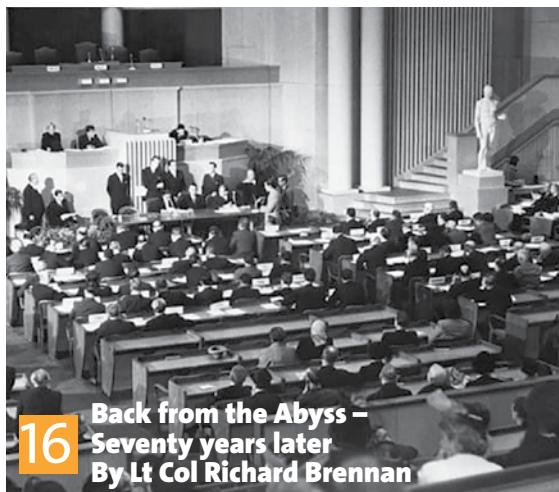
FEATURES



12 A Sprinters Tail
By Comdt Ruaidhri Kedney



18 Pick up the Pace!
By Lt Fergal FitzGerald (AR)



**16 Back from the Abyss –
Seventy years later**
By Lt Col Richard Brennan



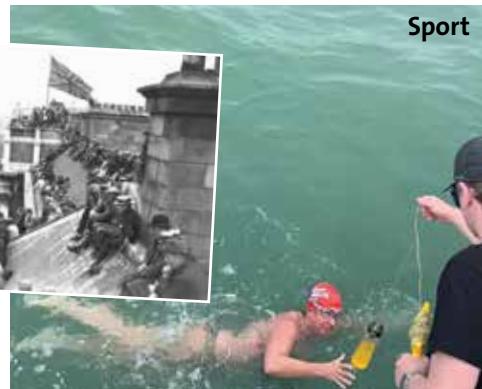
20 OGL and the 2006 War (Part 2)
By Comdt Kevin McDonald Ret'd

REGULARS

- 6** On Parade
- 8** In Focus
- 25** Tac Aide
- 27** History
- 31** Sport
- 35** Gear Up
- 36** Notice-Board
- 37** Reviews
- 38** What I Do



History



Sport



VALUE YOUR VOTE!

Kildare County Council are currently preparing the draft register of electors for 2020-2021. RFC registration forms are issued by the Defence Forces authorities to every whole-time member of the Defence Forces on 1 September each year.

Instructions are issued, requiring the completed RFC forms to be returned by each Defence Forces Unit to the local authority by 25 November.

Where an RFC form is not received in respect of a member of the Defence Forces who is on the register of electors 2019-2020 their name will be removed from the draft register of electors 2020-2021 postal voters list. Check that your name and address are present and correct on the Draft Register.

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Front Cover

Photo by Sgt Karl Byrne,
PR Branch

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Editorial

Hello and welcome to our October issue, in our main feature, Pte Finn McHale gives us an insight into three star training in the Army reserve, their training took place over two intense weeks in Dún Uí Mhaolíosa Bks, Galway hosted by 1 Inf Bn.

This month we have 16 Articles, ranging from individual sporting achievements to historical landmark achievements on a world scale. Our first *In Focus* piece is a look at the life of Father David Murphy in *From the Trenches to the Pulpit*, who began army life as a Pte, got promoted to Cpl and left the army to join the priest hood, and is now back serving the Defence Forces as an Army Priest. The second *In Focus* piece is brought to us by Lorcan Barron, about the motorsport career of Gnr Lee Bracken, who went from photographing rally events to competing in them.

Our Veterans News remembers the 50th anniversary of Tpr Michael Kennedy, who started his career in 1 ACS Plunkett Bks in 1966 but sadly died 3 years later in a tragic accident while serving his country overseas. Our first feature is a double on Athletics, the first of which describes what its like to be a sprint athlete of the Defence Forces by Comdt Ruaidhri Kedney in *A Sprinters Tale*, the second part of the feature is a report by Cpl Martin Bennett on the recent All Army Athletics events held in Waterford back in August. In our second feature article 95th Cadet class gives us a look at one of there many weeks of training as they braved the various tasks involved in adventure training in Galway. This is followed by a piece on the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Geneva Convention in 'Back

from the Abyss – seventy years later, by Lt Col Richard Brennan.

In *Pick up the Pace!*, Lt Fergal Fitzgerald (AR) details the 4 day marching event 'Vierdaagse (4 daagse) in Nijmegen, from training here at home to the event itself in the Netherlands. A gruelling event but a great insight for anyone considering competing next year. Moving onto page 20 Comdt Kevin McDonald (ret'd) brings us his second part of *Peacekeeping on the Edge OGL and the 2006 War*, the article concludes in this issue and is 'dedicated to the memory of those who paid the ultimate price'.

Our Tac Aide this month by Áine Carroll explains the various steps needed to obtain a mortgage in today's market. Our first history article takes us back to 1916 in *Trinity College 1916: what might have been*, as a small garrison defended Trinity College, told by Dr Rory Sweetman. Our second history article by Pte Terence O'Reilly, looks at the history of the now disbanded 5 Inf Bn, who many of its members are still serving in various units across the Defence Forces today. Lt O'Hare brings us a very interesting article about the workings of suppressors in *The Sound of Silence(rs)*.

Moving onto our *Sport* features, firstly Capt Deirdre Newell tells us of her courageous swim across the English Channel. Next CQMS Deirdre O'Raw recalls her 13km swim for the Frances Thornton Memorial Galway Bay swim.

Our final feature, *What I Do* looks into the working life of an instructor in the IWW from Sgt Karl Johnston.

We also have our regular features: *Gear Review*, *Noticeboard*, *Book Reviews* and *Pro Tac Competition*.

Sgt Karl Byrne – Editor



Competition Winner

The winner of last month's competition for a CD from Defence Forces Veteran Gabby Fitzgerald was John Martin, Co. Kildare.

6 | ON PARADE



▲ NEW RECRUITS DOWN SOUTH

Pictured are members of the 154th Recruit Platoon, 12 Inf Bn who held their passing out in Sarsfield Bks, Limerick recently. The award for 'Best Overall Recruit' went to Kevin Hennessy. *Photos: Pte Michael 'Rama' Walsh, 12 Inf Bn*



◀ 114 INF BN UNIFIL FUND RAISER NEW RECRUITS DOWN SOUTH

Pictured is Sgt Feargal McLoughlin presenting a cheque for over €1,000 to Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin this week. 114 Inf Bn UNIFIL conducted a 5km race around UNP 2-45 recently to raise funds for this worthwhile cause. Sgt McLoughlin had the opportunity to present the cheque whilst home on leave. *Photo: Provided by Capt Gerry Duff 114 Inf Bn UNIFIL*

12 INF BN CELEBRATES 80TH ANNIVERSARY

Pictured on Friday 23rd August 2019, are serving members of 12 Inf Bn, along with GOC 1 Bde, Brig Gen Patrick Flynn, on the 80th Anniversary of the Battalion in Sarsfield Bks, Limerick. The 12 Inf Bn was formed in 1939. Also present on the day but not pictured were retired members of 12 Inf Bn. *Photos: Pte Michael 'Rama' Walsh, 12 Inf Bn*



▲ 'INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW / LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT COURSE'

An International Humanitarian Law / Law of Armed Conflict Course was hosted by Medical Corps in UNTSI recently. Pictured are students from the DF Medical Corps, the UK Armed Forces Medical Services, instructors from the International Committee on Military Medicine, and members of Medical Branch. *Photo: Coy Sgt John Mulvaney, McKee Bks Coy*



▲ VICTORY FOR 1 CN COIS

Congratulations to the 1 Cn Cois Military Skills team led by Cpl Mick Jacob and Cpl Simon Hogan who won the 1 Bde Military Skills Competition 2019. Pictured is OC 1 Cn Cois, Lt Col Flannery with the winning 1 Cn Cois team. The event was hosted and ran by 1 Cn Cois on Oranmore Range and Training Area and tested participating teams in skills such as navigation, map reading, judging distance and observation and included an M203 and small arms shoot. *Photo: Provided by Capt Ruairí Millane, 1 Cn Cois*

ON PARADE



▲ LAST DAY IN UNIFORM

Pictured is RSM Johnny Murray, CIS Sch and current Defence Forces Values Champion who had his last day in uniform on Tuesday 3rd September 2019. He is pictured with Brig Gen Dick Heslip retd, Charlie Mott, IUNVA, RSM Murray, Anto Byrne, IUNVA and Michael Thompson, IUNVA. *Photo by Martin Rowe, IUNVA*



▲ 'OUTSTANDING 40 YEARS' SERVICE'

Last month Sgt Jean Maher RDF was presented with his certificate of discharge from the Reserve Defence Force after an outstanding 40 years service. GOC 2 Bde, Brig Gen Howard Berney presented him with this framed certificate. He is also pictured with Comdt Ronan Clarke, SO RDF 2 Bde, and Lt Col Peter Keenan, SSO RDF 2 Bde HQ. *Photo: Pte David Hogarty, 2 BDE HQ*



▲ ECHO270 AT UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL GALWAY

Pictured on the 1st August 2019, is Irish Air Corps Airbus H135 P2, Tail Number 270 and callsign ECHO270 at University Hospital (UH) Galway. The helicopter from 302 Training & Surveillance Sqn, 3 Ops Wing had a student pilot on board and was conducting a navigation exercise to UH Galway. *Photo: David McGrath*



▲ 9/11 MEMORIAL IN DONADEA FOREST PARK

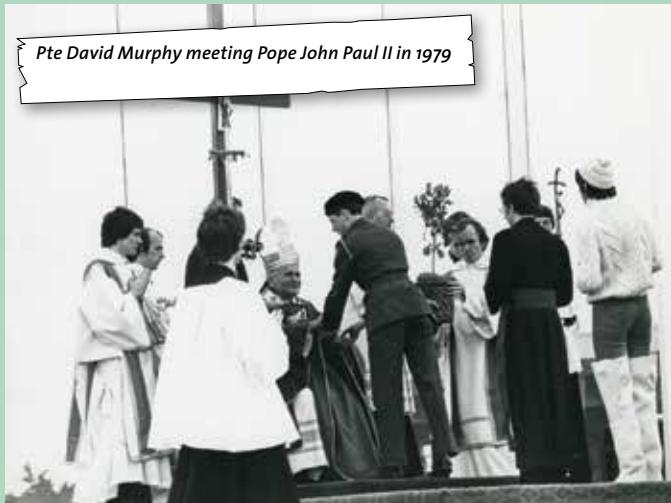
A Tri-Service memorial was held in Donadea Forest Park on 9th September to remember those who lost their lives in the 9/11 attacks in New York. The annual service saw members from 2 Inf Bn Association, An Garda Síochána and Dublin Airport Police Fire & Rescue Services, who performed a Guard of Honour at the memorial erected in honour of the late Sean Tallon. Sean aged 26, was a Donadea-born fire-fighter, who had emigrated to the US with his family and had lost his life in the terrorist attacks 18 years ago. Tallon family member, John Morris was in attendance to lay a wreath in his cousins memory and Tony Doran placed a wreath on behalf of all First Responders here at home and New York. *Photo: Paul Clarke, 2 Inf Bn Association*

▼ NATIONAL EMERGENCY AND SECURITY SERVICES DAY

The National Emergency and Security Services Day was held in Dublin Castle on Saturday the 7th September 2019. C Coy, 7 Inf Bn RDF were tasked by the Bn with providing a small arms weapons display. The public were allowed to handle the weapons under supervision, with a lot of interest and interaction with the public on what was a busy Saturday afternoon in Dublin City. Other RDF units were also there, including Cav, MPs, CIS and the Naval Service Reserve, with the EOD display the sole PDF element on show. Other services that took part included, the Coast Guard, Dublin Fire Brigade and various Volunteer First Aid and Ambulances services including veteran associations. *Photos: CQMS Michael Barrett AR, 7 Inf Bn*



From the Trenches to the Pulpit



Newly ordained priest, Fr. David Murphy (ex Corporal at Stephen's Barracks), returned to Kilkenny and celebrated Mass at the Barracks on Friday. A special presentation Mass Box was made to Fr. David by his former colleagues, represented by Pte. Robbie Beegan. Also included in our photo are Officer Commanding Lt. Col. Harry Quirke, Chaplain Fr. John Crowley and Sgt. Major John Sheridan. Photo: Gerry Doegan.

David Murphy enlisted in the Defence Forces as a recruit on 21 June 1979 in Kilkenny Bks. Later that year, on 30 September, he made a presentation of an oak sapling to Pope John Paul II on behalf of the young people of the Diocese of Ossory, at the papal Mass in Ballybrit Racecourse, Galway.

The sapling has now grown into a full-size oak tree, standing 40 feet high, located in the grounds of the old bishop's residence on Sion Road in Kilkenny.

David was promoted to the rank of corporal on 5 May 1981 after completing an NCO's course in the Curragh. He then undertook some studies in the Curragh Post Primary School

in 1982 and successfully completed the leaving certificate in 1984. At that stage he had been posted to the Curragh Camp and was attached to 6 Brigade HQ.

After completing six years of service in the Defence Forces, David entered St Peter's Diocesan Seminary, Wexford, to



study for the priesthood in September 1985. After six years preparation he was ordained on Sunday, 2 June 1991 in the church of the Immaculate Conception, Rowe Street, Wexford, for service in the Diocese of Ferns, where Fr David ministered for 25 years.

In October 2016, Fr David rejoined the Defence Forces as a chaplain. His official title being 'Locum Chaplain' which essentially is a substitute chaplain, this job means that he replaces a chaplain when they go overseas or need to be replaced in the short term. He initially started his first substitution appointment in Galway, then moved on to Gormanstown/Dundalk, moving then onto Limerick, the Curragh, back to Galway and his most recent appointment has been to Finner Camp, all his appointments were for a period of 6 months. Since rejoining, as well as his commitments to the units he serves, Fr David travels to Lourdes every year for the Military Pilgrimage, where he joins a team of Irish military chaplains in conducting masses all over the town of Lourdes.

Fr David always hoped he'd eventually go back to the Army after he had been ordained, so to finally rejoin the Defence Forces was a great honour for him, as he always felt that he wanted to give something back to the serving soldiers. The wheel has turned full circle for Fr David, starting as a soldier, being afforded the opportunity to do his leaving certificate which he needed to join the priesthood and now rejoining as a Defence Forces Chaplain. Something Fr David particularly enjoys is working with recruits who have just joined the Army. The chaplain will meet with them a few times during their training, and they see the chaplain as a friendly face he says.

Fr David will now deploy with the 60th Inf Gp UNDOF for a period of 3 months. He had previously served for a 3 week leave period in July 2017 in the Golan Heights, and is looking forward to the challenge an overseas deployment brings to his job. ■

Living the DREAM

BY LORCAN BARRON

Gnr Lee Bracken (28) from Mullingar joined the Defence Forces in 2014 and is currently stationed with 2 Arty Regt in Custume Military Barracks, Athlone.

Lee is involved in all aspects of his military career. In the short time since he enlisted he has completed a number of courses that relate to his work: the Artillery Gunners course; RPAS course, flying small drones; M-Uav Technician course, for the large army drones; and most recently, the Military Static-Line Parachute course.

Lee has also served overseas with the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon in 2018. As to as his career aspirations, Lee would like to progress through the ranks and build on all the experience he has gained while serving his country.

Lee also has a passion for motorsport and has been actively involved in two different aspects of the sport.

He has worked for many years as a cameraman with On the Limit Sports, covering various rally championships in Ireland, notably the Triton National Rally Championship, Irish Tarmac Rally Championship and Valvoline National Forestry Rally Championship.

Through this work he has received many awards, including an Appreciation Award from Motorsport Ireland for drone shots of the 2013 rally season.

Lee also films music concerts, festivals and corporate videos.



In 2017 Lee purchased a rally car, a Honda Civic, with a view to competing in the National Forestry Championship. Setting about his new task with his usual enthusiasm, Lee stripped the car down and over an 18-month period, with the help of McConnell Motorsport, he worked until he eventually had what he desired. It was time to compete.

Lee's first event was Limerick Forestry 2018, where he finished third in class; a huge achievement in his first rally. He then competed in the Carrick Forestry where he came first in his class. Lee had the bug, and over the winter months he decided to upgrade his car for the 2019 season.

In that season Lee has come first in his class in the Carrick-on-Suir Forestry, Cork Forestry, Moonraker Forestry and Limerick Forestry rallies, culminating in winning the overall class winner for the 2019 Valvoline Irish Forestry Rally Championship.

We wish Lee the best for the future, both in his military career and motorsport activities. ■

VETERAN'S NEWS VETERAN'S NEWS VETERAN'S NEWS

REMEMBERING TROOPER MICHAEL KENNEDY

BY CHARLES MOTT, NATIONAL SECRETARY IUNVA



Trooper Michael Kennedy (left) in the turret of an armoured car, with Sgt Vinnie Bradley (car commander) and Tpr Tommy Kenny (driver), leaving Gp HQ camp at Xeros.
Photo: Military Archives.



Members of IUNVA, ONE, 2 Cav Sqn Veterans Assoc, and the Glengarry Club, at the graveside.
Photo: Martin Rowe, IUNVA Post 27.

Michael Kennedy was born in October 1949 and grew up in Offaly side Portarlington. He was educated at Saint Patrick's NS and afterwards started an apprenticeship to become an electrician. At 17 he decided to change career, heading to the Curragh in December 1966 to join the Defence Forces. Michael was continuing a family connection with the army, as his father had served in the Cavalry Corps during the Emergency.

On completion of recruit training in the General Training Depot, Michael was assigned to 1 Armoured Car Squadron, Plunkett Barracks, where he completed driving and gunnery courses and qualified as a crewman on the Panhard AML 60 armoured car.

In March 1969 he deployed as a member of the Armoured Car Group, 12 Infantry Group, with the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Like so many of his comrades, he was a teenage soldier, on his first overseas mission, carrying out his duty trying to keep the peace between Greek Cypriots and their Turkish Cypriot neighbours on that troubled Mediterranean island.

Michael died in a drowning accident at Famagusta on 1 July 1969, while serving his country and the cause of peace.

On Sunday 7 July 2019 members of Trooper Michael Kennedy's family were joined by serving Defence Forces personnel, members of IUNVA, ONE, 2 Cavalry Squadron Veterans Association, and the Glengarry Club, to mark the 50th anniversary of his death. Mass was celebrated at St Michael's Church, Portarlington, where the celebrants were Fr Tom Dooley PP and Fr Fergus O'Connor PP of Our Lady Queen of Peace parish, Merrion Road, Dublin 4. Father O'Connor is a former cavalry commandant who also served with UNFICYP, with the Armoured Car Group, 13 Infantry Group. As a young second lieutenant, he was the person who, in July 1969, brought the tragic news to Michael's father, Harry (who had lost his wife in childbirth in 1958), and Michael's siblings, younger brother,

Harry, and sisters Patricia, Ann, Jean and Claire.

During the Mass a colour party from IUNVA Post 27 (Portlaoise) rendered military honours at the Consecration and musicians from the DF School of Music played the salute.

Among the congregation was Coy Sgt Jim Casey (ret'd), National Chairman IUNVA, who had pulled Michael from the water in Famagusta, and who, along with a Greek Cypriot doctor, had tried valiantly, but unsuccessfully, to resuscitate the young Irishman.

After Mass wreaths were laid at Michael's grave, while Sgt Anthony Byrne (ret'd), from the IUNVA pipe band played a lament. Last post and reveille were then played by a DF bugler before Sgt Byrne played the national anthem.

A framed copy of the poem 'A Soldier' was presented to the family by Denis Farrell on behalf of Post 27, and Patricia Carroll, speaking on behalf of the Kennedy family, thanked the Defence Forces and members of Post 27 for organising the ceremony and for remembering her brother.

It was good to see serving and retired DF personnel and the veterans associations working together to remember Michael, as it is very important that we do not forget our fallen.

Refreshments, courtesy of Post 27, were served afterwards in the Portarlington Community Hall. This allowed everyone to interact and meet up with former comrades and friends. ■

A photograph of Tpr Kennedy and his medals were placed on the altar. The medals were framed by Fred O'Reilly (Post 27) and had been presented to the family at Post 27's offices in the RDF building, Portlaoise.
Photo: Martin Rowe, IUNVA Post 27.





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A SPRINTERS TAIL

BY COMDT KEDNEY
PHOTO'S PROVIDED BY COMDT KEDNEY

Trying to marry a career in the Infantry while aspiring to compete as a track and field sprinter hasn't been the easiest of challenges but it's like anything in life, if you want it bad enough, you'll make it work. On the face of the Defence Forces it doesn't seem to value speed and power highly as one of its components of military fitness. Historically we have looked to the 2-mile run and the 10k battle run and hold these up as our badges of honour in terms of fitness. But this is constantly evolving. And having the perspective now to be able to look back on 17 years in the organisation I feel that in many ways the Defence Forces offered me the opportunity to run fast and compete to as close to maximum potential for as long as possible. Not many people can say that about their line of work.

We as a defence force place a high value on sport. And provided that your military career and skillset always comes first, I have found that numerous CO's over the years will support your sporting endeavors. For me that support came in the form of structured training time while in the various units I've served in, participation on athletics training camps and my release to compete at 2 CISM world military games.

Of course by the nature of overseas service, it means that training will be less than optimum for long periods of time. But all you can do is control the controllables. I spent January 2018 to January 2019 in camp Faouar in UNDOF, trying to rekindle my love of sprinting as a master's athlete (035). With no access to a track or even grass for that matter and extremely limited access to weights, everything was going to be a compromise from day 1. But you very quickly learn to work with what you have. For me that was a gently sloping hill from the main gate up to the operations building and also a flat area to pull tyres over near the FRC compound. And

with this as my foundation I was able to build consistent sessions that would get me into reasonable shape for the World Master athletics in September 2018. I was heartened by my performance (narrowly missing the semifinals) knowing that my preparation was so clearly hampered by the restrictions of an overseas mission and knew that I could target the World Indoors in March 2019 with some degree of optimism.

On return from overseas in late January 2019 I was able to utilize my UN leave to get some consistent track work under my belt and this period of training culminated in a strong performance in the World Indoor Masters in Poland with an 11th place finish overall and very much knocking on the door of making the final. My 2019 season was ultimately a successful one as I was finally home to compete in and win my first national title (men's 035 200m).

Building towards the future of athletics in the Defence Forces we hope to be more collaborative with the many other sports we share our physical attributes with. In sport, speed kills and we hope that through sharing training days with other speed and power sports that we can breath some new life back into track and field while developing excellence in other sports too.

DF athletics are planning a speed performance seminar with some of Irelands leading speed coaches on WED 13th NOV in the national indoor stadium to promote athletics, develop coaches (PTI's and sports coaches) and collaborate with our sister sports. ■



All Army Track and Field

REPORT BY CPL MARTIN BENNETT

PHOTO'S BY A/M SAM GIBNEY

The All Army Outdoor Track and Field Athletics Competition was held in Waterford in the Regional Sports Centre on the 21st August, which saw some of the finest athletes in the Defence Forces competing against each other. The unfavourable weather conditions on the day certainly did not take from the competitive nature of the event.

The event kicked off with the 100m race which was hotly contested and won in a very tight finish by Private Kelly (7th Battallion) in a time of 11.04, followed by in second place Cmdt Kedney in a time of 11.15 in a tight and competitive race. Private Kelly started very strong and at the 60m mark looked to be safe enough in front but a very determined Cmdt Kedney really pushed him right to the line. Third place went to Lt David Kelly who went on to med-al in several events. Cmdt Kedney was also awarded 1st place in the Masters event.

The mens 200m was won by Private Kelly. Second place went to Cmdt Kedney and 3rd place to Lt Kelly.

The 5k was won by Captain Ledingham in a time of 17.49. Lt Kelly showed his versatility by coming in 2nd and Gnr Coffey placed 3rd.

The other results were as follows:-

800m Men

1st Captain Ledingham
2nd Pte Cantwell
3rd Lt Kelly

100m Ladies

1st Lt O'Brien
2nd Lt Cusack

Long Jump- Male

1st Pte Kelly
2nd Pte Hayes
3rd Lt Kelly

Long Jump Female

1st Pte Cusack
2nd Pte O'Brien

3k Race Male

1st Pte Bullman
2nd- Lt Col Duggan

Hammer

1st Cmdt Bouchier
2nd Cpl Connell
3rd Pte O'Connell

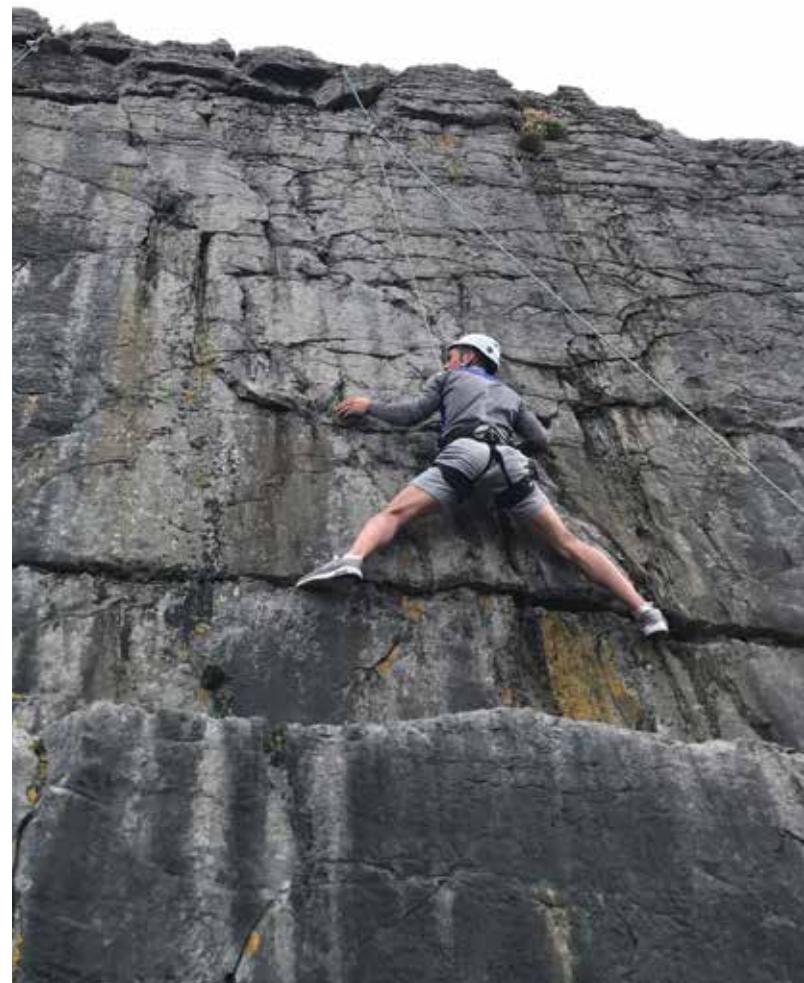


95TH CADET CLASS ADVENTURE TRAINING

Adventure training took place from the 15th - 17th of July 2019, after a long 6 month block of training (phase 2) marking the end to this phase and the beginning of summer leave, before kicking back into platoon level tactics after summer. The aim of adventure training was for cadets to gather an appreciation of the adventure sports available in the Defence Forces and to possibly drive them as commissioned officers to advocate these sports in their respective units. It was an overall extremely enjoyable experience and allowed us to see many different sports along with the beautiful city of Galway.

CDT BRIAN MCGRATH – ROCK CLIMBING

The first day of Rock-Climbing training began with learning the basics to begin entering the sport of climbing. Initial training was conducted in Dún Úi Mhaoilíosa barracks under the careful supervision of experienced instructors. Firstly, we learned 'the ropes', this was of course learning to coil up climbing ropes and be proficient at it. Surprisingly this took up half of the first day as it is a meticulous skill. The next skill we learned was the safety devices, these included the harnesses, helmets, belay devices and of course how to belay. Belaying is basically how to control the rope for the descent of your buddy as they descend, which would become important in the days to come. The second day initiated with a 1.5hr drive to the Mirror Wall on the edge of the Burren in Co. Clare. Beginning day two was an introduction to heights which also played as confidence training for the group of us 20 cadets, all eager to set foot off the cliff face, which was perched some 50 metres over the Atlantic Ocean. We began abseiling down the cliff while doing 'confidence' drills with the instructors. These drills we did halfway down the rope, letting go and putting both hands on your head, letting go of the rope to show you had control of the situation and were confident with heights. Very few of us were comfortable from the beginning but soon after a few attempts many became naturals at coping with heights. Following abseiling, the group began working on rock climbing skills on a lower 20 metre wall, where we took turns in buddy pairs. This was one cadet climbing the wall on a bottom rope while the other belayed them and offered hints to the nearest rock holds and pinches. This was a true test of our confidence and the trust we all placed in our buddies. Day 3 of adventure training saw us back at the original Mirror Wall to attempt climbing harder traditional routes. Routes from climbing grade VDiff to E3 were all attempted on a bottom rope with trust being placed in fellow classmates to belay and support their buddies. The training showed how climbing is a sport of technique and well executed movements while under the fear of height. Key points we learned from our 3 days of rock climbing as a group were that it is vital in the Defence Forces to support more uncommon sports such as adventure sports the same way as we would for GAA players and other traditional sports players, as each member can be an athlete to their respective sport. Secondly that the members of DFAM have an extremely well run and functioning club that should be better utilised by units and individuals throughout for both the high levels of expertise and training and the high standard of equipment that is maintained. Overall the 3 days were eye opening and shaped many newfound interests in the sport.



CDT DYLAN OBYRNE - KAYAKING

Kayaking was a popular choice during our Adventure week training. In total we had 44 cadets taking to the water every morning along with a number of external instructors to make the week possible.

Monday morning was very much the basics of kayaking being taught, such as paddling forwards, backwards and turning, along with everybody learning how to capsize the boat and exit correctly. Games were also introduced to allow everyone to become comfortable with the water. This was extremely helpful for the vast majority of cadets who had never experienced this before and aided greatly in the events to follow in the coming week.

Tuesday morning, we loaded up onto the transport and headed for Castleconnell, Limerick. This was thoroughly enjoyable with numerous rapids and small drops encountered along the route. We had a stop midway down the river where there was a ledge which everybody got to jump off. This was extremely enjoyable and there were a select few cadets who managed to conquer their fear of heights here which was a success. As the day progressed there was numerous people who I could visibly see becoming more and more confident in

the water with some attempting to learn the eskimo roll at the end of the day.

Wednesday was very much the same as Tuesday with the class and instructors travelling down to Limerick again to run the same river, however the class was much more confident this time and flew through the route with a lot less swimming this time.

Water safety was thought throughout the week with instructions, demonstrations and the practical learning shown and carried out by the instructors and cadets on what to do in the event of swimming on fast flowing water. This was extremely valuable knowledge and sponged up by the class.



On Thursday the group headed for the river corrib, where the class got to experience Galway city from a point of view we had never seen before. It was an extremely enjoyable experience and a lot of fun was had. We paddled down through Galway city with large crowds watching on. We had numerous individuals managing to get the eskimo roll on our last day of kayaking. At the end of the day the group paddled towards the double drop located near center of the city. Approximately 15ft in total a large handful went off the ledge of this waterfall. It was an experience like no other and was clear to see on the faces of everyone who attempted it.

It was very clear to see the improvement everyone in the group had made compared to day one. The adventure week training introduced us to a sport not many had thought of before but ended up thoroughly enjoying it with a number of us hoping to keep it up. This was a very fulfilling experience and we were very grateful for the great knowledge and skillset the instructors thought us throughout the week.

had thought of before but ended up thoroughly enjoying it with a number of us hoping to keep it up.

CDT ALAN LUNDON - SCUBA DIVING

Over the course of our Adventure week in July, 17 of my fellow cadets and I were given the opportunity to earn our PADI open water diver course in the Oceanlife Dive Centre in The Pier, Kilkee.

The course which lasted five days earned us all the ability to be able to dive in any open body of water up to a depth of eighteen meters, a feat that seemed unachievable at the start of the week as our group of first timers nervously stared at the plethora of diving equipment that surrounded us on day one. However, within a matter of hours, we had already learned about the basic ins and outs of diving, including; the effects of water pressure and air volume on the body at different depths of water, buoyancy control and learning how to fit and assemble all of the various bits of kit and equipment we would need for our dives.

Operating kit and equipment which at first seemed complicated and confusing, quickly became second nature to us, such as; our snorkels, masks, BCD'S(buoyancy control device), our regulators,



cylinders and weight control systems to name but a few, all thanks to the skill and instruction of our team of scuba diving instructors who we worked with throughout the week. As the week went on, our range of skills grew as we progressed to learning hand signals and perfecting emergency drills such as; clearing seawater out of our masks and/or regulator, emergency drops of our weight management system, before finally moving on to removing all of our kit and regulator under water, making any necessary adjustments and then correcting putting on all of our kit again, no easy task!

Our depth of knowledge also grew as we came to learn about the parts of diving which aren't always as apparent but still play a large part in ensuring a safe and enjoyable dive, for example; assessing the water and weather conditions, how to deal with aquatic life and safely dealing with other geographical features of the ocean, what goes in to planning a dive and planning for any emergencies that may arise on a dive.

Each day also included an extra dive of some sort whether from the dock, or later in the week from a boat out at sea, that allowed us to practice and hone our skills and drills and explore the rich sea-life that is available off the coast of Ireland.

All of this training eventually ensued in our group receiving our PADI license, which was exciting in itself but also for the opportunities it affords all of us to progress further still to more advanced courses in the future if we so choose, something I think is fairly certain given how much each and every member of our group enjoyed the whole experience. ■

BACK FROM THE ABYSS –

Seventy years later

BY LT COL RICHARD BRENNAN

“Calamitous events and atrocities have repeatedly driven the development of international humanitarian law. The more offensive or painful the suffering, the greater the pressure for accommodating humanitarian restraints.”

—Theodor Meron



Seventy years ago, commencing on 21 April 1949, a diplomatic conference was convened by Switzerland at which the attending delegates were mindful of the enormous horrors of the Second World War. (As stated by the president of the ICRC in 2019: **“The battlefields and the Holocaust had brought humanity to the edge of the abyss and laid bare the glaring gap in legal protection for civilians.”**)

As often noted, however, war entails human losses, suffering and pain, as well as destruction and devastation, and the delegates at Geneva in 1949 were always going to be presented with this age-old tension between the relentless demands of military necessity and humanitarian considerations originally prescribed under the St Petersburg Declaration of 1868 which sought to *“...fix the technical limits at which the necessities of war ought to yield to the requirements of humanity...”* A ‘battle’, if you like, between those who must plan and fight wars against those committed to reducing the suffering caused by war - an uneasy equilibrium. In this regard, the adoption of the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, were without doubt one of the most significant developments in attempting to calibrate this delicate balance.

The 1949 Geneva Conventions updated and added to the earlier Geneva Conventions of 1864 and 1929, and supplement-

ed the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 in regard to the protection of civilians.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 dealt with sick and wounded military personnel (Conventions I and II), prisoners of war (Convention III), and civilians (Convention IV). Today, these four Geneva Conventions are among the very few international treaties that have been universally ratified, not least because they reflect universal values of ethical behaviour.

Significantly, the 1949 Conventions secured the place of the International Society of the Red Cross (ICRC) as the principal protector and enunciator of international humanitarian law (IHL).

In 1977 IHL responded to tectonic shifts in warfare arising from the so-called ‘wars of self determination’ in Algeria and Vietnam with additional protocols supplementing the Conventions.

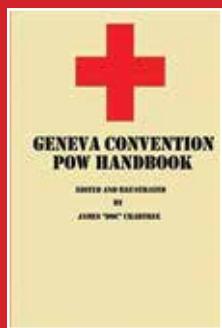
The Conventions and their additional protocols fundamentally underpinned, through prescription in treaty, the axiomatic principles of ‘humanity’, ‘necessity’ ‘distinction’ and the ‘prohibition of causing unnecessary suffering’, structuring what were referred to at the Nuremberg trials as the ‘elementary considerations of humanity’.

There are still very significant challenges, as recently outlined by the president of the ICRC in respect of the ongoing conflict in Syria; one being that *“war is being conducted by all sides in ways that repeatedly violate IHL and the principles of proportionality, precaution and distinction.”*

The modern battle space, in the context of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, is complex, as aptly set out by former ISAF commander, General Stanley McChrystal: *“Supply lines of material, money recruiters, handlers and, most importantly, volunteers, stretched to Riyadh and Aleppo, Tunis and Hamburg.”*

In 2015 the ICRC recognised that the operational environment of contemporary armed conflict is changing and is increasingly characterised by ever more involvement of civilians in military action (both on the side of states and organised armed groups), and by growing difficulties in distinguishing between fighters and civilians.

It is within this paradigm, that the utility of the Conventions and their protocols pertaining to the rules regarding the conduct of hostilities have often been criticised. US Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, then counsel to the president, said the new paradigm of modern conflict *“rendered obsolete Geneva’s strict limitations on questioning of enemy prisoners”*.



THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 12 AUGUST 1949



The reality is that armies are now fighting in a battle space that is everywhere and “traditional conceptions of a distinct ‘battlefield’ often seem rather obsolete in this constellation”. In terms of territorial span, the spillover of conflicts into neighbouring countries, their geographical expanse, and their regionalisation also appear to have become a distinctive feature of contemporary armed conflicts, as seen in the Middle East and West Africa.

In the Sahel region, where Irish peacekeepers deploy, elusive, highly mobile armed groups fight each other as well as a number of governments, affecting vulnerable populations.

The ICRC has further recognised that on the non-state side, a myriad of fluid, multiplying and fragmenting armed groups poses a number of risks to the civilian population.

Adapting conventional targeting consistent with Geneva Conventions and protocols has not been without challenge, particularly against non-state actors in Afghanistan and Iraq. The principle of ‘distinction’ is relatively

simple when it comes to obvious military assets, such as a weapon system, munitions factory, or barracks, but applying these rules becomes more fraught with respect to what some have deemed to be ‘dual-use objects’, such as transportation systems or energy sources (like oil fields). This is particularly so when fighting an organised groups like ISIL, who could generate between \$1million and \$1.5million a day from illegal oil sales generated by a production system that rivalled many state-owned oil companies.

This requires nuanced and informed assessments by commanders. In Afghanistan in 2009, ISAF commander, General David McKiernan (US), declined to follow SACEUR’s guidance to directly attack drug producers and facilities throughout Afghanistan, holding that such actions would “seriously undermine the commitment ISAF has made to the Afghan people and the international community to restrain our use of force and avoid civilian casualties to the greatest degree practicable”.

The broadening of targeting rules in primarily urban conflicts such as Iraq and Syria, presents another significant challenge. The comments of Maj Gen Rupert Jones (deputy commander of the international coalition against ISIL) to a critical Amnesty report, are reflective of this challenge, stating that “*it was naïve to think a city of Mosul, with a population of 1.75million, could be liberated without any civilian casualties while fighting an enemy that lacks all humanity*”. Notwithstanding, the onus remains on the commander to ensure that all feasible precautions are taken in attack under Additional Protocol 1; a challenging prospect recognised in the 2017 ICRC debate on war in the cities, at which it was noted that often an enemy will hide and fight in populated areas and endanger the civilian population. The anonymity of big urban areas supports the unfortunate strategy of human shields, which is often at the origin of a vicious cycle of behaviour leading to disrespect of the law.

The multiplicity of roles individuals

can take – from daylight civilian to night-time fighter and back – adds to the complexity of a battlefield in which civilian and military areas are increasingly intertwined.

Within all of this of course, the question of reciprocity and precedent arises, as some scholars observe, “These attacks can be precedent setting even against terrorists”. If it is legal and reasonable to target oil refineries and banks because they generate revenue for a non-state actor where is the line drawn? The theoretical, worst-case scenario is a dynamic of negative reciprocity, that is, a spiral down effect that could ultimately culminate in mutual disregard for the rules of IHL.

Conclusion

The president of the ICRC emphasises that the “*law is in line with our humanity; it is our shield against barbarity*,” offering guidance on “dilemmas of humanity and military necessity; allowing armies to exercise common decency, to keep their honour clean.” Certainly, IHL affords these practical considerations, and can have positive impacts when it is respected, when the principles of proportionality and distinction are applied.

More importantly, however, the law provides a basis to win the peace and set the foundation for community acceptance. Within the rubric of the past 70 years it is arguable that the ‘shared language’ of the law has allowed warring parties to find common ground or mutual advantage such as the treaty on anti-personnel mines, negotiating prisoner exchanges, or ensuring safe passage for civilians out of besieged cities.

As the ICRC has iterated, IHL is a living body of law. It was developed with militaries for application in the battlefield, to balance military objectives with humanitarian imperatives. It’s not about dusty legal books, but for the law to provide guidance on the gritty realities of war.

Today, the collective challenge remains to find ways to ensure greater respect for the law within the changing dynamics of armed conflict, and IHL must strive to rationally balance humanitarian concerns with military necessity. While, as recent conflicts show, this balancing may shift with developments in the nature of warfare, it must remain at the heart of IHL.

Defeating ISIL or such armed groups should be a priority for any state, but it cannot serve as a basis for setting difficult precedents. Fundamental principles such as ‘distinction’ must remain, in the words of the International Court of Justice, ‘intransgressible’, otherwise we will risk sending the law “*hurtling down the slippery slope of collateral calamity*.” ■

The signing of the Geneva Convention 1949



PICK UP THE PACE!

BY LT FERGAL FITZGERALD (AR), 27 INF BN – PHOTOS BY CPL DIARMUID CONNON (AR), 1 MIC, DFTC

The Vierdaagse (4 Daagse) Marches is an annual event held in Nijmegen in July every year which sees entrants undertaking one of four different distance categories **30km, 40km, 40km (Military) and 50km each day for 4 days.**

The first Vierdaagse took place in 1909 with 300 soldiers completing a 150km march via a series of garrisons. Various different routes came and went before the Vierdaagse found a permanent home in the southern city of Nijmegen on the river Waal in 1925. Popular with military and civilian participants alike, the event has grown to become one of the biggest of its kind anywhere in the world, with an average of 42,000 marchers completing the event each year.

Military participants must carry a minimum weight of 10kg throughout the march and have two choices: enter as an individual or a part of a team, which must comprise of at least 11 members. Individuals have significant flexibility on how they approach their march, including their rest stops and their pace. Teams, however, have a strict departure time and must remain as a group at all times, particularly when reaching control points where the whole team must be present or face disqualification.

In 2018, five members of the Army Reserve completed the marches as individuals and set about returning to Nijmegen this year with the first Defence Forces team to participate in the event.

A notice was placed in *An Cosantóir* looking for anyone interested in finding out more to attend a briefing in DFTC in January, and from there the team grew to 19 from all three services, with a mix of PDF and RDF members. With a commitment of one combined training weekend each month, along with individual training, each member of our team clocked up a minimum of 300km before arriving in Nijmegen.

Our training took place throughout Ireland, generally making use of the fantastic network of greenways including: the Old Rail Trail (Athlone and Moate); Westport Greenway; Darkness into light (Galway); Waterford Greenway; Cork to Blackrock Greenway; and the Grand Canal towpath.

While marches of 15km and 20km posed no difficulty for the team, the further we progressed the longer and more challenging the distances became. Three of our training sessions included back-to-back marches covering distances of 51km, 65km and 80km over two days. These longer marches proved invaluable to the team and our ability to march on tired legs stood us in good stead for the event itself.

One of our biggest fears was the ongoing European heat wave with temperatures reaching the low 30°C's; not something we could train or prepare for in Ireland! Thankfully, the heat wave passed just before we departed.

Flying out of Dublin on 13 July, we reached our military accommodation in the purpose-built Camp Heumensoord later that evening. The camp was an impressive model of efficiency. Built over the previous four weeks from scratch, the camp consisted of a series of large accommodation marquees and ablutions, a dining tent, medical tent and recreation tents. Approximately

5,500 military participants – permanent, reserve and retired (never former!) soldiers from 31 countries settled in and prepared for the week ahead.

Sunday morning commenced in true military fashion with a parade on the main square and a flag-raising ceremony, with every member of our team drawing great pride on seeing the Irish flag taking its place among the 30 other nations present in the camp.

After the ceremony, we boarded transport to the Canadian War Cemetery, located in nearby Groesbeek. With 2,338 Canadian soldiers interred there, the Canadian team, numbering some 500 members, held its annual remembrance ceremony and invited each military delegation occupying Camp Heumensoord to attend and lay a wreath on behalf of their home nation.

Every day saw numbers in the camp swell as more and more delegations arrived. Monday was the final cut off and the teams participated in the official opening of Vierdaagse, with a parade through Nijmegen and a short ceremony in the centre of town.

The remainder of Monday was spent sorting kit before get-





The group pose for a photo with the Irish Ambassador to the Netherlands Mr Kevin Kelly



The Irish 'Four Days Marches' Team 2019-09-16



Cpl Diarmuid Connon receiving treatment in between marches



ting an early night in preparation for the days ahead

With alarms set for 3am the camp awoke eager to get underway after months of training. We were checked out and crossed our allotted start line at 4.30am and waved goodbye to the camp which we wouldn't see for another nine hours, and 43.3km, later.

Our march took us across the river Waal, north of Nijmegen, through the town of Elst and back through Nijmegen city centre. There was fantastic support throughout the route, with rest stops being run by Dutch military logistics personnel, who spend the week on the ground, staying one step ahead of the marching teams; moving into a rest stop the night before and having everything set up before the teams start arriving the following day.

On Wednesday we noticed an emerging trend of being greeted with '*Buongiorno Italia!*' and cheers of '*Ciao!*' from sup-

porters unfamiliar with the Irish flag.

Day two was a 'short day' in Vierdaagse terms, with a total distance of 38km taking us through the town of Wijchen and getting us back to camp an hour earlier than the day before. This time was put to good use with visits to the medical tent for preventative taping for blisters and time to refit after two days of marching.

Day three of the march presented a new challenge, known as the day of the 7 Hills, which took our team south of Nijmegen to the town of Groesbeek. The 7 Hills in themselves wouldn't normally be considered a challenge but kicking in as they did during the second half of the day's march, having covered approx 100km over the previous days, the hills definitely made their presence known. However, the fantastic reception from the crowds lining the route kept everyone going right to the finish line in Camp Heumensoord.

While our final day's march was welcome, it presented our biggest challenge to date. As the week moves on, the distances get longer, the hours of sleep get shorter and fatigue builds up. Many teams around us had lost teammates to injury and some teams got noticeably smaller or withdrew altogether.

Our goal was simple. A steady pace and finish as we started - together as a team. We experienced highs and lows as we progressed south again from Nijmegen through the towns of Grave, Beers and Mook. Our team grew at various points during the day as individual marchers fell-in at the end to tick off a few kilometres with the team. (Teams generally have a slightly faster pace than individuals and hitching a lift with a passing team is a great way for individual marchers to pick up the pace.)

Our march continued, with crowds getting ever larger as we approached the last 10km into Nijmegen. As military participants we finished just outside of town where we were presented with our Vierdaagskruis (Cross of the Four Days) and had a short time to rest, drop the weight in our backpacks and prepare for a final 5km into the city centre.

Losing the weight was a godsend as we formed up for the final march, and made our way to the city centre. Words can't describe those last few kilometres, with the route thronged with cheering crowds urging the teams past the final review stand where we were greeted by Ireland's ambassador to the Netherlands, Mr Kevin Kelly, who then joined us on the final kilometre to the finish line.

The Vierdaagse was a fantastic experience for all involved and brought our Defence Forces values to life in so many ways, such as respect for our fellow teams from around the world, loyalty among our team, selflessness to put the team first and foremost, and physical courage to drive on through pain and tiredness to become the first Irish Defence Forces team to complete the gruelling four days. Most importantly, everyone finished.

Our journey to the finish line had started back in 2018, and would not have been possible without the leadership, permission and support of ACOS Brigadier General Peter O'Halloran, Col Ger Buckley (D Reserve), Lt Col Flannery (OC 1 Cn Cois), Lt Col Oliver Dwyer (OC 6 Inf Bn), Lt Col Noel Maher (OC 1 BAR), and Comdt John Tynan (OC 1 ACS), and their teams in Custume Barracks, Collins Barracks, Dún Uí Mhaolíosa, and Plunkett Bks, who facilitated the team with rations, accommodation and transport on our combined training weekends throughout the year. A special thanks goes to Comdt (AR) Ian Stewart, 1 ACS, and team liaison officer, who ensured all aspects of the march went like clockwork for our time in the Netherlands. ■



Peacekeeping on the Edge OGL and the 2006 War (part 2)

BY COMDT KEVIN MCDONALD (RET'D)

All patrol bases (PBs) received 'firings close' during the war but PB Khiam seemed to be getting the brunt of them, especially in the days leading up to July 25. Concern had been growing about the volume of not only artillery strikes but also aerial bombs landing close to the base; a concern transmitted to the IDF on a number of occasions by the UNIFIL liaison officer.

The morning of the July 25 started like preceding days, with aerial bombs and artillery raining down on Lebanon. During the day the village of Khiam was hit by 95 artillery strikes and 91 aerial bombs. In addition to many firings close from aerial bombs, the base was hit on numerous occasions by artillery. Throughout the day complaints were made by UNTSO, UNIFIL and the highest levels of UNHQ New York to the IDF and Israeli authorities concerning the level of strikes in and around the PB.

Despite assurances from the IDF, the intensity didn't decrease. The vicinity of the PB experienced three waves of bombardment during the day. In the third wave Indbatt positions recorded 15 tank rounds fired to 100m east of the PB at 1830hrs, followed by five aerial bombs landing in or near the PB between 1915hrs and 2000hrs. A total of 26 artillery rounds were also recorded between 1950hrs and 2005hrs.

UNTSO HQ in Jerusalem was informed by OGL that PB Khiam had received two firings close, comprising four artillery shells into the PB and an aerial bomb very close. The report stated that the gym and garage were demolished, the shelter door damaged, and that the PB was no longer operational.

At 1925hrs UNIFIL notified the UNMOs in PB Khiam that they would evacuate the post the following morning. Five minutes later,

at 1930hrs, PB Khiam failed to answer the scheduled radio check. In PB Mar we tried to establish contact using HF, VHF, sat phone, and individual cell phones, but there was no response.

A recovery team from the nearby Indian battalion was dispatched at 2010hrs but due to shelling and damaged roads it didn't arrive until 2155hrs. We had switched our radio to the Indbatt net to monitor their progress and with increasing concern we listened as they broke through the locked gate of the PB with an armoured car. Shortly afterwards we heard them report the near total destruction of the base.

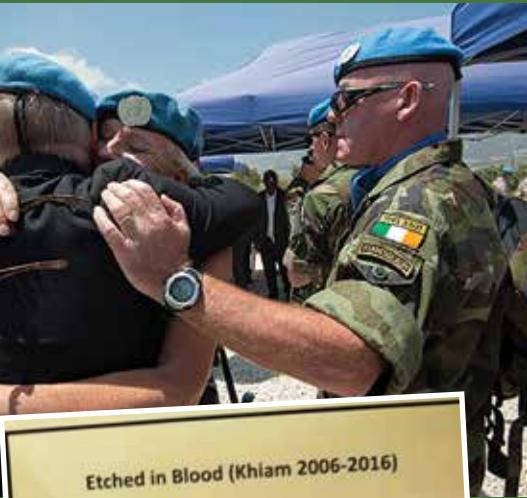
Around 0155hrs we heard the rescue team transmit that they had found the body of a Chinese officer, followed shortly by a report that two additional bodies had been recovered. Slowly, and in a state of complete shock we came to realise that our four colleagues in the base had perished.

The rescue team were only able to recover three bodies that night, and early the next morning a Ghanaian convoy with three OGL UNMOs collected me at PB MAR and brought us to the mortuary in Marjayoun Hospital to commence the identification process. (It would be many days later, during the ceasefire, that we would recover the remains of our fourth colleague.)

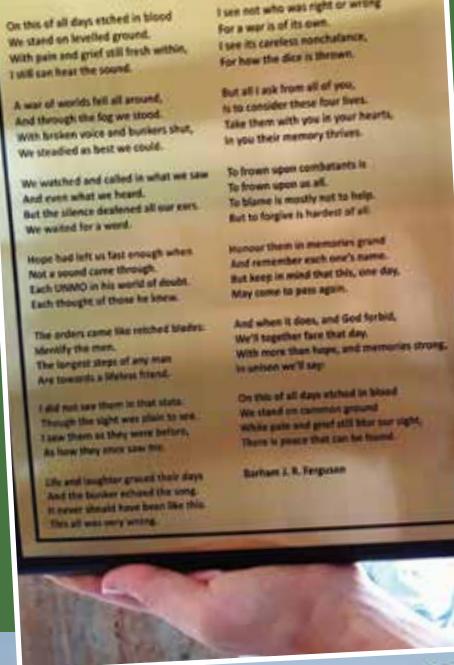
There is no easy way to prepare for the task of identifying the remains of colleagues and friends and that morning in Marjayoun, amid the noise of jets, artillery and Katyushas, will remain etched in our memories for ever.

We positively identified one colleague, were 95% sure on another, and were completely unable to identify the third. It was clear to us that they had been killed instantly.

Picking up a colleague with no arms, no legs and no head is not an easy task, and the war ploughed on regardless. The search for our fourth colleague resumed throughout the day with no success and on the third day it was decided that we would transfer the three remains through the Technical Fence to UNTSO colleagues.



Etched in Blood (Kham 2006-2016)



Clare McDonald being evacuated



we were ordered to travel back to PB Mar, collect our remaining colleagues and evacuate the position. As jets and artillery boomed all around the villages, we took the laptops and important files,

burned the rest, spiked the diesel tanks, and, finally, took down the UN flag; another surreal moment in an increasingly surreal war.

Like Major Stanfield's earlier patrol to Naquora, ours was to be eventful as well. We had barely managed to get as far as Tibnin when shelling broke out and we rushed to Ghanbatt HQ, where we

spent over two days. From there we crisscrossed south Lebanon in a desperate attempt to find passable roads. At last, we rumbled into Naquora to an emotional reunion with the rest of our OGL comrades; and still the war raged on.

Finally, on 14 August a ceasefire was declared and we prepared to reoccupy our three remaining PBs.

Returning to PB Mar the devastation in every village was incredible; houses, schools, mosques, monasteries, hospitals, all flattened or at the very least badly damaged. Yet the mood of the locals was extremely supportive of us as we gingerly patrolled the shattered landscape of our area of operations.

The IDF, who were still deployed, awaiting the full deployment of the Lebanese Army, only patrolled during the hours of darkness. Observing their movements resulted in a number of our night vision devices being rendered inoperable after being 'lased' with laser range finders on Merkava tanks.

Eventually, we were able to do a systematic search of the ruins of PB Kham, a harrowing experience, and, with engineer assets, discovered the remains of our fourth colleague. A similar sombre operation was conducted to transfer his remains through the technical fence to UNTSO personnel for a medical identification. Gradually the Lebanese Army deployed into the south, the IDF withdrew, and Lebanon began to rebuild itself.

As we patrolled, it was necessary to keep a sharp eye out for explosive remnants of war and hardly a day passed without us having to mark and report unexploded artillery shells, aerial bombs and cluster bombs, (small, lethal antipersonnel devices that were fired in their thousands towards Lebanese villages in the last days of the war). Lebanese civilians were still being killed in 2016 as a result of those cluster bomb strikes in 2006.

In eight days that summer, OGL, with a prewar strength of 52, lost over 10% of its strength and 50% of its positions.

This article is dedicated to the memory of those who paid the ultimate price and those whose lives have been changed utterly as a result of injuries received, serving in the cause of peace.

- Major Hans-Peter Lang, Austria. KIA (killed in action)
- Major Paeta Derek Hess-von Kruedener, Canada, KIA
- Lieutenant Senior Grade Jarno Mäkinen, Finland, KIA
- Major (posthumously promoted Lieutenant Colonel) Du Zhaoyu, China. KIA
- Captain (now Colonel) Roberto Punzo, Italy, WIA (wounded in action)
- Major Matina Stanfield, Australia, WIA

ARMED TRAINING

BY PTE FINN MCHALE



Students and Instructors after the 24 hr tactical exercise.

1 Inf Bn hosted the 1 Bde Army Reserve three-star training course in Dún Uí Mhaolíosa, Gaillimh, from 3rd to 16th August 2019. With many of us having completed recruit training in Tralee in 2018, and others in Kilworth this year, this course was the next milestone for myself and the other students in our Army Reserve careers.

The three-star course built on the basic military skills we had learned throughout recruit training, adding further tactical training and navigation, and qualifying us to operate the general purpose machine gun (GPMG).

The course started with refresher training in foot and arms drill and we also completed our tests of elementary training (TOETs) on the Steyr AUG assault rifle, in preparation for firing our annual range practices (ARPs).

For many of us, the ARPs served as the first time firing on the electronic target range at Oranmore, which was just one of many new experiences throughout the first week. We also had our first exposure to the GPMG and were trained and examined on all aspects of this section-level weapon; from stripping and assembling, immediate action (IA) drills, firing and cleaning.

Our navigation training covered both day and night navigation and we quickly became accustomed to producing route cards. We also conducted a 7.5km navigation exercise over hilly terrain, which, while challenging, we found to be an excellent test of our new found abilities.

The members of the course also took part in adventure training, facilitated by local PDF staff, who organised and set up an abseiling activity that allowed us to rappel off



Pte Steven Riordan abseiling.



one of the tower buildings in the barracks. This was a very enjoyable confidence-building experience that was thoroughly appreciated by all.

The tactical training on the course primarily revolved around section attacks, starting with a walk through of the process, dry drills, and progressing to carrying out full section attacks using blank ammunition as we grew in competence and confidence.

The tactical phase culminated in a 24-hour exercise consisting of platoon attacks as well as setting up and conducting operations from a patrol harbour. This thoroughly tested the knowledge and skills of the students and many of us agreed that the highlight of the course was the execution of a platoon ambush.

We concluded a challenging and enjoyable course with our passing out parade, during which we were all congratulated for passing our star tests. The NCO and officer instructors presented awards for achievement to a number of students, with Pte Colm Garvey receiving the award for best student. For myself, I was delighted to be awarded best shot on the GPMG.

See right for some feedback from other students on the course. ■



Pte Finn McHale and Pte Colm Garvey with Lt Michael Black (Pl Comd) after receiving their awards.



**PTE PARAIC Ó FÁTHARTA,
1 CN COIS**

"Bhain mé an-taitneamh as an gcúrsa. Bhí na ceannairí go maith ag teagasc, agus bhí siad foigh-neach leis na daltaí a raibh siad ag tabhairt aire dóibh ar an gcúrsa. Thaitin an léamh mapáí agus treodóireacht go mór liom, agus

bhi an-am againn ag siúl thar an bealach a phleannáil muid i nGaillimh Theas. Don dara seachtain bhí muid ag cleachtadh ionsaí buíne agus teacticí agus chríochnaigh muid le luiochán san oíche ar phatról mar bhuíon, inar scoileamar cúpla ceád urchar, le cúnamh ónár GPMG, an t-arm nua ar bhain muid amach ár gcáiliocht ann i rith na coicise."



PTE STEPHEN RIORDAN, 3 INF BN

"I really enjoyed taking part in the course as part of my progression through the Army Reserve. A supportive and challenging programme was carried out by competent and professionally trained staff. The camp was well organised and diverse, covering a range of subjects; from lectures regarding fundamentals of defence, to navigation, to overnight tactical exercises. All aspects of the course were well run and highly relevant. Personally, I thought the ambush conducted on our overnight exercise was extremely interesting and well executed. I felt that this was a great experience and I would recommend it to any prospective applicant."



PTE GORDON DICKS, 12 INF BN

"The course provided a comprehensive introduction to various military skills not covered throughout recruit training. This included training on the GPMG, navigation skills and platoon level tactics. There was a good ratio of instructors to students, enabling a high-quality learning atmosphere. I personally found that the navigation component of the course was the highlight, as it expanded upon and refreshed previous knowledge. I am looking forward to more opportunities to challenge the theory of what I have learned so far and to take part in more in-depth training."



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Considering a mortgage?

Áine Carroll, Director of Communications and Policy, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission looks at steps you can take to get yourself mortgage ready.

Before you apply for a mortgage you will need to get your finances in order so you can demonstrate to potential lenders that you can manage your finances effectively and comfortably afford the repayments and other costs. Getting to grips with your finances will also help you build up a lump sum for your deposit.



By Áine Carroll, Director of Communications & Policy with the CCPC

The first step is to get a realistic picture of how much you can afford to save and where you can cut back. To do this:

1. Know your income. Draw up a list of all your income including salaries, social welfare and any other income.
2. Examine your outgoings such as rent and bills. See if you can save by switching utilities or bundling your TV, broadband and phone.
3. Track your spending to work out your everyday outgoings. Your bank statements are also a good indicator of this.
4. Tackle your debts before you start to save. Start with any high interest loans including credit cards and focus on clearing these first. If you start saving first and don't focus on paying off your debts, you may save your deposit faster but your debts may reduce your ability to get mortgage approval.

How much do you need to save?

The deposit you need will depend on how much you want to borrow and whether you are borrowing on your own or with someone else.

If you are a first-time buyer a 90% limit will usually apply, meaning you will need a minimum deposit of 10%. If you are not a first-time buyer, you can borrow up to 80% of the value of the property. There are also limits based on your income. There are tools available on ccpc.ie that can help you work out how much you can afford to borrow as well help you to compare the rates available from lenders in the Irish market. When working out your savings target remember to also budget for costs of buying a home, including legal and valuation fees etc. Your savings target should stretch beyond the minimum deposit you need.

Applying for a mortgage

Before you start looking at properties try to get 'approval in principle' so you have an idea of the amount you can borrow. This can be an advantage when it comes to making an offer on a property, as in some cases sellers will want a potential buyer to have mortgage approval before accepting their offer.

You can apply for a mortgage by:

- Applying directly to a lender and looking after the application process yourself.
- Using a mortgage broker who will deal with lenders on your behalf and advise you during the process. Be sure to ask the broker for their 'Terms of Business', what they charge and how many lenders they represent.
- When comparing mortgage providers be careful about special offers such as cash back from the lender, or paying your legal fees. These offers are attractive in the short term but they might not make financial sense in the long term as a mortgage provider could have a higher interest rate than other lenders. When comparing mortgages, focus on the interest rate first as even a small difference in the rate will make a big difference to your repayments over the full term of the mortgage.

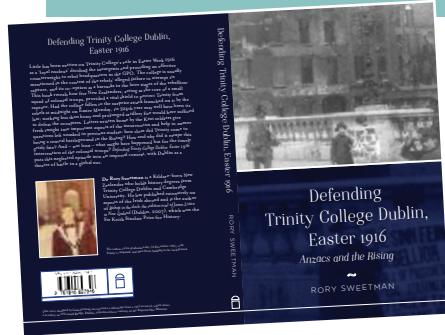


For more information see our step-by-step guide to buying a house and our mortgage comparison tools on www.ccpc.ie

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TRINITY COLLEGE 1916: WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

BY DR RORY SWEETMAN*



the Library windows, ammunition spent, while a horde of rebels with fixed bayonets swept in line across the Fellows' Garden.' This extract from a book by **Dr Rory Sweetman** explores how close Taaffe's nightmare came to being realised.

What would have happened had Michael Mallin shouted 'Left wheel! CHARGE!' once his Citizen Army column reached Trinity's front gate at midday on Easter Monday? Or had members of Eamon de Valera's 3rd Battalion rushed past the sole porter at the Lincoln Place Gate, or dropped down silently from the Loop Line bridge behind the Officer Training Corps (OTC) headquarters, unseen and unheard by its corporal's guard? Or simply entered Trinity's grounds by climbing over the northern wall, as multitudes of students were wont to do when patronising the Queen's Theatre in Great Brunswick Street? Or taken advantage of the railings on

During Easter Week 1916 Michael Taaffe, a medical student, was part of the small garrison that defended Trinity College from insurgent attack. Half a century later he wrote down his memories of those turbulent days. 'I had a nightmare vision of a last stand at

the southern side of College, described by an acute observer as 'by no means unscalable'?

Who would have stopped them? A handful of porters armed with pikes? Four young cadets wielding empty rifles?

Once the shooting began on 24 April, the military and police fled Dublin's streets for their respective barracks, the latter emerging occasionally to collar an unsuspecting looter. Trinity was largely empty, its students on vacation, so the first armed group to arrive in force would almost certainly have won the day, especially after taking control of the OTC armoury.

Even after the alarm was raised, gates secured, and armed sentries posted, Trinity was still not safe from invasion. Merely waving an academic gown at the porter was sufficient to secure admission to College on Tuesday, while those students who entreated Ernie O'Malley to help defend the university from 'those damn Sinn Féiners' on Monday afternoon did not know their man – before the week was out O'Malley would be sniping at the Crown forces. Either he or one of Walter Starkie's 'Sinn Féin friends' in College could have expedited a rebel incursion, providing the 'kindly traitor' whose possible existence so concerned Elsie Mahaffy, the Provost's elder daughter.

For that matter, the rebels needed only to capture John Joly, Trinity's well-known professor of geology, on one of his incautious spying expeditions to their strongholds, to have secured a key to one of the several side gates to College. Had the rebels gained entrance to Trinity, its defenders had few illusions about the likely outcome. According to Gerald Fitzgibbon, 'they could have had [the College] for the asking up to two o'clock on Monday, and at very small cost up to two o'clock on Tuesday.' Lt James Glen agreed that 'it is very doubtful whether, with the small number of defenders, a really determined attack in the dark could have been successfully resisted.'

Once secure in occupation, the rebels would have done just as Trinity's defenders did: relocate the contents of the armoury, fortify the front quadrangles, and prepare for a siege. As in other rebel strongholds, this would have involved a considerable amount of damage: smashing windows, boring holes in internal walls, using books to construct barricades, throwing furniture downstairs to block access. However, this destruction would have paled in comparison to the likely effect of the British response. Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell had privately warned Prime Minister Asquith that artillery would be necessary in order to reduce Crown casualties when retaking the city. On his arrival in Dublin, General Maxwell made this threat public, declaring in his first proclamation as military governor that 'if necessary, I shall not



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hesitate to destroy all buildings within any area occupied by rebels.'

Trinity's defenders applauded the use of artillery against rebel strongholds instead of the 'expensive tactics' of a frontal assault by troops. They agreed that only intensive shelling would drive the rebels from their fortresses. Joly rejoiced as Liberty Hall 'received its quietus,' but would surely have changed his tune had the heavy guns been turned instead on his beloved university. He correctly foresaw that 'once captured, nothing but the wholesale destruction of buildings, containing the most precious heirlooms of the ancient university, would suffice to dislodge the enemy.'

As Michael Taaffe's nightmare scenario suggests, Trinity's library was a symbol to generations of graduates. The destruction of 'the College's greatest asset' would have been a tragedy on the scale of the loss of the University of Louvain's library in August 1914. No-one would have intended this outcome, but war is no respecter of culture. Trinity meant little to soldiers like Lowe and Maxwell, and as the historian Charles Townshend notes, 'an alien kind of militarism was in the ascendant' during the Rising.

Joly conceded that rebel occupation would have consigned Trinity to 'the same fate which befell every public building into which the Sinn Féiners entered.' Fire would probably accomplish

what shelling did not. By the end of Easter Week at least some of the university's fine buildings would have resembled the shell-like remnants of the recently refurbished General Post Office.

What of the wider strategic implications? Rebel occupation of Trinity would not only have deprived the Crown of a vital troop concentration centre, but also prevented the division of rebel forces planned by Brigadier-General Lowe. British troops would no longer be able to simply bypass and ignore rebel strongholds like Boland's Bakery and Jacob's Biscuit Factory. Attacks on these places would have driven the surviving rebels towards the centre of the city, accentuating a natural centripetal tendency as the British cordon tightened. For the beleaguered rebel outposts Trinity would then have become a place of refuge; even the headquarters garrison at the GPO and Ned Daly's 1st Battalion at the Four Courts might have made it across the Liffey, especially with the rebel snipers commanding Carlisle (later O'Connell) Bridge from the heights of Trinity.

Given Maxwell's refusal to accept anything less than unconditional surrender and the rebel leaders' desire for as spectacular a 'blood sacrifice' as possible, the stage was set for a fight to the death, possibly across the Fellows' Garden as Taaffe had envisaged. There would be no civilians dying in tragic circumstances to dishearten Patrick Pearse, only a straight-out showdown between the armed forces of the Crown and what Thomas MacDonagh called the 'zealous martyrs' of the new Irish Republic.

Trinity would have become first a funeral pyre for the rebels, and then – rapidly – a shrine to their memory. There would be fewer insurgent leaders for General Maxwell to execute, but the shock of their grisly deaths would contribute to shifting public opinion in their favour.

With rebels' ashes mixed in the rubble of the university's once splendid buildings, who would then be in a hurry to rebuild the College of the Holy and Undivided Trinity? It took thirteen years to reconstruct the GPO, and over a decade to restore the Custom House; within six years of the Rising most of Ireland was under new management, a Free State created in the image of the dead rebel leaders.

During the Rising a rumour spread in the suburbs that, should the rebels succeed in their audacious enterprise, Patrick Pearse was to be Trinity's new Provost. Elsie Mahaffy scoffed at the idea, but Pearse ended Easter Week as Commandant-in-Chief of the Army of the Republic and President of the Provisional Government, and within a few years the railway station and main street on Trinity's northern boundary would both bear his name (over the energetic protests of Trinity's board). Is it entirely fanciful to suggest that any new educational establishment erected on the former site of Trinity might have been called 'Pearse College Dublin'?

About the Author: Dr Rory Sweetman is a Kildare-born New Zealander who holds history degrees from Trinity College Dublin and Cambridge University. He has published extensively on aspects of the Irish abroad and is the author of *Bishop in the Dock: The Sedition Trial of James Liston in New Zealand* (Dublin, 2007), which won the Sir Keith Sinclair Prize for History. His latest book is *Defending Trinity College Dublin, Easter 1916: Anzacs and the Rising*, published by Four Courts Press (2019). ■

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5 INFANTRY BATTALION

BY PTE TERENCE O'REILLY, DEFENCE FORCES LIBRARY, MIL COL, DFTC

The original 5 Infantry Battalion was formed in Athlone in February 1923 as one of five battalions under the Athlone Command, with its first commanding officer being Comdt B Carrahan. Several officers in the new battalion were former members of the Longford Flying Column, many of whom had fought in the famous Battle of Ballinalee under General Sean McEoin.

In 1924 the unit was moved to the Curragh Camp where it remained until its transfer to Portobello Barracks, Dublin in 1928. One year later it was transferred to Collins Barracks (Dublin), which was to be its permanent home until 1941.

After the beginning of the Emergency in 1940 the battalion was tasked with occupying posts at Blackcastle House, Boyne House and Gibbstown House in County Meath. In August 1941 these outposts were evacuated and the battalion moved back to Portobello Barracks as part of 2 Infantry Brigade.

In the summer of 1942 the battalion participated in the Blackwater Exercises, which involved a 150-mile march across the country, a month of division-level exercises in County Cork, and then a march back to Dublin, where it remained until October 1942 when it was transferred to Bray, with outposts in Bray International Hotel, Greystones and Killiney.

After the conclusion of the Emergency, 5 Inf Bn was based in Gormanston Camp from January 1946 until November 1946 when it moved to Griffith Barracks, Portobello Barracks and the Hibernian School in the Phoenix Park.

In 1956, the battalion again marched to the Blackwater as part of

Exercise 'Youghal'. At this time, Lt Col Seán Clancy was appointed battalion commander, a veteran officer who had served with the Dublin Brigade IRA during the War of Independence, before serving throughout the Civil War with the National Army and, later still, through the Emergency with 18 Infantry Battalion. Lt Col Clancy commanded the battalion until his retirement in 1959. (He died in 2006 at the ripe old age of 105, the last surviving War of Independence veteran; 5 Inf Bn rendered military honours at his funeral.)

As part of the 1959 reorganisation 5 Infantry Battalion absorbed the personnel of the recently disbanded 7 Inf Bn and returned to Collins Barracks, where it would find a home for nearly 40 years.

In 1960 members of the battalion deployed to the Congo with the UN peacekeeping force and suffered its first overseas casualties when Cpl Liam Duggan (34) and Cpl Peter Kelly (25) were killed in the Niemba Ambush that November. In December 1961, Lt Patrick Riordan (25) and Cpl Michael Fallon (18) were killed during the



Sgt M. Clarke
5 Inf Bn



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only three months ago he was a guest of the Chief of Staff at McKee Bks to mark his 105th birthday.

Right:
Photo shows members of 5 Inf Bn visiting Col Clancy before his passing away. From (l-r): Sgt Maj Gerry Hanley, Pte Brian Meagher, Lt Col Michael McCarthy, Lt John Moody, Sgt John Byrne and the late Col



assault on The Tunnel, shortly after deploying in Elizabethville. The citation for Lt Riordan's posthumous DSM states that he was 'tireless in his task in insuring the efficiency and welfare of his platoon under very trying circumstances, and it was while actually leading his platoon in an attack that he met his death.'

DSMs were also awarded to Cpl Gerald Francis, who remained in command of his section although wounded and his platoon commander had been killed, and Cpl Patrick Gregan who: *'On the 16th of December 1961, deliberately exposed himself to heavy automatic fire on a number of occasions in order to use his own 84mm anti-tank rifle more effectively... Later in the action, although wounded, he continued until ordered back for treatment.'*

In October 1966 Coy Sgt J Ryan died in St Brinc's military hospital having been medically repatriated from UN service in Cyprus three months earlier.

From 1969 the battalion was heavily committed in the ATCP role as a result of the eruption of hostilities in Northern Ireland. In March 1972, the battalion was presented with an official Irish wolfhound mascot, presented by famous music publisher Martin Walton. (When the battalion later formed its Special Assault Group, it was codenamed 'Wolfhound'.) Two months later the battalion was deployed to Mountjoy Prison where imprisoned terrorists were staging a major riot. The sudden appearance of a large body of disciplined and well-equipped troops had the desired effect and the disturbances quickly came to an end.

In 1978, members of 5 Inf Bn were among the first Irish troops deployed to Lebanon with UNIFIL, where Pte Michael Burke won the battalion's fourth DSM, *'For displaying courage, initiative and compassion of a high order when, voluntarily and under fire, and at considerable personal risk, Private Burke abandoned a position of safety to go to the aid of wounded civilians, in the open, in the village of Brachit, Lebanon on the 17th of April 1979.'*

On 8 April 1980, Pte Derek Smallhorne (31) was one of two Irish UNIFIL soldiers captured and murdered by DFF militia in the wake of the Battle of At-Tiri.

Another battalion fatality occurred in Lebanon on 27 Oct 1982 when Pte Peter Burke (20) died under particularly tragic circumstances as one of three soldiers murdered by Pte Michael McAvey at Tibnin Bridge.

Meanwhile, ATCP duties continued, including border deployments and cash escorts. In July 1981, a detachment from the battalion was on duty in Portlaoise Prison when a sudden fire in the clock tower trapped Pte John Norris on the roof. Pte Thomas Metcalfe, with 'exceptional bravery and with little regard for his own safety', scaled a forty-foot drainpipe while carrying a heavy fire hose and lowered his colleague to safety minutes before the tower collapsed. Metcalfe was subsequently awarded the military medal for gallantry (MMG); the only instance of this decoration being awarded for home service.

Despite heavy ATCP and overseas commitments, the battalion took care to hone its conventional infantry skills through training exercises, such as a 48-hour exercise in Wick-

low in July 1986 that involved a platoon deploying from LÉ Emer and marching inland to Kilpeddar to capture a company HQ.

By this time, the battalion had acquired its own artist in the shape of Sgt Michael Clarke, who accompanied 59 Inf Bn UNIFIL as unofficial battalion artist. The artwork thus produced was published later that year as *The Irish Soldier in UNIFIL*.

April 18 1997, marked the end of an era for the battalion when it marched out of Collins Barracks for the last time. It also marked the end of the barracks' status as the world's oldest continually occupied military facility (since 1704). On conclusion of the parade the battalion marched through the main gate onto Benburb Street where transport awaited to move them to their new home in McKee Bks.

UN peacekeeping missions continued, notably UNMIL in Liberia. Training initiatives also continued; one example being a battalion commander's challenge, organised in April 2009, aimed at enhancing the unit's basic soldiering skills and esprit de corps. Eight sections participated, each soldier carrying over 30lbs in battle vest and patrol pack, in addition to helmet and rifle, over a 5km march-and-shoot course around Gormanston Camp.

Three years later, 5 Infantry Battalion was disestablished as part of the 2012

reorganisation, with most personnel transferring to the newly formed 7 Infantry Battalion in Cathal Brugha Bks.

The 5 Infantry Battalion Association was quickly formed to keep the 5 Inf Bn name alive and in 2015 the association was presented with its colours, sponsored by the battalion's last two BSMs. ■



THE SOUND OF SILENCE(RS)

BY DEFENCE FORCES ORDNANCE OFFICER

Commonly referred to as silencers, mufflers or sound moderators, a suppressor is a device used to moderate the sound of a weapon when fired. To understand how suppressors work, one must first understand what causes the sound heard when a projectile is fired.

Sound can be defined as variations in the pressure, temperature and density of the medium through which the sound waves move, for example air or water.

When a weapon's trigger is pressed, it results in a chain reaction that leads to a round or rounds being fired. Pressure on the trigger releases the firing pin, which strikes the cartridge's primer, igniting and combusting the powder inside the round, driving the bullet out through the barrel, with the gases and unburned propellants following it causing muzzle blast. If the speed of the bullet exceeds the speed of sound, a ballistic N-shaped wave is produced along with the muzzle blast. These sounds together are known as the gunshot.

The sound level of the muzzle blast is strongest in the direction the barrel is facing. However, noise is still detected in the vicinity of the shooter, due to sound waves reflecting off the ground and nearby surfaces. Muzzle blast, the loudest sound caused by firing a small arms weapon, is affected by factors such as the environment, ammunition and calibre of the weapon. Ear muffs and ear plugs can be used to distort sound during training and military operations but these affect the shooter's ability to hear sound around them. Suppressors provide an alternate method to reduce this problem.

Weapon suppressors can minimise muzzle blast by breaking up the initial wave front from the gases, disturbing the shock waves as they pass through a series of baffles in the mechanism of the suppressor.

Metals, such as steel, aluminium or titanium, are used in the con-

struction of suppressors as they must be capable of enduring high pressure as well as being heat resistant. Suppressors divert gas flow and prohibit gas from flowing freely with structures called baffles and spacers. Wired mesh with reflective discs and surfaces are also included as structural components.

Suppressors are usually cylindrical and attached to the muzzle of a weapon such as a pistol or rifle. Expansion chambers allow the barrel to release gases into them and lower the muzzle blast effect. Suppressors also reduce the noise by decelerating and rapidly cooling the expanding gases released when a round is fired. There are at least four chambers in a suppressor, with the largest located near the muzzle end, as this allows unburned propellant and gas to expand substantially and slow down before coming into contact with the baffles, which in turn absorb a lot of heat before the gas and unburnt propellant exit the weapon.

A suppressor also increases the volume of a barrel by 20 times or more, allowing the gas behind the bullet more space to expand and lowering its pressure before the bullet exits the barrel. This causes a reduced sound wave.

Suppressors have many advantages, including allowing easier communication between soldiers during live fire exercises and operations; improving shot accuracy by promoting barrel stabilization; eliminating muzzle flash and preventing the blooming of night vision equipment; hiding a shooter's location from the enemy; and reducing recoil and muzzle flip, helping with the accuracy of subsequent shots.

This topic is one of many taught in detail during the MAMF Technicians Course and the Light Weapon Systems Engineering block of the Ordnance Young Officers Course. A thorough understanding of how light weapons work allows the Ordnance Corps to fully support Óglaigh na hÉireann at home and abroad. ■





BY CAPT DEIRDRE NEWELL, OIC AREA RECORDS, 2 BDE HQ

Mid Channel

I swam with a club when I was younger and it was always the thing I was good at. However, on joining the Defence Forces as a cadet in 2003 I had a rude awakening when I found out that swimming and running had very little in common, and running was what you needed to keep up in the Cadet School!

I still loved swimming, though, and when I heard someone talking about an island hopping holiday with a difference, in that it involved swimming from island to island, it sounded like heaven to me. Then, in 2014 I came across a swim-holiday company, Swimbtrek, and went with them on a trip to Croatia.

While there, I fell back in love with open-water swimming. I'd had a brief falling out with open-water swimming after my first experience swimming 13km across Galway bay in what I can only describe as horrendous conditions; a swim in which I was supported by the Army Dive Group, and after which I said "Never again". I stayed true to that sentiment until 2016 when I decided to give it another go.

In preparation for the Galway Bay Swim 2016 I was back in touch with Swimbtrek and booked on a 10km training camp in Mallorca. Sian Williams, who had been a guide on my trip to Croatia and the first person I had ever met to have swum the English Channel, was guiding on this trip along with Cliff Golding, who went on to be my English Channel mentor and number one crew for the swim.

When I met Sian in 2014 I was blown away at the idea that she had swum the Channel, something I had never even dreamt of doing. During a motivational talk, Cliff told us about his decision to

swim the Channel, and that it was only on his seventh attempt that he successfully landed in France. (Had he been successful on his first attempt I'm sure he would not have been such an influential mentor in my life.)

During the week there was one swim in jellyfish soup. As the majority bailed out and got back on the boat I pushed on and Cliff said, "Dee, you will be a Channel swimmer." It was the first time I thought it could be possible.

In 2017, after I completed my first six-hour, qualifier swim in under-16° water, I knew I was going to swim the Channel some day.

Booking a slot to swim the Channel must be done two to three years in advance, due to the popularity of attempts and restrictions on the number of boats traversing the busiest shipping lane in the world at a swimmer's pace.

As a member of the Defence Forces it was more difficult to plan an attempt. For example, given the amount of training required and the training conditions required, it is difficult to return from overseas deployment to do this swim. I returned from UNDOF in October 2018, which meant I had missed the whole swimming season of 2018. I didn't see this as a problem until I began to really feel the cold on training sessions, where the majority of my training was done in under 14°. Long-distance training coupled with low temperatures made it very hard for me to put on additional weight to help insulate against the cold. Nevertheless, when I arrived in Dover to a heat wave, with air temperatures of 32° and water temperatures of

18°-20°, I knew I didn't need to worry about the cold.

My window was 22-30 July and I was number 4, due to go on a neap tide, which means less moving water and a smaller S shaped course. However, one person cancelled and storms at sea resulted in only one swimmer making it to France. If I could hang on for the spring tide (more moving water and a bigger S shaped course) I might just get my chance. I had the support of 2 Bde HQ and was told to stay as long as I needed, although I had to say goodbye to my crew, who didn't have such flexibility.

Cliff, my mentor, was the only crew member able to stay and he was living an hour away, so I was alone in an empty house. Within days, however, I had numerous offers of back up crew. This is one of the reasons I love the open-water swimming community. As well as offers from London-based swimmers I also had offers from Defence Forces colleagues to fly over and do whatever was required. In the end Andrew Ferguson, an accomplished sailor from London, and Gavan Hennigan, a Galway friend who has completed many of his own epic endurance adventures to date, made up the perfect additional crew with Cliff.

At 1853 hrs on 3 August the message came from my pilot, *"Midnight meet for iam splash..."* and it was on! With the crew not arriving until 2100, I was on my own preparing for the swim; readying all of the equipment needed for the boat, all of my feeds, and snacks for the crew. However, my military training and in particular my SERE instructors course gave me the confidence I needed to go into this swim, and I realised just how much of an advantage I had undertaking this challenge as a member of the Defence Forces.

In the days leading up to this swim I had meditated regularly and focused on enjoying the swim, and after such a long wait to hit the water there was no way I was going to do anything but enjoy it.

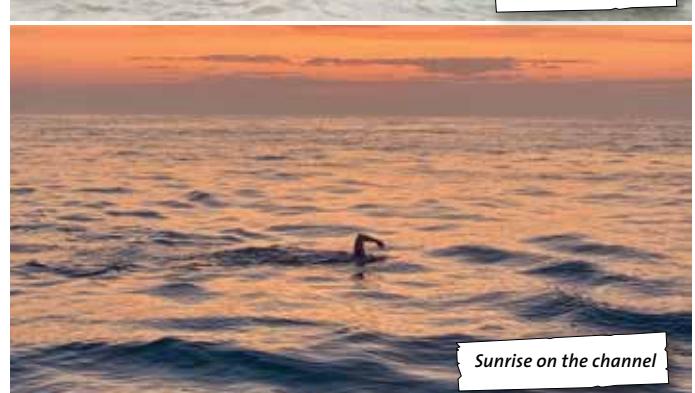
I had also been told that the ratio of male to female swimmers was 60:40 and a large driving force for me was to nudge this ratio closer to equal. Keeping this stat in mind it is a good time to mention that Rachel Lee, a member of the Dublin Fire Brigade, completed the fastest Irish time for a crossing, and Alison Streeter is the person who has made the crossing more times than anybody else. Women may be the minority of people crossing, but the ones who make it are top quality.

I was early to the beach, officially starting in darkness at 0053hrs, with a spotlight on me from the boat to ensure I had cleared the waterline, and to officially start the clock on the swim.

The first four hours were in darkness which was a good thing as I never had to face looking back on the looming white cliffs of Dover, and the sunrise felt like the real beginning of the swim. I did meet jellyfish along the way but was lucky to only have one bad sting and not need to take any medication for it. The crew saw some porpoise accompanying me but the only sign of wildlife I saw, other than the jellyfish, were some lobster-pot buoys that I collided with as the tide turned off Cap Gris Nez, and although they were stationary the tide was pushing me so fast it seemed they were coming at me at a blistering pace.

In order to get a good position on leaving the final shipping lane I had to spend half an hour power swimming, which was only made possible by all of my crew lining the side of the boat and cheering continuously for the whole time.

Coming out of the shipping lane is where the swim really starts. I had been warned that this point is comparable to Everest base camp with the beach as the summit. Up to this point I was so comfortable that if I had been asked to swim back to Dover I felt I would have been able to do it, but the half hour of power, coupled with not being entirely sure if I should be pushing for the cap or not meant that when I eventually heard the claxon indicating I had cleared the water on Wissant Beach and the swim was complete, I was extremely



happy to jump aboard Suva (my pink boat!)

Although it was a solo swim, there is no way it would have been possible without the immense support that I had along the way from friends, family and colleagues. Training swims take anything from one to six hours and yet I was never short of shore crew and water support, and in a time of poor water quality the Lough Dan Scouts let me use their grounds. This was an expensive journey and I am so grateful for the financial support I gained through the gofundme page I set up as well as numerous private donations.

This has been such a positive experience for me and I am so excited by what I have learned and achieved along that way that I would

Galway Bay Swim

BY CQMS DEIRDRE O'RAW

On 20 July the fourteenth Frances Thornton Memorial Galway Bay Swim took place in aid of Cancer Care West, a charity that provides residential and cancer support services free of charge for patients and their families. In those 14 years over 500 swimmers from around the world have completed the 13km swim, as individuals and in relay teams, with many returning year after year.

For most, the preparation begins early in the year, building up the mileage in the pool until the water gets slightly warmer and they can start swimming in the sea. For me, however, it was only six weeks before swim day that I got offered a place, which meant I had to put a fairly intensive training programme in place. Also, every swimmer has to complete a time trial in order to compete (solo swimmers have to swim 4km in 90mins and each member of a relay team has to swim 2km) and I only had a week to get ready for this.

With the time trial successfully completed and my place secured, it was time to get training and fund raising. My training involved swimming a minimum of 25km a week and making sure to do a long swim in the sea at the weekend. The fund raising was more fun, for me at least. With the help of a few CTIs (confidence training instructors) from the Defence Forces Association of Mountaineers, we ran a day of abseiling from the Fire Tower in the DFTC. Thankfully, bad weather didn't stop people giving it a go.

With money raised, training done, and boat and crew sorted by the Army Dive Group, it was the weekend of the swim. The race brief on the Friday night gave us our waves and all the information that we needed.

Early Saturday morning we met at the bus for the anxious drive to Aughinish Island. After checking in, making sure our boat was in place, and taking the all-important wave photograph, it was time to get into the water, where conditions were the worst in ten years, with a wave height of 1.5m, a tidal range of 3.2m, a wind speed of 12-16kts and a temperature of 17°C.

I found the first 2km to Deer Island the hardest part of the swim (this part is without boat support) as the wave height made finding my boat a bit of a task. There were also many, many jellyfish; thankfully compass, whose sting is not as bad as the lion's mane.

Eventually I made it through the jellyfish to my boat and the swim really began.

In open-water swimming sea conditions can really affect your speed and it is extremely hard to know how far you have come, how far is left, and what direction you are travelling. Therefore, it was great to meet the boat, as the crew's job is steering the direction I swim, as well as looking after my welfare, ensuring that I don't come down with hypothermia. Of course, they are also great for morale.

I was working off a 40min feeding plan; swimming for 40mins and then eating brioche buns with peanut butter and jam and drinking milk for fluid.

After several feeds and a good bit of swimming I started to hear the crowd at Blackrock, about 2km out from shore. I continued past Foudra, a buoy 1km from Blackrock, and about 500m away from shore the boat left me and it was time for the final push.

The clock stopped when I stood up at the steps, which are quite daunting when you've been swimming for nearly five hours. However, you eventually make it up the steps to get the hard-earned Galway Bay Swim towel, and of course the standard can of coke and cup of tea.

With the swim finished for another year it was time to get changed, sit down for a nice meal and begin the recovery process. ■





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The RUSH series of bags are one of the most popular ranges from 5.11, and for good reason! Built to withstand serious abuse, with soldiers in mind, these offer clever storage, easy-use, and extreme durability.

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MILITARY HISTORY LECTURES FOR OCTOBER 2019

TUESDAY OCTOBER 1ST AT 8 P.M.

Seán A. Murphy will present 'Lieutenant Edward Hempenstall, the 'Walking Gallows' of 1798, in Wicklow Lore' to the Kilmacanogue History Society in the Glenview Hotel, Glen of the Downs, Delgany, Co. Wicklow.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 5TH FROM 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

Dublin City Library & Archive, 138-144 Pearse Street, Dublin 2, will host a 'War of Independence' Seminar featuring a series of talks from various speakers. All welcome - admission free. Full programme details available in the 2019 Dublin City Festival of History brochure available from Dublin City public libraries.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 5TH FROM 10 A.M. TO 4 P.M.

The Western Front Association (Irish Branches) will hold a Seminar 'Hinge of the twentieth century: the aftermath of the First World War' with contributions from Gary Sheffield, Gerry White and Lar Joye, in the Dublin Port Company offices, Alexandra Road, Dublin 1. Admission €15.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 10TH AT 8 P.M.

Joseph E. A. Connell Jr. will present 'The shadow war: Michael Collins and the politics of violence' to the Rathfarnham Historical Society in the Memorial Hall, Rathfarnham, Dublin. All welcome - admission charge.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 15TH AT 7 P.M.

Joseph E. A. Connell Jr. will present 'The shadow war: Michael Collins and the politics of violence' in Clondalkin Library, Clondalkin, Co. Dublin. All welcome.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 16TH AT 7 P.M.

Joseph E. A. Connell Jr. will present 'The shadow war: Michael Collins and the politics of violence' in Lucan Library, Lucan, Co. Dublin. All welcome.

Thursday October 17th at 8 p.m.

Joseph E. A. Connell Jr. will cover 'Ireland 1919 to 1921' to the Bray Cualann Historical Society in the Royal Hotel, Main Street, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

All welcome - admission €5.

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Last month's winner of the PROTAC €50 Voucher was Stephen Ryan, Dublin. Closing date is 18th October 2019.

WORD SEARCH

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

The 7th CISM World Games 2019

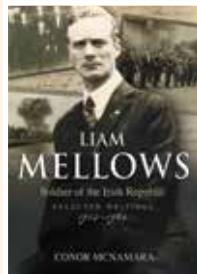
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BOOKS BOOKS

LIAM MELLOWS: SOLDIER OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC, SELECTED WRITINGS 1914-1922

Author: Conor McNamara
Publisher: Irish Academic Press (August 2019) www.iap.ie
ISBN: 9781788550789
Pages: 230
Price: €18.95 PB



On the 8th December 1922, Liam Mellows and fellow Republicans Rory O' Connor, Joe McKelvey and Richard Barrett were taken from their cells in Mountjoy Prison and executed by firing squad. The Free State government had ordered these killings as a reprisal for the shooting of TD Seán Hales. This action sent a shock wave throughout the country and brought the ruthlessness of the Civil War to a new dimension.

Historian Conor McNamara has conducted a landmark study of the life of Irish Republican Liam Mellows. The work brings together letters, speeches, political writings and captured IRA documents that enable the reader to explore and examine in detail Mellows short but dramatic life.

Mellows was at the forefront of the republican movement in Ireland from its inception. Following the Easter Rising he spent four years as an IRA representative in New York. During the Irish War of Independence, Mellows was responsible for the importation of arms for republican forces.

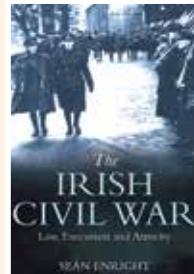
Later, Mellows was bitterly opposed to the Anglo Irish Treaty and became an implacable opponent to Michael Collins. He was a major instigator in the formation of the anti-Treaty IRA in 1922 that contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Chapters cover Mellows' writings on the History of Na Fianna Éireann (1917), The True Story of the Galway Insurrection as well as Civil War Writings, 1922, to name but a few.

McNamara also examines in the last chapter of the book the Battle for the Soul of Liam Mellows, as political groups lay claim to the man's work and memory. This is a well-researched, well written and an excellent read. **P O'B**

THE IRISH CIVIL WAR: LAW, EXECUTION AND ATROCITY

Author: Seán Enright
Publisher: Merrion Press (August 2019) www.irishacademicpress.ie
ISBN: 9781785372537
Pages: 200
Price: €18.95 PB



During the Irish Civil War it is estimated that eighty-three executions were carried out by the National Army of the emerging Free State Government, including four prisoners not tried or convicted of any charge. A further 125 prisoners were killed in the custody of the state, shot at the point of capture or killed while in custody. The words 'Shot while trying to escape' became an all too familiar press release.

Sean Enright's latest work *The Irish Civil War. Law, Execution and Atrocity* examines new material unearthed from the Military Archives on this dark period in our nation's history. After the Civil War trial records were destroyed and the execution policy became a bitter memory that was and until now rarely discussed.

In this groundbreaking work, Enright examines how a climate emerged in which prisoners could be tried by rudimentary military courts and then executed, and how many other prisoners were killed without trial at all. While the author looks at specific cases there is also a very useful chapter on key events and the main protagonists that enable the reader to travel through this period understanding the time and of those involved on all sides.

This is an excellent read and highly recommended. **PC**

DEFENDING TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, EASTER 1916: ANZACS AND THE RISING

Author: Dr Rory Sweetman
Publisher: Four Courts Press (May 2019) www.fourcourtspress.ie
ISBN: 9781846827846
Pages: 176
Price: €17.95 PB

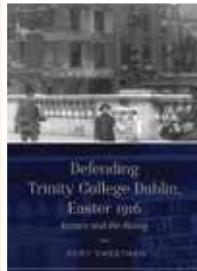
Kildare-born New Zealander Dr Rory Sweetman, who holds history degrees from both Trinity College Dublin and Cambridge University has released his latest work, *Defending Trinity College Dublin, Easter 1916: Anzacs and the Rising*. His previous book *Bishop in the Dock: The Sedition Trial of James Liston in New Zealand (Dublin, 2007)*, won the Sir Keith Sinclair Prize for History.

This topical story on the action that took place in and around Trinity College during the 1916 Easter Rising has been mooted in history publications for a good number of years, but this is the first time I've seen it put into a book on its own.

"Most commentators march past Trinity as determinedly as did the Irish Citizen Army on its way to St Stephen's Green, with at most a sideways glance at what one rebel referred to as the intellectual centre of West Britonism."

Dr Sweetman's book revels the story of the 5-man squad of New Zealanders, who as British colonial troops provided a vital shield to protect the college from attack or capture. The book contains numerous letters from these New Zealanders to their homeland which gives a fresh insight into the aspects surrounding the insurrection and answer some questions previously asked by historians.

Defending Trinity College Dublin, Easter 1916: Anzacs and the Rising is explored further in this month's history section, but the book is highly recommended as Dr Sweetman poses many other interesting aspects of The Rising, like: how close did Trinity come to being a central battleground in the Rising? How and why did it escape this grisly fate? And – not least – what might have happened but for the timely intervention of the colonial troops? **WF**



NAME

KARL JOHNSTON

RANK

SGT/SNIPER INSTRUCTOR SGT

UNIT

INFANTRY WEAPONS WING (IWW)



BY SGT KARL BYRNE

PHOTOS BY SGT KARL BYRNE

Karl joined the army in March 2005. He's married to his wife Dee and they have two children, Jack (4) and Freya (9months). Before joining the army Karl worked in his families business, a launderette on Pearse street in Dublin's city center. 2 weeks before travelling to the ITC Catterick in the UK to join the British Army Karl got word that he had been accepted into the Irish Defence Forces.

He completed his recruit training and three star cse in Gormanston camp with the 2 Bn. *"I really enjoyed the training in Gormanston, looking back now the location was perfect and the training staff were excellent, the Pln Sgt who is now a CS, Paul O'Mara was a very good influence on all of us"*. After training he was posted to A Coy, 2 Bn, where his very first course was a Regimental Signals cse. From there he did 3 months in the security Pln in Portlaoise Prison. Wanting to keep himself busy Karl then increased his infantry skills by completing an Infantry Light Support Weapons (ILSW) cse.

Karl's first overseas mission was to Kosovo with the 33rd Inf Gp in October 2006. *"It was a really good trip, I was employed as a signaller and I enjoyed the extra responsibility it brought to the mission"*. His first introduction to sniping was experienced on his basic sniper cse, which ran over a 7-week period in the early autumn months of 2007. *"I loved that course, I really found my passion for sniping on the course and I haven't looked back since"*. Not resting himself, after his basic sniper course, within 2 weeks, Karl was afforded the opportunity to go for promotion, which he jumped at and after 7 months potential NCO's cse he was promoted in May 2008.

Karl's love of sniping continued when he completed his Sniper Instructors cse in the IWW. *"Doing that course I learned how to work as a sniper team and how to deploy a sniper team on operations both home and abroad"*. Immediately after his sniper instructors cse he formed up for his second overseas mission to Chad, with the 99th Inf Bn as a section 2 I/C. After 3 weeks the Bn Cmdr wanted 2 full time sniper teams and Karl was deployed in a sniper team with APC Coy, used as over watch for Camp Ciara and as over watch for the basecamps while out on operational patrols.

After training the 71st recruit pln in 2009, Karl transferred into 2 Bde HQ working in the Adjutant's office, completing his Inf All Arms Standard cse and then almost straight onto the Inf Sgt's cse in 2012. Not long after those courses he completed a Combat Trackers cse in the Cavalry school, Karl then progressed his Infantry career by completing the ILSW Instructor's cse before being promoted to Sgt in the March of 2015. Getting promoted into the Admin School in the DFTC he had the opportunity to up-skill himself with an Ord Room Sgt's cse, Logistics cse's, Mif cse and the Logs mod 1 cse.

In 2016 Karl spent 9 months overseas working in the special staff team for the then Head of Mission Force Commander of UNIFIL Major General Beary. This job was extremely demanding as it meant he was deployed as an operations admin clerk, a driver, photographer and note taker when needed. After his deployment to UNIFIL Karl completed a higher diploma in Supply Chain Management in Carlow IT in May 2018.

Karl's current position in the IWW came about after he completed an LFTT (Live Fire Tactical Training) cse as a precursor to a transfer into the unit. In March 2019 he was attached to the IWW and tasked as Sgt coordinator for an International Marksmanship Skills competition. Once the transfer competition had ended he was able to transfer into the IWW on 16th June 2019.

His main job in the unit is as sniper instructor sgt, this consists of running badge tests for unit level basic sniper cse's for various units across the Defence Forces. He also conducts the sniper instructor's cse's that are run in the IWW. Secondary to his job as lead sniper instructor is being an LFTT instructor, this involves planning, organising and the supervision of LFTT exercises for overseas mission readiness exercises (MRE's), weapons concentrations and conducting LFTT instructor's cse's within the IWW.

Speaking of his love for sniping Karl told us *"I really enjoy being involved with the Defence Forces Sniper community, they are a highly motivated and enthusiastic collection of Irish Defence Forces members"*. *"Working in the IWW is a very demanding but a highly rewarding job, because I enjoy working in the IWW the hardest part of my job is trying to get a good working/life balance. I'm also looking forward to one of our on going projects coming to fruition with the first batch of new sniper clothing and equipment due to arrive before the end of the year"*. ■





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