

THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

# AN COSANTÓIR

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JULY / AUGUST 2019

## SPECIAL FORCES

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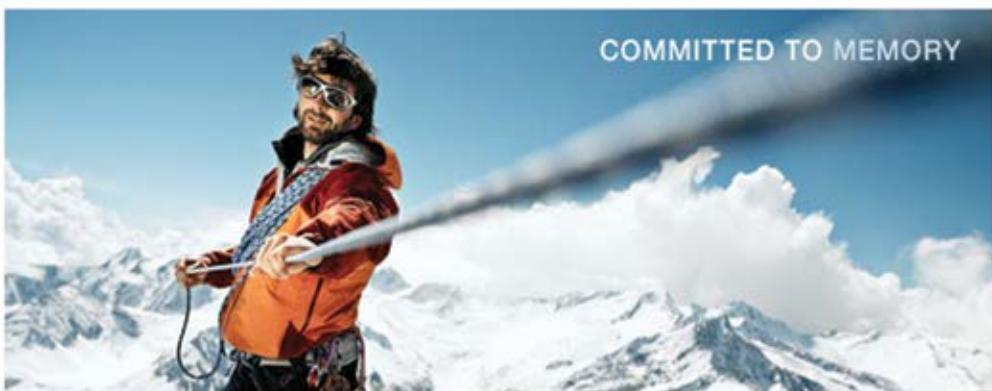
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**Front Cover**

ARW Assault Team Operatives during an ATCP exercise. Photo by Armn Adam Murphy Ret'd

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# Editorial

**H**ello and welcome to our 48-page July/August issue, which has a large focus on Special Forces and the Army Ranger Wing.

July is the month of remembrance for the Defence Forces, where we remember our fallen, many of whom died in the service of peace. This month we have many articles that feature our veterans, from using their skills after service and by discussing their peacekeeping experiences so we can learn from the past. Last year at this time we commemorated our achievement of being the only nation to complete 60-years of continuous involvement in United Nations peacekeeping, since 26th June 1958. Our overseas service has always provided Irish soldiers, sailors and aircrews with the opportunity to practice their profession in an operational environment, to travel, and to meet new people, and sample foreign cultures, and most importantly, to make a difference where and when they could.

During those six decades of peacekeeping we have lost 87 of our comrades in the service of peace. They made the ultimate sacrifice while trying to protect the vulnerable and bring peace to troubled regions of the world, regardless of the dangers and risk of personal harm. We also think of their families and their sacrifices. This

month ONE's Fuchsia Appeal will be to the forefront once again and we use their fundraising emblem as a symbol of remembrance for those who are deceased and to those currently serving in the Defence Forces.

***Cuimhnímis! – Let us remember!***



*“...Ireland pursues an independent course in foreign policy, but it is not neutral between liberty and tyranny and never will be...*

*...from this legislative assembly to the United Nations, Ireland is sending its most talented men to do the world's most important work - the work of peace.*

*...but you no longer go as exiles and emigrants but for the service of your country and, indeed, of all men... I pay tribute to them and to all of you for your commitment and dedication to world order. And their sacrifice reminds us all that we must not falter now...*

*My friends, Ireland's hour has come. You have something to give to the world - and that is a future of peace with freedom.”*

**- US President John F. Kennedy addresses Dáil Éireann, 28th June 1963**



This month we have 21 articles covering all aspects of military life, from your photographs *On Parade*, to our *Veterans News*, Defence Attaché visit, a look at the ARW, and an extended look at *Special Forces – Ultimate Hell Week* the reality TV show that took us by surprise. We have Recce, Belgian Special Forces, and Paul O'Brien's Mercenaries Part 2, along with a veteran's view of 'A Life Less Ordinary' and an expended *History* section looking at 3 Inf Bn, the Irish in D-Day, Wol Internment and the Limerick Soviet 1919. Our *Sports* section looks at the making of a Tactical Athlete along with our regular features *Tac-Aide*, *Gear Review*, *Noticeboard*, and *Book Reviews*. Enjoy the summer and see you in September.

**Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald**



#### ▲ TECH EXCELLENCE AWARD

On 23rd May 2019, the Defence Forces were awarded the Tech Excellence Award for Data Centre Innovation - deserving recognition for the dedication of CIS Corps personnel both past and present.



#### ◀ RDF NCO'S LAST SHOOT

Pictured at the recent DF SA Shoot 22-24 May 2019, near 60-year-old Cpl Cathal Costello AR, 6 Inf Bn RDF with the Director of DF Training Col Tom O'Callaghan. Cathal has 43- yrs service and was originally with 56 Inf Bn and is a former Bde GPMG Champion (twice) and DF All Army GPMG RDF Champion in 2017. Photo: Comdt Shane Rockett, J7, DFHQ



#### ▲ DF GOLF MATCHPLAY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Congratulations to 1 Bde Golf team, who were victorious over the 2 Bde team in the DF Golf Matchplay Championships held in Donegal

Golf Club, Murvagh on 22nd and 23rd May. The championships were organised by Comdt Shane Fahy and Comdt John Fitzgerald to provide a firm test to all competitors over a very testing links course. Thanks to Donegal GC for their hospitality and to OC 28 Inf Bn Lt Col Fred O'Donovan. Pictured is the winning team: Pte Chris Murray, 3 Inf Bn, Pte Liam Hickey 3 Inf Bn, Pte Joe O'Meara, 1 BAR, Cpl Tommy Fitzgibbon, 1 BTC, Cpl Micky Comerford, 3 Inf Bn, Cpl Sean Fleming, 3 Inf Bn, and Team Captain Sgt Cieran Kennedy, 3 Inf Bn. Photo: Comdt Paul Burke, DFTC CIS Group



#### ▲ GAI SCE'S DEFENCE FORCES CHALLENGE

Pictured are participants on the Gaisce's Defence Forces Challenge as their 6 Inf Bn instructors put them through a team building event incorporating obstacle course and pool in the DFPEs.

Photo: Sgt Stephen Buckley, DFTC Ops



#### ▲ ALL ARMY SHOOTING COMPETITION

Pictured are members of C Coy (RDF), 7 Inf Bn who formed the Bn Rifle Novice Team during the DF All Army Shooting Competition in TISK in May. Front Kneeling: Pte Luain Beirne, Pte Richard Hiney, and Pte Jonathan Forbes. Rear Standing: Pte Jordan Fynes, Pte Shane Lynam, and Cpl Paul McGee. Photo: CQMS Barrett AR, 7 Inf Bn RDF



#### ▲ INTERNATIONAL HUMAN SECURITY ADVISORS COURSE

Pictured is Capt Deirdre Carberry who instructed on the UK's Human Security Advisors Course at the Defence Academy. The staff and students came from Australia, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Ireland, Nigeria, Finland, Iraq and Bosnia i Herzegovina. Photo: Capt Deirdre Carberry

# MONUSCO PARADE



## PROMOTION IN THE CONGO

Comdt Ian O'Riordan (centre) is pictured receiving his crossed swords on promotion to Commandant on 23rd May 2019. He is currently serving with the MONUSCO mission in the Congo along with Comdt Stephen MacEoin (left) and Capt Phelim Carroll. *Photo: Comdt Stephen MacEoin*



## SGT MAJOR DAVE HEAPHY

After over 42 years of dedicated service to the Defence Forces, 3 Inf Bn were honoured to have a Stand Down Parade for Sgt Major Dave Heaphy in Stephens Barracks on 9th May 2019. Sgt Major Dave Heaphy is pictured inspecting the troops with OC 3 Inf Bn Lt Col Murt Larkin - All in 3 Inf Bn wish him all the best in his retirement. *Photo: Sgt Martina Cronin, 3 Inf Bn*



## ONE VETERANS' REMEMBER

Pictured are members of Fr James Gilmore Branch of The Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel (ONE) at their annual Lá na bhFiann mass on 9th June in St Benedict's Church, Kilbarrack. Other ONE members and their families accompany them in remembering fallen veterans. *Photo: Dessie O'Hara, ONE*



## CAPT THOMAS KEANE REMEMBERED

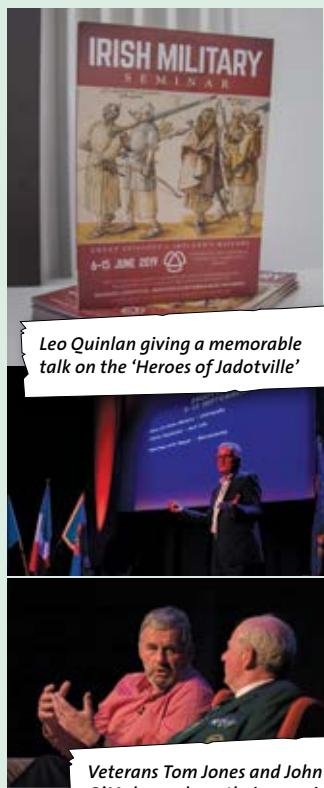
Pictured are members of the 12 Inf Bn who held a wreath laying ceremony for Capt Thomas Keane, C Coy, Limerick Brigade IRA who was executed by firing squad in Sarsfield Barracks on 4th June 1921. The Mayor of Limerick James Collins accompanied by OC 12 Inf Bn, Lt Col Robert Kiely laid a wreath after inspecting the honour guard. *Photos: Pte Michael 'Rama' Walsh*

## THE 3RD MILITARY SEMINAR

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

The 3rd Military Seminar opened in the Riverbank Arts Centre, Newbridge Co Kildare from 6th to 15th June 2019. On the 75th Anniversary of D-Day, Lt Col retired Dan Harvey launched his latest book 'A Bloody Dawn – The Irish at D-Day' by journalist and author Kevin Myers. On Thursday 13th, three talks took place covering a Luftwaffe bomber crash near Kiltealy Co Wexford in 1941, followed by fire and manoeuvre in the Boer War 1899 and then the War of Independence in Co Kildare. Then on Friday 14th, Comdt retired Leo Quinlan and son of Lt Col Patrick Quinlan OC A Coy, 35 Inf Bn, gave a memorable talk and PowerPoint display on the 'Heroes of Jadotville'. This was followed by the 'Battle of At Tiri', where I chaired a panel discussion with Irish veterans, Tom Jones and John O'Mahony. This truly was a once in a lifetime experience, to hear of a live action battle involving Irish peacekeepers from those that were there. Finally, on Saturday 15th a number of talks took place throughout the day. Talks included: Irish Neutrality in WWII; IRA Border Campaign 1956; Margaret Skinnider and the Easter Rising; The Irish at the Battle of Little Big Horn, from acclaimed authors such as Dr Myles Dungan, Dr Mary McAuliffe, Dr Ruan O'Donnell, Des Ekin, T. Ryle Dwyer, and Dr Leeann Lane.

Congratulations and well done to all in the Riverbank Arts Centre and to Mario Corrigan, James Durney and Karel Kiely and the Kildare Decade of Commemorations Committee on an excellent seminar. ■



Leo Quinlan giving a memorable talk on the 'Heroes of Jadotville'

Veterans Tom Jones and John O'Mahony share their experiences of the Battle of At-Tiri.

## The Hugh O'Flaherty Humanitarian Award

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD - PHOTOS: MARTIN ROWE, IUNVA

On 4th June 2019, Ireland's United Nations Peacekeepers were awarded the Hugh O'Flaherty Humanitarian Award for 2019 in St Mary's Church, Kenmare Place, Killarney, Co Kerry.

Monsignor Hugh O'Flaherty from Killarney served in the Vatican City during World War II, and helped Jews, Allied POWs and downed Allied airmen escaping the Nazi war machine by providing safe refuge within the Vatican. The 'Rome Escape Line' is credited with the securing the safety of 3,925 Allied POWs/Airmen from 25 different nationalities during the period September 1943 to June 1944, when the advancing Allied Forces liberated Rome. In 1945 the British Government awarded Monsignor O'Flaherty with a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) and in 1946 US President Harry S. Truman bestowed him with the US Medal of Freedom with Silver Palm. The Hugh O'Flaherty Memorial Society first presented the Hugh O'Flaherty Humanitarian Award in 2009 to GOAL aid workers Sharon Commins and Hilda Kawuki - who were kidnapped in north Darfur, Sudan. This is now the 11th year of the award.

Major Gen Kieran Brennan, retired from the Defence Forces on 19th June 2019, we would like to wish him well in his retirement and congratulate him on an excellent career both on and off the field. ■



Pictured accepting the award are IUNVA National Chairman Jim Casey, Brig Gen Paddy Flynn, GOC 1 Bde, Minister with Responsibility for Defence Paul Keogh TD, Chair of the Hugh O'Flaherty Society Jerry O'Grady, and DCOS Ops Major Gen Kieran Brennan.



Members of IUNVA who are all UN Peacekeepers accepted the award along with members of the general staff.

# TECH SUPPORTING VETERANS

## Veterans @ Dropbox

BY PATRICK FINUCANE, REGIONAL SECURITY  
MANAGER EMEA/APAC, DROPBOX

In 2012, US tech company Dropbox moved to set up its International Headquarters in Dublin. With over 500 million users globally, the Dublin office manages several key operations on behalf of Dropbox throughout EMEA and APAC. Everything from physical security, legal representation, customer experience and online support are some of the services. Similar to Facebook, Microsoft and Amazon, Dropbox has a large international workforce, and it is in that space that many former service personnel have carved out new careers for themselves.

Within the tech industry, there is a growing recognition that former service personnel (or veterans in the US lexicon) are highly focused, motivated and skilled and often possess a far wider range of skills and abilities not available amongst candidates in the traditional job market - this means that there is a ready pool of talent to tap into. For those leaving service it also means that there are now opportunities in the tech sector that simply did not exist 10-years-ago.

In recognising the commitment and service that veterans have given to their countries, many tech companies continue to support and reward that service through global support group initiatives and Dropbox is no different. The group Veterans @ Dropbox's mission is to educate Dropboxers about military service and veterans' issues (regardless of where that service took place). While also supporting the diverse community of employees who have served in the military, their families and supporters. Additionally, the group plans to support the active duty and military veteran community outside of Dropbox through a range of transition-related programs and partnerships.

The aims of Veterans @ Dropbox are: Establishing partnerships with impactful organisations that uplift the active duty and military veteran community through a range of transition-related programs, service-related activities, and support groups; Supporting newly hired/transitioning veterans at Dropbox; Building a safer space for Dropbox to learn the value of veterans; Provide greater education around transferable skills and Socialise the value of veterans in the workplace.

As part of that outreach program it was decided that Dropbox would offer a donation of IT equipment to the Organisation of

Nation Ex-Service Personnel or Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann (ONE). After the completion of some necessary administration, Patrick Finucane, Richard O'Neill (both former DFHQ) and Cormac Johnson (former 2 Bde HQ) met with ONE's CEO Ollie O'Connor to handover a donation of Apple and Dell laptops. All three former service personnel are now part of the Dropbox Physical Security & Safety team, where they lead up protective intelligence security operations for Dropbox. In addition to the laptops, Dropbox Catering Operations Manager Glen Curtis and EMEA Executive Chef Mark Anderson donated an industrial coffee machine for the residents of Brú na Bóinne – ONE's homeless initiative for veterans.

The donated laptops will allow ONE run programs and databases that are critical to the charity's continued operation and will also assist them in providing an essential service to veteran clients. The coffee machine will keep everyone refreshed and rejuvenated. During the visit Ollie gave the group a tour of the facility and spoke about the challenges facing veterans when they leave service. Following the visit, it was agreed that Veterans @ Dropbox would continue to support ONE and also the larger Irish veteran community on a global scale. ■



Dropbox donations.



Cormac Johnson serving in Liberia.



Dropbox staff Richard O'Neill, Patrick Finucane, and Cormac Johnson meeting ONE's CEO Ollie O'Connor at Brú na Bóinne, Smithfield, Dublin.



Patrick Finucane serving in Chad.

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

## FALLEN IN THE CAUSE OF PEACE: IUNVA'S ANNUAL WREATH LAYING CEREMONY

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD PHOTOS BY ARMN SEAN FOLEY, 105 SQN

**O**n Sunday 26th May 2019, the Irish United Nations Veterans Association held their Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony in the UN Memorial Garden in Arbour House, Dublin 7.

The annual ceremony is held in honour of the members of the Defence Forces, An Garda Síochána and civilian personnel who paid the ultimate sacrifice for world peace.

In total, 95 Irish personnel died on UN Peacekeeping missions around the world since 1958, 87 of them were members of the Defence Forces. Countries included Congo, Cyprus, Lebanon, The Middle East, Somalia, Bosnia I Herzegovina, East Timor, Liberia, Haiti and Europe.

The ceremony held in the well-kept and picturesque UN Memorial Garden, began at midday, retired Defence Forces Sgt Major Mick Dillion took the parade, with retired Comdt George Kirwin, IUNVA Press Officer on the microphone as the days MC. IUNVA's National Chairman Jim Casey acknowledged and thanked the Defence Forces Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, the Secretary General of the Dept of Defence, An Garda Síochána, the Office of Public Works, the Civil Defence for their continued support and contribution to IUNVA.

The IUNVA Pipe Band started the ceremony and played music through-

out. The Roll of Honour was called out and followed by the wreath laying. Members of the Defence Forces representing the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service laid wreaths along with family and friends of the fallen – “Your names are etched into the pages of history, and more importantly into our hearts. We salute you today and always,” was softly spoken over the speakers. As is always mentioned at these solemn occasions “we will always remember them.”

This year marked the 50th Anniversary of Tpr Michael Kennedy, 1 ACS who died while on service in Cyprus with the 12 Inf Gp, UNFICYP on 1st July 1969. There was a special mention of Clareman Michael Ryan, who died in an Ethiopian Airlines plane crash in March of this year. Michael was the Deputy Chief Engineer with the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) and was living in the WFP's Rome headquarters.

A minute's silence was followed by the playing of the Pipers Lament, Last Post, with the National Flag raised to the top, and then Reveille and the National Anthem – this concluded the Wreath Laying Ceremony for 2019. Guests then proceeded into the IUNVA House and gardens for light refreshments, and stories and memories were regaled from peacekeeping missions from many a veteran's memory.

In the words Dag Hammarskjöld, UN General Secretary 1953-1961 (RIP): “Do not look back and do not dream about the future either. It will neither give you back the past nor satisfy your day-dreams. Your duty, your reward, your destiny...here and now.” ■

Ronnie Daly hands IUNVA Vice President William Gilbert a wreath.



IUNVA Pipe Band led by Anto Byrne.



IUNVA's National Chairman Jim Casey and Vice President William Gilbert.



Serving members who laid wreaths on behalf of the Defence Forces.



IUNVA's memorial to our fallen comrades.

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# DEFENCE ATTACHE GROUP VISIT

BY CAPT ÁINE McDONOUGH, DEFENCE ATTACHE LIAISON OFFICER (DALO)

**A** total of 44 countries have Defence Attachés (DAs) accredited to Ireland. Their role is to promote co-operation between their own militaries and the Defence Forces. Only three countries have resident Defence Attachés in Dublin – the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Russia. The remaining 41 attachés are based in London.

In order to maintain the connection with these non-resident DAs, every year the Defence Forces host a Defence Attaché Group Visit. The visit is hosted by a different Brigade or Formation each year, thus offering the attachés an opportunity to see various aspects of Óglaigh na hÉireann.

This year 2 Bde hosted 33 DAs from 28 countries, along with their spouses from 8th to 12th April 2019. GOC 2 Bde Brig Gen Howard Berney greeted the group at the opening reception on Monday.

On the evening of Monday 8th April, the Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, and the Minister of State with responsibility for Defence, Mr Paul Kehoe TD, hosted the Defence Attachés at an official dinner in Cathal Brugha Bks. The following day they visited Aiken Bks, Dundalk where they were given a series of briefings on Defence Forces operations and unit life in the 27 Inf Bn. This was followed by a capability display which included weapons, equipment and vehicles from all corps. The DAs were also delighted to speak to the troops at each stand. After leaving Dundalk, the group travelled to Dublin to visit the National Emergency Co-ordination Centre, where they were briefed on the roles and responsibilities of the Office of Emergency Planning and the DF contribution in the event of a major emergency.

On Wednesday 10th April, the Defence Attachés visited Iveagh House where they received a number of briefings from the Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Dept of Defence, along with presentations from Strategic Planning Branch and the Air Corps. They also had an opportunity to speak with Maj Gen Kieran Brennan, DCOS (Ops) and Brig Gen Peter O'Halloran, ACOS. That evening, the Defence Attachés hosted their own dinner at the Honourable Society of King's Inns, inviting all members of the General Staff and many others with whom they had interacted over the

course of the visit. They were welcomed by a DF piper and entertained during the reception by a woodwind quintet from the School of Music.

The spouses of the DAs were also present at this dinner, having spent the previous two days on their own cultural programme, ably escorted by Capt Richard O'Hagan, 7 Inf Bn. The spouses were treated to a private tour of Marsh's Library and St. Patrick's Cathedral and also had the honour of meeting President Michael D Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin.

On Thursday 11th April the whole group came together for a cultural visit to Lambay Island. The DAs were brought to the island on board the *LÉ Samuel Beckett*, captained by Lt Cdr Eoin Smyth. Thankfully the weather conditions were ideal and it was smooth sailing from Dublin to Lambay. The DAs and their spouses were very impressed by the ship and her crew, as well as the excellent lunch provided by the School of Catering. On Lambay they were given a tour of the island and treated to a whiskey tasting in the castle. Edwin Lutyens, who designed the War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge and the Cenotaph in London, also designed Lambay Castle and many of the other buildings on the island.

The annual Defence Attaché Group Visit provides the Defence Forces with a tremendous opportunity to engage with foreign militaries through their DAs. It also serves as a showcase for Óglaigh na hÉireann, allowing us to demonstrate our capabilities and expertise to an international audience. A visit on this scale would not be possible without the assistance of all services and corps, especially those from 2 Bde who hosted the event.

The Defence Attaché Liaison Office (DALO) is the single point of contact for Defence Attachés and all correspondence between the DF and attachés should be routed through the office. The DALO office is available to assist with any queries in relation to foreign militaries. ■

Defence Attaché Group



Spouses Group visit to President Michael D Higgins at Áras an Uachtaráin



LÉ Samuel Beckett



Defence Attaché's visit LÉ Samuel Beckett



DF COS Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, talks to the Defence Attachés.



# THE ARMY RANGER WING (ARW) IRELAND'S SPECIAL FORCES

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD PHOTOS BY SGT KARL BYRNE & ARMN ADAM MURPHY RET'D

**T**he Defence Forces Special Forces unit is officially titled as 'Sciathán Fianóglach an Airm' and translates as 'The Army Ranger Wing' (ARW) - as there is no direct English translation of the term 'Fianóglach' so the internationally recognised designation of 'Ranger' is used. The word 'Fianóglach' links the traditions of the ARW to 'Na Fianna', the legendary Irish warriors, with the present day Óglaigh na hÉireann or Irish Defence Forces. In order to be eligible to undergo the selection process you must be a serving member of the Defence Forces.

*"Glaine ár gCroí, Neart ár nGéag, Agus beart de réir ár mbriathar"* ("The cleanliness of our hearts, The strength of our limbs, And our commitment to our promise") - The ARW motto is taken from an old Fianna poem and continues the link with Na Fianna.

The ARW's roles are divided into conventional warfare offensive operations behind enemy lines, like long range patrols (LRP), raids, ambushes, sabotage plus other tasks, and specialist aid to the civil power (ATCP) in anti-terrorist taskings including anti-hijack, hostage rescue, airborne and seaborne interventions amongst others. The ARW has also an established role in the advancement of standards within the DF, including testing and evaluation of equipment, organising and participating in training exercises to name a few.

The ARW has significantly revised its selection and assessment procedures for prospective unit members and their selection and basic skills courses have both been combined into a single 36-week Special Operations Force Qualification (SOFQ) Course. SOFQ requires a high level of physical fitness, navigation skills, personal motivation and the aspiration to serve in the ARW. The SOFQ syllabus is designed to test and assess all aspects of the candidate's character, military skills, ability and general suitability to become a member of the ARW and on successful completion provides the potential unit member with all the skills and knowledge necessary to function in the role of a Special Operations Force (SOF) Assault Team Operator.

The SOFQ course is divided into five distinct modules: The aim of Module One is to assess the candidate's levels of physical fitness, motivation and suitability to progress onwards. During this phase all candidates must pass a series of fitness assessments, map reading and individual navigation assessments, claustrophobia, water confidence and psychometric testing in order to progress. The candidate is then assessed further by a series of individual navigation exercises with set weights, but unknown distances and completion times. This culminates in a 60km cross-country march carrying a 65lb combat load. Officer candidates are also subjected to rigorous assessment of their planning and decision-making skills, to assess suitability to achieve a command appointment in the ARW.

Modules Two to Five consists of further training and assessment in areas such as SOF weapons and marksmanship, live fire tactical training, SOF conventional and Counter Terrorism TTPS, combat water survival, SERE, communications and medical training. Candidates are awarded the 'Fianóglach' tab on successful completion of Module Three and are assigned to the unit. On completion of Module Four they are awarded the distinctive ARW green beret. On conclusion of the SOFQ course candidates are posted to an opera-

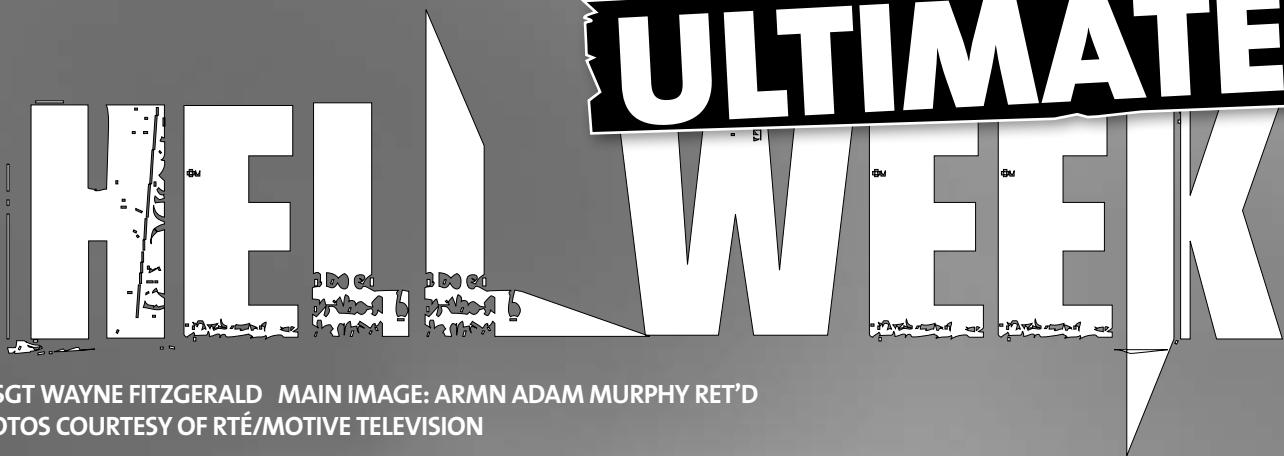


tional ARW task unit as an Assault Team Operator and can expect to undertake numerous further training in areas such as advanced medical skills, military freefall, combat diving and boat handling, close protection and advanced weapons skills.

This training would not be well known or publicly advertised, nor would the ARW operatives, who remain in the background in order to protect their identities and that of the unit. Thus, the unit and its members are shrouded in secrecy both within the Defence Forces and to the public. ■

# “TO HELL & BACK” SPECIAL FORCES

## ULTIMATE



BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD MAIN IMAGE: ARMN ADAM MURPHY RET'D  
PHOTOS COURTESY OF RTÉ/MOTIVE TELEVISION

Now that we have looked at the physical and mental training and commitment it takes to become an Army Ranger Wing (ARW) Assault Team Operator in the previous article – imagine developing that training and condensing it into an 8-day selection course that would seek out 24 of Ireland's fittest candidates for a brand-new factual format TV programme?

That's what the Motive Television producers of *Special Forces – Ultimate Hell Week*, which aired in April, and May on RTÉ 2 put to four former ARW Assault Team Operators. Motive is an IFTA Award winning television company specialising in producing factual entertainment shows and documentaries like *The Notorious: The Series* (RTÉ 2), and *Toughest Place To Be* (RTÉ 1). Motive's Hell Week



producer Jamie D'Alton said, "The four Directing Staff (DS) Ray Gogins, Alan O'Brien, Ger Reidy and Robert Stafford were absolutely incredible. Elite soldiers and seriously impressive men, who gave viewers a unique and privileged insight into what it takes to become a member of the ARW. This was a big call for them to get involved in, not only were they representing themselves and their families, they became the public face of the ARW and Ireland's Special Forces. It was a significant responsibility."

Jamie then explained, "From the production side, it was a huge undertaking: nothing like this had been attempted in Ireland before. Between casting the 24 candidates, building the sets and filming... With more than 50 crew working 21-hours a day, for 9-days straight,

them into their world very quickly - by having them strip to their underwear in the freezing rain. The next few episodes showed back-to-back tasks coming at them as they are pushed to their limits - within 24hrs six candidates are eliminated. A snow blizzard hits the camp where the remaining 15 candidates start to show signs of increasing fatigue. The remaining episodes see the candidates attempt to overcome physically demanding tasks, and the DS do more psychological games to see who will crack, until we get down to the last five candidates to see who has what it takes to survive and pass Special Forces – Ultimate Hell Week selection.

Hell Week's Directing Staff all lived the high-octane life as Special Forces Operators for many years. Their experience of

passing selection and being able to spot weaknesses in the candidates was there to see. It's not just about shouting, swearing or trying to impose your presence on a candidate – it's knowing when to do so and making sure the candidate can take the pressure and will respond to it; by either breaking and 'Dropping Out' (DO) or taking the pressure, biting down and doing better. Like most DF training courses there is always what we would call the 'grey man' or woman, the person who stays in the shadows and not coming to the eye of the DS. Then the opposite, the 'heat seeker' and Hell Week had a few of them too, some came to their attention straight after getting off the bus. So we got to ask them about their views on Hell Week.

Robert Stafford, 22-years' service, 2 Inf Bn with 17-years in ARW. He is currently working in

the private security sector for Detail Security Consultants with a lot of international work. "We wanted to stay as true to the Irish ARW selection process, this leaned more to the old course which we did. Selection is a phase-based process which is over 9-months which might not relate to TV as easily."

Ger Reidy, 23-years' service, 2 FAR, with 20-years in the ARW. He is currently working in the private security sector for Detail Security Consultants with the majority of time working abroad. "We were determined that it had to mirror or be close to the selection



Production crew with Cpl Paul Magee AR second from the left, and Recruit Tiernan O'Rourke AR (both 7 Inf Bn) is far right. Photo: Paul Magee



If I don't see you improve immediately I'm going to f\*ck you right up.

in the worst imaginable weather, it took a huge effort from the entire team to pull it off."

In getting the former ARW operatives to undertake the task Jamie explained, "From the outset they said the series had to be a robust and realistic representation of selection. At times this intensity probably shocked viewers, but ultimately it made for compelling television; a raw, honest telling of what members of Ireland's military go through to become ARW unit members. The most ambitious aspect of the series was the decision for production staff not to directly engage with the candidates. From the moment they stepped off that bus on Day 1 it truly felt like they were on selection. It was amazing how quickly they forgot about the cameras and became fully immersed in the experience."

Reserve Defence Forces (RDF), Cpl Paul Magee AR, 7 Inf Bn was a member of the production team, "After 10-years in the reserves and working in television, I was well suited to work on this show. The extreme conditions faced by the candidates had to be endured by the crew. The schedule left some of us with as little sleep as the candidates. Operating a camera in sub-zero temperatures with driving rain and snow is always a challenge, especially as its more delicate than a rifle. The physicality required by the candidates was astronomical, it surpassed anything I have ever seen the DF and bearing in mind none of them had any military experience, their performance had to be applauded."

Hell Week's 24 candidates (18 men and 6 women) arrived in TIS Kilbride Camp in Co Wicklow by bus. Here they met the Directing Staff for the first time, who brought



Candidates get acclimated in Kilbride Camp.



#14 Grace O'Rourke gets to grips with 'Scratch'.



Ger Reidy putting it to #4 Des Seepersad.

process that the unit go through. We were also sacrificing a lot in our personal lives especially for the type of work we do in civilian world, so it had to be right from the off."

Ray Goggins, 26-years' service, 4 Inf Bn, with 17-years in ARW. He is currently working in the private security sector with a lot of international work. "Like the others I didn't watch the other similar shows, so that we kept it to our own style and true to the old selection process."

Alan O'Brien, 21-years' service, 4 Inf Bn, with 11-years in ARW. He is currently working as a Programme Coordinator in the School of Medicine at University College Cork. "The show must as far as possible be an accurate reflection of what is required to become a member of the ARW."

Looking at early candidates and if they could see anyone passing selection, Robert said, "#21 Dmitry Vinokurov was very quiet, but completed every task without coming to our attention. #3 Michael Keogh was a very strong candidate but could overbear some of the others who were in appointment."

Ger added, "I thought #16 Ray Kenny had a really good chance of finishing it out. He came across really strong. #12 Michael O'Shea was doing really well - switched on and well rounded. However, he dislocated his knee during the Unarmed Combat phase."

Ray continued, "For me #3 Michael Keogh performed very well on the 'Scratch' task, he was keeping them going at times, when they needed it – and then he was taken out on the river crossing."

Alan said, "It's not unusual for a candidate who is near the back in some of the tests to be still standing at the end, as was the case with #14 Grace"

We then looked at the different tasks, Robert said, "The bridge jump and the foreman/aftman 20k weighed forced march were my favourites; the bridge jump tests a number of fears, like heights, water and of course there's the cold factor. The foreman/aftman is all down to the individual commitment to finish. You have the weight, the uncertainty of not knowing where the finish line is and then there's the good old Irish weather, which was blowing a gale on the day - I came very close to calling this event off."

Ger added, "I like the pipe crawl, you know straight away whether a person will do the challenge or not. It really takes you out of your comfort zone. Claustrophobia is one of many things we look for during selection and the pipe will show that."

Ray agreed, "The foreman/aftman was my preferred task, as mentioned, they don't know how well they are doing on times, distance

– you just have to keep going and pushing on. Also, the unarmed combat really shocked the candidates, we intended to put them in an uncomfortable position which reflects combat."

Ger continued, "The unarmed combat was difficult because some never had to physically confront someone - now we were asking them to fight each other when they had just made friends."

Alan added, "The casualty evacuation task in Fort Davis was a SOF hostage rescue mission, and is designed to test their physical and mental strength, leadership, teamwork, situational awareness, decision-making..."

Looking at the eventual winners, Robert said, "I thought #14 Grace would get through, she never complained, always tried to help others while being a real team player. She continued to put her head down and just keep going and that is one of the keys to passing. #4 Des was a very level-headed and clear-thinking candidate, he was constant all the way through, but near the end caught our eye for a couple of reasons."

Ger added, "#14 Grace is what we would call the grey man or women. She never really stood out till the later stages. She helped others out a lot, good team player, never complained and she had a really good attitude toward the whole process. #4 Des seemed to be very strong in all the challenges and throughout, he's fairly switched on. Yes, near the later stages he came to our attention but he pulled through to finish."

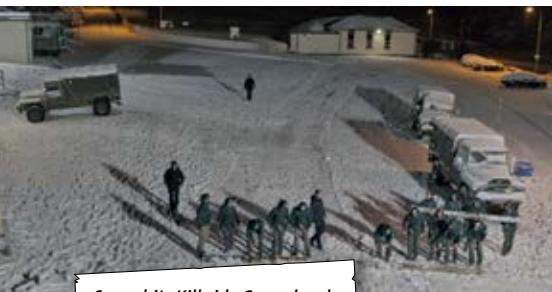
Ray made the point, "Any one of the last five candidates could have passed, some were taken out on the interrogation task – which surprised us."

Alan agreed, "#14 Grace was the typical course 'grey person', once she passed foreman/aftman she had a good chance of succeeding, as her mental strength was obviously her strongest asset. #4 Des was a strong candidate right from the start, both physically and mentally. He had a very difficult day in Fort Davis, but recovered well to produce a strong finish."

Finally, is there a season 2? Robert said, "We are talking it through at the moment. If people think there's a 'Cut' and everyone just starts acting at any phase of the show's production, I assure you there isn't."

Ger added, "The show's success was really down to Jamie and his crew - never once did we shoot anything a second time as that's not how it goes on selection. For season 2 we would be looking at keeping the same tasks but with different dynamics..."

Alan made a good point, "The show gave a small glimpse of what



Snow hits Kilbride Camp hard.



#4 Des on the bridge with Ger Reidy.



They told us this isn't Ireland's Fittest Family



A candidate is brought in for a 'chat'.



it takes to become an ARW SOF Operator. Most DF members would have undertaken similar challenges in their career and I hope that the show's success will raise public awareness of the commitment and training that is required of DF members."

We then met up with Hell Week's finalists, #18 Mark Cushen a member of An Garda Síochána explained how they had no interaction with the film crews and that was a rule from the outset, "in-doors the cameras were fixed to locations so they were not in your face." #11 John Kenny Firefighter/Paramedic added, "It's as real as they could make it – I reckon I got a total of 15hrs sleep throughout the week!"

His Firefighter/Paramedic colleague #16 Ray Kenny added, "We had no watches or clocks to know exactly what time of day or night it was – only the orderly sergeant had one to use so we knew what time to be outside at – it wasn't synchronised to real time."

#14 Grace O'Rourke explained, "All the candidates were very physically fit going in."

They explained about also doing a night sentry duty in helmet and weapon 'bar' on the billet door, which was divided amongst the candidates - who were dropping out daily.

They only had two sets of clothing, "we copped on quick to number our kit, and grab something dry for the next task!" one of them quipped. Ray added, "our boots were never dry, that's why we wore flipflops in the billet," he then told a great story of his missing flipflop in the snow from the first evening.

We chatted about the great comradery and friendships that has built up amongst them after this challenging experience. They explained they had never met before the show, except to go through the interview and fitness test process where they crossed paths. John said he knew of Ray but they weren't friends then.

Around 350 applied for the show with approx. 60 selected for the fitness tests, before the final 24 had a meeting with the producers and received their briefing and kit list, and they were allowed to break-in their boots before the show started.

John said it was very easy to get sucked into the whole atmosphere of being in a training camp, the not knowing what was coming next kept them on their edge, "you just have to go in and give it 100%," he said.

Discussing the tasks, Ray and Grace both said the bridge jump, not because of the height, it was the waiting in the freezing cold, "they said it would be warmer in the water, and they were right - I had grown men either side of me shivering, we were all encouraging

each other," she added. Mark added, "I had a bit of luck on the HUET task, I just made it out."

They all agreed one of the best moments was when #4 Des Sopersad came back into the billet soaking wet and went to the bathroom to get showered and changed without saying what happened. The candidates tried to look at each other and try figure out what the task was. The DS had him crawl through the pipe with water rushing through which made for some excellent TV, and gave us some great 'one liners' - "Get out of my pipe". It was also the catalyst for some candidates as their fear of enclosed spaces got the better of them. Another great moment was when John tried to escape during the escape and evasion phase, while everyone else was doing jumping jacks to stay warm.

Asked if they appreciate military training? Ray said, "We all have a more positive view on the Defence Forces and the Army Ranger Wing."

Grace added, "I completed the An Gaisce Defence Forces Challenge 14-years ago. It was a really great experience and I had my heart set on a career in the Defence Forces. I applied three different times for a cadetship, but unfortunately it wasn't to be."

While it was back to their jobs for the lads, Grace has used the experience to set up her new business www.graceorourke.com, where she offers personal performance programmes.

Congratulations and admiration to Des and Grace for passing Hell Week's selection course. After the final episode aired Des wrote on his Twitter account, "An honour to take part in and complete the ultimate test to find the ultimate civilian... delighted to be named the biggest legend along with Grace."

Grace recently told Evoke Magazine about her experience, "Taking part in Hell Week was one of the most difficult and challenging things I've ever done, but it taught me so much about myself and has been an invaluable and truly life-changing experience."

A few final words from Hell Week's producer Jamie, "The show went down well with audiences, rating really well, with approx. 18% consolidated share, about 200,000 viewers per episode - which is really really strong."

In terms of season 2, there has been some preliminary discussions with RTÉ, but these are at a very early stage. The view would be that it's only worth going again if we feel we can improve it."

Lastly, to the 24 crazy recruits who took on the Hell Week challenge. All legends. All mental. All heroes. I hope all of them can look back on their time up the mountains and laugh about how mad it was, but feel very proud of themselves!" ■



Hell Week's finalist.

Robert Stafford.

Keep the weapons at a 45-degree angle.

# LEADING THE WAY 1 BRIGADE RECCE COURSE

BY CPL SEAN FLEMING



**O**n Monday, 10th April, 16 students from 1 Brigade made their way to 3 Inf Bn, in James Stephens Barracks for a four-week recce course. The group included representatives from 3 Inf Bn, 12 Inf Bn, 1 Cn Cois and 1 Cav Sqn.

The role of the reconnaissance soldier is to gather timely and accurate information on enemy positions and ground, by day or night, in all types of weather, and in all types of warfare. The information gathered is then passed to higher HQ via patrol reports, comms logs and back briefs, to enable planning for future operations. The two main ways of gaining information are by conducting CTRs (close target recce) or OPs (observation posts). The former involves getting as close as possible to an enemy position, using natural cover as concealment, and getting the information required without getting detected. OPs, which can either be over ground or dug in, involve staying in situ with eyes on the objective at all times, logging and reporting any activity.

The recce soldier has to be proficient in navigating, as they can be required to operate up to 10km forward of friendly lines and all tactical movement is primarily done during darkness. Consequently, week one of the course primarily concerned navigation and map reading, with day and night navigation exercises taking place in the Knockmealdowns, the Comeraghs and the Blackstairs mountains.

Week one also included lectures on recce tactics, an introduction to battlefield first aid, and signals training.

The second week began with a trip to Baldonnel, where the students rehearsed heli drills that they would use later on in the course for a heli extraction back to Stephens Bks.

Along with more day and night navigation exercises students got their first introduction to TGP (target grid procedure) in the Infantry Weapons Wing, DFTC. (TGP is the ability to call in indirect fire and adjust fire onto a specific target.)

Week two saw the students complete their first full-scale exercise 'Dark Hole', which saw them digging sub-surface OPs on Flagstaff Hill in Kilworth to observe and report on 'enemy' activity in the area.

The students dug their positions throughout the night and were in position by first light. After 24 hours of observing the students were told their positions had been compromised and that they were to tactically withdraw from the area to the designated heli-landing zone for extraction.

Week three consisted of a CTR exercise. Operating from a patrol harbour, each detachment commander was required to give a full set of orders for the upcoming mission. This was followed by the CTR on the objective before returning to the patrol harbour to submit a detailed patrol report and back brief to the intelligence officer.

The culmination of the exercise was a CTR on the FOB (forward operating base) in Kilworth, which had been occupied by enemy forces. Acting on the information gathered by the recce students, a two-star platoon from 3 Inf Bn conducted a raid on the FOB, clearing it of all enemies. Following this, A Company, 3 Inf Bn, occupied the FOB and set up a defensive position to prevent any enemy from re-occupying the area.

This exercise gave the students a very good appreciation of the importance of gathering timely and accurate information, as friendly troops carrying out subsequent operations will be depending on the recce information they have collected.

Week three also saw the students conducting live-fire tactical training (LFTT), in which they rehearsed their contact drills, operating in 'buddy pairs' to clear enemy as they traversed a 'jungle' lane set up by LFTT instructor, Sgt Henry Byrne.

The week ended with a detachment-level river crossing near Kilkenny Castle, where any student feeling sleepy after the week's activity was quickly woken by the cold waters of the Nore before the course headed back to prepare for their final exercise.

The last week of the course was taken up with the final exercise, which included CTRs and OPs, along with various other taskings throughout the week.

The students prepared an excellent model for the exercise and Pte Connolly, the student tasked as platoon commander, gave a

very detailed set of orders. At the drop-off point a 10km insertion walk with full kit to their patrol harbour awaited the students.

In the patrol harbour the students were split into two detachments and tasked with constructing OPs and conducting CTRs. The detachments were rotated throughout the week to build up a picture of enemy activity in the area and relay timely, accurate information.

The students were also kept busy with other taskings, such as ration and water resupplies, clearance patrols, route recce, patrol reports and back briefs.



The week ended with a well-planned raid on the enemy, followed by a casualty evacuation back to a designated heli zone, where an AW 139 helicopter picked up the students to return to Stephens Bks.

After some cleaning and a bit of rest it was time

for the students to put on the glad rags and enjoy some well-earned refreshments!

The students put in a tremendous effort throughout the four weeks and it was a very enjoyable course to instruct on. Next up for our students was the All-Army Recce Competition, which took place in Kilbride from 3rd – 16th June, where they got to test the skills they learned against fellow national and international teams. ■



## Vox Pops



### CPL TOMMY COMERFORD, 3 INF BN

*"I had been contemplating putting in for a recce course for a few years and felt it was the right time to do it now. The course has brought me on a huge amount in CTR and at gaining correct and timely information. It has also given me great appreciation in working with smaller teams and what they can do when pushed to the limits, as a huge factor on this course was being able to embrace hardship."*

### TPR AARON O'FLYNN, 1 CAV SQN

*"As a member of 1 BCS in Cork, completing a recce course is essential to allow me to travel overseas, so I was delighted when I got a place. The course taught me vital new military skills, such as, target acquisition for support weapons, OP construction and occupation, and how to conduct a CTR as part of a recce detachment, along with model making and giving a detailed set of orders. It also allowed me to improve existing skills like SEER, LFTT, map reading and navigation."*

*"While the course was physically challenging, the way it gave you the responsibility to think for yourself and make decisions as a part of your detachment also made it quite mentally taxing."*

*"The skills we learned allow the recce detachment to be a vital tool for a commander and should be a goal for every soldier."*

### PTE SHANE TORPEY, 12 INF BN

*"A recce course is known as being hard, so it is something I always had my eye on. It is there to challenge you in all aspects and also improve your basic skills. Being able to carry big weight over a long distance can be a struggle, but it's only after that when a recce operator begins their work!"*

*"The job of a recce soldier is to get timely and accurate information, so stealth and speed are vital. Hopefully in the future as I progress in my career and get promoted, I will keep the recce commanders course in my sights."*



### 2/LT JACK MOORE, 1 CN COIS

*"It was a privilege working alongside the motivated soldiers on the basic infantry recce course. Challenges to our fieldcraft came thick and fast, making for a robust course that developed skills to be employed at the business end of the infantry battalion. It was also a great opportunity to plan and execute less than conventional operations, such as CTRs, ambushes and raids. The ability to get eyes and ears on an objective by pushing your kit, equipment, and most importantly yourself, to the limit is a skill that is developed through both physical and mental hardship and is a challenge to any infantry soldier looking to test their metal."*

# BELGIUM' SPECIAL OPERATIONS REGIMENT 3 PARA

REPORT & PHOTOS BY MICHAEL PEETERS

**T**he Land Component is the biggest component of the Belgian Defence in terms of men. The component is composed of the motorised brigade, the special operations regiment, a military police unit, an information operations unit, a movement control group, four training camps and an instruction centre for land troops.

In total, there are about 10,600 men and women serving in the component. Their mission is the preparation and training for foreign missions. The Land Component permanently deploys hundreds of servicemen in operations anywhere in the world; both on land, in the air and at sea. Their missions include providing support in Afghanistan, support the Iraqi army and the coalition in Iraq, support in Mali, boarding at sea and participation in military partnership programs in several African countries.

With its 35 units, the Land Component is involved in numerous international operations and carries out a wide range of missions. On Belgian territory the land troops can provide support to the population and they are responsible for defending the country.

Their motto is therefore hence: "With people, amongst people, for the people", because a soldier



of the Land Component is always in the field, at the heart of the conflict. Together with their colleagues, they are in direct contact with civilians and opponents, which makes their mission a constant challenge.

**Special Operations Regiment:** At present, the Special Operations Regiment (SOR) consists of the Special Operations Group, the 2nd and 3rd Para-Commando Battalion and the related training centres for commandos and paratroopers. The 6 Gp CIS has also been integrated into the SOR to provide the communications support. The SOR particularly focuses on the execution of special operations; military activities performed by specially organised and equipped units, using carefully selected personnel and special tactics, techniques and engagement methods.

These methods are often discrete, through water, on land or by air, with the mission of carrying out sensitive actions on several occasions, such as the collection of information, control of precision bombing by the air force or the liberation of hostages anywhere in the world. The SOR can play an active role within the context of the fight against terrorism and the assistance of friendly democracies in their struggle against irregular groups.

In addition to their current training for a number of more conventional missions, such as capturing and securing an airport or evacuating nationals from a crisis area, the Para-Commando battalions are also trained to carry out special operations. Depending on the nature of the mission, they may execute them in support of the Special Forces Group or in a completely autonomous way.

**3 Para:** 3 Para-Commando Battalion is one of two battalions of the Special Operations Regiment. At any given time, the regiment keeps one battalion ready to act as fast intervention force. 3 Para is located in Tielen, Belgium.

**History:** In 1955, the 3rd Para-Commando Battalion was created out of elements of the 1st Para Battalion and the 2nd Commando Battalion during their presence in Belgian Congo. As a new unit, 3 Para took over the traditions and logo of the Volunteer Corps for Korea. This corps earned multiple honourable citations during battle. During the independence troubles of Belgian Congo, 3 Para took part in airborne actions on Kikwit, Kindu, Manono and in

Force – NRF).

The final change for 3 Para presents itself when the Recce squadron, located in Lombardsijde, is disbanded and part of the squadron moves to a new Recce squadron with 3 Para.

Throughout its history, the battalion has also adopted two institutes for mental and physical disabled children and adults, the MPI "De Mast" in Kasterlee and "t Margrietje" in Tielen.

#### Mission

**Main tasks:** The main tasks for the battalion include, deployment as a Rapid Intervention Detachment (RID) both nationally and internationally; Delivering the backbone for a battle group of the EU Battle Group (EUBG) or one dedicated to the NATO Response Force (NRF) and Evacuation of non-combatants (Non-combatant Evacuation Operations – NEO).

In support of the above-mentioned, classic or special operations, 3 Para is able to execute these missions entering the difficult and complex theatre of operations via air (air transport/jump) or amphibious way, both day and night. In addition, Crisis Response Operations (CRO) can also be executed to prevent or stabilise conflict situations.

**Special Operations:** In order to be able to execute all missions requested, the battalion often deploys within Belgium but also abroad to hone their skills. The author was able to attend an 'after sunset' Special Operations training mission which was executed by 3 Para, supported by assets of 1 Wing operating out of Beauvechain (2x NH-90 air assault, 1x Agusta medevac).

According to the scenario, Kalashnikov equipped insurgents kept themselves hidden in an ammunition storage location situated in a tower. Members of a Recce team observed the location for a period of 36 hours. On the second day of the operation, just after sunset, members of 3 Para were inserted by two NH-90 helicopters and immediately after touchdown, the offensive group rushed towards the tower. With the aid of night vision goggles (NVG), they managed to seize the tower and eliminate all insurgents.

The rest of the group remained behind to provide cover. The scenario had one member of the attacking force was wounded during the attack on the tower and the team members had to take appropriate action to evacuate the casualty from the combat zone.



raids on Lokandu and Kasongo. In 1962, the battalion left Burundi and found a new home in Lombardsijde (Belgium). In the course of 1977, the battalion moved to their new home in a former British ammunition depot in Tielen. The camp was named "Camp P. Gailly" to honour Captain Pierre Gailly who lost his life during the Korean War. In 1983, the battalion became an exclusively Flemish battalion and has the privilege to have His Royal Highness Prince Filip of Belgium as platoon commander. From 2006 to 2010, 3 Para was the pilot unit of the Rapid Intervention Force of NATO (NATO Response

After having returned, covered by the own forces, the patient was stabilised and brought to the Agusta helicopter, which operated as medevac. Once the casualty was evacuated from the battlefield, the remainder of the teams were picked up by the NH-90's and brought back to Beauvechain airbase. Here the mission was debriefed in detail, and they took on board any lessons learned and will apply them when called upon again.

The author would like to thank the IPR – SEC SCV of the 3rd Battalion Para-Commando for their hospitality and support. ■

# THE DOGS OF WAR

## MERCENARIES PART 2

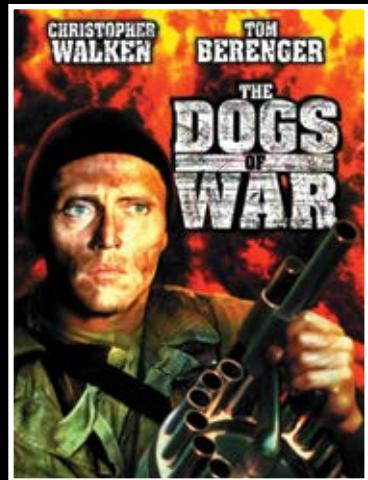
BY PAUL O'BRIEN MA

**T**he freelance soldier, whether fighting for money or reputation or for an adopted cause, has always been a fascinating and controversial phenomenon. While the Wild Geese had flown, the Dogs of War were waiting in the wings.

The 20th century was to be filled with conflict; World Wars, revolutions, counter revolutions, coups and Civil Wars. The soldiers of fortune were to be found in all of these, plying their trade as guns for hire. However, one of the most legendary mercenary armies that still exists today was created during the 19th century.

There is no more famous fighting force than the French Foreign Legion. Since its foundation by Royal decree of Louis Philippe in 1831, the Legion has been a focus of fascination to the outside world, attracted by its unique aura of mystery

headlines throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Africa and its people were caught in a conflict that would last decades. Millions of people were to be killed as Western powers used Africa as a battleground against Communism. The Congo, Angola, Biafra, Rhodesia and Rwanda made names such as Mike Hoare, Bob Denard, Colonel Schramme and Rolf Steiner notorious. Millions of dollars in cash



and heroism. When P.C. Wren wrote 'Beau Geste' young men from all over the world flocked to the ranks of the Legion in the hope of good pay and adventure. In reality they found a training regime that was the toughest in the world, followed by a posting to one of France's colonial outposts, where they lived, fought and died under the French flag.

In the aftermath of World War II, the Cold War was to provide a new outlet for mercenaries with Africa as their battleground. While the war in Vietnam dominated the

and uncut diamonds exchanged hands as governments were overthrown and millions of people were displaced by wars, which ravaged their countries.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of Communism, the Cold War came to an end. As previous Communist states in the Balkans sought independence, mercenaries once again found employment on both sides of the struggle.

While former colleagues fought to stem the drug trade,

others sought to gain from it. Throughout the world, the increase in the drug trade witnessed the arrival of the drug cartels and their private armies. These forces were often better trained and better equipped than the country's standing army. Trained by ex-military personnel, the drug lords used mercenaries to protect their interests and enforce their will on the local population.

Many others who had made their money in the late 1970s and 1980s decided to open legitimate businesses where personal security could be provided at a price. Businessmen and foreign dignitaries could employ contract security personal with military training more cheaply than hiring direct. The era of Private Military Contractors (PMCs) had arrived.

The 21st century was to explode onto the world stage with the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11th September 2001. Since this event now known universally as 9/11, the world has been taken over by a global war on terror, in which there are many armed players who wear no uniform. The major powers were reducing their standing armies at the time and were taken by surprise by the attack. As a result hundreds of thousands of trained soldiers came onto the jobs market.

When the war against terrorism erupted with the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, the hired soldier had become not simply a mercenary but a vital part of modern privatised warfare. Hundreds of thousands of PMCs flooded into the countries on close protection details with companies such as Blackwater, Executive Outcomes and DynCorp International.

Controversy surrounded many of the companies for the operating procedures in the field and the deaths of a number of employees that made headlines around the world.

contracts. The public wanted to believe that their wars were being fought by patriotic young men and women while in reality, mercenaries often outnumbered regular troops on the ground. While security details made up the bulk of the contracts, deniable operations were also being carried out. Elsewhere, Governments bankrolled thousands of contracts with Private Military Contractors. Oil, its acquisition and its protection is one of the major themes of PMCs. In countries such as Columbia, Algeria, Georgia and Pakistan, oil companies supported by governments employed hired guns to protect their interests.

Today, there are still those ex-soldiers who, attracted by a sense of adventure and the possibility of large amounts of money, take up positions abroad as guns for hire. Some become military advisors while others provide personal protection for dignitaries and officials. While fighting as a mercenary, one's morals are often called into account as a soldier must choose whether to fight for money and forsake their obligation to uphold international law and take part in clandestine operations.

While the grass may look greener on the other side, one must take



*Mercenary leader Mike Hoare in 1964.*



*The French Foreign Legion in 1954.*



*Members of 5th Mercenary Commando with Ferret armoured car in Congo, circa 1965.*

These contractors had a poor reputation amongst professional government soldiers who classed them as a liability on the battlefield. Those employed by contractors had a variety of backgrounds that ranged from the experienced ex-soldier to the adventurer to the criminal. When operations went wrong (which they often did) contractors relied on brute force and sheer luck to extract them from the situation and in many cases had to call for government assistance to get them out of a tight spot. Public opinion was shocked that private armies were being employed on government

into account the following. Many Private Military Contractor companies make limited or no pension provision or life insurance cover for their operators. Protection and equipment provided to PMC personnel are often inadequate. They lack armour and their weapons are often of poor quality. Professional standards are lacking in the field. There is no moral commitment to company staff when things go wrong and air support or a medivac are non-existent. As a mercenary you are effectively on your own and always will be. ■

# “A Life Less Ordinary”

## *A Veterans View*

BY COMDT KEVIN MCDONALD RET'D

*Kevin on the motorbike during his early career.*



**“A Life Less Ordinary”** was a successful recruiting tag line used by the Irish Defence Forces some years ago, and is still used in conversations between Defence Forces Veterans.

Saturday 26th November 2016 was a poignant day for me as it marked the day I retired from the Irish Defence Forces on age grounds. It marked the end of 40-years in uniform, seven-years with the 5 Cavalry Squadron in Castlebar and 33-years in various units both at home and abroad.

locked up in a Communist jail in East Germany. We were touring Europe on motorbikes and detoured off the main transit route into a town only to be met by a rather irate policeman none too impressed with our navigation skills.

After a good seven-years with the 5 Cav Sqn I decided that the army was the life for me and there being no recruitment in the West, I had to enlist in the Eastern Command, Monaghan to be precise. Before I was even interviewed, I had to agree to serve a minimum of three-years in the 29 Infantry Battalion. I was overseas in Lebanon within a year and during that trip was the one and only time I ever had to give the order to open fire in combat.

On return to Ireland I looked for more challenges and ended up passing Army Ranger Wing ‘selection’ course and spent five demanding but really enjoyable years in the Curragh. I left that unit in 1990 to return to Castlebar, but despite engaging in some serious rock climbing (some of it up the walls of the barracks) I

*Kevin in Blessington in his ARW days.*



*Newly commission Lt McDonald in South Lebanon in 1993.*



My fledgling career with the 5 Cav Sqn nearly took a nose dive (literally) when a few of us dispatch riders (DRs) were asked to drive over to Westport in the late 1970s to lead the opening of the Summer Festival, no problem to that you might think but letting three 16-year-olds off on their own on 400cc motorbikes was probably not fully thought through. Naturally we had a race on the way over and then someone had forgotten to tell us that the An Garda Síochána would be waiting at the entrance to the town to escort us to the parade. Not expecting any ‘Guards’ I descended the hill into Westport at around 40mph standing on the saddle with my arms outstretched like the scene in the Titanic. As if that wasn’t a sterling start to my military career, myself and my brother Brendan hold the dubious distinction of being the first and presumably only members of the Defence Forces to get

still needed a greater challenge so I applied for the 7th Potential Officers Course.

That opened up an entirely new career for me and I was commissioned in 1992 and overseas again in 1993 and 1996. That deployment was great because I managed to persuade an official with a catering can of Maxwell House coffee to issue a visa for my then girlfriend Clare to come out and visit me, she was one of the first Western tourists in Lebanon after the civil war ended.

Little did she know that she would be back there ten-years later living in Lebanon with a three- and five-year-old. I deployed to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) in 2005 and we initially lived in Tiberias by the Sea of Galilee as I was working on the occupied Golan Heights, then in February 2006 I was transferred to Lebanon so we got an apartment in the

southern city of Tyre. I headed up to the Patrol Base for a seven-day stint on 11th July, said goodbye to my wife Clare and the kids saying I'll see you in a week. The following day the war kicked off between Hezbollah and Israel which lasted a very brutal 34-days. Where I was based, I could see the bombs landing in Tyre and Clare could look up at the distant ridgeline and see the smoke rising from where I was. Eventually the UN decided to evacuate the families and as Clare was getting the kids into the lifeboat that would bring them out to a chartered ship, I rang her and said "*I'll see you when I see you*", which believe me is not the way to end a family mission to the Middle East. Thankfully they survived, unlike four very good friends of mine killed in an Israeli air strike on their Patrol Base and we had a further two more colleagues seriously wounded in separate incidents.

In 2010 I deployed with the last Irish Battalion in Chad. Of interest during that mission was that I ended up with the removal of my appendix in a hospital tent! I was medevac'd by a chopper on a Saturday morning, had my appendix taken out at midday and on 'coming round' the surgeon, after inquiring how I felt, says "*you're Irish you'll have a beer*" so thinking I was in dream land with the anaesthetic, I replied in the positive and when he came back with a large can of lager, I asked him if he would mind opening my bag, taking out my camera and taking a picture of me as no one in Ireland would ever believe that after getting my appendix out in Africa I was given a beer. The following day he wanted to discharge me but due to lack of choppers he waited until Monday!

Africa became something of a passion with me then for a while as I ended up at very short notice in Western Sahara in 2012, which allowed me to indulge in my other great passion, which is

January 2017, to the Central African Republic (CAR) to take up a temporary job offer with the UN as a Regional Security Officer. Nothing in my previous UN experience had prepared me for the scale of violence and ethnic hatred that was visible in Bria. Life in many cases was nasty brutal and short, and just outside my base was a camp of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) numbering up to 41,500 people. Every day in CAR was different and you could go from an idyllic calm sunny day to absolute mayhem, as some of the many-armed groups would decide to attack each other. One of the largest attacks I witnessed was in June 2017 when the Christian anti Balaka attacked the Muslim FPRC. Within three hours there was over 95 people killed.

So, in January 2019, I completed my two-year



Kevin working as Regional Security Officer in CAR, 2019.



Kevin in Western Sahara in 2012



Transfer of the remains from our UNTSO Patrol Base in 2006

archaeology. I could drive into the desert in any direction for any length of time, stop the car and find evidence of prehistoric activity. Temperatures there often got as high as 58 degrees.

My only non-UN mission was the following year in 2013 with the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in Mali. This was of course the first time the Irish and British Armies deployed and worked together. It was really great to see them operating side by side in the training camp in Koulikouro.

I was no sooner back in Ireland in 2014 when an opportunity came up to do a second stint in UNTSO so I deployed for 17-months in Lebanon followed by seven-months in Jerusalem and returned to Ireland at the end of 2017. As mentioned above, unfortunately I had to retire on age grounds but as one part of my life closes, another one opened and I flew back to Africa in

contract with MINUSCA and as a going away gift from CAR I got my third dose of Malaria. Nothing is easy in Africa!

I am now home in Ireland busy searching for meaningful employment; taking up golf was never going to be an option for me.

In my 40-years wearing the uniform of that great organisation that is the Irish Defence Forces, I have been privileged to meet with, worked with and served under, some of the most remarkable people. It has indeed been a privilege to be given the opportunity to do as much, travel as much and experience as much as I have and it's fair to say that I have a serious amount of memories. I have to mention that this was only possible because of an extremely supporting family, so to Clare, Ellen and Ben... as they would say in Arabic Shukran Jazelen... Thank you very much. ■

# ANSAC at 25

**“Credit unions exist only to serve members — not to profit from their needs.”**

Irish League of Credit Unions

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD

**O**n 26th June 2019, ANSAC (Army, Naval Service, Air Corps) Credit Union, celebrated 25 years of providing an unfaltering service to its members.

ANSAC was established in 1994 to help members build up financial resilience and reduce the chances of being overwhelmed by unaffordable debt, which was prevalent in the early 1990s as a result of low pay and a slow economy.

An Cosantóir recently spoke with some of ANSAC's founding staff, both military and civilian, about the credit union's history.

Martin Cosgrave, first general manager and former CEO, explained that PDFORRA's Annual Delegate Conference in 1992 agreed that one of its objectives would be to open a Credit Union, and a sub committee was set up to organise this. They included Jack Whelan (RIP) President of PDFORRA, Tom 'Claver' Nevin, (RIP), Tom McDonagh (RIP) and Steven Rynn. They met with the Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) in February 1993. It was agreed that a full Study Group would be put in place and they first met in Cork's Metropole Hotel, in March 1993.

Martin recalls, "We registered as ANSAC Credit Union Ltd in February 1994. At that meeting, a Board of Directors and a Supervisory Committee was elected to run the Credit Union. We didn't receive our first payroll deductions until March 1994, and it was a few weeks after that before we could offer loans. In our first week of signing up new members we opened 1,000 accounts." Martin remembers working hard alongside other directors, supervisors and volunteers to get the project off the ground.

ANSAC's first offices were above PDFORRA's head office in Capel Street, Dublin, and Martin says that the representative association loaned ANSAC the money to purchase their first computers, which comprised basic CPUs with green screens. The loan was subsequently written off by PDFORRA's annual delegate conference in 1994, which took a large financial strain off ANSAC.

Rachel Kearns, ANSAC's first civilian staff member, who was taken on part time to operate the telephone and computer account system in October 1994 remembers those early days: "Oh,

the green screens bring me back!" she says.

In May 1996 Martin, who had been seconded by the DF to ANSAC in 1995, took up full-time employment with the credit union as general manager. At the time ANSAC was one of the fastest growing credit unions in the country, which saw Rachel being made full time and the addition of another civilian staff member, Gillian Dunne, who is ANSAC's current CEO.

In July 1996 ANSAC purchased 75 Amiens Street, an 1860s residential building not far from Connolly Station, for about £59,000. When they opened their new offices in October 1996 membership stood at over 2,500; today this stands at over 6,200.

Just over 10 years ago ANSAC purchased the building next door at 76 Amiens Street, which now houses the board and committee rooms.

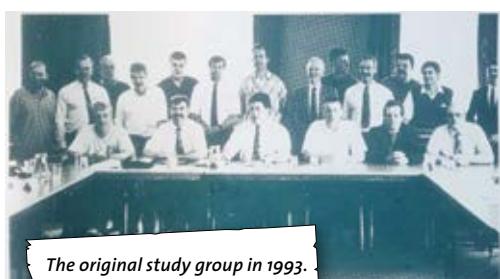
Martin retired in June 2016, which saw Gillian promoted from assistant manager to CEO. Rachel is now the membership officer and on the Credit Committee.

Gillian says that, like all credit unions, ANSAC relies heavily on volunteers, from committees and reps around the barracks and posts. "We have a large panel of volunteers, with eleven on our board of directors, five on our Board Oversight Committee, two on our Credit Committee, and three on our Credit Control Committee."

Technological advances have seen ANSAC move its accounts and most of its loan applications to a secure online portal, which has reduced customer footfall.

"It's not like back in the 90s," Martin says, "when a Naval Service ship would come into Dublin Port and we would have a string of sailors at the door." To which Gillian added: "Of course we are always open for personal callers, but we don't have the queues like community credit unions have. Also, recent renovations to the customer area include a private consultation room if members wish to avail of it."

ANSAC currently has seven full-time and three part-time staff and Gillian says they are always looking for volunteers to act as barracks reps, and to sit on committees, for which training will be provided. ■



The original study group in 1993.



Some members of the Board of Directors in early days.



The original civilian staff, Rachel Kearns, Martin Cosgrave and Gillian Dunne.

## TIPS FOR TACKLING CREDIT CARD DEBT

Carrying credit card debt can be stressful, and taking control of it may seem impossible. Using a credit card is the one of the most expensive ways to borrow money, and high interest rates and penalty charges if you miss payments can make it difficult to reduce your balance.

If you dread the arrival of your credit card bill and want to know how best to tackle this debt, follow these steps from the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC).



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

### Step 1 – Don't ignore the problem

Do you find that you are always running out of money, missing repayments or relying on credit cards for your day-to-day spending? It is never too late to start taking control of your finances. The first step is to stop using your credit card. Resist the temptation by leaving your card at home.

### Step 2 – Figure out how long it will take you to clear your debt

Start by figuring out how much you can pay each month. It is important that you pay as much as you can afford, and not just the minimum. By paying more than the minimum by even a small amount you will reduce the time it takes you to get debt free and will save you money in interest.

The CCPC's website has a credit card calculator which shows you how long it will take you to clear your debt if you continue to make the same repayments, and how long it would take if you increased your repayments.

*For example, if you have credit card debt of €1,000 and the interest - known as APR - on your card is 17%, it will take you two years to clear your debt if you pay off €50 a month and you stop using the card completely. If you increase your repayments to €100 per month, you could clear your balance in 11 months. So, the debt is paid off 13 months earlier and you save on interest repayments.*



**More information on financial wellbeing and the tools available can be found at [www.ccpc.ie](http://www.ccpc.ie).**

### Step 3 – Can you get a better rate on your credit card?

Have you checked to see if there is a better rate available? Interest rates currently range from 13.8% to 26.6% so it pays to compare. Some providers offer an introductory 0% interest on transferred balances if you switch. So if you move your balance, every cent you pay will reduce your debt, as you won't be paying any interest for that period of time. Check out the CCPC's credit card comparison tool to see what's on offer.

### Step 4 – Consider taking out a personal loan

Although you may feel reluctant to take on more debt, it might make better financial sense to take out a personal loan to pay off your credit card debt. Interest rates on personal loans are generally lower than on credit cards. If you do this, make sure you stop spending on your credit card or else you will be faced with both the loan repayments and credit card repayments. Take a look at the CCPC personal loans comparison to compare the costs of loans and to work out what your repayments would be.

### Step 5 – Get into good habits

If you have a credit card there are some small steps you can take to help you keep your debt to a minimum and ensure that your credit rating is not affected. Firstly, try to keep your credit limit low and don't view it as a spending target. Consider reducing the credit limit to an amount you can comfortably afford to repay every month so you are not able to run up debt you cannot repay. Don't use your card for

cash withdrawals except in emergencies, as you will be charged a high rate of interest often from the day you take out the money, as well as a cash advance fee. Set up a monthly standing order or direct debit for the minimum monthly repayment, or more if you can afford it, to avoid late payments. Late payments can also appear on your credit history and may impact your ability to borrow in the future. ■



# FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE CLASSROOM

## The CIS Trainee Technicians Scheme

BY SGT WAYNE FITZGERALD PHOTOS BY ARMN SAM GIBNEY

**A**ccording to the Defence Forces Syllabus of Training, the aim of the CIS Trainee Technician Scheme (TTS) is 'to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to lay the foundation for a professional technical communications military career as a CIS Technician in the Defence Forces.'

The core objective of the CIS TTS is to develop technical skills to the high required of today's CIS Corps. More specifically, the intent is to prepare students practically and academically, instilling the required technical problem solving and knowledge-based skills, for their role as a CIS Technician in the Defence Forces.

The other objectives include fostering a deep interest in the individual in the technical areas of Communications & Information Technology and general preventative maintenance. The scheme provides an intellectual foundation that will act as a basis for further technical education – a common theme of general life in the CIS Corps – to benefit the Defence Forces and its capabilities. Cultivating a capacity for critical thinking as a structured decision-maker and problem-solver lies at the heart of the project work conducted over the almost 4 year scheme. Finally, the scheme provides a detailed training path for all CIS Corps technicians and helps promote esprit de corps in the Defence Forces, its traditions and associations – specifically within the proud and interesting history of the CIS and Signals Corps.





Sgtm John Lucey



Pte Jennifer Byrne



The CIS TTS (Phase 1 through Phase 7 inclusive) is of 45 months duration (3  $\frac{3}{4}$  years). Students will qualify as Gp5 CIS Technicians (CIST) on successful completion of the Course. Phases 2 through 6 are conducted in partnership with IT Carlow, where the student will complete a Bachelor of Engineering (Ordinary) Degree in Electronic Engineering (Military Communications Systems). Successful applicants are required to complete CIS CommOp (Communications Operative) course in their first year on the scheme and CIS Corps technical tests for advancement in their technical grade. On successful completion of the near 4-year course students will be on T5 Tech Pay, requiring they then complete the relevant CIS Corps technical tests for advancement to T6. The CIS TTS is open to Pte 3\* or equivalent ranks and NCOs. Successful NCOs on the scheme will revert to the rank of Pte 3\*.

With that in mind there are currently 56 CIS Trainee Technicians from 1st years to 4th year now under instruction in the CIS School in the DFTC. An Cosantóir recently visited some of the final year students to see how their projects were getting on.

Speaking to the CIS School's Chief Instructor Comdt Eoin Scanlon, he told us, *"This is a unique opportunity for soldiers to move into the modern, fast-paced world of information technology. Successful candidates will graduate with a fully accredited degree in electronic engineering and move into a dynamic and technologically fast-paced Corps. As graduates, all CIS technicians rely on their TTS education to be self-motivated, technically competent and up to speed with modern communications technology. Their final year project is a great start on this path, as autonomy and research are inevitable features of future work. The standard of projects this year is impressive. The vast majority of work undertaken this year is self-selected and extremely innovative – an accurate reflection of the high standards of academic excellence achieved over the past three years by each student."*

We then visited the students at their workbenches to get a run through on some of their projects.

#### **Sgtm John Lucey, 1 CIS, 16-years' service**

John transferred from 4 Inf Bn to 1 CIS on the 2012 reorg. He has already completed a CommOp course and applied for the TTS in 2015, where he sat an interview and completed tests, 6-weeks of maths and physics with only the top 13-16 getting offered places (depending on how many applicants).

*"I'm building a two-tier security system, with a hard circuit to secure an armoury. It has a camera and will be aimed at reducing workload by detecting movement with live feed video sensors and motion sensors. I'm looking at a camera that can see through small objects, and it will have a pressure switch and pressure sensors too.*

*The two modes will be user and engineer – which will have a password-protected area. The 2nd tier will be a WiFi enabled camera that can detect entry to a secure area, from a switch on a door and take a picture and send it to the operator/security. The image and data can be stored on a server or protected website."*

#### **Pte Jennifer Byrne, 3 Inf Bn, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ years' service**

*"I did physics and maths in my leaving cert. My project was to monitor atmospheric conditions like humidity, temperatures and light exposure. My idea was for use in a pharmacy, which requires cold storage and room temperature control. I spoke to the pharmacist in the Curragh Military Hospital so I could plan my project.*

*It was a password protected fridge, that if someone enters the password incorrect 3 times, or electricity failure or if the temperature is outside of the required conditions the fridge sends a text message to a controller or the Medics/MP duty room. The message will have a time stamp and instructions on what is the next course of action."*

**Pte Kevin Griffin, Tpt Coy, DFTC, 12-years' service**

"I found it a hard course at the start, I don't have a background in IT, I got to repeat my leaving cert in the Defence Forces in 2012-2014. I then applied for the TTS in 2015."

My project is a waste bin monitoring system. It has a keypad, and a false bottom, which weights the bin for general waste – it can prevent the bin from overflowing and can send a text message to the operator with a % volume or weight exceeded. It could also be used to let the waste utility company know that the bin can be emptied. I am also fitting a lock to the lid to prevent it from being used by anyone other than the owner or it can be used by an ID Card."

**Tpr Glen Ahearn, 1 ACS, 7-years' service**

"My project is a road traffic alert system. I'm testing it on a bicycle to simulate it's us on a motorcycle. There are two parts to the system. The user interface which is activated with a military ID card. If the vehicle is involved in a crash, the system will send a text message to the hospital duty room with details of the RTA with a GPS location. It has three ways of detection: SOS button and a gyroscope on the side which sends an alert if the bike is on its side for a pre-determined period, and the third is a seat sensor which detects if the driver is off and the vehicle is still moving as the GPS tracks speed. The vehicle has a flashing light and a siren to alert if the vehicle can't be located off road etc."

**Pte Eoin Finlay, MP Group, 16 years' service**

Eoin had completed 10-years in the infantry with 4 Inf Bn before completing an MP Probationers Course and being promoted to Cpl in the MP Group, DFTC. Eoin had to revert back to Pte in 2015 to undertake the TTS.

"My project Temperature monitoring control system for the ammunition depot, the idea would be for military use for detecting the temperature humidity or smoke within a cell, as the ammunition needs to be maintained at a particular temperature. I spoke to some of the ammunition examiners in the Ord Corps and did a lot of online research. The cells for ammunition storage will have cooler fans and heater fans to help maintain the temperature. The system will send out a text message if the temperature or other alarm triggers are met. The information is logged and can be used statistical purposes."

Eoin explained that there are certain radio frequencies that can't be used around ammunition depots.

**Pte Mark Gaughran, 6 Inf Bn, 7 years' service**

Mark applied for the TTS in 2014.

"My project is a Vehicle Breathalyzer and safety monitor system, it will be built into the vehicle. If a driver blows into the system and fails the test the vehicle won't start as it disables the vehicle. I have a fingerprint scanner and an ID card database of drivers loaded under the engineer mode. Like the other trainees' projects, it will send a text message of the driver's details including the GPS location of the vehicle – thus alerting the MPs. There is a bypass key code to allow technicians or MPs drive the vehicle. My idea came from hearing reports in 2015, that the percentage of road deaths attributed to alcohol was 40%, so my idea was to cut out the vehicle. I 3D printed my bespoke enclosure to fit a Mitsubishi Pajero. College does take a lot of dedication."

**Pte Sean Gurr, 7 Inf Bn, 8½ years' service**

Sean spent his first 4½ years' in the Naval Service.

"My project is based on a Bird Control Unit to be used in the likes of Baldonnel. The current BCU in Baldonnel uses two eagles and two hawks, roof mounted speakers, and non-leather weapons. All need to be manually controlled – my unit will be portable and can be placed in certain locations, they have 360 degree and are battery operated. The pods will detect large birds. They will have a SD cards that contain a lot of birds of prey sounds to scare off the large birds. When the pod goes off it can send a text message to the operator so they can cut their patrols down." "It's a very worthwhile training, my advice to anyone thinking of applying is to not be afraid of the maths, and once you get into it goes along fine. There is heavy competition amongst us on these projects which is good to keep you motivated."

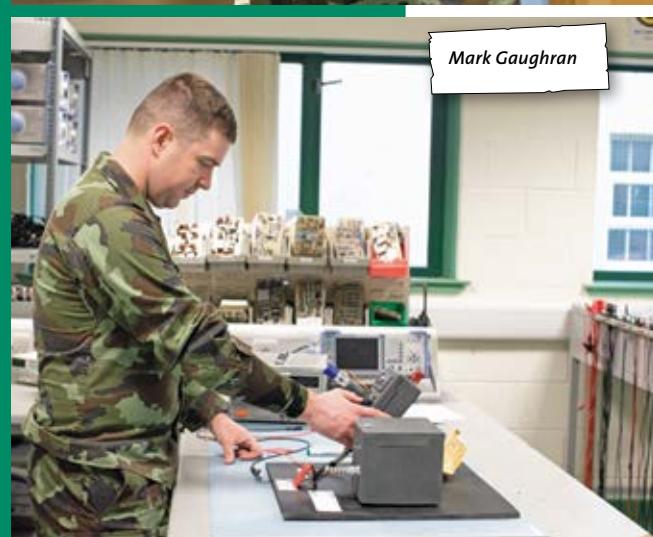
The technicians will soon be finding out their results, their posting and where they will conduct their last phase of training. After nearly 4-years training we will wish them well in their new career paths as the next classes move up one year and a new batch will start. ■



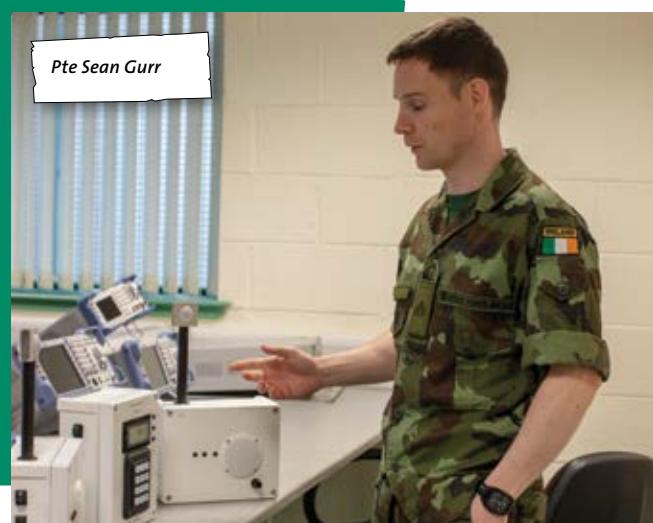
Pte Kevin Griffin



Pte Eoin Finlay



Mark Gaughran



Pte Sean Gurr

# Ordnance Corps Article Series

## HOW YOUR EQUIPMENT WORKS - RIFLE RECOIL

BY CAPT ORDNANCE SCHOOL, DFTC



**R**ecoil in a rifle is a force that pushes the weapon back towards the firer. This force is created when a round is fired. The Law of Conservation of Momentum is a familiar concept to us where every action must have an equal and opposite reaction. The action of a rifle round being fired typically involves a firing pin striking a cartridge primer, which initiates the deflagration (extremely fast combustion) of the propellant grains in the cartridge. As the propellant burns, the rapidly expanding hot gas generates a massive amount of pressure. For SS109 5.56x45mm ball, this pressure is approximately 430 Mega Pascals (MPa). To put this in perspective, that is the pressure you would feel if you were under 43km of seawater! This high-pressure gas can only be released in one direction - down the barrel. The expanding hot gas pushes the bullet from the cartridge case through the barrel and into the air. The same force that drives the bullet from the barrel produces an equal-but-opposite force, which drives the butt-stock into the firer's shoulder. Using Newton's laws of motion, it is possible to determine exactly how much recoil is created when a round is fired in a rifle.

When conducting these calculations, it is necessary to consider recoil in terms of energy. Thus, it is called the free recoil energy, which is a measure of kinetic energy. Kinetic energy is the energy of a moving thing and is measured in joules (J). The free recoil energy of a Steyr AUG A1 Assault Rifle firing SS109 5.56x45mm ball ammunition is 4.62 J. In comparison, the free recoil energy of a Steyr AUG Mod 14 Assault Rifle firing the same ammunition nature is 3.92 J. This makes sense as the Mod 14 is a heavier weapon, it takes more energy to move it and so the firer feels less recoil.

In fact, the firer of an AUG Mod 14 will experience 15% less recoil than the firer of an AUG A1. Coupled with the improved optics of the Mod 14, this has the potential to increase a firer's accuracy and consistency.

Understanding how much recoil is created by each shot allows

weapon engineers to design rifles, which reduce the recoil felt by the firer. This can be done in a number of ways. The basis of each method, however, is to get the recoil force from the round to do some other kind of work than simply slapping the weapon into the firer, as is the case with a bolt action rifle.

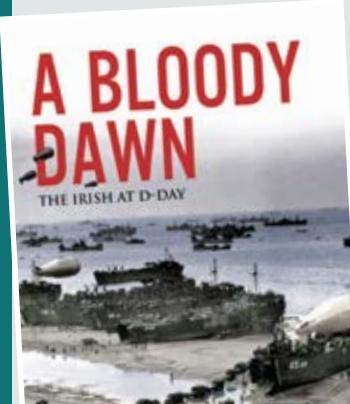
The energy from the recoil force can be converted into doing more useful work such as extracting a spent casing, compressing a return spring (allowing for automatic cycling of a weapon), and recocking a hammer. Alternatively, the propellant gases can be used to do work to counter the recoil force through the use of a muzzle brake or suppressor. These actions will reduce the recoil felt by the firer.

In rifles where the butt-stock is in-line with the barrel, the recoil force is sent directly back into the firer. The Steyr AUG has an in-line butt-stock. Where the butt-stock is not in-line, as in the FN FAL or AK47, then the recoil force creates a turning moment when a round is fired. This occurs because the anchor point of the butt-stock on a firer's shoulder is below the barrel. Firing causes the weapon to rise. Weapon engineers attempt to counter such a turning moment by making in-line stocks or by deflecting propellant gases upwards at the muzzle to push the muzzle downward.

The addition of an internal mechanism to absorb some of the recoil means that the weapon will not just have a single impulse of recoil. First, the firer will experience the recoil from the round being fired, then they will feel the recoil of the weapon's mechanism striking the weapon's casing or buffer spring. These impulses typically occur within 0.03s and so are almost impossible to sense. This second impulse will be far smaller in intensity than the first, unless a weapon is unbalanced. In an unbalanced weapon, too much force is being recovered by the gas system and transmitted to the internal mechanism. This has the effect of slamming the mechanism into the casing or buffer spring with too much force and reduces the weapon's accuracy. ■

# A BLOODY DAWN – THE IRISH AT D-DAY

BY LT COL DAN HARVEY RET'D



*A Bloody Dawn: The Irish at D-Day* by Dan Harvey, is published by Merriion Press and is reviewed on page 46.

*"I landed on D-Day in water waist deep and waded ashore in the midst of the most incredible sight in history. The fleet of ships was terrific and my first sight of France was a church steeple with a hole clean through the side of it – a German plane appeared, and as if by magic six of ours were on his tail and down he came."* - Reverend Cyril Patrick Crean (Dublin), Chaplain 29th Armoured Brigade

Seventy-five years ago, on 6 June 1944, D-day, the largest land invasion of the twentieth century, began. Its scale was unprecedented.

It was a task of enormous complexity and great difficulty, an immense undertaking, both stark in its magnitude and in the realisation that if the Allied forces failed, faltered or otherwise came up short in Normandy – and war is unpredictable – then the war might drag on for years.

Thousands of Irish soldiers, both Irish-born and members of the Irish diaspora, were among the British, US and Canadian units landing in France on D-Day and beyond to Berlin, until VE Day. They played a small but significant role in driving the German Army, first from France and then back across Europe to the German capital itself.

Their sacrifice, contribution and effort have had to be exhumed from the corners of Irish history. Theirs was often a narrative not related, a recognition neither commemorated nor celebrated. Yet their sacrifice, suffering and sorrow were all very real. The proper presentation of such participation is long overdue.

Like many soldiers who survived the Second World War, Irish veterans rarely spoke about their experiences, but in all, it is believed that some 120,000 Irish fought with the British. Many thousands more Irish Americans fought alongside them. The 'D-Day Irish' are no longer to be ignored; the role they played will no longer go unwritten. Irish men and women of all ranks and none were involved in D-Day, and in each of the phases, facets and events of this epic story there was Irish participation.

One of the first US paratroopers on the ground on D-Day was the 82nd's Bob Murphy, an Irish-American member of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment's Pathfinder platoon, the only 'stick' to land intact on D-Day, a mile west of Sainte-Mère-Église. Others – most – were far from where they should have been; they had crossed the 'start line', the first shots had been fired and the plan



*RAF Dakota aircraft kicked off the D-Day invasion on 6th June 1944. Photo: Gary Eason/Flight Artworks/Alamy Stock Photo*

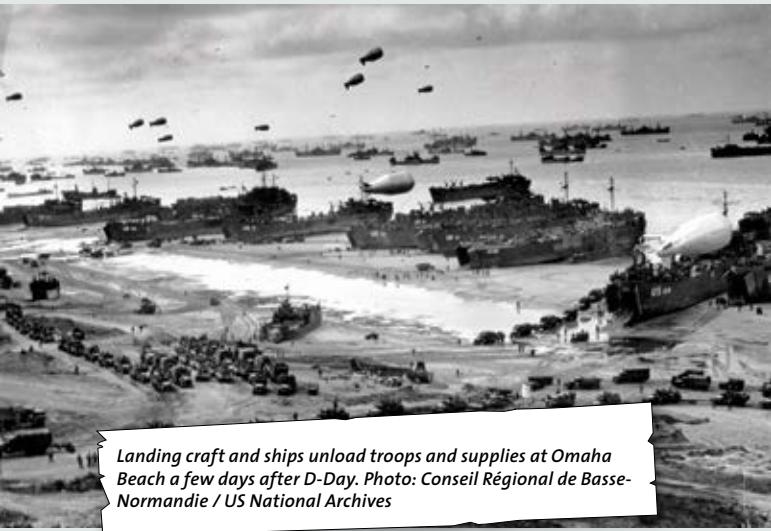
had fallen apart. But the men intended to do what they were sent to Normandy to do. There was little or nothing the twenty or so American parachutists could do, coming down directly onto the village square of Sainte-Mère-Église, their arrival lit by a blazing building, one unfortunate even being sucked into and engulfed by its flames. Others were mowed down, instantly killed by the frenzied machine-gun fire of the frightened German garrison. However, dawn was to see Sainte-Mère-Église liberated by the 82nd, their objective achieved; the first French village to be freed of German occupation. The Nazi swastika that had hung from the town hall for four years was removed.

Captain Patrick James Ness of Michigan, whose mother was Irish (a McAuliffe), flew four sorties over Normandy on D-Day in his P-47 Thunderbolt ('the Jug') with the US 81st Fighter Squadron. His initial memory of the day was being woken early to discover that while they (the pilots) were sleeping, their fighter bomber aircraft had been painted overnight with the black and white striped identification markings unique to D-Day, 'in poor quality paint, more like whitewash'. They had come over from America in February 1944 and flew their first operational missions commencing 1 May out of Leamington airfield. His father, a Norwegian immigrant who arrived to the US in 1872, was a mining engineer and so he gravitated towards that industry, which had a large Irish contingent. After eleven years in New York he went to Michigan and became involved in the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), an Irish-American society that brought him into contact with his soon-to-be 'Irish' wife, to whom Patrick James was subsequently born. When

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the Second World War broke out, Patrick joined the 81st Fighter Squadron and so followed his subsequent D-Day involvement.

For his part, Patrick James Ness was to find himself in 'US Air Force Intelligence', loaned (seconded) to the OSS, and was involved after Victory in Europe (VE) Day, 8 May 1945, in seeking out German scientists and sending them to the United States to work on 'military projects'. In all he saw service from 1942 to 1968, fought in



*Landing craft and ships unload troops and supplies at Omaha Beach a few days after D-Day. Photo: Conseil Régional de Basse-Normandie / US National Archives*

three 'hot' wars (the Second World War, Korean and Vietnam wars) and at the height of the 'Cold War' flew a B-47 bomber for Strategic Air Command. His mantra throughout his service was 'You do not volunteer for anything, you do not turn anything down.'

Another Irishman who was involved in D-Day was Joe Walsh, from Athy, County Kildare. On leaving the Irish Army in 1942, Joe Walsh joined the RAF and landed in Normandy in late June 1944 with the 715 Motor Transport and Light Repair Unit. He was keen to go to France to see action, and interviewed in James Durney's, *Far From the Short Grass*, he said: 'The Irish were not worried about the danger. They always went for the most dangerous jobs; tanks, tail gunners and paratroopers – the paras were full of Irish'. He was sent to France and reached there around the time of the Allied 'breakout' from the bocage countryside. He recalled, 'We did not see much action. I remember a V-1 rocket landing in a field beside us once though it didn't cause any casualties.'

These Vergeltungswaffe (V, for vengeance) V-1 and V-2 flying bombs, unmanned aircraft loaded with explosives, were directed towards London mostly, timed to fall on the city and its population. The first one (of ten fired that day) arrived in London on 10 June 1944, killing six people. Up to 100 per day began arriving in the weeks and months thereafter, and in all it is estimated that about 8,000 V-1s fell on England before the launch sites were overrun by Allied ground troops in September. Among the last to be killed by one of them, tragically, was Captain Guinness, heir to the Guinness Brewing industry dynasty.

Destabilising also was the Allied bombing of known V-1 launch sites. These perpetual air raids on the wider area and on transport, infrastructure and military targets hampered the production and development of other such 'products', like the V-3, a multi-barrelled gun capable of firing huge 300-pound shells across the English Channel at a rate of one every six seconds. This 'London Gun' project never properly got started, so the Americans went bigger again, this time attempting to pack old aircraft full of explosives. Flying them close to the launch sites, the pilots would 'bail out' and the explosive-laden aircraft would be remotely controlled and guided to the launch site targets. The premature explosion of some planes, killing the American pilots along with them, put an end to this initiative, but not before Joseph Kennedy Junior, who was being carefully groomed to be the future Irish-American President of the United States, was among those unfortunate pilots. A graphic illustration of how war destroys potential as well as people, it fell to his younger brother, John F. Kennedy, to become that candidate.

It only took a split second to end the life of twenty-two-year-old Sammy Glass from Belfast. A member of the 1st Battalion Royal Ulster Rifles ('The Rifles'), Glass was struck down by a German sniper's bullet, never to realise his youthful ambition to play in goal for Northern Ireland. How easily the bullet could have struck the man beside him, Dubliner Tommy Meehan. Random chance at the sniper's choice of target, capricious fate or fluke meant that Tommy Meehan lived and Sammy Glass did not. This was war.

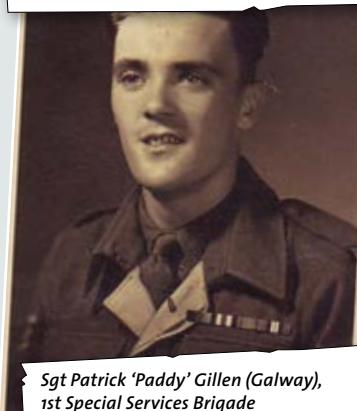
For the first time, this book facilitates the telling of the wide-ranging, important Irish involvement in D-Day, and it places Irish participation on the front page, by populating the undertaking through an Irish 'lens'. The story of D-Day is enormous, and the Irish have a rightful place among its many chapters. ■



*USAAF Capt Patrick James Ness, US 81st Fighter Squadron (his mother was Irish, a McAuliffe), flew four sorties on D-Day. Photo: courtesy of his son Phillip Ness*



*RSM Sean O'Donovan (Drumcondra, Co. Dublin), Royal Artillery. He escaped from a number of POW camps and also fought alongside Italian and Russian partisan resistance groups. Photo: courtesy of his nephew Lt Col Fred O'Donovan*



*Sgt Patrick 'Paddy' Gillen (Galway), 1st Special Services Brigade ('Commandos'), came ashore at Sword Beach on D-Day. Photo: courtesy of his son Robin Gillen*

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## Two Revolutions and Two Civil Wars? 'Forgotten Revolution: The Limerick Soviet 1919'

BY LIAM CAHILL

Liam Cahill is the author of a recently published book 'Forgotten Revolution [The Centenary Edition] The Limerick Soviet 1919'. He is a former public servant and journalist who has worked as an adviser in government, politics, the private sector and with campaign groups.

**A**t the beginning of 1919, 'Republicans' and 'Sinn Féiners' were not a homogenous group with a common political objective. It is more sensible to view them as two distinct types of 'Separatists' - Pacifist Separatists led by Éamon de Valera and Militant Separatists (Irish Republican Brotherhood) led by Michael Collins.

Following the Dáil's first public meeting, the pacifist non-IRB Separatists focussed on using the assembly's moral and political mandate to gain international recognition for Ireland's cause, mainly by leveraging Irish-American pressure on President Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference. In June 1919, de Valera undertook an eighteen months long visit to the United States to rally support and raise funds. At the same time, the militant IRB element of Separatism, led by Michael Collins, was intensifying the gathering of intelligence as well as the capture or purchase of munitions and weapons with the intention of an early resumption of the armed struggle, begun in 1916.

Events in early 1919 set the pattern for how the War would evolve during the ensuing year and a half, up to the Truce in July 1921. On 21st January 1919, three events occurred that were to have a major influence on the course of the War. Two are commemorated and taught in schools and colleges – the first public session of Dáil Éireann in the Mansion House in Dublin and the ambush and killing of two policemen at Soloheadbeg, county Tipperary, by members of the 3rd Tipperary Brigade, Irish Volunteers.

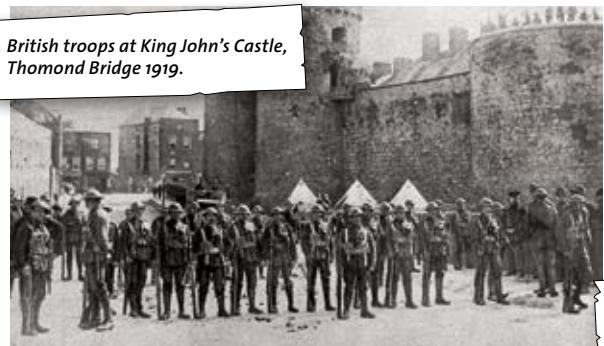
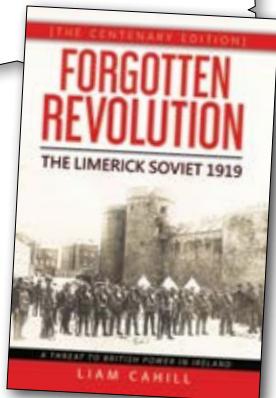
The third event – despite its leading to almost four years of militant struggle by workers and their trade unions for their version of freedom – has been largely overlooked and forgotten for most of the last century. This event was the commencement in Limerick of the Court Martial of Captain Robert Byrne, Adjutant, 2nd Battalion, Mid-Limerick Brigade, Irish Volunteers, on a charge of possession

of a revolver and ammunition. He was sentenced to serve twelve months imprisonment with hard labour in Limerick Prison. Immediately, Byrne led Republican prisoners in a demand to be accorded political status.

After a punishment diet of bread and water for several weeks, followed by some weeks on hunger strike, he was transferred to a local hospital. There, on 6th April, the Volunteers mounted a botched rescue attempt. A policeman was killed, another seriously wounded and Robert Byrne was fatally wounded – probably by a member of the rescue party. He was the first member of the Irish Volunteers to be killed in the War of Independence. More than 10,000 women and men, many in Cumann na mBan and Volunteer uniform, marched to his graveside where a volley of shots was fired.

Already alarmed by the opening of the First Dáil and the killings at Soloheadbeg, the British authorities responded by declaring Limerick a Special Military Area. The city was surrounded by barbed wire and the bridges across the Shannon were blocked by barricades and tanks, cutting off the populous working-class district of Thomondgate from the rest of the city. Workers were required to produce a military pass and be checked four times a day, going to and from their work.

In protest at these restrictions, Limerick Trades Council declared a 'General Strike Against British Militarism' and 14,000 workers responded. For two weeks, the workers' Council – sarcastically dubbed a 'soviet' by the 'Irish Times' – controlled the baking and supply of bread and sympathetic farmers from surrounding areas



British troops at King John's Castle, Thomond Bridge 1919.



Newspaper clipping from British Sunday Pictorial showing images of Limerick during the general strike. Photo courtesy of Military Archives BMH Photo Series Album Events of National Interest 1919-1920.



Capt Robert Byrne, Adjt 2nd Bn, Mid-Limerick Brigade, Irish Volunteers, an active trade unionist who suffered fatal wounds in a rescue from a local hospital and was the first member of the Irish Volunteers killed in the War of Independence.

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delivered food to the edge of the city for distribution. The Council controlled prices, the opening hours of shops, carting and transport; they published their own newspaper and printed their own currency. The strike achieved worldwide newspaper and newsreel headlines.

At the outset, the Council co-opted to membership Commandant Michael Brennan, Officer Commanding, the East Clare Brigade of the Irish Volunteers. Brennan put the Clare and Limerick network of the Volunteers, the IRB and Sinn Féin to work in maintaining clandestine food supplies to the city. He reported daily to the Chief of Staff, General Richard Mulcahy, in Volunteer Headquarters and Mulcahy himself made an undercover visit to the city to evaluate the situation at first hand. The Brennan / Mulcahy connection closely linked the events in Limerick into activity and thinking at national level.

The Dáil Cabinet discussed support for Limerick three times and their representatives spent three days in discussions with the leadership of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress. Cabinet ministers, like Éamon de Valera, who favoured a gradual, peaceful approach to separatism were not prepared to support a militant struggle led by workers. The upshot of the contacts – with support from General Mulcahy and Michael Collins (the militant IRB Ministers) – was agreement on a plan to evacuate Limerick and leave it as an empty shell in the hands of the military. This was a version of a tactic that had been devised, but never implemented, to oppose Conscription in 1918.

The workers rejected the joint Congress/IRB evacuation plan out of hand. Alarmed by the turn of events, the Catholic Bishop, Dr Denis Hallinan, and the Sinn Féin Mayor, Alphonsus O'Mara lobbied hard for the strike to end. There was a partial resumption of work after ten days and a full resumption after fourteen days.

From 1917 onwards, the Volunteer Headquarters had organised a second IRB-led and dominated Battalion in Limerick. In the same year, the ITGWU arrived, radicalising workers and unleashing a wave of strikes unequalled anywhere else in the country. Robert Byrne, the dead Volunteer, was a prominent trade unionist as well as an IRB member. His death was the catalyst that fused militant separatism and militant trade unionism together, to create a General Strike that quickly morphed into a Workers' Council, or Soviet, in April 1919.

Emboldened by Limerick, the workers and their socialist organisers continued on a militant path, with women workers to the fore.

It is estimated that, in the succeeding years, there were hundreds of soviets, seizures, occupations and strikes, mainly across Munster.

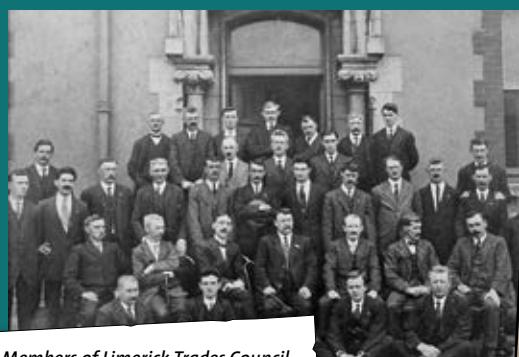
In 1920, in the West of Ireland, there was a wave of agitation for breaking up estates and big farms. The Republican Department of Home Affairs, under Countess Markievicz, saw them as 'a grave danger threatening the foundations of the Republic'. The newly established Sinn Féin courts and IRA police were used to snuff out the agitation. The land seizures were paralleled by farm strikes and a Farmers' Freedom Force was formed 'to take such action as was required' and be 'a national bulwark against Labour, Socialism and Bolshevism'.

April 1920 also saw a general two-day strike in support of Republican hunger strikers. The rank and file quickly took control of the strike and there were seizures, takeovers, soviets and red flags in scores of towns and villages throughout the country. The 'Irish Times' saw it as *'A wave of Bolshevism before which Sinn Féin itself stands appalled... a continuation might have witnessed the establishment of soviets in all parts of Ireland.'*

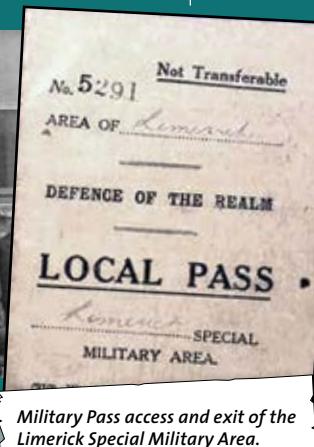
In 1921, the year of the Truce and the Treaty, a major economic recession provoked another strike wave and outbreak of workplace soviets. Farm labourers went on strike – blocking roads, felling trees and creamery workers refused to process milk. Once again, the farmers were backed by the IRA in trying to break the strike. The last throes of this wave of militancy was the Waterford farm labourers' strike from May 1923. In episodes reminiscent of the Russian Civil War, the farmers formed units of 'White Guards' and the Government deployed a 'Special Infantry Corps' to support the farmers.

From Limerick 1919 onwards, the geographical spread, duration and level of violence of these struggles raises a question. Were there two revolutions and two civil wars? We know about the conventional wars but were there two other wars where socialist-inspired workers first took on British power in Ireland, and then clashed repeatedly and violently with farmers as well as with Republican and Free State power, intent on suppressing class conflict in favour of unity in seeking separation from Britain but, inevitably, siding with the big farmers and business?

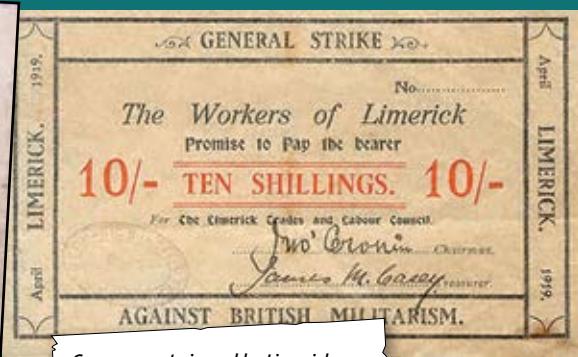
The Decade of Centenaries is an opportunity to re-evaluate these events and to understand their significance better. It is time to move on from a patronising view of the Limerick Soviet as some kind of exotic, regional aberration in the 'Confraternity' city, and instead see it for what it was - a pivotal event in the evolution of the War of Independence. ■



Members of Limerick Trades Council who led the 'General Strike Against British Militarism'.



Military Pass access and exit of the Limerick Special Military Area.



Currency note issued by Limerick Trades Council during the 'General Strike Against British Militarism'.

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# Interned: The Curragh internment camps in the War of Independence

BY JAMES DURNEY

**I**nternment, or imprisonment without trial, was an important weapon of the British government in its fight against Irish republican violence. The purpose of internment in Ireland was to contain people the British authorities felt were a threat, without charges or intent to file charges. Faced with armed insurrection and revolutionary claims to democratic legitimacy, the British government responded with increasingly harsh emergency powers against Irish republicans.

The immediate aftermath of Bloody Sunday on 21st November 1920 marked a turning point in the War of Independence when the British authorities decided to open internment camps, facilitating a record use of imprisonment without trial. The internment camps, rather than established prisons, quickly

“Vital reading for anyone interested in the Irish Revolution”

— Liz Gillis, author and historian

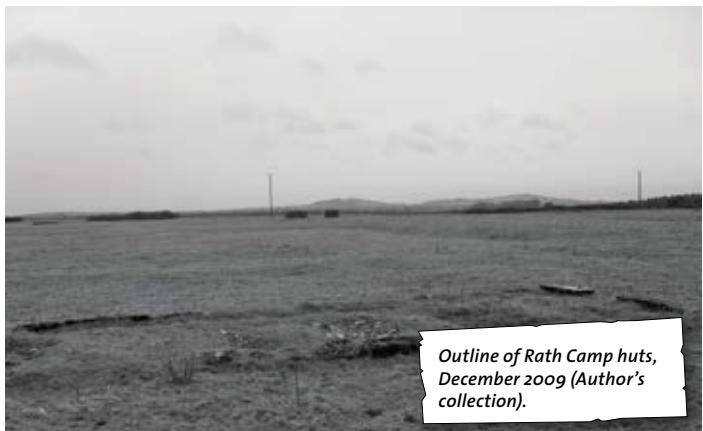
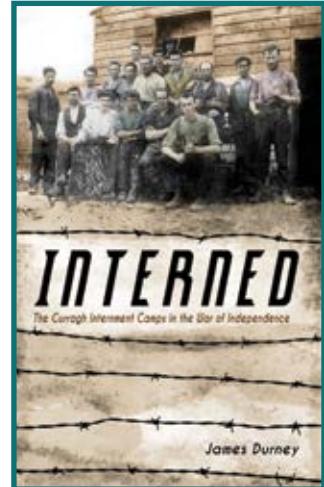
became the largest holding centres of political prisoners. By late June 1921, 3,311 men were interned in these camps, constituting just over half of all those then incarcerated because of the independence war.

In the first three months of 1921, crown forces arrested a considerable number of republicans. Numbers interned rose from 1,478 for the week ending 17th January, to 2,569 for the week ending 21st March 1921. The internment camp at Ballykinlar had reached its capacity and instructions were received from British general headquarters to prepare a further internment camp at the Curragh military base, in Co. Kildare, for the reception of internees from the Army 5th Division and Dublin District Division areas.

The Rath Internment Camp was laid out on the south fringe of the Curragh Camp directly opposite the grandstand of the racecourse. It consisted of about ten acres of the Curragh plain enclosed in a rectangle of barbed wire entanglements. There

were two fences ten-feet high and four-feet wide. Between the fences was a twenty-foot wide corridor, which was patrolled by sentries, and which the prisoners called ‘No man’s land’. At each corner of the compound stood high block-houses from which powerful searchlights lit up the centre passage and played on the huts. Sentries armed with rifles and machine guns manned these watchtowers day and night. Sentries posted on the watchtowers called out ‘All’s well’, on the stroke of the hour throughout the night. No. 1 post would start off, ‘No. 1 post, and all is well.’ No. 2 would repeat and Nos 3 and 4 would do likewise. This ‘All is well’ continued through the night, every night.

Inside the rectangular enclosure there were some fifty to sixty wooden huts (twenty-feet by sixty-feet), which served as sleeping quarters for up to 1,000 men, and housed huts used for a hospital, a canteen (dining hall), a cook-house, a chapel and a library. There was also a hut used for British military stores and a sports ground large enough to provide a football pitch



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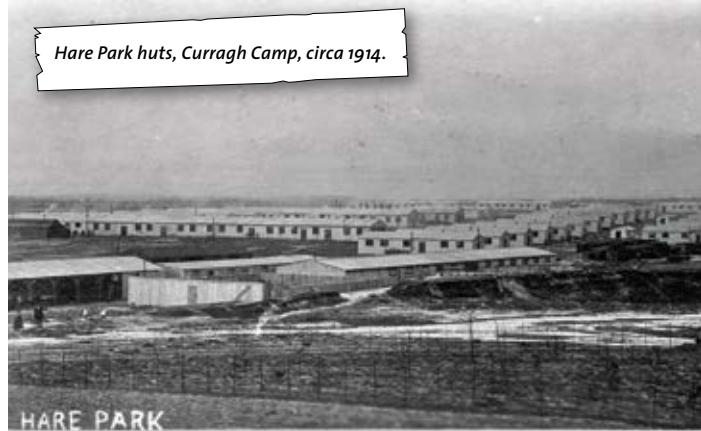
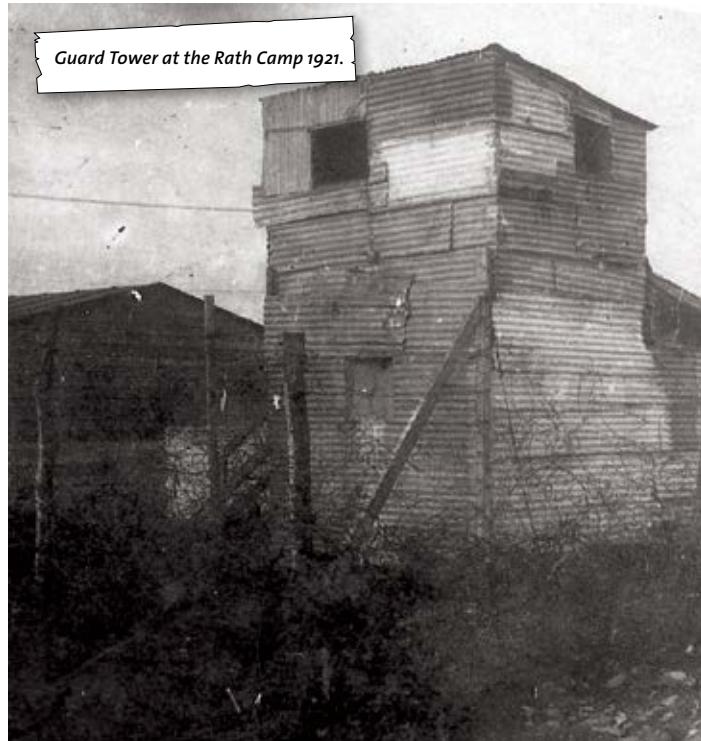
and space for exercise. The wooden huts were arranged in four symmetrical rows, referred to as 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Lines.

Beyond the main barrier, the camp was surrounded by another fence consisting of five single strands of barbed wire about four-feet high. The Rath Camp was regarded as escape-proof. To add to the difficulties of intending escapees, a large searchlight was mounted on the watchtower of the main military camp. During the hours of darkness, the beam from the searchlight lit up the entire Curragh plain. The capacity of the camp was for a war-time battalion, or about 1,000 men, but when it was eventually filled, there were around 1,300 internees and overcrowding resulted.

By the beginning of March 1921, the camp was ready for business. The *Leinster Leader*, a weekly newspaper published in Naas, carried a report in its 12 March issue that 'another internment camp, conducted on the same lines as the Ballykinlar Camp, has been opened at the Rath, Curragh. A large number of prisoners,' the report continued, 'have been transferred from the Hare Park Camp to the Rath, where no visits are allowed'. It went on to report that fifty prisoners from the west, including a priest, passed through Naas on their way to the Curragh, while thirty prisoners from Athlone military barracks were transferred to the Rath Camp, along with a further seventeen prisoners from Maryborough Jail.

The Rath Camp remained one of the main detention centres during the War of Independence and was the scene of the biggest mass-breakout from a prison camp when over fifty internees escaped through a tunnel in September 1921. It was closed after the signing of the Treaty on 6th December 1921.

*Interned: The Curragh Internment Camps in the War of Independence* by James Durney and published by Mercier Press will be launched by Col Brendan Delaney in the Curragh Military Museum at 19.33pm on 25th July 2019, and will be available for purchase on the night and in all good bookshops. ■



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# 3 INFANTRY BATTALION

BY PTE TERRENCE O'REILLY, DEFENCE FORCES LIBRARY, MIL COL

**O**n 24th January 1923, a General Routine Order formally organised the Infantry Corps into 60 Infantry Battalions; only the 3 Infantry Battalion still traces its origin to that date. At that time the Irish Civil War was still on going and the Army's oldest unit was then based at Drumboe in Donegal, commanded by Comdt Bernard Sweeney and comprising three rifle companies and an MG Coy equipped with Lewis Guns.

In June, following the conclusion of the Civil War, the battalion were concentrated at Dockery Barracks in Boyle and began a training programme with the emphasis on route marches to Sligo and to the ranges at Finner Camp. The battalion's sport teams adopted a red and white livery, leading to them and in turn the battalion, being nicknamed "*The Bloods*".

In 1927 the battalion entrained for transfer to the Curragh. By 1931 the battalion was equipped with Vickers helmets and machine guns and that year gave a spectacular firepower demonstration with 16 Vickers Guns in the Glen of Imaal. In the same year the Bloods won the rifle and revolver competitions in the inaugural All-Army Championships; this feat was repeated in 1932 and 1933 as well as winning the Lewis Gun competition. Small wonder that the battalion was nominated as demonstration unit of the Military College.

On the declaration of the Emergency in 1939, the Bloods occupied positions in Portlaoise, Kilkenny and Waterford. In May 1940, the battalion formed the core of the 1 Mobile Column, based under canvas in the Nore Valley and responsible for defending the Waterford/Wexford coast from hostile invasion; this was in fact the area chosen for Operation Green, the projected German invasion of Ireland. In 1941, the Bloods became the spearhead of the newly activated 5 Inf Bde. Headquartered in Kilkenny Castle, this formation was now responsible for the defence of Waterford and Wexford.

By 1942, battalion troop strength was over a thousand and in

August that year, the Bloods marched from Kilkenny over the Knockmealdown Mountains to the Blackwater River to take part in the divisional level exercises that month. The battalion soldiered on until the end of the Emergency in 1945 when the 5 Inf Bde was disbanded and such posts as Bawnjames Camp, Flood Hall and Ballybricken Gaol were closed down.

In 1946, the battalion returned to the Curragh and was based in Connolly Barracks, its home for the next fifty years. It soon re-established itself as the demonstration unit of the Military College, beginning with the formation of an anti-tank troop.

In 1955, the battalion made a near "*clean sweep*" at the All-Army Championships and in 1956 participated in Exercise Youghal, marching there and back again. In 1958, the internment camp in the Curragh was opened to deal with the resurgent IRA and the battalion was heavily committed to guard duties there.

In 1960 members of the unit deployed to the Congo with the UN peacekeeping force, including BSM D. Douglas who had begun military service in the War of Independence. Five DSMs were awarded to Bloods, including Comdt Patrick Barry for his rescue of 250 civilians at Manono, Pte Christopher Doolan for his performance in the field in September 1961 and Capt James Flynn who led a unit in a thousand-mile pursuit of a Baluba war party in October 1961. The battalion however suffered its first overseas fatality when Cpl Liam Kelly (22) died as a result of an accidental shooting on Christmas Eve 1960 in the Congo.

In 1965, the Battalion was presented with its colours, featuring the Red Hand of Ulster and the unit motto: "*Dilis go Bráth*".

On the outbreak of the Northern troubles in 1969, battalion



Bloods wearing WWI pattern 'coal scuttle' helmets, somewhere in the '30s.



The Bns., under Comdt. M. J. Higgins, marching through Callan, 1942.

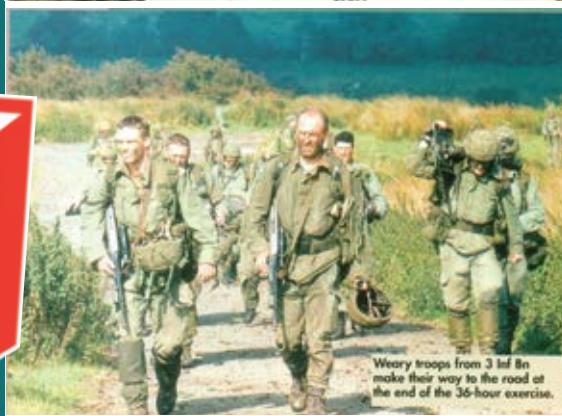


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-5 HMG being fired in the AA role by the 3rd Bn on 5 July 1989.



Weary troops from 3 Inf Bn make their way to the road at the end of the 36-hour exercise.

cash escorts and further border deployments.

The battalion received its first allotment of seven Panhard APCs in 1973 and in 1976 the battalion formed a Special Assault Group, codenamed "Oakleaf" under the command of Lt Billy Harrington.

In 1978, the first Bloods deployed to Lebanon with UNIFIL, mostly serving with B Coy throughout the UNIFIL deployment.

By the early 1980s, Connolly Barracks had undergone some modernisation with for example electric heaters replacing "pot belly" turf stoves and televisions appearing in the billets. In March 1981 Sgt 'Hooker' O'Regan, the longest serving Blood and a popular character, passed away on the last day of his military service. His service with the battalion had commenced in 1938 and included three tours in the Congo and several All-Army titles in Rugby and Gaelic football.

The ATCP commitment continued; as in November 1987 when a company was deployed to the border at short notice to participate in Operation Mallard, an intensive search operation for PIRA arms dumps.

In October 1991, the 'Battle of the Bloods' competition was initiated to increase combat fitness in the battalion; a gruelling mix of infantry run, falling plates and combat swimming, this proved a popular event for years to come. Periodic and intensive APC Crewman courses

strength was 150, several of whom deployed to the border with the hastily organised 17 Inf Gp. Reservists were mobilised and troops recalled from UNFICYP. In 1972, the battalion formed a company in Kilkenny and although numbers later increased, the unit remained heavily committed in the ATCP role including Portlaoise Prison,

1997 proved to be a successful year for the battalion, training with the new Tactical Engagement Simulator in time to win the All Army Platoon in Attack competition that summer and in October winning the All-Army 81mm mortar competition.

On 23rd January 1998, serving and former Bloods enthusiastically celebrated the 75th anniversary in Connolly Barracks, few realising the momentous changes that were coming. The Bloods were greatly impacted by the Defence Forces reorganisation of 1998, the battalion absorbing the troops of the former 30 Inf Bn in Stephens Barracks, Kilkenny, which now became their main base of operations. Although B Coy remained in Connolly Barracks, they now shared with other units and the old officers and NCOs messes were closed.

On 14th February 2000, the battalion suffered the worst single loss of life in its history when four young soldiers returning from Lebanon on leave were killed in a traffic accident south of Beirut; Privates Declan Deere (21), Jonathan Murphy (21), John Lawler (23) and Brendan Fitzpatrick (19) were flown home by the Air Corps and buried with full military honours.

In 2001 the aging Panhard APCs were finally retired and B Coy retrained with the Mowag Piranha, reaching a proficiency that enabled them to play the central role in Exercise Flagstaff in June 2002. In June 2009 the company carried out a unit confidence-training block including abseiling from the Curragh Water Tower and jumping from the bridge on Blessington Lake.

Under the 2012 reorganisation, B Coy in the Curragh became 1 Mechanised Company (1 MIC). Although this broke the final link between the Bloods and Connolly Barracks, the new unit's heritage was obvious in its unit insignia. 3 Inf Bn remained based in Stephens Barracks in Kilkenny, with C, D and E Companies now comprising Reserve Defence Force personnel from Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kildare, Kilkenny and Laois.

Reflecting the current security situation, the battalion conducted Exercise Strongbow in Waterford in May 2016 to test the response plan in the event of an increased threat to national security. In March 2017, Exercise Turas Fada involved multi role scenarios encompassing a wide variety of situations encountered at home or on overseas deployment. In August 2017, Exercise Céim Deireanach involved tactical exercises by a Three Star Course in the Glen of Imaal before being transported by LÉ Eithne from Rosslare to Fort Davis for FIBUA training.

In February 2018, the battalion provided vital ATCA assistance across its wide AO when the "Beast from the East" inflicted arctic conditions on the country. In March 2018 the battalion provided the majority of personnel for the 57 Inf Gp, which deployed to UNDOF that year. In October a team from the battalion won a Silver Medal at the Cambrian Patrol; already regarded as the most difficult military exercise in the world, Storm Callum added to the already gruelling conditions.

The 3 Inf Bn will celebrate its centenary within three years; its status as the Army's oldest unit is as renowned as its reputation as one of its most professional.

A 3 Inf Bn Association for retired members was formed in Kilkenny in October 2015. ■



were organised, which included amphibious training in Blessington Lake, 16 Panhard APCs now served with the battalion.

# HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY HISTORY

# DEVELOPING THE TACTICAL ATHLETE

BY PTE SHANE CURRAN, DEFENCE FORCES PRINTING PRESS

**T**he high intensity nature of military operations places a unique set of physical and psychological demands on the modern soldier. To meet these demands the soldier must have a high level of physical readiness at all times. In order to survive on the battlefield the soldier must be stronger, more agile and faster than the enemy to ensure battlefield survivability and mission success. Physically fit soldiers are critical to mission success as they show improved performance and higher levels of resilience to the demands of sustained operations. To add to this, physically fit soldiers may also be less susceptible to injuries thereby improving longevity of service.

In the Defence Forces every soldier is trained as an

Infantryman first, regardless of employment. In recent years with increasing demands placed on the Defence Forces the importance of this robust training has become more evident than ever. Given

the extreme physical and psychological demands placed on modern soldiers, they should be treated and trained similarly to elite level athletes.

In the same way the elite level athlete requires a training program specific to the needs of his/her sport so to does the tactical athlete. There is however a number of differences between the elite athlete and the tactical athlete. There is no defined season for the tactical athlete who is required to have a high level of physical readiness at all times. Tactical athletes are also required to operate for extended periods in extreme environments with no scheduled rest and recovery periods.

The demands placed on the tactical athlete during operations vary greatly with unexpected changes in tempo being seen as the norm. The elite athlete on the other hand, will be expected to train sport specific skills and deal with a small number of circumstances when compared to the tactical athlete. The tactical athlete can be expected to go from low intensity operations to receiving contact from an enemy, having to change

“  
THE ROLE OF THE  
INFANTRY IS TO DESTROY  
THE ENEMY AND TO HOLD  
GROUND IN NIGHT OR  
DAY IN ANY TERRAIN  
”





to high intensity operations including jumping, running, casualty evacuation, heavy lifting and crawling to name a few. This can all happen in a split second with no warm-up thus increasing the risk of musculoskeletal (MSK) injuries along with the potential of injuries from projectiles, explosives and unarmed combat. To further add to these stressors the tactical athlete is required to wear individual protective equipment and carry heavy loads.

### Developing the Program:

In order to meet the unique demands placed on the tactical athlete it is key that we look at areas such as common movement patterns, energy system demands, key injury sites and psychological demands. This should of course be done through the use of an evidence-based approach. It must also be taken into consideration when training recruits for instance that in recent years civilian jobs have become less physical and the general population has

become more sedentary. This means that levels of movement competency, strength, aerobic and anaerobic conditioning is now lower than ever before.

The tactical athlete must be physically well developed all around in order to meet the unique demands of sustained military operations. Traditionally there has been a focus on developing fitness through the use of aerobic endurance and load carriage training. Current literature would suggest that strength training could improve load carriage, decrease injury risk and improve recovery periods. A report by the DF Physiotherapy in 2017 showed that injuries to the lumbar spine accounted for 23% of all recorded injuries, which compared similarly to a report by US Forces in 2014. The high rate of lower back injuries would suggest that posterior chain strengthening should be a major focus of programs for the tactical Athlete. This would include the use of exercises such as deadlifts and hip thrusts.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<b>Week 1</b>	Upper Body Hypertrophy 4 x 8	Aerobic Training	Full Body Strength 4 x 6	Anaerobic Intervals	Lower Body Hypertrophy 4 x 8	Rest	Rest
<b>Week 2</b>	Load Carriage	Upper Body Strength 4 x 5	Anaerobic Intervals	Lower Body Strength 4 x 5	Metabolic Conditioning	Rest	Rest
<b>Week 3</b>	Upper Body Hypertrophy 4 x 9	Anaerobic Intervals	Full Body Strength 4 x 4	Battle PT	Lower Body Hypertrophy 4 x 9	Rest	Rest
<b>Week 4</b>	Load Carriage training	Upper body Hypertrophy 4 x 10	Metabolic Conditioning	Lower Body Hypertrophy 4 x 10	Aerobic training	Rest	Rest
<b>Week 5</b>	Recovery	Metabolic Conditioning	Recovery	Metabolic Conditioning	Recovery	Rest	Rest

### Here is a sample five-week training block for a tactical athlete

#### Injuries:

Injuries for the tactical Athlete are to be expected. While it is not possible to avoid injury it is possible to lower the risk and improve recovery times when injury occurs. If appropriate training and recovery strategies are put in place this can lower the risk of occurrence. Training strategies can include the use of specific injury prevention training as part of the warm up and the use of specific download

weeks every 4-6 weeks when non-operational. These simple steps could help to significantly reduce the number of ineffective days due to MSK injuries and improve operational readiness if properly implemented.

#### Summary:

There is no one fits all program that will be suitable for every tactical athlete. In order to develop an effective program an evidence-based approach should be used. The modern soldier is required to go further and faster than ever before. In order to increase mission readiness and the effectiveness of the soldier more time and resources must be put into physical and psychological development from an early stage. Soldiers are trained from the outset of initial training to maintain their kit and equipment to the highest standards. If the soldier is to be able to operate for sustained periods it is key that the soldier is also viewed as a tactical athlete and developed and maintained to the same high standards.

*Pte Shane Curran has just finished a BSc in Strength and Conditioning and currently holds a Level 6 Cert in Science in the same subject. He is currently a Strength and Conditioning Coach with Kildare GAA. ■*



# BOOK COMPETITION

Here's a chance to win a signed copy of Brendan Lynch's latest book:

## YESTERDAY WE WERE IN AMERICA: ALCOCK AND BROWN, FIRST TO FLY THE ATLANTIC NON-STOP

Publisher: The History Press  
 ISBN: 978-0750990004  
 Price: €15.00  
 Available: online or in store

*"They battled through a 16-hour journey of snow, ice and continuous cloud..."*

Read the review on page 46

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Laser-cut MOLLE panels adorn each side of the pack, facilitating the expansion via additional pouches.

Tough enough to keep up. Intuitive enough to make you grab another pack.

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- Capacity: 26 Litre
- Weight: 2.223 KG
- Dimensions: 50.8 x 27.94 x 21.59 cm
- YKK Zippers
- External MOLLE (Side)
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- Hi-vis piping; stay visible on duty

RRP €229



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2019

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<https://activesportsevents.niftyentries.com/Defence-Forces-Triathlon-2019>

**See DFTA Training Group on Facebook or the Triathlon Group page  
on IKON for further details.**

# NOTICEBOARD

## MILITARY HISTORY LECTURES FOR JULY/AUGUST 2019

**WEDNESDAY 3RD JULY AT 6.30PM** - Cathy Scuffil will present 'The Black and Tans to the Treaty' in Inchicore Library, Emmet Road, Inchicore, Dublin. Admission free but booking required via [inchicorelibrary@dublincity.ie](mailto:inchicorelibrary@dublincity.ie) or call 01-453 3793.

**FRIDAY 12TH JULY AT 1PM** - There is a free 'Guided Tour of the World One Ireland exhibition' in the National Library of Ireland, 2/3 Kildare Street, Dublin 2. Admission free.

**THURSDAY 22ND AUGUST AT 11AM** - There is a tour of the Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Blackhorse Avenue, Dublin, covering WW1, ANZAC and 1916 graves including those that lost their lives on the RMS Leinster. Admission free.

**THURSDAY 22ND AUGUST AT 7PM** - James Scannell will present 'A 1918 Police Shooting Incident in Shankill' in Shankill Library, Library Road, Shankill, Co. Dublin. Admission free but booking advised - call 01-282 3081 or email: [shankilllib@dlrcoco.ie](mailto:shankilllib@dlrcoco.ie).

**THURSDAY 22ND AUGUST AT 8PM** - As part of the Rathmichael Historical Society 45th Summer Series of Evening Lectures, Liam Irwin will present 'Limerick: City of Sieges and a Broken Treaty' in Rathmichael School, Stonebridge Road (Dublin Road end), Shankill, Co. Dublin. Admission €5 – includes tea/coffee/biscuits.

**FRIDAY 23RD AUGUST AT 2.30PM** - There is a tour of Arbour Hill Cemetery, Dublin 7, including the 1916 graves. Admission free.

### UNIFORM SERVICES

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Last month's winner of the PROTAC €50 Voucher was Paul Fahy, Co Kildare. Closing date is 19th August 2019.

## WORD SEARCH

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

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

### Special Forces

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# BOOKS BOOKS

## A BLOODY DAWN: THE IRISH AT D-DAY

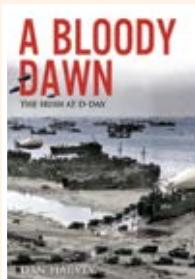
**Author:** Dan Harvey, Lt Col retired  
**Publisher:** Merrion Press (June 2019)  
[www.merrionpress.ie](http://www.merrionpress.ie)  
**ISBN:** 9781785372414  
**Pages:** 250  
**Price:** €14.95 PB

D-Day has for many been depicted in film or written about by many an author and has since never been forgotten. But what has never been revealed in such detail is the inclusion of so many Irish born or those of Irish parenthood in that epic event.

Throughout this book you will discover the names of those Irishmen/women who took part or were involved. Like the Irish Coast Guard lighthouse keeper at Blacksod Point, in Co Mayo; where his wife Maureen had sent a weather report by telephone to the RAF's Meteorological Unit in the UK on the eve of D-Day, that there would be a brief interlude of improved weather. This prompted General Eisenhower to issue the famous words, "Okay, we'll go".

This is an in-depth and well-researched book, diligent in detail, informative and easily readable. Highly recommended. **SS**

Lt Col Dan Harvey, now retired, is the author of *Soldiering Against Subversion: The Irish Defence Forces and Internal Security During the Troubles, 1969–1998* (2018), *Into Action: Irish Peacekeepers Under Fire, 1960–2014* (2017), *A Bloody Day: The Irish at Waterloo, A Bloody Night: The Irish at Rorke's Drift* (both reissued 2017), and *Soldiers of the Short Grass: A History of the Curragh Camp* (2016).



## YESTERDAY WE WERE IN AMERICA: ALCOCK AND BROWN, FIRST TO FLY THE ATLANTIC NON-STOP

**Author:** Brendan Lynch  
**Publisher:** The History Press (Reprint centenary edition February 2019)  
[www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)  
**ISBN:** 978-0750990004  
**Pages:** 288  
**Price:** €15.00 PB / eBook €7.80

Former racing cyclist and driver Brendan Lynch's first novel *Green Dust: Ireland's Unique Motor Racing History* won him the Guild of Motoring Writers' Pierre Dreyfus Award, now on his eighth book. *Yesterday We Were In America* was first published in 2012 by Haynes Publishing, now with a new foreword and introduction to bring it up to date for this the centenary edition to mark the 100th anniversary of the Alcock and Brown transatlantic flight.

*"They battled through a sixteen-hour journey of snow, ice and continuous cloud, with a non-functioning wireless and a damaged exhaust that made it impossible to hear each other."*

The two British aviators John Alcock and Arthur Brown flew non-stop from Newfoundland, situated in north-eastern North America to Clifden, Co Galway on Ireland's west-coast in a Vickers Vimy, a modified WWI plane with an open-cockpit in June 1919.

Brendan's book has a nice clean and easy to read layout and plenty of historical photographs, chapters cover the aviators first meeting, the construction of their plane, other failed flights and their dramatic take-off. Highly recommended reading for the Irish aviation reader or anyone interested in the history of flight. **WF**



## FORGOTTEN REVOLUTION: THE LIMERICK SOVIET 1919

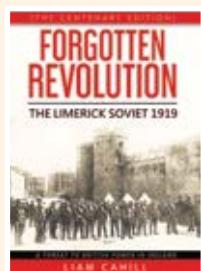
**Author:** Liam Cahill  
**Publisher:** Orla Kelly Publishing (reprint centenary edition April 2019)  
**ISBN:** 978-1912328413  
**Pages:** 187  
**Price:** €15.00 PB

Historian and author Liam Cahill originally wrote *Forgotten Revolution: The Limerick Soviet 1919* in 1990 after a long period of research. He has continued to write and lecture about this forgotten part of the revolutionary rise against British rule in the early part of the last century. Liam has republished this 'centenary edition' to bring this story to a new generation of readers.

Liam describes the book as "A new framework for understanding the often competing – but occasionally complimentary – relationship between workers/ trade unions, the IRA/IRB, Sinn Féin/ First Dáil and the Catholic Church/middle classes and big famers in the years 1916 to 1921."

The book looks at the Limerick General Strike or Limerick Soviet as its otherwise known in April 2019, this edition now goes beyond this event with new information that has been researched in Military Archives and puts new light on involvement of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB).

This version has a map, with a chronology of events and some unseen photos which are now 100-years-old. This would make a great addition to other publications on Ireland's revolutionary past, especially for topics outside of Dublin. **WF**





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