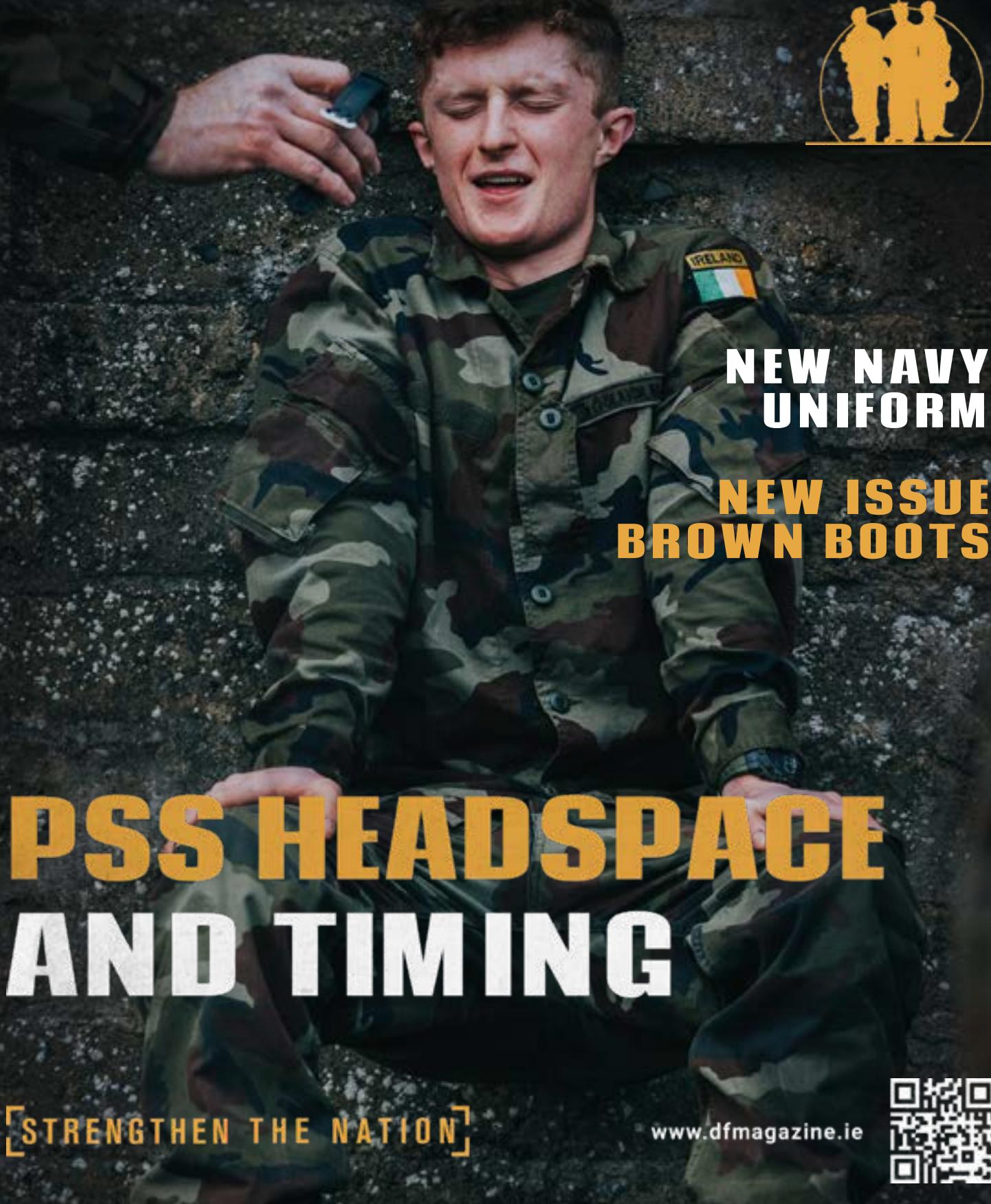


THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

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AN COSANTÓIR



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FRONT COVER

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EDITORIAL

Hello, and welcome to our second issue of 2021, our 81st volume of the An Cosantóir magazine. As the year starts to fly past, we hope you are doing well and continuing to enjoy the magazine in its new format.

Starting off the Magazine is a piece on our noticeboard page about the Defence Forces new brown issue boots, an interview by Tony O'Brien with CQMS Derek Stafford. Our On Parade pages are a look back at some of the best photographs of 2020, sadly we couldn't feature these in January's issue as their release fell past our design dates so we hope you enjoy them this month.

We continue with Sgt Mick Lennon's Military Fitness feature, looking at how fitness classes in the DF can be conducted during the pandemic. Capt. Barry Jones of the Military Training School in the Air Corps College, provides us with an article on SERE in JPR, a very interesting read for the soldier in you.

Moving on to page 14 is an interview by Tony O'Brien with Col Sean O'Keeffe (Rtd), a look at his career and life in the Defence Forces. Page 16, Tony continues his interviews with members of the DF, this time speaking to CPO/EA (Chief Petty Officer Electrical Artificer) Patricia O'Sullivan of the Navy.

Continuing with the Navy, Lt Cdr Cian Ó Mearáin & SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra provide us with an in-depth look at the new Naval Service Variant DPM which has recently come online for the Navy.

Ollie O'Connor talks to Tony O'Brien about the O.N.E. and it's 70th Anniversary, talking through O.N.E.'s history and it's future

endeavours in its service to retired and serving members of the Irish Defence Forces.

Part 1 of Walking into a Healthy Lifestyle, on page 24, by Sgt Thomas Devereaux, looks at how to physically recover after a positive diagnosis and recovery from Covid-19. We know this article is gaining world-wide traction and we hope An Cosantóir readers can enjoy it and give it another push forward.

With another Potential Officers Course on the horizon, and applicants putting their names forward for it, Capt. Gerry Duff provided us with an article looking back on his course the 10th POC in Earning it the Hardway.

You can also read our regular pieces too, our People of the Defence Forces by our own Cpl Martin Bennett chats with Pte Nicky Lawless, Dirty Boots takes us to Coumshingaun Loop Walk, Comeragh Mountains in Waterford, and Headspace and Timing looks into the PSS (Personnel Support Service) and the services they provide.

Our Curragh Pens competition continues this month, which is running for a limited time, and could see you win 1 of 5 unique handcrafted pens - kindly provided to us by Bill Dooley of Curragh Pens. See page 4 for further details.

Many thanks to all our contributors and we hope to continue producing the magazine, that we know you've enjoyed over the years, throughout 2021.

Request for Information

I am creating a pictorial chronology of Women in the Defence Forces to mark 40 years of service. While the book will be predominately a photographic record, I'd also like to include some vignettes and anecdotal records of life in DF. Anybody who would like to be included in the book is strongly encouraged to make contact with me via renken91@gmail.com. The book will feature the following topics though this list is not exhaustive - early days following the foundation of the State, the Army Nursing Corps, change in legislation late 1970's, first eight cadets, first platoon, first apprentices, second platoon, integrated training from 1994, overseas, sport, family service (siblings, parent/daughter) and present day. I will need and would greatly appreciate members of the first two platoons from 1981 and 1990 to get in touch to educate me on their experiences as having joined in 94 myself I am somewhat familiar with life in DF since then! I would also like access to photos from those early days if people can share with me and I will conduct interviews with volunteers who are keen to be featured. This will be a publication that we can all take pride

in and be a part of so I really would urge people to get in touch. My publication date is aimed at mid-Summer and by then hopefully we can hold an event to celebrate 40 years without Covid-19 spoiling play. Thanks in advance.

Sgt Rena Kennedy



«The soldier is the Army. No Army is better than its soldiers. The soldier is also a citizen. In fact, the highest obligation and privilege is that of bearing arms for one's country»

— Gen. George S. Patton

Sgt Karl Byrne – (Stand-in) Editor.

NOTICEBOARD

|| NEW ISSUE BROWN BOOTS ||

by Tony O'Brien

They had been around since the foundation of the State but the traditional black army boots are a thing of the past. Modern, hi-tech, brown boots are now the order of the day; some 9,000 new pairs have been ordered by the Army and were issued for official use on the 1st of February.

The old black boots were heavy and uncomfortable – they were 10 inches high – inappropriate for modern warfare and service situations, particularly in warm weather overseas postings, such as Lebanon. Following regular complaints from personnel, the Army's Clothing Procurement Section procurement section set about finding a suitable alternative, testing many different types before deciding that the Haix Scout boot was best. "We tested them out in all sorts of situations – snipers, recce, mountains – and these ones came back with a good report from those who wore them, explained Company Quartermaster Sergeant Derek Stafford, who added: "The feedback was very good." Derek was able to test the boots for himself – he wore them on a tour of duty in the Lebanon which ended last November. "I found them very comfortable and much better in such a hot environment", he said.

Working with Capt Cathal Daly, they run the Ordnance Equipment and Clothing Procurement operation for the Office of the Director of Ordnance at McKee Barracks in Dublin. This includes buying everything from food and equipment to clothing and footwear for the Army. "There were a lot of complaints about the old black boots", explained Derek, "black is not a good colour, it's not cool in a hot climate and they were big and heavy." He explained how the traditional black boots were very unsuitable in places like Lebanon or Syria. "They got very hot and heavy and this new brown boot is much better for those conditions", he said.



The new brown boots are shorter – 7 inches as opposed to 10 inches – and lighter, plus they don't have to be polished! They are also waterproof, more flexible and more comfortable to wear. "We were the first to try out these new boots, before France and the UK", said Derek, "They are more suitable all round, particularly in overseas missions such as Lebanon etc."

Boots, of course, are one of the most important parts of a soldier's kit and therefore have to be not only durable, but comfortable. And they have to last. "It all depends on who is wearing them. A soldier sitting in an office all day will have very little wear on them. However, a soldier out training in the mountains or elsewhere will be making more demands on their boots and they won't last as long", says Derek. Of course, different elements of the Defence Forces have different boot requirements. "The Air Corps and the

Navy as well as artillery and others would need a different type of boot, so these are for general Army personnel", he said.

The Haix Scout boot is made of Nubuk leather and is waterproof and breathable with GORE-TEX®. It has highly abrasion-resistant lining with fleece mid layer: optimised climate comfort for all year, seasons and excessive use. The foot bed is anatomically formed, exchangeable and washable, plus has very good moisture absorption and dries quickly. Its sole is rubber/PU walking sole with proven street/terrain tread, wear resistant and non-slip traction; large, bevelled contact surface and superior bending comfort. It has oil and gasoline resistance and non-marking characteristics and is also heat resistant compliant with EN ISO 20347:2012.

The HAIX® Climate system uses the pumping movement, which permits air circulation with every step – warm air is released through the Micro-Dry lining at the top of the boot leg. The Two Zone Lacing System enables a separate adjustment of the boot to the foot and leg area. The boots have a quick lock and lace pocket. The lacing system has eyelets permitting smooth movement, pulling strap, manually applied rubber sidewall on the front and back of the shoe for a better durability.



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ON PARADE

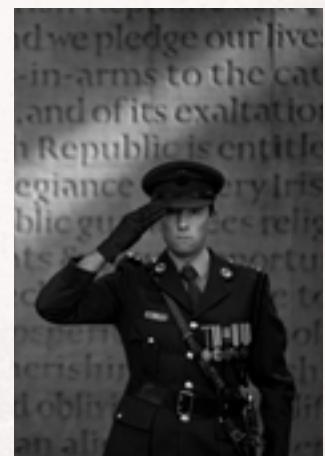
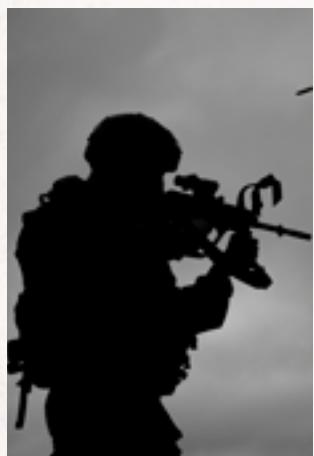
March
April 2021

Best of Army 2020

Photos by various photographers of the DF



These photographs are a small selection of what is available on our DF Flickr page and can be accessed from this link: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157717380642037>



Best of Navy 2020

Photos by various photographers of the DF



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Best of Air Corps 2020

Photos by various photographers of the DF



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Values Awards 2019

Photos by A/M Sam Gibney



Sgt Halpin Values Champion



RSM Philip Hayden (Retd) Loyalty

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic these awards which were meant to be awarded early in 2020 were held back until an appropriate time to award them. The Awards took place in December 2020. These photographs are a small selection of what is available on our DF Flickr page and can be accessed from this link: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dfmagazine/albums/72157717363446346>



FS Brian O'Keeffe Selflessness



Comdt. Michael Cullen Integrity



PO Daire Mulvaney Physical Courage



Sgt Brendan Fennell Loyalty



Cpl John Murphy Respect



Cpl Paddy Bradshaw Moral Courage



Troops standing with ammo boxes in full combat gear with weapons prepared for the P.T. session

PANDEMIC P.T.

By Sgt Michael Lennon
Photos by Sgt Michael Lennon

Improvise: "to make or fabricate out of what is conveniently at hand".

Adapt: "to become adjusted to new conditions".

"No spitting", I call back down the line during a 7km scout pace, as I hear the distinctive sound of a student clearing their throat and jettisoning the contents out into the mid-morning Atlantic air; just another thing to be hyper-vigilant about while training troops in the midst of a pandemic.

This is the second 2-3 star course I have been involved with since Covid-19 changed everything last March. The first as platoon sergeant and PTI and now the current group (two weeks in) solely as PTI.

We had managed to get through a very hectic four weeks where our main concerns, with a large group of sixty-five, were space, equipment, transport and instructors. The first lockdown meant the course was postponed indefinitely. Fast forward approximately three months to the end of June when we finally resumed training, with a much smaller group of twenty-two and things were vastly different. We may have had only a third of the students from before the lockdown but PT sessions would be a lot less straightforward.

- We were reforming as a single unit after 3 months so, for the first two weeks at least, social distancing where possible would be important.

- While before we could fit sixty-five inside the barracks gym for indoor circuits, the gym was now out of bounds for twenty-two.

- Use of gym equipment was less practical, as anything used would have to be sanitised before and afterwards. So each student would need their own individual set of equipment throughout each outdoor session.

- Time was short. Any fitness gains made in weeks 1-4 would have regressed for many and we only had a further 4 weeks until consecutive week-long MOUT and patrolling exercises.

So, how do you prep physically for the exercises, to ensure students get through them injury-free, performing efficiently and also passing the DF fitness test?

- 1. Circuit Training (Outdoors): For anatomical adaptation, muscular endurance, core & joint stability and conditioning.

Here, along with standard-timed circuits, I decided to use an Escalating Density Training (EDT) protocol that I had recently become aware of and used myself, during lockdown.

EDT had been initially developed by a strength coach, named Charles Staley, as a muscle building programme where

opposing exercises are paired into 2-3 supersets and, using a 10-12rm for each exercise, 5 reps of each are alternated continuously for 15 minutes per superset. The idea is to complete as many quality repetitions of each exercise as possible within the time-frame. You progress by completing more reps in the same time-frame in your next session, eventually increasing the weight used.

The bodyweight protocol I used, taken from Sam Portland (@coachsportland), involved doing 5 reps of each exercise in a pair too. However superset duration started at 5 minutes and 4 pairs were used. Progression was made by adding a minute per superset each session, up to 15 minutes. Once you reach 10 minutes you can reduce the supersets to 3 or even 2.

Example:

1. (a) Push-up, (b) Squat
2. (a) Sit-up, (b) Split Squat/Rear Foot Elevated Split Squat/Lunge variation
3. (a) Glute Bridge/Single Leg Glute Bridge/Glute Bridge March, (b) Dead-bug
4. (a) Lateral Squat/Lateral Lunge, (b) Bird-dog/Anti-Rotation plank.

As technique starts to falter, reps can be reduced to 4, then 3 and so on.

The list of exercises above is not exhaustive of course and if you had access to a pull-up bar, then pull-ups or chin-ups would be a perfect addition. We do have a rig behind our gym, but due to the current pandemic, it wasn't initially practical for 22 students.

We're also lucky enough to have a good supply of weighted (8-15kg) ammo-boxes that have been passed on from platoon to platoon over the last few years. I utilised these in some timed circuits, usually at a work: rest ratio of 1:1 or 2:1, (20-40 seconds on: 20-40 seconds off), for 3-5 rounds. We had sufficient boxes for each of the 22 students to have their own set for each session, sanitised before and afterwards.

Example:

- Squat Jump/Power lunges (without box).
- Zercher Squat (box cradled to chest).
- Shoulder to shoulder overhead press.
- Single arm bent over row.
- Split stance deadlift.
- Zercher split squat/Walking lunge.
- Woodchop.
- Famers/Suitcase carry.



An example of circuit training which can be adapted for outdoors and social distancing

impractical. All that is required is a surface, other than tarmac or concrete (barracks G.A.A. pitch in this case), at least 100m long and some poles or cones for students to run to.

The goal of extensive tempo is the development of the aerobic system without the presence of lactate or substantial central nervous system fatigue. It aims to improve aerobic capability at intensities that are high enough to retain speed qualities, but low enough to allow a quick recovery. (Gustin 2016)

It allows for the inclusion of manageable distances (50-400m) to ensure the qualities of running mechanics remain high and that excessive fatigue does not enter into the session. The accumulation of extensive tempo training from week to week can build significant aerobic endurance capacity and muscular endurance for specific low intensity demands, while forming a solid foundation of training upon which other elements are built. (Hansen 2014)

For the linear runs, it was a straight run at 65-70% for 100 metres (distance can be reduced depending on ability, then just walk to 100m mark and start next rep from there back).

The multi-directional run involved an initial shuttle out 5 metres, decelerate, backpedal to start, then out 10-15 metres, lateral shuffle out to one side up to 5 metres and back in, finishing with a curvilinear run through 2-3 poles for a total of 100 metres.

I would set up 5 lanes with 4-5 at each lane. The first group would go on the minute every minute, with the remaining groups going every 5 seconds thereafter until everyone was



Ammo box Split Stance Single Leg Deadlift



Zercher Split Squat

gone, for 3 sets of 8 reps initially. The work: rest ratio usually worked out at approximately 1:2.

1. Scout pacing & Loaded marches: To prepare the body for moving over distance with external load.

We completed one scout pace per week, with multiple laps around a 1km route outside the barracks perimeter, plus two marches of 10 and 16km along the Western Way.

1. Hybrid Sessions: Blending muscular endurance/strength and cardiovascular endurance into one session.

The purpose here is to challenge multiple energy pathways, local muscular endurance, willingness to fight through fatigue and capability of sustaining long stressful efforts. (U.S. Army 75th Ranger Regiment 2009)

A hybrid session could be as simple as blending a circuit with a tempo or interval session, or it could be something a bit more intense - not quite battle PT but heading in that

1. Extensive Tempo Running: Both linear and multi-directional.

I generally prefer extensive tempo running to block runs (which do have a place early on in recruit training) anyway, but this type of training was even more appropriate as running out in the local area, in a block of 22 plus instructors, was again

direction. One session we completed in week 2, following resumption of training post-lockdown, went as follows:

- M203 & Body Armour Circuit: Due to the large numbers pre-lockdown we still had enough M203s for each student to have their own personal one. The combined weight of the M203 and CBA added a resistance of approximately 14kg.

- Zercher Squat: (Weapon cradled to chest, body armour worn).

- Single arm M203 Overhead Press.

- Split Stance Bent Over Row.

- Glute Bridge: (Weapon held at arm's length above shoulders).

- M203 Frontal Raise.

- Zercher Split Squat: (As per Squat).

30-40 seconds per station

4-5 rounds

Rest 2 minutes, then 2-3 rounds of:

- 1 minute section contact drill (right peel)
- 1 minute leopard crawl
- 1 minute contact drill (left peel)
- 1 minute leopard crawl



Troops taking part in a Hybrid P.T. session in full combat gear with weapons

(Helmet, C.B.A. and battle vest worn)

Rest a further 1-2 minutes, then:

Ammo-box farmers carry full length of GAA pitch and back

Finish with 2-3 rounds of a core circuit:

- Plank x 30 seconds
- Side plank x 15-20 seconds each side
- Plank with shoulder tap & fly x 30 seconds.

Another hybrid session I ran recently, with the latest group, combined a 4 x 5 minute EDT circuit, 3 rounds of a 20:20 timed circuit - consisting of squat jumps, mountain climbers, side plank and glute bridge march, with every second station either leopard/spiderman or bear crawl, followed by some ammo-box weighted carries and finished with 5 shuttles of the G.A.A. pitch, adding an extra item of equipment each time, (helmet, battle-vest, day-sack, 1st ammo-box, 2nd ammo-box).

Now, I wonder what would battle PT via Zoom look like?

Something tougher this way comes.

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THE ROLE OF SERE IN JOINT PERSONNEL RECOVERY (JPR)

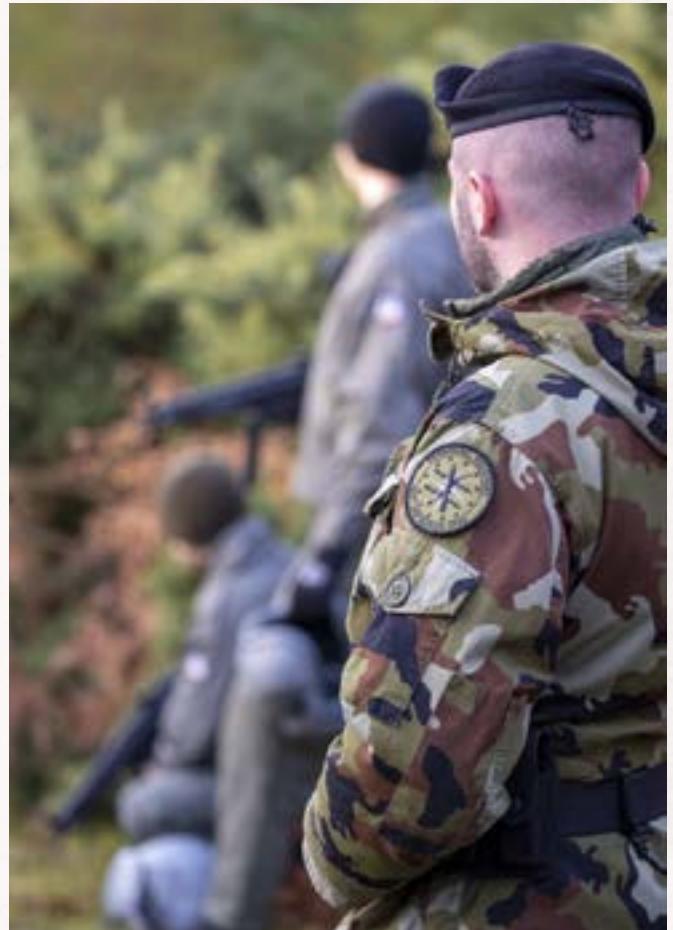
Joint personnel recovery exercise during recent sere course

By Capt Barry Jones
Photos by Capt Barry Jones and Sgt Massimo Caschera

Personnel Recovery (PR) is the process whereby personnel identified as isolated, missing or captured are then located, recovered and reintegrated. An isolating event can be any incident that causes personnel to be separated from the main group in the presence of a threat or even when the entire group finds itself in a scenario where immediate extraction from a hostile area is required. From capture by radical groups, to a vehicle with flat tyres, running out of fuel or simply taking a wrong turn, the potential scenarios span the entire spectrum of severity. However, the process of authentication, extraction and reintegration must be standardised, rehearsed and committed to muscle memory for when a distress call is received and a PR mission



Cpl Warren Gaffney operating the Air Corps Mobile PRCC (Personnel Recovery Co-ordination Cell)



SERE Instructor Cpl Warren Gaffney looks on as a SERE exercise is carried out



Isolated Personnel being recovered as per extraction procedures on a recent SERE course



SERE Instructor Sgt Massimo Caschera in EUTM Mali briefing German troops on a SERE exercise

launched.

The three main elements of Personnel Recovery are SERE, Rescue Forces and PR Staff (Planners and controllers). SERE training (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Extraction) is the foundation of any PR capability and it's during this training that troops are trained in how to survive the threat and the environmental challenges, evade and prepare for rescue. Knowing what to do and when to do it will significantly speed up the rescue and make it safer for everyone involved.

While for some people the term SERE stirs up images of going feral in the wild with a sharp knife between their teeth, the most important elements of SERE training are how to activate the Route Plan/Evasion Plan of Action to get to the Designated Area of Recovery, correctly authenticating with the rescue forces and performing the extraction procedures as taught, so your actions will be predictable, which increases the safety and speed of your own rescue. The entire purpose of SERE training is knowing how to communicate and facilitate your own rescue. The quicker you can make that happen, the less you need to know about surviving, evading and resisting interrogation.

SERE training and Personnel Recovery may not seem important when the threat level is perceived as low or it has been a while since an incident has occurred, but in medical terms it is the equivalent of CPR training. It is vital to know what to do when the scenario occurs, regardless of how infrequently it may appear to happen. Knowing where to go, how to authenticate and execute the extraction drills could



German troops in EUTM Mali conducting SERE extraction training for the JPR Capability

be the difference in being rescued in a couple of hours or the rescue taking days and committing more and more personnel and assets to the risk involved in a PR mission. For this reason, we create a Route Plan/ Evasion Plan of Action, which details all of the mission's waypoints, the crew manifest, the SERE Signal equipment they are carrying and the initial evasion intentions in the event that anyone is isolated or must move under duress. This Route Plan also details what signal equipment is to be used and when it is to be activated during the rescue, so any potential decoy signals from enemy forces can be identified and dismissed. Once the personnel are onboard, the process of reintegration begins.

On our current overseas missions it is our QRF/ SMR who are tasked with

providing the Personnel Recovery capability. For an effective PR capability, our troops must be SERE trained and rescue forces exercised, with a specific focus on authenticating and executing the extraction procedures. This is conducted in Mission Readiness Exercises prior to deployment.

In this series of articles in the coming months, on SERE and Personnel Recovery, I will explain some of the planning, training and procedures in establishing a Personnel Recovery capability

For any information on SERE and Personnel Recovery, contact the Military Training School, Air Corps College.

COL SEAN O'KEEFFE

By Tony O'Brien



Col Sean O'Keeffe Deputy Military Representative of Ireland to the EU, Brussels

In many ways Col (Retd) Sean O'Keeffe's future was pre-ordained. He lived beside Kickham Barracks in Clonmel as a youngster; his best friend's father was a Quarter Master Sergeant in the 3rd Cavalry Squadron - based in Clonmel - and his own ex-Old IRA grandfather used to drill him and his sibling, with hurleys as rifles, back in the day.

Retired in December 2020, he now says: "There was never a day's regret in my 42 years. I always went to work happy; at no point did I think joining the army was a bad idea." Although actually a Kerryman (born in Killarney), he lived most of his young life in Clonmel, Co Tipperary. It was this fortuitous home move which would ultimately lead him to a 42-year-long career in the Defence Forces.

"I joined as a Cadet and always remember the day – it was the day Munster beat the All Blacks in October 1978," he recalls, "It was straight out of school really, but I had already served two years as a 'child soldier' in the local FCA." He added: "Although I was only 15, a blind eye was turned to my age, so me and my best friend, Gerry Millea, joined the FCA together". His older brother Tom had also been in the FCA and was an Army Cadet before him.

Now, freshly retired from a final posting as Deputy Military Representative of Ireland to the European Union in Brussels, Sean looks back over a career which has seen him do several tours of duty in the Lebanon and the Middle East, work in the troubled city of Sarajevo and Argentina, as well as many different roles at home in Ireland.

After being commissioned as a 2/Lt and posted as a Cavalry Officer to the Depot Cavalry in the Curragh in 1980, he went on to study in UCG graduating with a B.Comm. Then, at the young age of 22, came his first overseas posting with UNIFIL in the Lebanon with the 54th Infantry Battalion commanded

by Lt Col Jimmy Kelly. "I suppose you could say I was dropped in at the deep end in many ways.

But it was a great learning experience; I dealt with all types of situations." However, it wasn't easy: "I spent most of my time in the turret of an armoured car, for six months in winter. People may have the impression that Lebanon is a warm, sunny place but they can have very wet and cold winters." The Israeli invasion was underway and Beirut was under siege. "Where we were in South Lebanon it was quiet but still quite tense. Our main role was to oversee what the Israelis were doing and to protect the local population. Overall, it was a relatively peaceful six months."

Just before he returned to Ireland, he was transferred to the 2nd Cavalry Squadron based in Griffith Barracks in Dublin. A posting which proved particularly memorable, as he was involved with the Presidential Motorcycle Escort: "We provided the ceremonial escort to visiting Heads of State, which included the Crown Prince of Japan, the King of Spain and President of France! It was one of the best parts of my



Col Sean O'Keeffe on his last day of service (17 Dec 2020), standing at the Cavalry Memorial Garden, Plunkett Barracks, where he started his career as a Cavalry Officer

career." Towards the end of five years there, Griffith Barracks was closed and it fell to Sean to have the honour of taking down the Tricolour. "I was the last military person there." While there, he held a number of positions including Troop Commander, Transport Officer and Adjutant.

He then moved to the Cavalry School in the Curragh, as an instructor on armoured vehicles, and later Technical Stores Officer in the workshops. "I was involved with maintenance programmes for vehicles such as the old Panhard armoured cars and then with the selection of its replacement by the Mowag armoured vehicle. It was an important job to be involved in the planning and procurement for the future."

Sean was appointed Second in Command, 1st Armoured Cavalry Squadron, in the Curragh before again being deployed to the Lebanon with the Force Mobile Reserve. Ironically,

this tour saw the withdrawal of the Israeli Army from South Lebanon and a change to the security atmosphere in the region. After that tour of duty, he was posted to the Infantry School in the Military College as a senior instructor. While there, he completed his Command and Staff course and graduated with a Masters in Leadership, Management and Defence Studies.

Then in 2003 Sean was sent overseas again to the Middle East with UNTSO (the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation) as Military Assistance to the Head of Mission (Major General Karl Dodd). He was stationed in the UN HQ in Jerusalem before transferring to Beirut as Deputy Head of the UN Liaison Office. "It was a very interesting time there", Sean says, "I was there when ex-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was assassinated by a massive bomb. However, this led to considerable political changes in Lebanon including the withdrawal of Syrian troops from the country."

Interestingly, Sean had his family – wife Fiona, daughter Aine and son Jack - with him in Beirut. "They were never really in



Mowag APC Midlife Extension and Upgrade Project Team visit to Mowag facilities in Kreuzlingen Switzerland. The photo includes DF and DoD team members, with Irish Agents IFC and Mowag Representatives. (December 2014)

any danger and I believe it was a rewarding experience for all of us, and important for the children in particular. They were in an international school and developed friendships with people from all over the world, some of which are still lasting to this day." He added: "They say travel broadens the mind and today Aine is working as a pharmacist in Vancouver, Canada, and Jack works as a biomedical engineer in London."

On return to Ireland, Sean was again posted to the Military College as an instructor and then appointed Military Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Major General Pat Nash in Defence Forces HQ in Dublin, later moving to the EU Operations Desk there. Then came something he had been seeking. "I was appointed Commanding Officer 2nd Cavalry Squadron, my old unit. It was a great honour and something that I had sought for a long time." While there Sean

was deployed to Argentina with the 2nd Armoured Brigade Argentinian Army for a three-week period.

On promotion to Lt Col, he was posted as Military Assistant to the Italian Commander of the EU Mission to Bosnia, based in Sarajevo. "It was fascinating to be at the General's side



On exercise with the Argentinian 2nd Armoured Brigade, Parana, Argentina, September 2008

for crucial meetings. It was an EU mission so different from many UN deployments and you were now dealing largely with European troops and staff." On return, Sean was appointed Operations Officer with the 2nd Brigade in Dublin and was heavily involved in coordinating security operations for the visits of Queen Elizabeth and President Obama!

A further interesting career move would come when Sean was transferred to the planning office in Defence Forces Operations. "It gave me time to look forward, to look at how the Defence Forces would be shaped for the future." After three-and-a-half years there, he was promoted to Colonel and appointed Director of Transport. Although based in McKee Barracks in Dublin, it often brought him back to the vehicle workshops in the Curragh where he had served in his early years. More significantly, this appointment provided the opportunity to make a significant impact on the transport capability of the Defence Forces, for both the armoured and non-armoured fleets.

At the end of that, Sean was looking ahead to retirement at 60. "I thought it would be nice to get one more overseas posting" and that came when he was sent to Brussels as Deputy Military Representative of Ireland to the European Union. "It was the time of Brexit and I witnessed the EU flag being taken down outside the British Embassy."

Now enjoying his retirement at home in Naas, Co Kildare, Sean can indulge his passion for music as a member of the Baldonnel Singers and Naas Musical Society. Reflecting on his career, he is happy to have lived "a life less ordinary".



CPO Patricia O'Sullivan

CPO PATRICIA O'SULLIVAN

By Tony O'Brien

Photos by CPO Patricia O'Sullivan

Patricia O'Sullivan knew from an early age that she didn't want a 9-to-5 job. But the Cork woman wasn't quite sure what she did want to do with her life. Then one day, at a careers session in her school, Patricia overheard a fellow student ask about an application for the Naval Service. It was a moment that was meant to be and which culminated in Patricia recently becoming the first female Chief Petty Officer in the Navy.

"I didn't really like school and I didn't want to work in a shop or an office", Patricia recalls, "I always longed for something different and the Naval Service suited me perfectly. It might seem an unusual choice, especially for a woman, but it was exactly right for me."

After that initial interest during the school's careers talk, she was in the Navy within months, at age 17. Twenty-two years of service later, she doesn't regret a minute. "The experiences, the excitement, the different elements of the job – you would not get that anywhere else", says Patricia adding: "It's unique, it's different and that's something I really like, as I always knew I wanted to do something different and I really felt at home in the Naval Service."

And what a career she has had. From the fun of taking part in the St Patrick's Day Parade in Savannah – Georgia - as part of a Naval Service unit representing Ireland, even working at NASA, to the more harrowing experience of rescuing migrants from the Mediterranean Sea.

"If you are looking for something different, something challenging, something away from the usual 9-to-5, then



Pictured with her brother Donal, Patricia was just home from the Mediterranean serving on board Le Samuel Beckett 2016

I would encourage young women to consider the Naval Service. As I and others have learned, women are just as capable of carrying out the duties expected of them as men."

She explained that the physical training can be tough but as someone who had always enjoyed sports, Patricia was fit and could handle it all. "So, I actually enjoyed the training." All along the career line, she continued to learn and enjoy all the experiences a life in the Naval Service brought.

At an early stage, she was selected for a special training programme: a kind of apprenticeship project involving the then national training body FAS. Part of this involved going to America for three months, which included time in college, then on work experience in utility companies. This included a visit to NASA where Patricia and her colleagues took part in a design and build project. In this case designing and building

a weather balloon for NASA. "It was a fantastic experience for a young woman and again, something that would not have happened in any other job".

On another mission, Patricia was part of a crew that sailed to America as part of a promotional project for Ireland. "We ended up in Savannah and took part in the St Patrick's Day Parade – the second biggest in the United States – and again a fantastic experience, we were treated so well, plus it was great to be representing Ireland."

At sea, Patricia has served on all the Naval Service vessels, but one that particularly stands out in her mind is the LÉ Samuel Beckett. She was involved in the European Union humanitarian rescue of migrants in the Mediterranean which featured in the much-praised TV documentary of the mission. "That was a different experience, harrowing at times when you saw the condition these people were in. But it was fulfilling and rewarding. You really felt you were doing good for people, that you were making a difference."

As for being a woman in a predominately male environment – particularly when at sea – that has not presented any issues for Patricia. "Throughout my career I have often been the only female in particular situations but I have never experienced discrimination. You are part of a team and that's it. Sure there can be banter, especially when you are at sea, but once you realise it's just banter – and give as good as you get – it is not a problem!"

At sea, she says, "you are basically living with 40 other people, 24-7. There are all sorts of people from all over the country, but it becomes like a family when you are onboard and everyone looks out for each other."

As Chief Petty Officer Electrical Artificer, Patricia has a lot of



Patricia being presented with the EUFOR NAV medal OP Pontus by Flag Officer Naval Service 2016

responsibility. "If something breaks down and you are over 200 miles off the coast it is up to you to sort it out. You could be called at three in the morning in the middle of a storm and told a piece of vital equipment has gone down. You need to be quick on your feet and make sure it gets fixed."

Reflecting on life in the Navy, she says: "Of course there are ups and downs, just like any job really, but if you go in with the right attitude you will be alright. I take the view that when one door closes another invariably opens." And she is full of praise



Patricia poses for a picture on the day of her NCO's Course passing out parade in 2006

for the opportunities that the Naval Service has offered her. "You are given the opportunity to develop and progress, to take part in specialised courses and extra training. If you apply yourself and work hard, you can progress in the Naval Service just as well as our male colleagues."

She goes on: "I have always been keen to learn. I always wanted to take the next step. If I achieved one thing then I wanted to know what's next. That's why I applied for so many different courses." At the time of speaking, Patricia had just finished a course in Mental First Aid. "I learned how to spot the early signs that people might have a problem and then to know how to offer help. It was a very valuable lesson and it's great that the Navy is not only aware of

mental health issues people might have, but have actually put systems in place to help."

She added: "The Naval Service, in general, does offer a lot of help and advice. Don't get me wrong, it can be difficult too, especially if you have a family and are away at sea for long periods." While she would like to see more women join the Navy, she accepts that it can be hard on families and that might be one reason why it is hard to retain women in the service.

At present Patricia is land-based at HQ in Haulbowline, where she is involved in planning and maintenance. "We would run maintenance management for the ships." Her other role is in the training college working with apprentices. "I'm really enjoying it; it's very rewarding being involved with younger people and passing on my years of experience. New systems are coming into the Naval Service all the time and we have to keep up with them."

When not working, Patricia lives in Ballydehob in West Cork with her wife Elaine and baby son Tadgh. Again, she found easy acceptance of her personal life: "I was well settled and had built a good reputation, so people respected me for that before I came out. But I have never had a problem and the Naval Service certainly had no issues. If anything, people were really kind."



20mm Rheinmetall Training NSV DPM

NAVAL SERVICE VARIANT DPM

By LtCdr Cian Ó Mearáin & SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra
Photos by SCPO/ERA Ruairí de Barra

The Naval Service will celebrate its 75th Anniversary on the 1st of September this year. It's a milestone birthday, which will be celebrated with family, friends, and the general public. Another significant milestone will take place in March. The Naval Service Variant DPM- (Disruptive Pattern Material) (NSV DPM) will enter service. This project has been nearly ten years in the making. The origins of this programme are based in a desire to rationalise a sailor's kit bag to just two uniforms, a ceremonial one and one for everything else, because up to now there were four different uniforms to pack for sea. Which

isn't just a pain to carry on and off the ship, it takes up room in cabins where space is at a premium, and for the Naval Service it will mean the uniform quality can be brought up to modern standards.

A foot in the past, with eyes on the future.

As the days of sail gave way to the days of steam, and in turn to the internal combustion engine, as much as things changed, many things stayed the same. The NS dress uniform is typically only on view during ceremonial parades these days, yet it is composed of some items of kit, which would have been as familiar to a gunner on a 18th century ship of the line, as it is to today's hi-tech mariners. The silk, the blue jean collar, the lanyard, the gaiter, and the bell



Able Mechanician Conducting Rounds



Able Seaman Karen Casey



Crew of LÉ James Joyce during the sea trials

bottomed trouser, were items of practical use, which were part of the working dress of the fighting sailor¹. Today, these items remain as an aspect of tradition, this form of dress has not been the practical daily working wear of any sailor for many decades. All branches of the military have their own culture and language, the Naval Service more than most. It operates in a harsh environment, in what is essentially a floating self-contained town, and it carries everything with it that it needs to sustain maritime defence and security operations in Europe's roughest seas. Uniforms form part of this unique service culture, yet it is more important that the everyday operational uniform be designed to meet the needs of today.

What's in the sea-bag?

The new NSV DPM will consist of a trouser, shirt and smock. For members of the NS this will replace both the current General Duty Rig (GDR) and the Woodland Green Operational DPM, as well as eliminating for most personnel the wearing of Service Dress No.3, colloquially known as "Office Rig". The roll out was delayed slightly due to the pandemic interrupting the supply of the subdued rank markings, and it will take several weeks as social distancing, and other health and safety measures are employed during sizing and issuing. When all personnel have their full initial issue, a changeover date will be ordered by FOCNS, and a new era will begin. The new uniform has many innovative features, and its prototypes were trialled onboard sea going units. The end users' feedback was assessed, and some minor adjustments made. The black beret, and the traditional dark navy woollen jumper shall remain. The jumper is a most practical and useful item of clothing. As part of the layering system, when worn over the shirt,

¹ Keep an eye out for a future article on the NS dress uniform, its unique features and its origins coming soon in An Cosantóir.



Engine Control Room

The Naval Service has always sought a fabric that did not melt when exposed to flame or heat as part of the core of its operational uniform. This is sometimes erroneously described as being 'fire retardant'. GDR, for its many steps forward in garment technology had one inherent flaw, it has 'fire retardant' chemicals applied to its threads. These would only last for a set number of washes, if laundered in unchlorinated water at cool temperatures. Given that fresh water onboard a ship is often mildly chlorinated for safe consumption purposes, and with GDR often being washed at high temperatures to remove the unavoidable oils and greases, this leads over time to a reduction in the fire retardancy of the materials. This does not make GDR in any way unsafe; it just returns it to a more regular condition which is less than optimal. This is one of the key reasons for making a leap forward with the new NSV DPM, made from inherently 'no melt' and self-extinguishing materials. Meaning no matter what you do to it, how or how often you wash it, it will, if ever exposed to direct flame or extreme heat, not melt.

Small changes, big impacts.

One of the first items, which everyone will notice is that the shirt pockets have been removed. The primary reason for this is in fact a DF policy to make clothing gender neutral, but it brings operational advantages as eliminating the chest pocket makes the shirt suitable for use with body armour. It is a requirement during operations for the standing sea reaction force (SSRF), and the bridge watch to be able to don helmets and body armour as quickly as possible to react to any threat. Once that pipe² or alarm sounds, anything which slows this reaction time down, or which could cause injury

² Pipe refers to the practice of official ships announcements being preceded by a note sounded on a bosun's call over the intercom before the information is transmitted. It catches the notice of all who hear it, and they automatically pay attention as something important is about to be said. In the days before intercoms, these pipes were actual commands for the sailors to carry out specific duties or actions.



First Trial Sample worn by D_ORD Staff

to the wearer, from an impact on an item beneath the body armour should be designed out as far as is practicable. Similarly, in response to the sounding of the ship's fire alarm, designated people are moving. They act as if each alarm is the 'one', and they maintain their readiness through constant practice. Two of those responding to the initial alarm will proceed directly to locations where self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) sets are on stand-by, which they don and proceed to the indicated scene. These are the attack BA, and the primary part of their protection is the clothing they are wearing. While GDR provides reasonably adequate protection against the risk of flash and heat, the new NS VPDM will be even better. Should the attack BA or any other member of the standing sea emergency party (SSEP) meet fire and flame in the darkness below, they'll be protected from the potentially terrible consequences of melting clothing onto skin. These sailors are the ships first line of defence; they might put out a minor fire, or they just might be able to slow it down long enough to give their shipmates a fighting chance to assemble as damage control and firefighting parties. These have seven minutes before they will be ready to move. The front line must hold fast, and this new uniform will reinforce their ability to do so.

Policy in action.

A recruiting pitch in an all-girls school was met with this simple question from a potential recruit; "Would we have to wear boys' clothes?". This is a powerful vignette that highlights a connection that needs to be made between policy, and action to achieve the Defence Forces commitment to improved female participation in the services through improved recruitment and retention. With GDR the answer was yes, but this need not have been the case. The tension here is the desire for simplified logistics supply chains, especially in a small Naval Service, which does introduce a desire for a single uniform, but first it must fit well on every



NS Subdued Rank Markings

potential sailor. Accepting the need for a uniform system that fits all wearers was not hard; meeting that need took a lot of consideration and re-imagining of the status quo. The Woodland Green Operational DPM clothing was introduced at a time when there were very few women in the operational units trialling the potential new uniforms. Changes over the decades since have been the basis of discussion, and small-scale individual trials. There had been a female cut shirt in the Operational DPM uniform but currently the shirt is considered unisex. When trialled formally by the Naval Service this shirt was found to be too loose on all female trial participants, and a statistically significant number of the males. Rather than identifying a shirt as male or female pattern the trial data drove a solution that arrived at a number of fits. This was achieved on a gender-neutral basis where there are slim and regular shirts, all with vents at the hips, rather than male/female shirts. Now the wearer can select the shirt that best fits at the point of initial issue, when they are being sized. There is only a single design of trouser which has adjustable leg and waist length. The only gender specific garments are the maternity shirt, undershirt, and trouser.

A view below decks.

The working environment of a modern naval warship, bristling with powerful armaments and 21st century technology, is complex. Out here, far from sight, over the horizon, you must be ready at all times to counter whatever threat the ocean,



NSV DPM Smock Front CW Rank



NSV DPM Smock



NSV DPM Trouser Detail



Woodland DPM vs NSV DPM

or operations may throw at you. So, while the science and policy behind the provision of the NSV DPM is important, the daily practicalities of the new operational dress will be at the forefront of the sailor's mind. The average Able Rating³ will be awake and in uniform for almost eighteen hours a day while at sea. For most of these waking hours, the majority

of the ship's company are involved in some form of work. Maintenance doesn't start and stop. It just is. This is an immutable fact of a life at sea. The NSV DPM will make the physical aspects of that work more comfortable. It will be harder wearing, more breathable, and safer. It will not remove the need for personal protective equipment such as overalls for those extraordinarily dirty jobs, such as painting and greasing, which are needed to keep each vessel shipshape. While NSV DPM will be slightly more forgiving of the occasional mishap, all sailors know another fact only too well, woe betide the sailor who would present with slovenly dress on morning divisions, or on handover of a watch should the Coxn's eye fall upon them.

A final and universal fact of military service is that personnel bind together in the shared identity of their profession and their service. These bonds forged through shared hardships and experiences, last a lifetime. We sailors remember that we are only caretakers of a proud tradition of service which has been seventy-five years in the making. We work hard to instil that pride in every recruit who comes to Haulbowline. We respect the enormous privilege granted to us in becoming part of this heritage through our service to the state. So, within this new clothing is new technology and new features, which brings us in line with the operational uniforms of the other two branches of the services. Yet it is still a reaffirmation of our unique identity as the principal seagoing agency of the state, as the maritime component of the Óglaigh na hÉireann.



Petty Officer Patrick Reidy and Able Seaman Karen Casey

³ Able Rating: All ratings are sailors, but not all sailors are seamen. The use of the word Able is to designate a sailor who is fully qualified in their specialist role. The term comes from Able Bodied or fully fit for duties. Rating is a term used to describe all enlisted sailors who are rated or assigned a specialisation. These ratings include seaman gunners, communications operatives, logistical operatives, mechanicians, artificers etc.



O.N.E. 70TH ANNIVERSARY



Ollie O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer of O.N.E.

By Tony O'Brien

Óglaigh Náisiúnta na hÉireann (Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel-O.N.E.) is a veteran's organisation, a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee and an approved housing body for veterans of the Irish Defence Forces.

O.N.E. was established in 1951 and its primary objective is



Brig Gen (rtd) Jerry Enright lays a wreath at Niemba 50th Anniversary Commemoration in 2010



Brú na bhFiann, homeless initiative building and home to O.N.E Headquarters located in Smithfield, Dublin

to support the needs of Irish veterans by the provision of accommodation to homeless veterans in its hostels. Advice and support is offered through its nationwide network of Branches and Veterans' Support Centres. "When people think of Veterans they may think of old men, but that couldn't be further from the truth", states Ollie O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer of O.N.E.. He adds: "In reality, we can have veterans of all ages, both men and women, veterans with differing sexual orientation and veterans from various ethnic backgrounds. We are a diverse and inclusive organisation and most definitely not an old man's group."

Ollie is keen to emphasise the point because ONE welcomes all veterans. He is the Chief Executive of an organisation with a very impressive record of support and representation for ex-Defence Forces personnel and their interests and daily needs. He continued: "To further build on and progress the overall goals and objectives of O.N.E., it is important to increase the diversity of our membership. Greater participation in the organisation is key to rounding out the invaluable services offered by O.N.E.."

O.N.E.'s purpose and objectives, he says, can be summed up in four words:

- **Support**
- **Comradeship**
- **Advocacy**
- **Remembrance**

Founded in Dublin's Mansion House on 10th March 1951, O.N.E. is celebrating a remarkable 70th anniversary. Over the decades in between, it has gone from strength to strength, until today it stands as one of the most active support groups in the country. With 1,400 members stretched across 37 branches and 15 veteran support centres, O.N.E. also has three hostels offering accommodation (meals and lodging) in 49 single rooms to veterans - in Dublin, Letterkenny and Athlone - who would otherwise be homeless. There are two further hostels planned for Cobh and Cork city.

Ollie O'Connor, himself a former Sergeant with 23 years' service, details the **Support** that the organisation provides. "We provide support through accommodation for homeless (or just about to be homeless) veterans in our hostels and other advice and support through the Branches and Veteran Support Centres."

Then there is **Comradeship**. "This is to develop a spirit of comradeship amongst veterans and between veterans and serving personnel", Ollie explains, adding: "We see ourselves as part of the Defence Forces family."

As for **Advocacy**, he says: "We meet quarterly with the



O.N.E. member Tom James being presented with 2016 medal in honour of O.N.E.'s service to the state by at the time Minister with responsibility for Defence TD Paul Kehoe, also in the picture is COS Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM and previous GOC DFTC Brigadier General Joe Mulligan

Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. We meet at least annually with the Minister for Defence, the Secretary General Department of Defence, the Chief of Staff and others. We meet with ministers from other relevant departments, opposition spokespersons, other TDs, local authorities, Mayors, etc - anyone that can help us."

Then there is **Remembrance**. "We take part in national and local remembrance **commemorations**. Our major event is the Niemba Ambush Commemoration which takes place in November every year. The ambush happened on 08 November 1960, with the first remembrance ceremony taking place in 1961 and we have been involved every year."

Although O.N.E. was always busy, the arrival of the COVID virus has seen activity increase. "At the moment COVID is presenting our members with challenges, as branches cannot meet so it put more work on us at organisational level to make sure we keep in touch with members," explains Ollie.

A big issue for O.N.E. and made more so by COVID, is mental health. "Families are not able to meet because of the restrictions, so while Facebook and Zoom are ok for chats etc, there is no hugging, no human touch and people are missing that, they are getting lonely."

Luckily, just before the virus arrived on our shores, O.N.E.



Custume House, Athlone

had trained up 63 Mental Health First Aiders. "This was a very important thing for us and we have also developed a Veteran's Welfare Pathway." There is a Welfare Officer in each branch who are there to help members with issues and a number of mental health clinicians around the country have offered their services to O.N.E. as have GPs. "It means we are better equipped to help members in these very difficult times, not just as a result of what COVID is doing to people, but other situations that can arise as well."

On a very practical level, O.N.E. operates three hostels which are open 24-7 providing 49 badly needed single rooms every night. They are Brú na Bhláinn in Smithfield in Dublin with 35 bedrooms; Beechwood House in Letterkenny Co Donegal with 7 bedrooms and Custume House Athlone Co Westmeath with a further 7 bedrooms. They are always kept busy with Custume House usually full, Brú na Bhláinn generally at 80 per cent occupancy and Beechwood House at a similar level. On top of those three busy hostels, a new hostel with five beds is being built for O.N.E. in Cobh at the moment and another with six beds is being planned in Cork City leading to the availability of 60 single bedrooms nationwide for homeless veterans.



Ollie O'Connor at a Fuchsia Appeal launch

How do veterans end up homeless? "There can be different reasons, everyone has their own story. But a significant reason we have found is the break-up of relationships. Another is that men and women coming from an institution like the Defence Forces sometimes find it difficult to adjust to civilian life. Some don't handle it well." according to Ollie.

Other welfare issues which can arise are: learning how our social welfare system works. "People come out of the Defence Forces and are reluctant to seek help. They've never had to worry about claiming unemployment or job-seekers benefits or worrying about applying for pensions etc. They relate better with fellow veterans and any assistance required can be provided in that manner" Ollie O'Connor adds: "We are there to support our members with whatever they need in the same way as Citizens Advice Bureaus or the Men's / Women's Shed movement."

O.N.E. is working to develop a pathway for veterans who need ongoing care. A Memorandum of Understanding has been reached with the Royal Hospital Donnybrook and similar arrangements are being developed with other hospitals.

Looking to the future, Ollie says a big issue is to continue to reinvigorate the organisation. "We are further developing an organisation that veterans want to join. It remains grounded in the ideals of its founders – support and comradeship – but must address those in the context of the needs of veterans in the 21st Century."

However, just like so many other groups, funding is always a challenge. "Our funding comes from many sources including state funding, membership, collections and donations. While we can predict our spending with reasonable accuracy, it remains very difficult to forecast income and that is an enduring challenge for many charities." Attracting corporate support from companies and businesses is also a key objective. To help with this, a Marketing Committee has been established to identify sustainable revenue streams for the coming years."

But whatever happens either with COVID or fund-raising, O.N.E. will always be there to support veterans in need.

If you would like to donate to O.N.E. you can do so by visiting either of these websites:

<https://www.one-veterans.org/one-connect-donate/>

<https://sleepingflags.ie>

WALKING INTO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

By Sgt Thomas Devereux DFPES, DFTC

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

The world has not encountered a pandemic (COVID-19) like this since the Spanish Flu of 1918. Each person is doing their utmost to beat it, while also trying their very best to get things back to normal so people can travel, return to school, sport and much more. Unfortunately, this pandemic is having a big impact on families and loved ones. People who are recovering from this virus are experiencing extended recovery periods, which are having a major impact on their day-to-day lives.

I have put something together for those people who are recovering from COVID-19 to help them return to a healthy lifestyle. What we know so far and what we have read in the HSE guidelines, there's clear direction "we know people who are recovering from COVID-19 feel tired, weak and suffer from shortness of breath". If this happens while carrying out physical fitness you need to slow things down and set small goals for yourself.

Getting your body back to its normal healthy lifestyle will take time; it could take anything from 5 to 8 weeks. Unlike anything we have witnessed before people must change the basic ways we interact with one another, but we can still perform physical fitness in a controlled manner and being active can help you to recover quicker.

PHYSICAL PROBLEMS AFTER COVID-19

Research has shown the problems you might experience while recovering from COVID-19. They are as follows:

- Muscle weakness and joint stiffness
- Extreme tiredness, fatigue and lack of energy
- Reduced mobility
- Unstable physical fitness
- Poor smell and taste
- Difficulties swallowing
- Breathlessness
- Phlegm build-up
- Stomach concerned

As we all know, COVID-19 would have a huge impact on your physical activity, nonetheless it would also play a crucial part on your 'mental and emotional side' like your sleep pattern or a change in your mood/ depression or any anxiety symptoms.

Regardless, your aim for the next few weeks is to start slowly and gradually increase your training so you can manage it. When carrying out training programme, remember regular exercise is good for you, but always keep in mind that it will take time to get back to normal activities.



You should:

- Start slowly and introduce new activities gradually.
- Set yourself realistic targets each week.
- Rest when you feel tired.

WALKING

As said time and time again, walking is undoubtedly the best way for you to regain your fitness normal level. The thing with walking is, you set yourself a small realistic goal, for example: you might not feel the best and on that particular day you feel very weak. Regardless you can still complete your goal within the comfort of your own home. Walk up the stairs, walk from room to room, walk out to the back garden and when your health recovers, try to increase the duration of the walk.

"Live your truth. Express your love. Share your enthusiasm. Take action towards your dreams. Walk your talk. Dance and sing to your music. Embrace your blessings. Make today worth remembering".

Steve Maraboli, *Unapologetically You: Reflections on Life and the Human Experience*.

How much time to give for walking when recovering

With a structured plan in place, you should be able to follow your pathway to a healthy recovery. Start small and work your way up, have a clear understanding of your goals each day and do your very best to achieve them. Plan your walking areas, for example, have a rest area if you're feeling tired. Walk in public view but maintain your distance, inform someone where you're going and what your route is and lastly, if someone within your family wants to tag along with you, that's fine for safety & support.

- Week 1: 5 to 10 minutes
- Week 2: 10 to 15 minutes
- Week 3: 15 to 20 minutes
- Week 4: 20 to 25 minutes
- Week 5: 25 to 30 minutes

After 6 weeks, you should aim to be walking at least 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. This walking should be reasonably fast so that you are slightly out of breath, though you should still be able to talk and walk. Throughout your

programme, you should be monitoring your breathing: you should be out of breath during exercise, but still able to manage a conversation with someone.

I would recommend starting a log journal, where you record everything on your path to recovery. This will also aid you if you are not performing on some days and it repeats itself the following week, you can then reduce your programme. Maybe speak to a health professional too, if you don't structure your plan it will fall apart.

FUNDAMENTAL MOVEMENTS

Fundamental movement skills categories include: Balance skills - movements where the body remains in place, but moves around its horizontal and vertical axes. Locomotor skills - such as running, jumping, hopping and galloping. Ball skills - such as catching, throwing, kicking, underarm roll and striking. www.health.act.gov.au › fundamental

Your body is after encountering a great ordeal and it is now repairing itself so you can return to normal activities with your family & friends. It's so important that we start developing the basic movement skills, the anatomy of the human body allows us to move our body differently and this is taught at a young age. So let's take a quick look at the basic movements and if you implement them into your daily workout, this will add strength and better range of motion (ROM) to your overall performance.

Locomotor (Movement) Skills

Walking, Running, Jumping height/distance, Skipping, Hopping, Leaping, Sidesteps, Swinging, Climbing, Crawling, Dodging, Galloping

Example of locomotor movement skill: During a run, the feet are both in the air at the same time, the feet alternate moving forward during the skill.

Body Control (Stability) Skills

Balancing on one foot (change foot), Climbing, Rolling, Walking a straight line, Twisting, Turning, Rotating, Bending, Landing, Stopping, Stretching

Example of body control stability skills: Stability skills are movements where the body remains in place but moves around its horizontal and vertical axis.

With locomotor and stability skills implemented into your daily workout, your functional movement will improve. All of the above skills can be carried out in the comfort of your own home. If you're feeling weak or fatigue at any point stop, and rest. Also support your weight by holding onto the wall or using a kitchen chair as you accomplish the exercises. Being active and avoiding long periods of bed-rest is important, it can help you to recover more quickly and improve your physical and mental wellbeing.

COVID-19 symptoms can sometimes persist for months. Most people will make a full recovery in days/ weeks, nonetheless not all are so lucky and they will continue to experience symptoms well after their initial recovery. The virus can damage the lungs, heart and brain, which increases the risk of long-term health problems. So when carrying out any physical training, take your time and don't rush into it, start small and it will eventually lead to bigger things. Having structure in your programme can help you move along nicely and with ease. If you're not up for training on that particular day then use it as a rest day. The main thing is you're on

the correct path to recovery and implementing the basic exercises into your routine will benefit you.

MAIN BODY ORGANS (LUNGS)

COVID-19 has a tremendous impact on your lungs; research has shown once the lung is damaged, it can cause fluid leaking from small blood vessels within the lungs. The fluid collects in the lung's "air sacs" or "alveoli" this makes it more difficult for the lungs to transfer oxygen from the air to the blood.

Exercise to improve adequately lung capacity "breathing exercise":

- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Simple deep breathing
- «Counting» your breaths
- Watching your posture
- Staying hydrated
- Staying active

The lungs, as we all know, play an important role in keeping us strong and in good health. It's not until we experience breathing problems that we start taking notice. The truth is like the rest of our body, our lungs need looking after daily. By carrying out some basic breathing exercise, you can strengthen your lungs and make them healthier. Without sufficient oxygen, people are more prone to health problems, such as heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and respiratory illnesses.

You need to challenge your lung's daily day-to-day activity. This helps you use your lungs to their full capacity; more intense activity is needed during the day/ week to help counteract the build-up of toxins and tar in the lungs, caused by environmental pollutants, allergens, dust and cigarette smoke. You need to help your lungs cleanse themselves.

Why is physical activity important during Covid-19?

During the COVID pandemic, so many of us are restricted in our movements. However, people of all ages and abilities need to be as active as possible. Even a short break from sitting, by doing 3-5 minutes of physical movement such as walking or stretching, will help ease muscle strain, relieve mental tension and improve blood circulation and muscle activity. Regular physical activity can also help to give routine to your day, plus be a way of staying in contact with family and friends.

This pandemic is after turning the world upside down, but each person has a part to play. During this difficult time it's very important to maintain high standards in cleaning/ hygiene and most importantly, your physical and mental health. This will not only benefit you, it will also help you fight back COVID.

Thank you all for giving up your time to read this; they're just my thoughts on COVID-19 and the path to recovery. I do believe implementing the stability skills into your daily workout will benefit you and soon you'll be "walking into a healthy lifestyle" - but only you can make this happen. I hope it helps and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

Continued next month in Part 2 of Walking into a Healthy Lifestyle

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE



No.3 Ops Wing underling training

By Lt Austin Doyle

Photos by DF Flickr

Internal Communications Update is created by the Defence Forces Internal Communications Team. Our aim is to deliver accurate and timely information of interest to our members in order to increase awareness on current and future developments across the organisation.

Our segment in the An Cosantóir along with our online member's area on military.ie will allow information of interest to be distributed across the DF.

The member's area of military.ie is to enable our personnel to access information while off-site.

General Staff Update

The General Staff Convened on the 26th of January to review a range or updates and provide clarity for the Defence Forces General Framework for Living with COVID-19 related restrictions.

The force protection of all personnel remains the priority of the General Staff. Assistant Chief Of Staff Brigadier General Adrian Ó Murchú, as covered in previous An Cosantóir publications has reiterated the importance of minimising staff attendance in shared workspace, with staff operating in pods where practical.



160 Rec PI Bn Commanders Challenge group photo

J7 (Training and Education Branch) the following course changes are to be highlighted

36th Senior NCO Course which will be ran from the NCO Training Wing, Military College, DFTC is postponed until 26 April 2021. The postponement was due to the 13th All Arms Standard Course being postponed by two weeks. For any students or subs due to be on the course please look at the NCO Training Wings IKON page for the Joining Instructions and more information about the course.

Sniper Instructor Course and Live Fire Tactical Training Course are deferred until later in the year – please check with your orderly room for the new dates.

Mortar Instructor Course (Q3) and DF Recce Comp and Concentration (Q2) are cancelled. DF Small Arms Comp is for review (Q4)

As of 28 Feb 21, 734 members of the Defence Forces have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. 143 DF personnel have received the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine. All personnel are either members of the CMU or are other «COVID Facing» personnel involved in providing support to the HSE.

The COVID Risk Awareness Brief has been updated – This brief will be delivered to all DF personnel as soon as possible. The brief includes an update on the Vaccine Roll Out, Mental Health and Well-Being.

All Formations and Branches are reminded of the importance of ensuring that the current Health and Safety guidelines, as issued by Government and Defence Forces are implemented and adhered to by all pers.

Planning and risk assessment for the commissioning of the 96th Cadet Class on the 25th of March are ongoing.

Release orders for March's issue of PPE to Brigades and Services will be sent to OCES on 19 FEB 21 and a six month supply of PPE will also be release on that date to the NSRC for the 63rd Inf Gp deploying to UNDOF.

Troops deploying to missions where they have access to

DF medical personnel will continue to receive the Battlefield Aid module on the Overseas Qualification Course. Troops traveling on all small missions will continue to receive the Medical First Responder course.

Content on the member's area of Military.ie

The Member's Area of Military.ie has been updated with the below information and will be the where the most up to date Internal Communication information will be published.



PPE resupply Flight to UNIFIL

The letter of instruction for the issue of HIAX Scout Brown Boot has been issued. All personnel who are due an issue will do so by the end of March 2021. By the end of April 2021 the HIAX SBB will be available on either Fair-Wear and Tear (FWT) or Repayment (RP) for all personnel.

Update to Admin Instruction A9 – Dress and Medals. Details about the HIAX Scout Brown Boot, the addition of Sniper Marksman Badge and ARW red tab badge have been updated to the Admin Instruction. To read the full document look at the regulations site on IKON or request the information through your orderly office.

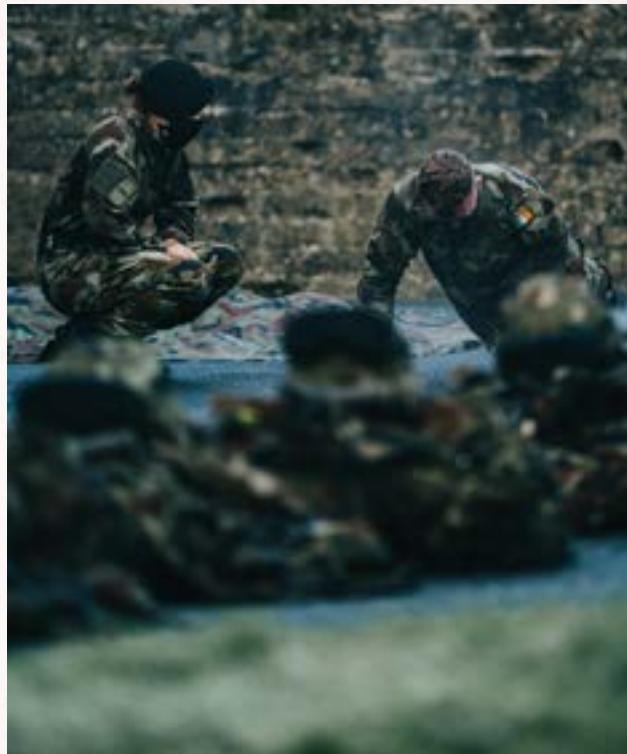
A letter from the Chair of the Commission on the Defence Forces Aidan O'Driscoll, is posted on the member's area of military.ie. It provides context to the Commission, how the Commission was formed, Terms of reference and the members of the Commission.

The Member's Area has been updated with the rotation dates and leading units for UNDOF, UNIFIL and EUTM Mali for the remainder of 2021 and 2022. There is also information about our smaller missions and what ranks can go on each mission. For more details on the qualifying criteria, rotation dates and application for each position on the smaller missions go through your chain of command.

With the cold spell in February the "Be Winter Ready" campaign was pushed out again. Details can be found on www.winterready.ie and @emergencyIE on Twitter.

Our Public Service Innovation Fund opened up in February where units can get grants for their innovative ideas.

The Internal Communications update will be added to the member's area each Tuesday for the week before. This



160 Rec PI Bn Commanders Challenge

will include the Weekly JTF stats which highlights the DF contribution to the fight against COVID-19 and any updates to the member's area.

The 2021 Trainee Technician Scheme is now open for applications for serving members of the Defence Forces. Personnel who wish to apply should email the Recruitment and Competition Section at recruitment@defenceforces.ie before 22 March 2021. The TTS is a great opportunity for serving soldiers to further their careers and gain qualifications such as Combat Engineers and Tradesmen (Electricians, Plumbers, CPF's and AirCon Techs) The handbook for the competition will be on the member's area as soon as it is available, keep an eye on DF Engineer Social Media (@DF_Engineers on Twitter) and the member's area for when it launches.

White Paper on Defence Implementation Programme report which provides an update on the delivery of the White Paper and describes the future progression of the implementation roadmap.

To view more information on all the above please go to The Member's Area of Military.ie

If there is Defence Forces Internal Messages you wish to have published here or on Military.ie please email feedback@defenceforces.ie and/or austin.doyle@defenceforces.ie



A group photo of the 2nd Potential Officers course back in 1970

EARNING IT THE HARD WAY

By Capt Gerry Duff

Photos by Capt Gerry Duff

27 Inf Bn and 10th Potential Officers Class

“Experience is the teacher of all things.”

– Julius Caesar (100-44 BC)

Historical Background: For over 200 years, only men from nobility were selected to receive commissions. During the 17th and 18th Centuries, commissions could be purchased in European armies by the nobility and higher classes.

Officers have traditionally received their commissions after a period of instruction in various military training institutions, such as United States Military Academy West Point (since 1802), Royal Military Academy Woolwich and Sandhurst (since 1741), École Spéciale Militaire de Saint-Cyr (since 1802) and Scoil na Daltaí (since 1928).

The first mention of NCOs receiving commissions was during the US Civil War (1861-1865). During that time, it was commonplace in the Confederate Army, who were all volunteers, to elect their own Captains and Lieutenants from within their own ranks. This practice also occurred in a limited way within the Union Army. Professional soldiers disapproved of this practice, as electing officers from within units clashed with the ethos of an army being apolitical. The practice of electing officers was phased-out by 1863.

During World War 1, the British Army commissioned over 250,000 men from middle and lower classes as ‘Temporary Gentlemen’. The plan was that these officers would revert to their previous employment and social standing after the war ended.

In more recent times, the practice of commissioning NCOs occurred during World War 2, the Korean War and the

Vietnam War. The main reason for awarding these ‘Battlefield’ commissions was due to the high number of officer casualties suffered in these conflicts. Highly experienced Sergeants were promoted to 2/Lt and usually had to leave their platoon to take up command in another battalion. Sgts such as Audie Murphy was one such NCO who became the most decorated soldier in the US Army during World War 2.

There are many terms used throughout the world that refer to Commissioned Officers who were prior-enlisted such as Brevets (France), Charackters (Germany), Rankers (Royal Navy), Late Entry Officers (British Army), Mustangs (US and Canadian Army), Commissioned From Ranks (CFR) (Irish NS) and Prior-Enlisted (DF).

Modern times: The practice of commissioning prior-enlisted personnel continued after the conflicts of 1939-1975 and continues to this day. Thankfully, the days when officers were required to come from certain social background and standing are long gone. Senior NCOs of many armed forces are offered a commission after they have served



The 10th POC marching onto the grounds of Dublin Castle where their Commissioning took place



The course halts under the clock tower of Dublin Castle



Members of 10th POC taking the Oath (Capt Gerry Duff seen on the far left)

as a Regimental Sergeant Major for several years. These officers then fill the appointments of staff/company officers throughout all regiments.

Defence Forces: The first Potential Officers Class were commissioned in 1964. These officers 'paved the way' for the nine subsequent classes that followed. In December 2020, the 2nd POC celebrated the 50th Anniversary of their commissioning in 1970. I have had the privilege to serve with two members of that class in my formative years as a member of Oglaithe na hÉireann: Comdt Charles Martin and Lt Col Pat Coughlan. Lt Col Coughlan was the first commissioned officer to come through the PO system to reach the rank of Lt Col.

The Course: Since 1964, a total of 226 NCOs have completed the Potential Officers Course. The course is highly challenging and rewarding. The 11-month course has been conducted in various schools of the Military College throughout the years. The 11 POC will be the third course to be conducted in the Cadet School. There has always been a good mix of students from all NCO ranks, representing all services, Corps and Brigades. The ethos of the course is 'Big Boys'/Girls' Rules'. NCOs are trusted to admin themselves, using the experience and qualifications from within the class to instruct each other on the various sub-courses, such as C-IED Instructor, Barrack Security, Adjutant, Logs Officer, Range Management and Tactics to name a few. Students are immersed in academic studies from NUI Maynooth and Military Writing throughout the course also.

The 10 POC had the opportunity to conduct training exercises with the 94th Cadet Class such as Platoon Field Assessment and Operations Other Than War (OOTW). These exercises were highly enjoyable, even though the older students



After the Commissioning ceremony members of the 10th POC embrace each other in congratulations on becoming Commissioned Officers of the Irish Defence Forces

required some extra stretching time at night in the billets! The Cadet Class also benefited from the experience of the POC. During Platoon Field Assessment, Cadets had the advantage of having 'actual' section commanders and platoon sergeants in appointment with them, as they performed the role of platoon commander. The POC were also an unlimited source of advice to the Cadet Class throughout the 11 months. Prior to the commissioning of the 94th Cadet Class, 10 POC held a series of briefings about what was expected from them from NCOs as newly commissioned officers.

As a commissioned officer who is prior-enlisted, an extra 50% is expected in everything that you do. This applies to operational taskings, overseas service, staff work and overall attitude and professionalism. No apology is made for this.



CS (now Captain) Gerry Duff gives a quick set of orders on the ground during Platoon Field Assessment

You are expected to bring the high standards that are required as an NCO directly into commissioned life.

Officers who have received commissions through a PO Class have a unique perspective on military life. They have made all the mistakes as Privates and Junior NCOs. They fully understand the challenges and demands of enlisted life. They expect exceptionally high standards from NCOs due to their previous service. They are a huge asset to have in any unit due to their experience, which cannot be taught on any training course.

These men and women are part of a small, unique and proud cohort of commissioned officers. At all times, they represent the 226 NCOs who have already travelled this challenging path.

Today, approximately 40 serving officers from the 8th, 9th and 10th Potential Officers Classes are spread throughout the DF. They remain an invaluable source of information and guidance for any NCO considering pursuing this highly challenging but rewarding career opportunity.

PEOPLE OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

By Cpl Martin Bennett
Photo by Cpl Martin Bennett
and Pte Nicky Lawless



Rank: Private
Name: Nicky Lawless
Unit: 1 Cn Cois

Pte Nicky Lawless in his new uniform after re-enlistment

This month we spoke to Private Nicky Lawless from 1 Cn Cois in Renmore, Galway. Nicky has come back into the Defence Forces recently, under the Re-enlistment of former members of the Defence Forces programme.

Hi Nicky, Can you start by giving our readers a brief description of yourself?

"My name is Nicky Lawless and I'm from Galway. I grew up in town but I currently live in Athenry with my wife Róisín and two children Aedín and Darragh. Last October I returned to the Army, after sixteen years as

a civilian and I am stationed in Dún Uí Mhaolíosa. I turned forty in December, but I initially joined the Army as a fresh-faced twenty year old in 2001. My recruit training was held in Dún Uí Neill, Cavan between June and December and once our platoon passed out, the majority of us were transferred to 6 INF BN. In January 2002 I applied for East Timor selection and I was fortunate to serve as part of 9IRCON from June that year. After returning from overseas, I spent some time in Athlone before ultimately being transferred to Galway and 1 INF BN. I made the decision to leave the Army and return to college in 2004."



Nicky, camouflaged and on patrol in East Timor in 2002

How did it feel to come back the first day?

"Honestly, it was a bit nerve wracking. I can't remember being that nervous when I walked into barracks as a young lad. I wasn't worried about my choice to return, more my ability. I suppose my age was on my mind. Sixteen years is a long time to be removed from anything but I was confident I made the right decision to get back into uniform. Luckily, I had two others start with me on the day and we had been in touch for a few weeks since the medicals and attestation. Everyone we met throughout the first week couldn't have been more welcoming. Of course there were high doses of friendly banter, but you'd be worried if you didn't get that. Upgraded kit and newer vehicles were the most noticeable changes since my day, but other than that everything about being in barracks felt right. Thankfully, we met plenty of familiar faces and everyone, regardless of rank, was generous with their time and information."

What were the values you feel you gained from being in the Defence Forces and how do you feel they stood to you on your time out?

"I think this is where I benefited the most from the Army. Everything I have done since I left, I have approached with belief that I can accomplish it or that

I can get through it. There's a confidence and respect I found along the way that made many things easier and less daunting, particularly in the early days, when I was trying to find my way in education and the workplace. I'd like to think my time keeping has been as good over the years, but I think that would be an outright lie! East Timor with 9IRCON is, by far, the most influential thing I've done in my life. Even the five-month selection for the trip is something I'll never forget. I think those few months taught me a lot of lessons that made me the person I am today. That trip and what I did there as a 21-year-old will stay with me forever and I'm very proud I got to experience that. Even if every memory isn't a 'nice' one, they are still lessons that shape me a little. Nothing in civilian life has ever presented me with a problem that I couldn't handle, mentally or physically. And I don't just have the Army as an organisation to thank for that but the people I was surrounded by on a daily basis."

What was your proudest moment in uniform?

"That's a tough one. I'm torn between two lives in a way. If I think back to my younger self, I was most proud in



Nicky dressed in his civilian attire after he had left the Defence Forces and was working outside

recruit training; marching into the gym in number ones and doing the drill we'd rehearsed for our passing out parade. I had been awarded best kit and as I marched up to collect it I caught a glimpse of my family in the stand and I remember sticking out the chest and lifting the head a little higher - an amazing feeling. Most recently it's coming home to my wife and daughter and the first time they've seen me in full uniform. It's been a strange year for the entire world and we've had a lot of life-changing events condensed in a few months: dealing with a pandemic, the arrival of our second child, a little brother for Aedín and me returning to the Army. It may seem a little cheesy but having a chance to put on the uniform at this stage in my life, makes me incredibly proud."

What would you tell your 18 year old self?

"Wow, you could get really deep and meaningful with a question like that. I suppose I'd tell him not to rush into things. When I did my leaving cert at seventeen, I was under the impression that things needed to fall in to place by college. How unbelievably wrong I was! I rushed picking courses, I rushed assignments. I rushed leaving college for the Army instead of staying a third year and, although joining was the best decision I made, I still feel I should have done my third year before joining - I had time. I rushed leaving the Army too, even though I had plenty of people asking me to slow down. Every time, the grass was always greener and I was too panicked to get there. Slow things down and do things that make you happy, not something that you think will make somebody else happier. And look after your knees, the new bergen is huge"

Finally Nicky, can you give us a brief description of your current role in the unit?

"Since returning, I've been tasked with normal rifleman duties as part of A Coy. At the end of January, I completed swab training in the Curragh and I expect to be placed on roster for that over the coming weeks. I have also placed my name forward to help administer the vaccine but I have to wait and see if I am eligible first."

For anyone interested in more information on re-enlistment, there is more information on military.ie

DIRTY BOOTS



Coumshingaun Loop Walk, Comeragh Mountains, Waterford

This route information was provided by Brian Coakley, owner of www.activeme.ie

Coumshingaun Loop Walk is a moderate 4 hour (7.5 km) walking route around a natural amphitheatre of splendour and silence, the Coumshingaun Corrie Lake and the surrounding mountains in County Waterford, Ireland. Coumshingaun is one of the finest examples of a corrie or coum in Europe and the Comeragh mountains most famous landmark. Corries were formed by glacier movement during the ice age.

This area is very popular for both hikers and climbers alike with some great rock climbs to be had and also some ice climbing in winter. This walking route starts in the traditional and most gentle approach to the mountain, parking at Kilclooney bridge (Grid Ref 348115) and entering a gate and crossing a stream. The paths here is not that obvious but keep aiming at the right / northern slopes of the mountain and the track becomes more obvious. An alternative start point for this walk is the official car park to the south in the woods.

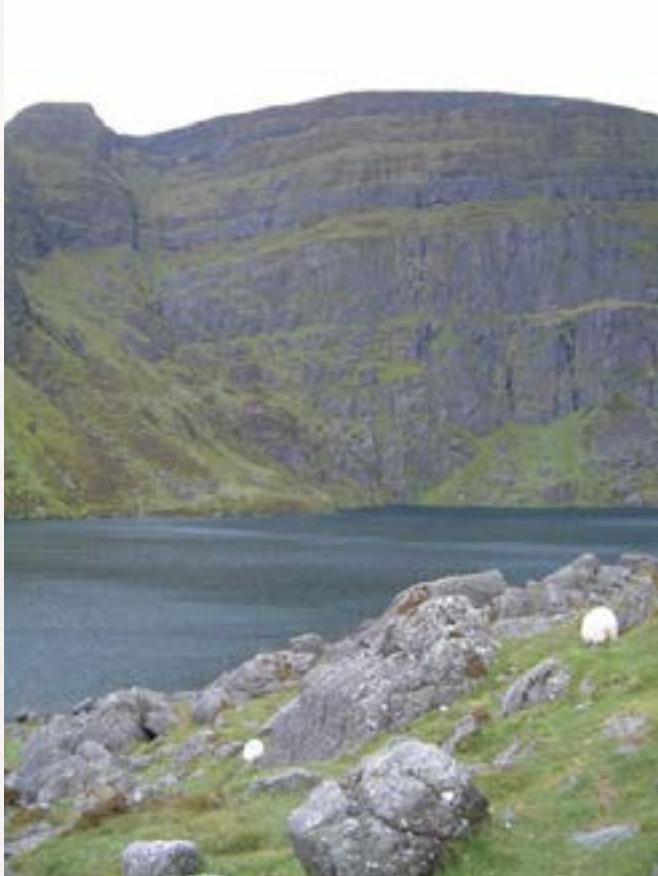
A lovely description of Coumshingaun from the 'Visitors Guide to the Comeragh Mountains' by Patrick Werner, 1978 reads 'It is difficult to know how to write of Coumshingaun itself. Whether you speak of it as the geography textbooks do, as a magnificent example of

corrie glaciation with the loch held up by a large black moraine or whether you see it as a guidebook says 'of unknown depth, associated with irresistible currents and evil spirits', in short whether you are practical or romantic, you are certain to be impressed. It is about a mile long, roughly pear shaped, widest at its western, precipitous end and except in winter when small streams flow down the precipices in headlong cascades, not visibly fed from any source . . . The water of the lake is constantly rippled by changing winds, sometimes steely blue in the sun, more often inky black, and always cold, though fish live in it. It is odd to speculate how they came there. I have seen it through a dazzle of sunshine, through swirling clouds of snow, through driving rain hissing off its surface and appearing and disappearing as mists eddied up and down the precipices and I have never failed to find it beautiful. Perhaps it is best to leave it at that'.

The cliffs behind the lake rise straight up to an awe inspiring 365 metres (1200) feet vertically above the lake. The highest point in the Comeraghs at 792 metres is very close to Coumshingaun and is shown on this map. It is marked by a cairn but is not a summit, merely a high point with great views over the plateau in every direction.



The view of the lake from the top of the cliffs



The view from the lake looking up at the cliffs

In years gone by a man named Jim Fitzgerald (1891-1959), a WWI veteran who was also known as the 'Hermit of Lackendara' returned from the war and decided to live the rest of his life here in a cave at the edge of the lake. The Coumshingaun lake has also been used for cold water swimming training by some endurance swimmers. There is a cliff and climbing route here known as Carraig an Fhiolair (Rock of the Eagle) which probably goes back to when Coumshingaun was a breeding site for both Golden and White Tailed Eagles before 1855. Now the mountains are regularly home to Red Grouse, Hen Harrier, Wheatear, Siskin and Crossbill and less common here are White-tailed Eagles, Hobby, Dotterel, Long-tailed Skua, Nightjar, Black Redstart, Ring Ouzel. Here is a nice video on 'Lackendarra Jim' by Tom Fitzpatrick.

At all times, our maps should be used in conjunction with a proper map (OSI Discovery Series map 75) and compass navigational techniques.

Feel free to review and add your own comments or suggestions on the route on www.activeme.ie.

HEADSPACE AND TIMING

By Lt Col John Martin (PSS)
Photos by Pte Derek Feehan

The Personnel Support Service (PSS)

Who we are: The PSS is a team of trained military personnel and occupational social workers and we can be found throughout the Defence Forces. We supply a friendly and familiar service to discuss any issues, big or small, that may be giving cause for concern. In addition we provide an array of professional skills to support military personnel and their families. For routine advice and for more serious issues, you can rely on the PSS to provide confidential and professional support, and to give military personnel the advice, information and guidance that they need. There are PSS staff trained to offer counselling support for a variety of issues, including relationships, coping with addiction and many others. There is a PSS team active in each installation of the Defence Forces, ready and willing to be of help. Here are some of the other things that we do.



Your struggles will always pass, just give yourself time to get through it



Sometimes you can't see the problems, but you can still fix them

Mental Health First Aid: MHFA is our standard intervention to support a positive mental health and wellbeing culture in the Defence Forces. It provides participants with knowledge and awareness on issues of mental health which enable them to better identify when a colleague is in distress. It gives participants the confidence to implement appropriate and timely interventions to support colleagues until they can access clinical or other services.

The MHFA course may be conducted online and is currently being delivered to personnel deployed overseas and here at home. Look for an MHFA course in your unit or formation over the next few months and get involved. Mental Health and Wellbeing is the responsibility of each one of us in the Defence Forces.

Suicide awareness and prevention: Suicide is an issue which affects everyone in IRELAND, and NOT just in the Defence Forces. Our aim is to ensure that we minimise the risk of suicide to personnel of the Defence Forces and their families. We work closely with the National Office for Suicide Prevention to deliver quality awareness training to all our DF team. Currently our SafeTALK and ASIST programmes are on hold because of COVID 19 restrictions. However there are alternatives - The START programme is an online intervention which can be accessed using a civilian email address and completed at home. Licences can be obtained through the chain of command or through contacting your local PSS team. Suicide awareness training may NOT be



Try to take time to yourself, take off the helmet and let the head breathe

suitable for everyone, depending on their state of mind and/or recent life experiences. PSS staff will be happy to discuss with you to ensure that all personnel are protected. We need to talk about suicide and to keep ourselves and our families safe!

Critical Incident Stress Management: There are times in our service when we will experience traumatic incidents, either as a part of our work or as a part of our daily lives. When this happens we support each other using Critical Incident Stress Management, or CISM. Military personnel are trained as peer responders to support each other immediately after a traumatic episode, to stabilise the situation and to ensure that anyone who needs extra help gets it as soon as possible.

Financial advice and guidance: No matter what your financial issues are, the PSS is available to support and guide you in finding the right solution for you and for your family. We can signpost you to the best resources available within the community and help you find your way to accessing the appropriate service to meet your needs. For contact with credit unions, including ANSAC, help negotiating a way through financial difficulty, information about pensions and entitlements, we are here to be of service.

Inspire Confidential Counselling: The INSPIRE confidential counselling service complements PSS resources and offers an external alternative that is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Here you can access the services of a trained counsellor outside the DF to deal with any issue that might be bothering you, no matter what it is. Currently INSPIRE services are delivered by phone or by video, so you can choose the medium that's right for you. INSPIRE is also available to

the spouses and partners of all military personnel and to any children over the age of 18 who are living at home. The INSPIRE contact number is 1800 409 673.

Defence Forces Families: The PSS is available to directly support the families of our military personnel. This can be most useful when personnel are deployed overseas and families need a bit of help accessing information or in sorting out some issues on the home front. We are happy to speak confidentially and directly to families to deal with individual issues and we work closely with the liaison teams within units to ensure that information from mission areas is both accurate and timely.

In conclusion: So there you have a snapshot of the PSS! These are just a few of our functions as we work to support our military personnel and their families. We will continue to work closely with our colleagues in DF Medical Branch and Central Medical unit as we all negotiate our way through these difficult times. Military personnel please contact your local PSS team for more information or email pss@defenceforces.ie and we will be happy to put you in touch. All contact with us is confidential and this will always be explained to you when you contact us. During this time we all need to take care of each other and to take care of ourselves.



No matter how much you're suffering, you're never alone



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Army Ranger Wing

HPP

The Human Performance Program is a holistic program that develops and establishes new training concepts designed to meet the need of the modern day SOF Operator. Created by subject matter experts in the Defence Forces based on NATO SOF guidelines, HPP aims to:

- Optimise human performance by increasing physical capacity and psychological resilience
- Reduce injuries rates
- Increase longevity of service of the ARW Operator

HPP's mantra revolves around "humans are more important than hardware". HPP creates an elite service to meet the high performance demands required of an SOF Operator.

Tactical Athlete Training Special Operation Forces - Qualification

Foreword

Every operational member of the ARW is unique, as each is trained to perform a task that is vital to the successful completion of the mission. The physical demands of the unpredictable nature of service in the ARW requires that Unit members maintain an excellent standard of physical fitness, be adaptable and face challenges head on. Physical fitness is a critical attribute for an ARW Operator. Therefore, the physical demands placed on ARW candidates during the Special Operation Forces – Qualification (SOF-Q) process reflect the actual job demands.

"We must prepare as if we are going to compete in the Olympics, without knowing when or what event we are competing in"

To prepare effectively for the demands of the SOF-Q process the ARW Tactical Athlete Training (TAT) program was developed. Designed by the ARW Human Performance Cell to guide SOF-Q candidates. The TAT emphasises the physical preparation for SOF-Q Module 1 – Assessment and Selection. SOF-Q Module 1 is designed to select candidates who have the potential for further training in the SOF-Q process. It is both physically and mentally demanding with a high attrition rate. However, with the correct preparation any motivated Soldier, Sailor or Airman can pass SOF-Q Module 1 and put himself/herself in the position to continue through the SOF-Q modules.

For further information and to get access to the TAT program and additional content, visit (web address and QR code). <https://www.military.ie/!YTOM40>

