THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE

AN COSANTÓIR

Óglaigh na hÉireann
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

SEP/OCT 2025



DF WOMEN'S RUGBY

WINCHMAN COURSE

INF PLN ATTACK

DEFEND OUR STATE

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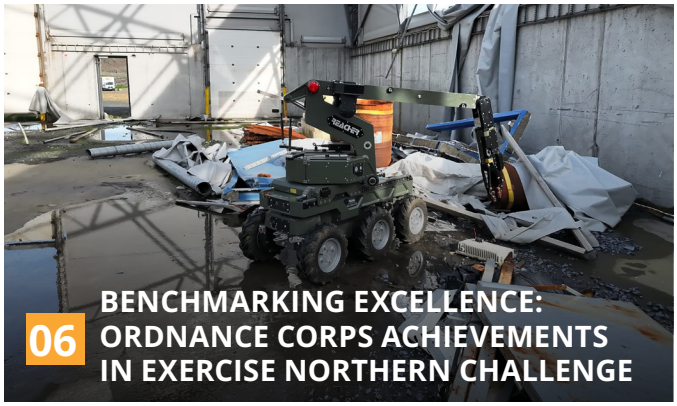
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From the editor

— Sgt Louise Kehoe

The Infantry Platoon Attack Competition returned in September 2025 after a ten-year break, testing tactics, leadership, and teamwork at the Platoon level. Held at Coolmoney Camp and the Glen of Imaal, seven Infantry Platoons competed in demanding tactical exercises and weapons proficiency tests over two days. The 28th Infantry Battalion won overall, with strong performances from all teams. The competition highlighted the strength of teamwork and the importance of rigorous, realistic training in preparing Infantry soldiers for battle. The Defence Forces Women's Rugby Team proudly represented Ireland at the Rugby World Cup, achieving memorable victories, like the win over Tonga, which brought them to the semi-finals, ultimately finishing fourth in the world. The 46th An Cosantóir 10k road race was a great success with almost 1000 runners competing on the day, the highlight of the day was seeing Pte Kenneth Rodgers return to compete after a short break and not only win the race but now holds the record of winning this prestigious race ten times. Included in this edition is the Buy a Veteran A Coffee campaign, page 33 can be torn out, we encourage everyone to fill out the form and return it to info@oneconnect.ie. We hope you enjoy this edition and look forward to our next edition to end the year.

"If records refuse to be broken, shatter them." — Matshona Dhilwayo



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INFANTRY PLATOON ATTACK COMPETITION 2025

ARTICLE BY COMDT STEVE BYRNE

Following the successful Section-level Tactical Competitions of 2023 and 2024, September 2025 saw the reintroduction of the Infantry Platoon Attack Competition after a ten-year hiatus. Conducted by the Infantry School, the competition's expansion to Platoon-level offered a tough and comprehensive test of tactics, leadership, and fire control with a premium on the implementation of Mission Command style leadership in conjunction with the Infantry Soldier Principles of robustness and resilience, the ability to fight through adversity; seizing of the initiative; commitment to excellence; and above all, determination to fight as a team.

The Platoon is the Infantry's decisive fighting element. At this level, the challenge is to coordinate the manoeuvre of multiple sections, maintain the momentum of an operation and provide protective fire support. With this in mind, the Competition was designed to refresh Platoon-level tactics, techniques and procedures across the wider Infantry Corps, to enhance small unit leadership at the Platoon Commander, Sergeant and Section Commander levels, to reinforce the necessity of timely and responsive casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) procedures at the Platoon level and finally to promote and assess marksmanship skills and weapon systems in a battle focused environment. Seven Platoons competed in the Competition this year, with each Infantry Battalion being represented.



The competition began on the 1st of September with the arrival of Platoons at Coolmoney Camp. Once settled into accommodation, competitors busied themselves preparing ammunition and readying their equipment for the tactical phase. After dinner Assessment Teams conducted a walk-through of the Training Areas whilst the competing Platoons received their full competition briefing before turning their focus to battle preparation well into the night. The atmosphere in camp that evening was tense but eager — Platoon Staff walked their soldiers through rehearsals and orders, knowing that the next day would demand quick thinking and sharp execution. The tone was already set: robust and resilient soldiers would be required to carry their Platoons through the trials ahead.

The initial phase of the competition took place on the 2nd of September when Platoons were put through their paces on the Quick Attack Lanes. Each team was allotted two hours and fifteen minutes to conduct a Recce, issue Quick Battle Orders and conduct an Advance to Contact through a designated Attack Lane. Enemy forces, played by role-players from 1 MIC were positioned in depth, forcing platoons to fight through multiple objectives. Each platoon had to conduct two such attacks, with every move, order, and shot scrutinised by Assessment Teams and the NCO Training Wing Staff. Three lanes ran concurrently in the Camp Field area, beginning at 0815 hrs. Timings were tight, with subsequent assessments starting every two hours and fifteen minutes thereafter.

For the Platoon Commanders, the challenge was immense: balancing speed with control, issuing clear orders under pressure and maintaining momentum. Platoon Sergeants were tested in resupply, casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) and Prisoner of War (PW) Drills, while Section Commanders had to suppress or assault enemy positions with a third Section in Reserve on immediate notice to resupply the forward Sections or evacuate any casualties sustained. Overall, each Platoon performed to a high standard; fire control was tight, CASEVAC drills were instinctive and the assaulting Sections

overwhelmed enemy positions with audacity and verve. Moreover, the attacks tested the cohesion and aggression of the Platoons; Commanders who acted quickly and decisively often gained an edge, even when the tactical picture was unclear. The last attacks concluded at 2030 hrs. For the competitors it was a successful day and all participating Platoons should be commended for the enthusiasm and skill they displayed.

On the 3rd of September, the focus shifted to weapons proficiency. Along the Lateral Road at the foot of Cemetery Hill the Infantry Weapons Wing (IWW) established five stands to test each of the Platoon's integral weapon systems. Two stands were allocated to assess Rifle marksmanship. One group (consisting of the Platoon Commander, Runner and Section Commanders) had five minutes to carry a simulated casualty to an elevated platform before engaging targets with their rifles. A second group (consisting of the Platoon Sergeant, Signaller and three soldiers) had four minutes to load and engage their targets. The third stand tested M203 accuracy with the Platoon's six gunners moving between two bunker positions to engage targets with their rifle and M203 respectively. The fourth stand focused on the Fire Support Groups (FSGs), with each FSG allotted five minutes to engage a number of targets, testing not only accuracy but also the FSG Commander's fire control orders. The final stand tested the ability of the Platoon's six SRAAW gunners ability to move into an area and accurately engage a target in a time constrained environment.

Following safety briefs and armourer checks at 0800 hrs, platoons rotated through the stands in 30-minute intervals from 1030 hrs onwards. Each stand demanded technical precision, team coordination, and disciplined fire. The SRAAW stand proved a crowd favourite, with soldiers relishing the chance to demonstrate accuracy on anti-armour targets. Meanwhile, the GPMG stands tested FSGs in the fine balance between suppression and ammunition control. This phase exemplified the Infantry ethos of demanding excellence. Marksmanship was not just about hitting targets but doing so with purpose, under the pressure of time and tactical constraints.

By 1600 hrs, all scores were collated, setting the stage for the closing ceremony and at 1630 hrs, the teams gathered for the prize-giving ceremony, where the top-scoring Platoon across all phases of the competition was awarded the Infantry Platoon Attack Trophy by the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Mulcahy. Congratulations to the 28th Infantry Battalion team on their victory, followed closely by the 3rd Infantry Battalion and an Céad Chathláin Coisite in second and third place respectively.





Behind the scenes, the competition represented a significant effort across the Infantry Corps and indeed the wider Army, who provided Assessment Teams (from 1 BTC, 1 MIC and the EUBG), Safety Staff, Armourers, Enemy Party, Exercise Security and Cooks. Special thanks must also be made to the staff of the NCOTW, IWW, Infantry School Store and Coolmoney Camp for their enthusiasm and dedication to this competition.

The Glen of Imaal once again proved its worth as a demanding training ground—rivers, gullies, dense vegetation and open fields combined to create the perfect setting for testing Infantry soldiers at Platoon level. Above all, the competition reinforced that Infantry soldiers succeed when they fight as a team. From the cohesion of Sections under fire to the mutual trust between commanders and soldiers, teamwork proved to be the decisive factor in every phase.





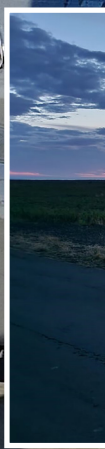


"We don't rise to the levels of our expectations. We fall to the level of our training"

— Archilochus











BENCHMARKING EXCELLENCE:

Ordnance Corps Achievements in Exercise Northern Challenge

ARTICLE PROVIDED BY ORDNANCE CORPS

In early September, eight members of the Ordnance Corps travelled to Keflavík Air Base, Iceland to participate in the largest annual Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) exercise conducted by NATO Allies and Partnership for Peace (PfP) countries. Exercise Northern Challenge (Ex NC), which has run for the previous 30 years, is an annual multinational EOD exercise hosted by the Icelandic Coast Guard aimed at preparing NATO Allies and PfP participants for international deployments and defence against terrorism. Ex NC aimed to train response to real-life terrorist incidents involving IEDs and other EOD-related scenarios, similar to those that have occurred in recent NATO missions and to be expected in the future. This year's iteration featured over 350 participants from 18 nations, including the USA (USMC, US Army, US Air Force & US Navy), Belgium, Canada, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

This year, and for the first time in the history of the exercise, the Irish Defence Forces deployed an EOD team to participate. The Director of Ordnance selected 1 Brigade Ordnance Group, Collins Barracks, Cork to undertake the exercise. This tasking presented an opportunity for the 1 Brigade Ordnance Group EOD panel to

benchmark skills, tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) against international partners. With participants including highly experienced teams from larger militaries, the scale of the challenge was clear from the outset. The team consisted of 1 EOD Officer and 3 EOD NCOs. In addition, a support element was provided to the Multinational Command and Control cell, and two personnel were attached to the exercise control cell.



Training for the Exercise commenced in July, when the EOD team began training on the upgraded REACHER Ver 2 ROV, in Ordnance Base Workshops, DFTC. What followed was an intense five-week pre-deployment training programme which focused on refining operator threat assessment and mission planning, and enhanced equipment training incorporating the REACHER Ver 2 and DJI Matrice UAS; kindly provided by the Ordnance School, DFTC to enhance IED reconnaissance capability for the team. In tandem, logistics planning was well underway, with final preparations being made alongside 101 Squadron, Air Corps, to transport both troops and EOD equipment to Keflavík Air Base from Baldonnel. It is important to note that this exercise would not have been possible if it wasn't for the assistance of the Ordnance Group DFTC, 101 Squadron, J4, J 3/5, J7, DOD and Department of Foreign Affairs.





Ex NC was designed to replicate the types of complex and evolving explosive threats faced by military and security forces across the world. Throughout the exercise, the EOD teams responded to simulated improvised explosive devices (IED) threats of increasing complexity over a two-week period. The local environment itself added to the challenge; the windswept Icelandic terrain, with its harsh weather and unforgiving volcanic rock, mirrors the kind of unpredictable conditions in which real-world EOD operations often take place on island. Each team was required to demonstrate not just technical ability, but also endurance, adaptability, and resilience under pressure. Several unique sites were set up to imitate non-permissive, hostile enemy environments in both land and maritime domains to test each team's specialised TTPs.



In addition to conducting complex training scenarios, teams from across participating countries collaborated within the multinational command and control and exploitation cells to enhance interoperability at the operational level. These cells ensured that EOD teams were organised to effectively counter improvised explosive device (IED) threats while ensuring the intelligence analysis and information sharing was in accordance with NATO standards and procedures. As the exercise unfolded, the teams rotated through a demanding series of tasks. Each task scenario was assessed by international directive staff, not only on the ability to neutralise devices safely, but also on decision-making, leadership, and team cohesion.

The Irish EOD contingent was assessed as the best performing at the end of the exercise – ranking #1 out 18 participating nations - followed by the Norwegian Air Force #2. The Irish Defence Forces #1 ranking at Ex NC is therefore not only a testament to national EOD capability, but also the contribution of the Ordnance Corps to ensure high training standards are continually maintained. It underscores the professionalism, skill, and dedication of Irish EOD, that despite the relatively small size of the Defence Forces, can excel on the international stage.

Such international exercises play a crucial role in strengthening interoperability between nations. They provide opportunities to exchange TTPs and information, and emerging threats – a particular example of this is the proliferation of UAV-IED attacks, as well as to learn from the experience of other militaries. For 1 Brigade Ordnance Group, the result also reinforces the value of sustained investment in training and professional development. It serves as a reminder that Irish soldiers, when placed in the most testing environments, consistently rise to the occasion. Emerging as the #1 ranked team in such a large-scale international exercise is an accomplishment and reinforces that Ireland's Defence Forces are world-class, capable, and ready to meet the most demanding challenges.

In an era where the threat of improvised explosive devices remains a persistent challenge for EOD duty teams operating at home and overseas, the ability to train and prepare for tomorrows threat, today, is vital – at all levels of the organisation.



THE INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE FORCES RUGBY WORLD CUP – OUR WONDERFUL *FAIRYTALE*

ARTICLE BY LT NORAH MURPHY, RDF





A Journey Begins

As the sun sets on the last glorious day at the Women's Military Rugby World Cup, we find ourselves reflecting on an incredible journey. What began as a shared ambition evolved into something far greater, it was a testament to dedication, resilience, and the power of camaraderie among women who serve, and the unbreakable bonds formed through these once in a lifetime experiences. It was indeed a shared journey that fused military discipline with athletic excellence.

Our squad was exceptionally diverse with players drawn from across the ranks and from all Bdes, Services & Fmns, representing both PDF and RDF. We had experience in the form of Sgts Shendah Moran and Orlaith Kiely and A/W Shauna Bennett, who helped guide new players such as sisters, Lts Áine and Maeve Gleeson, Lts Marie Beth Kirby and Amy O'Neill, and Gnr Ruth Johnson all of whom transitioned seamlessly from other sports.

Our squad captain, Pte Caoimhe Molloy and Pte Linda McNamara, former Munster player, brought elite rugby experience and vital leadership on and off the pitch. Comdt Niamh Ní Dhroma, a seasoned international and World Cup campaigner, was head coach of the squad and was even persuaded to lace up her boots one final time as she helped us navigate the pressures of international competition.







Every time we stepped onto that field, we hung up the rank we wore on our chest and replaced it with the Shamrock we wore over our hearts. It did not matter what our backgrounds were or which units we belonged to or whether you where PDF or RDF, we were united in our fight for each other and for our team. We were all driven by the same determination that defines life in uniform. Together, we formed not just a team, but a sisterhood built on respect, resilience, and shared purpose.

Pre-Tournament Excitement

Preparation began months before the tournament began and squad members balanced demanding military and civilian roles with the level of commitment required. Training sessions were rigorous but filled with energy and laughter, a reflection of the balance between professionalism and spirit that characterises the Defence Forces. Kit day brought laughter, nerves, and a wave of realisation "Are we actually going to a World Cup?"

A lecture at the Curragh solidified the journey ahead and Lynne Cantwell, the IRFU Head of Women's Strategy and Ireland's most capped female player, shared her experience regarding preparation and focus and inspired us with stories of pride, hard work, and unity. We left that room excited, nervous, but proud and determined.

The Opening Ceremony at Sandhurst Royal Military Academy marked the official start, where Nations from around the world came together under one banner. The jersey presentation was emotional, each player handed their jersey by the player before them, sharing words of encouragement, with laughter and hugs weaving the squad closer together.

The Tournament Matches

Rugby Against Cancer – 32:7 Win

Our opening match at Esher RFC set the tone. Every try, tackle, and set piece reflected months of preparation. Confidence and unity filled the squad, a great game had by all especially Lt Sophie Donnelly whose commitment to scoring a wonderful try also came with an injury that would remove her from the competition.

UK Armed Forces – 0:65 Loss

Our second match was a tough lesson in resilience. Despite the scoreline, and playing against some semi-professional players, every Irish player gave their all.

Tonga – 39:31 Win

A nail-biter from start to finish. With a halftime score of 19-19, this game was a true test of our character and teamwork. Lt Gen Mulcahy reminded us, we needed to go "to the trenches for one another" and that is exactly what we did. The reliable Tpr Chloe

Farrell scored an amazing four trys, including one shortlisted for try of the tournament. Captain Caoimhe Molloy crashed over for the equaliser when it counted the most and Gnr Patricia Coote kicked a penalty to edge us ahead. Every player left their blood, sweat, and tears on that field and it was in these moments of struggle that we truly saw the heart and determination of our team.

Fiji Semi-Final – 0:74 Loss

Though the result was harsh it did not reflect the effort displayed. Every try conceded was hard earned, every defensive stand fought with courage, and we showed through DF values of physical courage, selflessness and loyalty and gave a brave effort against a world class opponent, many of whom had represent Fiji on the international 7s circuit.

UK Armed Forces 3rd/4th Place Playoff – 5:76 Loss

A momentous experience walking behind our Irish colours out on to a prestige Kingsholm stadium in Gloucester, and standing shoulder to shoulder as Amhrán na bhFiann echoed through the international field, a moment of pride and triumph in the Irish Jersey and even though it was a challenging match, the final highlight was Lt Laura Biasiotto's last-minute try, a wonderful display of strength and determination.





Management and Support: Leading from the Top

Behind every success squad there is a vital support network. Col Jayne Lawlor, Chief of Delegation, and a former Leinster and Irish player, set the tone for professionalism and inclusivity. Comdts Sarah O'Regan and Jane O'Neill, our meticulous Team Managers, ably assisted by Sgt Hazel Brennan ensured every administrative and logistical detail ran seamlessly. The coaching team of Comdt Ní Dhroma, Cpl Martin Cummins and Sgt Paddy Behan provided tactical and strategic expertise while physio Richie McGrath and the medical team of Sgts Michelle Bradley and Brian O'Keeffe, kept us ready to perform with Referee Pte Paudie Sheehan representing us from the middle of the field.

Off the Field: Friendship and Culture

The World Cup journey was enriched by experiences off the pitch. We trained at London Irish RFC, enjoyed afternoon tea with the Irish Ambassador to the UK, Mr Martin Fraser, and had jerseys presented by former Irish international and tv pudit, Anna Caplice. On Culture Night, we shared hurling skills with Zambians and Tongans and learned their tribe dances. The Fijians fell in love with the Bodhrán and we taught nations the Irish Jig, but moments we treasure most were simple gathering around compression boots in Richie's physio room, enduring ice baths together, while laughing through the pain and hilarious board game nights in each other's rooms. These experiences wove the fabric of our friendship.



Support and Reflection

Support throughout the tournament was phenomenal, messages from rugby stars, former Defence Forces players, and our Commanding Officers reminded us of the wider community behind us as did the visiting support of the Chief of Staff, Lt Gen Mulcahy and DF RSM, Keith Caffrey and the Director of DF Rugby, Lt Col Bernard Behan. We left everything on the rugby fields of the UK and retained fourth in the world, a result we are immensely proud of and would not have been possible only for the support given and shown.

A Wonderful Fairytale

Our Rugby World Cup was not only about rugby, we represented our country and the Defence Forces with honour and a legacy that extended beyond the scoreboard. Our journey was about pride and the unbreakable bond of women and men who serve together, representing Ireland on the field, as soldiers, sailors, and airwomen, hoping it will inspire younger generations of servicewomen and men to pick up a rugby ball, to join a team, to step forward with confidence. We demonstrated that when commitment and camaraderie meet, the result can inspire a legacy of courage, respect, and national pride that will live on for years to come.

Thank you to everyone who supported us, fought for us, and made our journey possible. You will always be a part of our World Cup fairytale.





THE LAND WINCHMAN COURSE

ARTICLE BY
CPL KEVIN MAHER







Irish Air Corps context and history with hoisting

The Irish Air Corps has operated military aviation since the early 1920s and has maintained a rotary wing capability and associated aircrew training as part of its core duties. Over time the Corps provided search and rescue and casualty evacuation services beginning with the Alouette III and Dauphin 2 helicopters, particularly before civilian agencies were established to handle national SAR. The modern medium lift helicopter era for the Air Corps began with the introduction of the AgustaWestland AW139 in the mid 2000s. The first AW139s were handed over to the Air Corps in 2006 and that type has formed the backbone of the Corps hoist capable fleet since then. These aircraft and crew have supported national tasks, inter agency exercises and periodic maritime and mountain winch training. Number 3 Operations Wing is the Defence Forces operational helicopter element and is responsible for all helicopter tasks and training.

The Land Winchman Course

The course trains current helicopter aircrew for a core skillset in hoist operations known as the winchman. A winchman is the aircrew member who deploys from a hovering helicopter on a hoist or winch cable to reach casualties, personnel or equipment in locations inaccessible to the aircraft. The winchman's tasks include attaching and detaching casualties, communicating with the winch operator and responding to emergencies while suspended beneath an aircraft. The role requires technical skill, physical control and the ability to make rapid, safety first decisions while exposed to rotor downwash, variable weather and difficult terrain.

The course was ran under Number 3 Operations Wing between the 18th of June and the 3rd of July 2025, using an AgustaWestland AW139. Four students were selected for the course: Corporal Kevin Maher, Corporal Jamie O'Sullivan, Corporal Sean McHugh, and Airman William Brien.

What a winchman does

A winchman must perform a range of distinct tasks, often in rapid succession and under stress. These include fitting and checking harnesses, connecting or disconnecting casualties and equipment to the hook, providing casualty care or reassurance while suspended, monitoring cable tension and keeping the casualty clear of hazards and executing emergency procedures such as freeing a fouled cable or cutting loose when necessary.

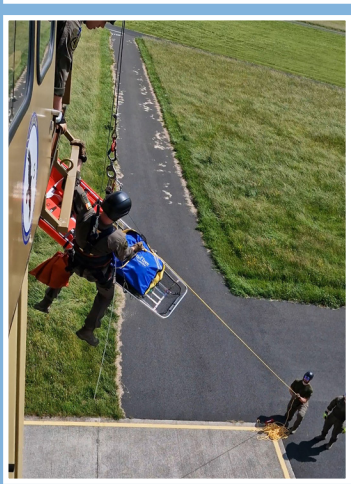


Classroom Phase

The course began with classroom instruction covering the principles of hoist operations and the responsibilities of the winchman. Subjects included aircraft safety, emergency procedures, hand signals, and the physics of operating a winch cable under rotor downwash. Human factors and crew communication were also emphasised, as effective coordination between the winchman and winch operator is critical to safety.









Joint Airframe Deployment System (JADS)

After the classroom lessons, students moved to the Joint Airframe Deployment System (JADS), a static training airframe maintained by Number 3 Operations Wing. The JADS allowed practice in a controlled setting before live aircraft operations.

On the JADS students carried out harness fitting, attachment to the winch hook, maintaining correct posture during lifts and handling of equipment. Emergency drills were also practiced, including cable fouling and the use of cutting tools to release from the cable if required.

Winching techniques

Students practiced three primary lifts:

Single Lift: Used to insert or extract one individual. The winchman is raised or lowered alone.

Double Lift: Two people are lifted together, commonly a winchman escorting a casualty. This technique requires secure attachments for both occupants and careful attention to rotor downwash interactions that can cause instability and a dangerous spin. The winchman must coordinate with the other person to adopt a compact posture and to keep their combined center of gravity stable during ascent and transit.

Stretcher Lift: A casualty who cannot move independently is secured to a stretcher and attached to the hoist. A winchman accompanies the stretcher to stabilize it, prevent rotation and provide medical reassurance. Critical points include litter rigging (making sure straps and carabiners are correctly routed and locked), protecting the casualty from rotor downwash and communicating movements to the pilot and winch operator before and during the lift. This technique is slower and more complex, it is practiced repeatedly in calm conditions before being attempted in marginal weather.

Each technique introduces its own failure modes: cable twist, stretcher rotation, unexpected swing or equipment snagging. These techniques were

practiced repeatedly on the JADS, then progressed to live flying operations on the airfield until each student demonstrated safe handling and confidence.

Mountain Training

Once airfield proficiency was achieved, the course moved to the Wicklow Mountains. The same single, double, and stretcher lifts were conducted in more demanding conditions, including steep slopes, rocky mountain side grounds and variable weather. Students were required to assess ground conditions, identify suitable winching zones and adapt to hazardous environments.

Risk awareness and emergency action

Risk is a constant theme in winch training. The course emphasised immediate responses for situations such as cable fouling, sudden aircraft engine issues or a casualty going into distress while suspended. Students practiced cutting free from the cable or being released from the hoist if the aircraft could not remain safe. Rehearsed emergency actions, proper use of cutting tools, and disciplined situational awareness are lifesaving skills for a winchman.

Course Completion and Next Phase

All four students successfully completed the course. Each demonstrated competency in the required techniques and an understanding of the risks and responsibilities involved.

The newly qualified land winchmen will now progress to Maritime Winchman training. This will introduce additional challenges, including operations over ship decks, sea cliffs, and open water. Maritime conditions involve vessel movement, harsh weather and congested decks requiring further skill development and endurance.

Summary

The Land Winchman Course provided a structured introduction to winching for helicopter aircrew. It progressed from classroom instruction to ground based JADS practice, to live flying at the airfield and finally to mountain operations. By completing the course, Corporals Maher, O'Sullivan, McHugh, and Airman Brien have met the required standard and are prepared for the next stage of training.

TRAINING FOR COMMAND

06 Army Reserve PNCO Course

ARTICLE BY CPL HARRY O'MAHONY 7 INF BN

The Potential Non-Commissioned Officer (PNCO) Course is a cornerstone of leadership development within the Irish Defence Forces. Designed to challenge and transform, the course equips Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve personnel with the skills, discipline, and resilience required to lead. This year's AR PNCO Course brought together a diverse cohort of 20 students from across Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and Medical Corps, each embarking on a journey of personal and professional growth.

The course commenced with prelim assessments in drill, weapons and map reading followed by a PT session and SD 1 inspection. The course quickly progressed into the Military Instructor Training (MIT) phase which took place in Custume Barracks. This block focused on introduction lessons to Military Instructor Training, the Learning Process, Irish words of Command, what is Helping – Values and Skills, Essential Instructor Skills – Effective Delivery, Group Dynamics (Situational leadership), Ethical Leadership, Presentation Skills, Map Reading Skills. Delivery of classroom lessons and arms drill fast became muscle memory before students progressed their practical assessments.

Throughout the course the Orderly Sergeant (OS) role was rotated between PNCO students providing an opportunity to refine their skills of leading and commanding a body of troops, and the opportunity to practice the Defence Forces values of respect, loyalty, selflessness, physical courage, moral courage and integrity.

Distance learning formed a large part of the coursework with students assigned taskings between each weekend of the course. These included presentation topics, route planning and route card preparation and the preparation of instruction plans. Students balanced these responsibilities with civilian commitments, often working late into the night to meet deadlines. This phase tested their time management and dedication.

As 2024 moved to 2025, the course switched location to Cathal Brugha Barracks in Dublin. Theory was soon put in the practice as the students commenced their first navigation exercise followed by Military law and Human Resource Management lectures.

Marksmanship is an essential skill for all soldiers regardless of their role or Corps. PNCO students covered significant time in the classroom focusing on marksmanship theory and coaching on the range culminating in a practical coaching session on Gormanston range which focused on marksmanship principles and enhancing coaching skills when training new recruits. This was followed by a practical navigation assessment on Sorrel Hill near Blessington Lakes.

The course culminated in a two-week full-time tactical training block held in April, beginning with the Defensive and Patrol phase and ending with the Section in Attack phase. Patrolling principles were revised including movement, formations, use of scouts, field signals, preparation and delivery of Orders.

Patrol bases to include site selection, base drills and discipline, the Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition,



Pte Nicklin and Tpr Dunne conducting a recce

and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) process, reconnaissance patrols, observation posts, ambush principles were also reviewed in advance of the patrol exercise insertion to the Slieve Bloom mountains. The biting wind and rugged terrain of the Slieve Bloom Mountains added a layer of realism and hardship, pushing students to rely on their training and each other.

Platoon Commander's Orders were given the night before the 72-hour patrol exercise, including student appointments as Section IC and 2/IC. The following morning a FRAGO was given and PNCO students moved from Cathal Brugha Barracks to the Slieve Bloom Mountains. The occupation of the Patrol Harbour involved a loaded march to our objective area and use of Patrol Harbour occupation drills including STOPCPL (Snap ambush, Take a look, Occupy, Perimeter check, Clearance patrols, Post sentries, Labour) and the Harbour routine.

Local patrols began straight away with support from 7 Inf Battalion exercise troops, whose eagerness and enthusiasm requires a notable mention, the exercise was further enhanced with the deployment of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) demonstrated by a team from the EU Battle Group.

Patrol assessments took place the next day, a series of patrols were released with each student given a mission and was assessed on their orders delivery, pre-departure rehearsals, the execution of the patrol – skills, drills and tactical viability to perform a Close Target Reconnaissance (CTR) of the enemy location, followed by a detailed patrol report.

Mid-way through the exercise, a new threat emerged in the form of adverse weather conditions which saw a drop in temperature followed by sleet and snow. Welfare of the troops came to the fore through the use of wet/dry routine, good personal admin and the buddy-buddy system which all played an important role in sustaining students and exercise troops throughout the cold snap. Patrols continued until all objectives were recce'd and assessments complete.

Back in barracks, all kit was cleaned and returned to stores followed by a rest period before the class completed their General Test reviewing all aspects of the course covered since September 2024. Easter Sunday saw the course complete its heritage block with a tour of the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks led by Commandant Lar Joye (DFHQ) with a focus on actions in Dublin City during the 1916 Easter Rising. The visit served as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made during the 1916 Easter Rising, reinforcing the values of service and national pride that underpin the Defence Forces ethos.

The offense phase of the course began with revision of Section Battle Drills and a fresh set of Platoon Commander's Orders before the course departed for Coolmoney Camp. Our poor luck with weather continued as heavy rains became a recurring feature of our Quick Attack training and assessments. Students were put through their paces moving between different command appointments and roles within the section with rolling section attacks. The PNCOs were tasked with generating and delivering a set of Quick Attack Orders as Section IC and leading their Section to attack the likely enemy position and successfully performing the role of 2nd In-Command (2/IC) providing service support to the Section and deputising the responsibilities of the Section IC.

The course was visited Josh Crosbie from Newstalk who took time to meet PNCO students and two-star privates from 2 Bde and DFTC on their three-star course.

The course departed Coolmoney Camp the next day with an unexpected stop in Clondalkin where we dismounted transport, RV'd with colleagues from the NSR PNCO Course and commenced a TAB for the final 10km along the Grand Canal Greenway with the 2 BTC and NSR pennants leading the way to the finish line in Cathal Brugha Barracks marking the end of training.

The course held it's passing out parade together with the NSR PNCO course in Cathal Brugha Barracks on Saturday 17 May with 20 AR Cpls and 6 NSR L/Sea returning to Units nationwide ready to support recruit training as numbers across the Reserve continue to grow.



Orders Prep - Slieve Bloom Mtns



Sec Comd Orders - Glen of Imaal



March from Clondalkin to CBB



Gnr Donnelly interviewed by Josh Crosbie from Newstalk

REPORTING FROM GRAZ

The Fourth International Conference of the Military Welfare History Network

ARTICLE BY MS CÉCILE CHEMIN - SENIOR ARCHIVIST MILITARY ARCHIVES & DIRECTOR
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MS CÉCILE CHEMIN

The fourth International Conference of the Military Welfare History Network (MWHN) took place from 9-11 July 2025 in the historic and vibrant city of Graz, Austria.

When I first joined the MWHN, graciously invited by Dr Paul Huddie (University College Dublin) back in 2023, I had little idea that this scholarly journey would take me to Austria. Over the course of three intensive days, I've gained invaluable insights, deepened my understanding of military welfare history in Europe and beyond, and proudly represented both Ireland and our Military Archives.

A word of thanks is due to the organisers: Paul Huddie, Heidrun Zettelbauer, Viktoria Wind, Sabine Haring-Mosbacher, Sabine Jesner and Sarai Lenzberger. From the comprehensive delegate information pack to the warm welcome extended at the University, the high quality catering, and above all, the exceptional calibre of discussion, the experience was faultless. This was a conference that set a high bar.

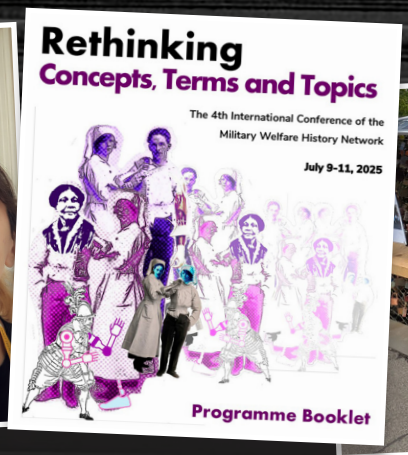
About the Military Welfare History Network

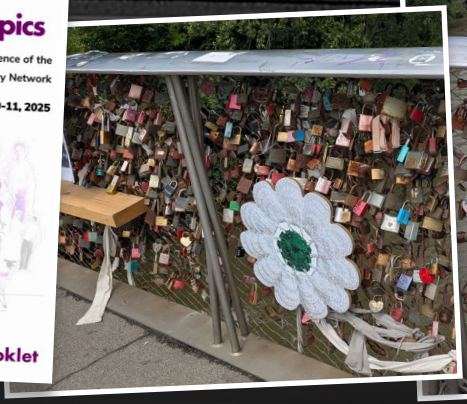
Established in 2019, the Military Welfare History

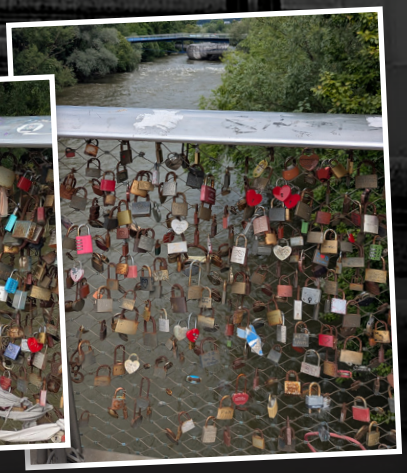












Network brings together researchers from across the globe to explore the historical evolution of welfare, care, and medical provision for military personnel, veterans, and their families.

Whether focused on healthcare systems, pensions, mental health, or the ethics of caregiving, the study of military welfare requires a strong historical foundation. That foundation enables informed assessment, innovation, and the effective development and administration of care systems.

The MWHN also seeks to bridge the past with the present. By applying historical methodologies to contemporary welfare issues, its members contribute to current policy debates and enrich understanding of modern support structures.

Today, the Network consists of 245 members affiliated with over 150 higher education institutions across 27 countries. Its work is supported by collaborations with academic journals, museums, research centres, and policy bodies around the world.

The venue: Graz, A City of Culture and History

Austria's second-largest city after Vienna, Graz is renowned for its vibrant academic life, with four universities and four colleges. Its beautifully preserved Old Town earned UNESCO World Heritage status in 1999. The city's name, historically Gratz or Grätz, likely derives from the Slavic gradec, meaning "small castle."

A visit to Graz is incomplete without stopping at the Styrian Armoury (Landeszeughaus), the largest historical armoury in the world. Housing approximately 32,000 pieces of arms and armour, it is a testament to Europe's martial past.

I also saw that Graz embraced remembrance. During my stay in the city, I had to cross the Erzherzog-Johann Bridge several times on my way to the University and back. Along the bridge, among the love locks, a solemn installation marked 30 years since the Srebrenica massacre, the genocide of more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims in July 1995. It remains the first atrocity in Europe to be legally recognised as genocide since the Second World War. The Srebrenica flower was displayed there, standing as a symbol of remembrance, justice, and hope.

The University of Graz

Founded in 1585, the University of Graz is the largest and oldest university in the region of Styria, currently home to over 30,000 students. It has produced several Nobel laureates, including Erwin Schrödinger (Physics, 1933) and Peter Handke (Literature, 2019), both of whom were associated with Graz during formative periods of their careers.

The 2025 Conference: "Rethinking Concepts, Terms and Topics"

The study of military history has expanded in recent decades. Once focused almost exclusively on battlefield tactics and high-command strategy, the field now encompasses the lived experiences of soldiers and civilians alike. Social history, gender studies, mental health, and the emotional aftermath of war are now firmly embedded in contemporary research.

This year's MWHN conference reflected that evolution. It brought together an interdisciplinary community to explore how military care, support structures, and welfare systems have developed and how they continue to resonate within today's societies.

Presentations tackled diverse themes: masculinity and vulnerability, the emotional burden of care, post-war identity reconstruction, social justice, disability, humanitarianism, and the ethics of support.

One particularly compelling paper was presented by Blanka Matkovic (University of Warwick), titled Rethinking Identity, Sense of Belonging, and Post-War Normality among Croatian Army Veterans. Drawing on interviews with 300 veterans, her research reframed "normality" (Oas in the desire to "go back to normal" post-conflict) as a fluid, complex construct, shaped as much by pre-war trauma and socio-political conditions as by war itself. She highlighted a pervasive sense of injustice among veterans, many of whom feel disconnected from the societies they once fought to protect and/or change.

The Military Service Pensions Archive: redefining the Irish Revolution

As the only archivist in attendance, I had the unique opportunity to present the Military Service Pensions Collection (MSPC), as a dynamic archival resource, transcending traditional military history, enabling new approaches to researching welfare and veteran care (including support for dependents), and facilitating a shift from traditional military history toward cultural history.

The strength of the MSPC lies in its layered structure. Each pension application, each personal testimony, operates on multiple levels: from individual experience and local history, to institutional dynamics and national historical processes to global history. That way, the archive functions much like an archaeological dig; researchers can "excavate" personal narratives, institutional policy shifts, and broader societal changes, all from a single source base.

This 'Russian doll' effect of the pension files makes them a gateway to the Irish Revolutionary period (1916-1923) but also as a springboard for exploring transnational social themes. Indeed, the MSPC invites a bottom-up approach to military history. It shifts the focus away from elite decision-makers and battle-centric narratives, toward the enduring impact of conflict on ordinary lives. These stories, often silenced or overlooked, reveal the long tail of violence: psychological trauma, physical disability, social alienation, and complex post-war adjustments as well as bitterness, grief, struggle, perseverance, and small but significant acts of resilience.

Ultimately, this is a profoundly human archive. It documents more than service, sacrifice, and welfare: it helps to reveal how people rebuild. The personal is not peripheral; it is central to understanding how conflict reshapes society from the inside out.

Conclusion

The fourth MWHN conference in Graz offered more than a scholarly exchange, it was a space of reflection, reconnection, and redefinition. It challenged researchers to think beyond the battlefield and consider the enduring, deeply human dimensions of military service and its aftermath.

For those of us entrusted with preserving and making military records accessible, the work is not simply about cataloguing the past. It is about giving voice to those who lived through history, capturing what was left unsaid, and ensuring that the echoes of service and sacrifice continue to inform our present and shape our future.

46TH DF AN COSANTÓIR 10K RUN AND 5K WALK RESULTS



Congratulations to Lt James Leahy, Cpl Dylan Campbell and Pte Travis Fahy, winners of the 10K Loaded March



MALE RACE	
1st Place	Pte Kenneth Rodgers (31.08)
2nd Place	Sgmn Josh O'Sullivan-Hourihan (32.01)
3rd Place	Cpl Gavin Sweeney (32.28)
O/35	
1st Place	Cpl Paul Mitchell (33.21)
2nd Place	Pte David Redmond (33.39)
3rd Place	Pte Paddy Martin (35.18)
O/40	
1st Place	Comdt Paul Conlon (36.41)
2nd Place	Pte Niall Smith (37.39)
3rd Place	CS Edward Casey (37.88)
O/45	
1st Place	Gnr Gary Walsh (37.00)
2nd Place	CPO Cian McParland (38.35)
O/50	
1st Place	Pte Anto Devaney (40.29)
2nd Place	Col David Browne (40.48)
O/55	
1st Place	Sgt Declan Madden (41.59)
VETERAN	
1st Place	Paul O'Beirne (34.17)
2nd Place	William Dowdall (40.03)
VET O/40	
1st Place	Mark Mitchell (45.40)
VET O/50	
1St Place	Daniel Delaney (40.33)
GUEST	
1st Place	Shane Ryan (36.50)
2nd Place	Stephen Collier (37.55)

FEMALE RACE	
1st Place	Capt Elizabeth Carr (35.53)
2nd Place	Pte Nicole Morehouse (38.45)
3rd Place	Pte Louise Nolan (41.45)
O/35	
1st Place	Tpr Christina Mandzyuk (44.07)
2nd Place	Pte Tina McKeever (45.53)
O/45	
1st Place	Sgt Kim Turner (53.29)
2nd Place	A/CQMS Sally Lawler (53.35)
VETERAN	
1st Place	Tara Kennedy (41.02)
GUEST	
1st Place	Leona O'Reilly (40.11)
TEAM RESULTS	
MEN'S TEAM	
1st Place	27 INF BN
2nd Place	6 INF BN
3rd Place	MIL COL DFTC
WOMEN'S TEAM	
1st Place	3 INF BN
2nd Place	MIL COL DFTC
LOADED MARCH WINNERS	
1st Place	126 INF BN
2nd Place	Cadet School
3rd Place	12 INF BN
BLOCK WINNERS	
1st Place	Cadet School No.1
2nd Place	12 INF BN
3rd Place	Engr Corps

IRELAND v BELGIAN ARMED FORCES	
MALE	
1st Place	Sgt Yan Bruers (31.06) (BEL)
FEMALE	
1st Place	Capt Elizabeth Carr (35.53) (IRE)
MEN'S TEAM	
1st Place	Belgium
WOMEN'S TEAM	
1st Place	Ireland


624








2071


993
5029
5018


829
383
326
563




1031




GBn
116


183




DEFENCE FORCES
384
964






LDN



FINDING STRENGTH IN STILLNESS: YOGA & THE MILITARY

ARTICLE BY COMDT STEPHEN BUNNEY

At first glance, yoga and military service might seem like unlikely companions. One conjures images of peaceful meditation and gentle stretches, whilst the other evokes thoughts of robust training and operational deployments. Yet, beneath the surface, these two disciplines share remarkably similar foundations: discipline, mental fortitude, breath control, unwavering commitment, the ability to remain calm under stress, and the pursuit of peak performance under pressure. The truth is that yoga and military training are a far better fit than you might initially think.

Balancing Force and Flow

The ancient Chinese concept of yin and yang teaches us that true strength comes from balancing opposing forces, not from developing one at the expense of the other. In military operations, we need both the yang energy to take decisive action and the yin wisdom to know when to pause, observe, and adapt. Yoga cultivates this balance, making us more complete operators and leaders.

Military training excels at developing our "yang" qualities; strength, discipline, action, and external focus. We learn to push through discomfort, maintain vigilance, and respond decisively to challenges. These qualities are essential for operational effectiveness, but they represent only half of the equation.

Yoga introduces us to the equally important "yin" qualities; receptivity, introspection, stillness, and internal awareness. Rather than opposing our military training, these softer qualities enhance it. In our evolving Defence Forces culture of transformation, inclusivity and growth, these yin qualities are becoming increasingly recognised as vital to modern military effectiveness.



Beyond Physical Training

Many people, including myself, initially approach yoga as another form of physical training. Whilst the asanas (physical postures) certainly





improve flexibility, strength, and mobility, they represent just one aspect of a much deeper practice. The Sanskrit word "yoga" means "to yoke" or "to unite" – specifically, to develop awareness of our thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and reactions. For military personnel, this heightened self-awareness translates into better decision-making, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced leadership capabilities.

I've had the privilege of teaching yoga to an incredibly diverse range of Defence Forces personnel – from operational deployments, Recruits, Cadets, POTs Courses, Standard Courses, Women's Network groupings, PTI Courses etc. The initial reaction is often scepticism, particularly among personnel who associate yoga with images that don't align with traditional military culture.

Social media doesn't help this perception – it's flooded with unrealistic body types performing contortion-style poses that bear little resemblance to authentic yoga practice. These images create unrealistic expectations and can be intimidating for anyone, especially those new to the practice. The reality is far different. True yoga isn't about achieving Instagram-worthy poses or having a perfect physique. It's about working with your body as it is, building awareness, and developing practical tools for physical and mental wellbeing.

Time and again, the feedback from military personnel is remarkably consistent: "I thought it was all about the physical aspect, but I felt so calm and grounded afterwards" – or words to that effect. This response comes from seasoned NCOs, young recruits, and everyone in between. This transformation speaks to yoga's ability to provide something our traditional training methods might sometimes miss: tools for internal regulation and mental resilience.

Practical Applications

Military training teaches us to control our external environment, but yoga's breathing techniques teach us to influence our internal state through conscious breathing. Specific techniques can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, reduce stress hormones and promote recovery, whilst others enhance focus and alertness when needed. These are immediately applicable in military contexts – from managing competing demands during a live fire tactical exercise to maintaining composure during a call out with the QRT.

The physical postures address common issues in military populations: tight hips from carrying equipment, shoulder tension from body armour, and lower back strain from prolonged sitting or standing. More importantly, they teach us to find stability and ease simultaneously – a quality essential for effective leadership. Each pose becomes an opportunity to practice maintaining calm awareness whilst experiencing physical challenge, directly transferring to our ability to remain centred during operational stress.

Perhaps most valuable is yoga's development of present-moment awareness. In tactical situations, this translates to better situational awareness and threat assessment. In leadership roles, it means being fully present with our team members and making decisions from a place of clarity rather than reactivity.

Yogic philosophy offers practical wisdom for military life. The concept of "dharma" – righteous duty – aligns closely with our military oath and sense of service. The practice of "ahimsa" – non-violence – doesn't mean avoiding necessary action, but rather ensuring our actions come from a place of protection rather than aggression. "Tapas" – disciplined practice – resonates with military training methodologies, emphasising consistent effort over sporadic intensity.

Building Military Resilience

The benefits of integrating yoga into military life extend far beyond what most initially expect. Beyond improved flexibility and stress management, personnel often report better sleep quality, enhanced recovery from physical training, improved emotional regulation, and stronger community when practiced in groups.

What makes yoga particularly valuable for military personnel is its emphasis on mindfulness and present-moment awareness. In our profession, we're constantly switching between high-stress operational environments and family life, with the potential to carry the intensity of one into the other. Yoga teaches us to be fully present wherever we are – completely focused during operations, yet able to genuinely disconnect and be available to our families when we're home.

The breathing techniques and awareness practices provide practical tools for managing the inevitable pressures of military life whilst helping us maintain perspective. Most importantly, yoga reminds us that whilst we serve with dedication and courage, we are more than our rank or role.

For fellow Defence Forces personnel considering yoga, approach it with the same openness you'd bring to any new training opportunity. The benefits extend far beyond the mat – into professional performance, personal relationships, and overall quality of life. In a profession that demands we give our best to others, yoga teaches us how to nurture ourselves, ensuring we can continue serving with strength, clarity, and compassion.

As the ancient Sanskrit saying reminds us: "Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu" – "May all beings everywhere be happy and free." In military service, we embody this principle daily, working to protect the freedom and wellbeing of others. Yoga simply ensures we include ourselves in that circle of care, maintaining our own strength and balance so we can continue serving effectively for years to come.



Comdt Stephen Bunney is currently serving in the Cadet School as Class Officer of the 102nd Cadet Class. He has completed over 500 hours of yoga training with over 4,000 hours of teaching experience, and a background in psychology, leadership and coaching.





LONG WAY FROM HOME

Irish citizens in British service on a peacekeeping mission in Poland

ARTICLE BY CPL LUCKASZ GANCARZ
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LUCKASZ GANCARZ

For over one hundred years, thirty forgotten British soldiers' and two civilian graves lie hidden in an inconspicuous plot of an old graveyard in the city of Opole, Poland. What makes them relevant to an Irish history is that 11 of these soldiers are Irish, coming from various towns such as Swords, Wexford, or Kilbride. How did Irishmen end up so far from their country, when Irish independence was being forged?

Polish and Irish history is not only full of similarities, but it actually brings both nations together in combat and in peacekeeping operations. Today's Camp Shamrock in Southern Lebanon is being ran by both Irish and Polish soldiers, however going back years, our hunger for freedom brought both nations together in combat as early as the 18th Century, when Polish soldiers joined the Irish in the Napoleonic "Legion Irlandaise". The legion continued flighting under Napoleon's command, up to its famous Battle of Bobr (also known as Battle of the Löwenburg on the 21st of August 1813) and many other skirmishes in the region of Silesia.

Poland and Ireland continued its fight for independence, with citizens joining European armies to oppose their common enemies. For Poland, the victory came on the 11th of November 1918 (now celebrated as the Independence Day) when the State came back to existence on the European maps, after over 123 years of occupation by the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Russian empires. While Poland won its freedom, several major conflicts continued to disturb the State, such as the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920. Several regional uprisings took place, such as the Upper Silesia one, where local insurgencies opposed the post war reality. The Versailles Treaty mandated an official plebiscite, as the region was habituated by both Polish and German citizens. While political processes took place to establish the ownership of the area with its new borders, local paramilitary units took part in skirmishes along the borders. This is where Polish and Irish would meet again. Allied forces deployed a significant peacekeeping force, consisting of French, Italian and British troops – the last unit most noticeably also including the several Irish Regiments, which spent over a year on a mission in the Upper Silesia. A large part of the peacekeeping contingent was made out of Irishmen, who were sent over to Poland, to keep them away from their homeland during the War of Independence. The first soldiers arrived in Opole in January 1920 and were greeted with huge interest and





gratitude. The biggest local newspaper in Katowice (one of the major cities of the region) quotes: "Greetings! Welcome! We will never forget your liberation of Poland. Long live the allied states! ... Upper Silesian people! Rejoice and be proud ... remember at the same time that there is still a great fight ahead of us that we have to fight ourselves." While the local German population became sceptical, Poles assisted the new peacekeepers as their own.

While the first British peacekeeping contingent entered the Upper Silesia in early March 1921, the 1st Royal Irish Regiment arrived in May of the same year and remained stationed in Tarnowskie Gory until July 1922. The second tour of troops was much more significant in strength, including the Leinster Regiment, Connaught Rangers and Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, backed up by two artillery batteries and even a tank regiment. All the units came with their full logistics departments, which included an advanced medical post, and motor transport company. This was mainly caused by the start of the Third Silesian Uprising and an increased hostilities between German and Polish population. The two Infantry Brigades contained three Irish Battalions serving as a part of the Royal Irish Regiment, the Connaught Rangers and the Leinster Regiment. The main goal of the British Command was to keep the Irish soldiers as far away as possible from the War of Independence back as home and many Irish Citizens serving within the English forces shared a similar fate, being sent far away from Ireland. When the decision was made to reinforce the peacekeeping force in 1921, two more Irish Battalions from Royal Munster and Inniskilling Fusiliers were dispatched to the region. Soon after the Constitution of the Irish State was set in place, all Irish soldiers were sent back home, replaced by the British troops.







During the short stay of the contingent, as many as 41 British died in Silesia including 11 Irish, mainly of sickness, however one particular incident comes to light. As far as records go, backed by an article in "The Cologne Post" (British Army newspaper for the troops stationed in Rhineland) dated 19 February 1922, four Irish soldiers died and a fifth was seriously wounded, when another Irishman opened fire on them in an unprovoked attack. Below is an extract of the original article: "The tragedy in the 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish now in Upper Silesia, took place on Saturday 11st inst. About 8.15 hours, a Private soldier suddenly went mad and shot two Privates in his own barrack room, and then proceeded to the Company Dining Hall where he shot dead two more Privates. Later on he shot at and dangerously wounded a Corporal of another company. Twelve shots were fired altogether and several men had miraculous escapes. Fortunately there were very few men about at the time or the result might have been even more terrible. After shooting the Corporal, the madman put down his rifle and gave himself up to the commander of the guard. There was no question of ill - feeling against any particular individual, as letters which he left behind prove that he was merely a homicidal lunatic."

While the article gives detail, it fails to name the "crazed soldier" however thanks to correspondence from 1930, between Opole City Hall and the British Ministry of War, concerning the maintenance and upkeep of the graves, researchers were able to identify all four fallen soldiers, by sharing the common date of death (11 February 1922) and the same unit. The fallen Irishmen were:

Private Michael Foran (Army No. 7111257) born in the village of Carrickbeg, County Tipperary, Ireland, probably in 1903. A farmer by trade, he took his military oath on 2 November 1920 in the town of Clonmel. His mother Kate Foran lived at Mothel Road, Carrick-on-Suir.

Private James Keating (No. 7110968) was born in the town of Swords, near Dublin, probably in 1897. He was a labourer by trade. During World War I, he fought in France, where he was wounded on 22 March 1918 during the German Spring Offensive. James' father, Damhnaic Keating, was domiciled in the Dublin suburb of Mulhuddart.

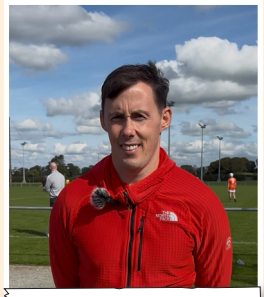
Private Martin Murphy (No. 7110952), who came from Wexford, Ireland, was most likely born in 1901. He was a son of Thomas Murphy of Green Street, Wexford. He had worked as a labourer until he took his military oath on 5 January 1920 in his home town.

Lance Corporal Patrick Shally (No. 7109064), the eldest of the four, was born in 1886 in the village of Kilbride, County Roscommon, Ireland. A farmer by occupation, he was sworn in on 22 February 1905 in Chester, England, at the age of 19. He fought on the Macedonian Front during the First World War and was wounded on 30 April 1918.

Sadly, the Imperial War Graves Commission (since 1960 named the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) does not recognise any of the graves left behind in Poland. According to its policies, only 11 soldiers qualified as casualties of war and their bodies were exhumated and buried again in the CWGC cemetery in Stahnsdorf, near Berlin. The remaining 30 soldiers, including fallen Irish citizens were left behind, without proper care or funds to maintain their plots. After World War II, the socialist government of Poland had no interest in commemorating foreign soldier's graves under its jurisdiction. Throughout the years, their graves became forgotten and destroyed by the elements. Their current exact location of the burial plots of individual soldiers is not known; however, it is thanks to people like Mr. Mariusz Gasior, we can learn more about their time in Poland and their final resting place. Mr. Gasior, a local historian and researcher, is not only taking care of the burial site of both British and Irish citizens, but also ensures that their names won't be forgotten. Mr. Gasior wrote a full research paper on the British soldiers stationed in Silesia region, and works relentlessly not only to preserve their memory but he also actively campaigns to have the graves officially recognised, both by the Polish and British authority. As per the Irish Citizens, buried so far away from home, just recently Mr. Gasior founded a commemorative plaque and organised a remembrance event, attended by members of a local historical recreation groups and a Scottish pipe band.

SPORTS & CLUBS UPDATE

HURLING



Kilkenny Senior Hurler Pte Richie Reid

The DF Inter Bde hurling competition took place in The Faithful fields Offaly GAA centre of excellence on September 24th. Over 60 Hurlers were involved representing all units and formations. 4 x teams competed for the DF hurling Inter Bde and an inaugural competition, the Pte Gerard McMahon Cup, which was donated by his friends and colleagues from the 1st Inf Bn and the 63rd Inf Group UNDOF. Pte McMahon tragically passed away in 2021. The winners of the Inter Bde were 1 Bde, and the 3 Inf Bn won the Pte Gerard McMahon Cup which was presented by his parents Pat and Carmel. Look forward - the upcoming DF Rep series versus AIB in Hawkfield, the Kildare GAA centre of excellence, on the 19th of November. There will be a match versus the Gardaí (AGS) which will take place in Semple Stadium on the 03rd of November. Also, in December the DF team will travel to London to play the London senior hurling team.



Presentation of the Pte Gerard McMahon cup by his parents Pat and Carmel



JIU-JITSU



Armn Baltaduonis on the winners podium receiving his bronze medal

The Defence Forces Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) team competed in the national BJJ tournament in Blanchardstown TU on Sunday 28th of September with 22 soldiers from the Air Corps, Army and Navy taking part. They won 30 medals overall, a very successful day out. The DF BJJ team have small groups training locally all over the DF in the following locations:

AIR CORPS // AIKEN BKS // CATHAL BRUGHA BKS // COLLINS BKS // HAULBOWLINE // STEPHENS BKS // DFTC

Get in contact with your local sports rep to find out more.

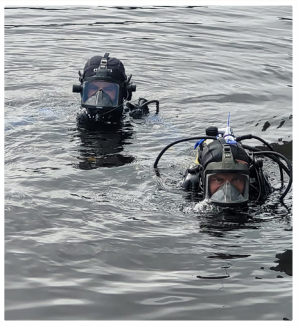




Cpl Nesbit who won double bronze



DF DIVE GROUP



The Defence Forces Dive Group held the continuation dive camp in Collins Barracks, Cork. The objective of the camp was to upskill personnel who had recently completed the Basic Dive Course. Club divers experienced a range of dive training scenarios including an introduction to full face mask diving, a visit to the Naval Service Diving Section and RHIB training. The camp culminated with a dive on a German WW1 submarine in Cork harbour. Contact us through the Connect app if you're interested in "try-a-dive" experience with the DFDG.



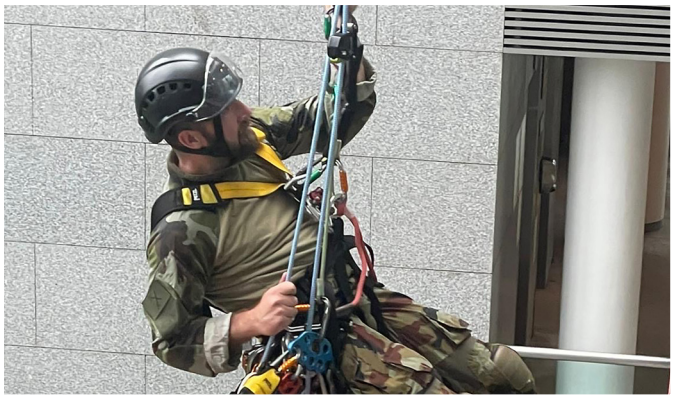




DFAM

In the last month members of DFAM took part in the DFB reeve'n'rescue 2025 workshop. This consisted of 5 rescue scenarios spaced out over Dublin City centre.

Members of DFAM also underwent their reassessments in Dalkey quarry. These are essential to maintain our skills level and currency.







Reeve 'n' Rescue workshop in Dublin City







Sgt Ken Ennis and Pte Jordan Carr goal celebration

SOCCER

DF Soccer held its first camp since the 1-1 draw with the Dutch in Cork this week. The week was a preparation week for the upcoming CISM fixtures away to France in November and the UKAF men and women's double header in Dublin in December.

Although numbers where tight it was a positive week allowing the staff focus on system and course of action preparation for the upcoming internationals!

DF soccer is always looking for high quality players to join the squad. If you think you have what it takes, contact any member of staff or players and we will organise a trial #weareone

DF ROWING

The Irish Defence Forces Rowing Club took part in the Rhine Marathon in Germany — a prestigious 42.8 km rowing race from Leverkusen to Düsseldorf. The team, made up of serving Defence Forces personnel, trained extensively for the challenging event, which tested stamina, teamwork, and resilience. Upon arrival, the crew received a warm welcome from the international rowing community. Despite tough weather conditions on race day — including strong headwinds and cold temperatures — they maintained a steady pace alongside top European crews. The Irish boats achieved impressive results:

- 5th and 11th place overall
- 3rd international boat
- 1st Irish boat

Their performance earned praise for both athletic achievement and sportsmanship. Beyond competition, the event fostered international camaraderie and cultural exchange. The club views this as a milestone in its mission to promote fitness, teamwork, and international cooperation, with plans to return next year.









ON PARADE



The Collins Cup DF Golf tournament winner Pte Ciarán Healy from 1 BDE CMU



Armn Eric Cumberton has completed his Emergency Aeromedical Service training with Air Corps 112 and is now live with the service



The DFTC Soccer team pictured after winning the Cunningham Cup



The DF Men's Rugby Team pictured after playing against the Dutch Lions, winning 32-7.



Congratulations to OS Morris who has become the first ever NSR driver from the Cork NSR Unit.



The 64th Naval Service Cadet Class visited the Peruvian training vessel BAP Union in Dublin. The Cadets spoke to Peruvian cadets about their experiences so far and the similarities between both Peruvian Cadetship and an Irish navy cadetship



Members of EUBG had their kit on display at the National Services Day held in Dublin Castle



Members of the 03rd Air Corps Progression Course pictured at their passing out

ON PARADE



The 177th Recruit Platoon concluded training in Collins Barracks Cork, trained by 1 Brigade Cavalry Squadron. The platoon carries on their training in 12th Inf Bn.



Sgt Nathan Clabby & Cpl Darren Brennan 6 Inf Bn travelled to Hanscom Air Force base in the US where they competed in the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge Test 2025. Both successfully achieved bronze awards under the tutelage & management of CS Lynch, Sp Coy, 6 Inf Bn



Lt (NS) Cian Moran launched his book "The Evolution of Humanitarian Intervention in International Law: From the Ottoman Empire to the Russia-Ukraine War" in The University of Galway in September



Head of Strategic HR Mr Declan Carville speaking at the Senior Enlisted Leaders Conference which took place in the Osprey Hotel



CS Mark Doherty pictured receiving his new rank marking on promotion from OC 6 Inf Bn Lt Col Lennon and BSM 6 Inf Bn Sgt Maj Nuttall



Members of the public on the Bridge of L.É. Samuel Beckett at a recent open day in Port Foyle



Mr Derek Redican recently presented his artwork of Michael Collins to the Department of Defence



Members of the Naval College recently completed a six-week Professional Seamanship Course, covering a wide range of vital maritime skills. Over the duration of the course, participants gained practical experience in replenishment at sea, towing operations, rope work, swimmer-of-the-watch duties, and key health and safety practices



GOC DFTC conducted his unit inspections in September

ON PARADE



Pte Shauna Kearney & Pte Rachel Lawless on their way to represent Ireland in boxing against England and Hungary



Members of the Naval Service pictured after completing the Cork Mini Marathon in September



Members of 127 Inf Bn UNIFIL took part in SafeTALK in preparation to overseas deployment – the Suicide Alert Helpers' role will help open direct conversations around suicide and connect people to suicide interveners when needed



Brussels adult hurling team won the European Hurling Cup 2025 on 04 Oct with Lt Col Stephen Molumphy (EU MPCC) as a player. This competition is run over 4 days in different cities around Europe and involves 52 different hurling clubs from 22 European countries.



Sgmn Ben McMahon receiving an award for Best Project in Engineering at the Global Undergraduate Awards for his dynamic project, AQUA-TRIC. This is the second year in a row the Defence Forces has been the winner of this prestigious award.



101st Cadet Class Dig-in exercise in the Wicklow Mountains



Archie visits the Air Corps who transported him in 2022 for urgent medical care



2 Bde Training Centre on Carnagh Range for Range Conducting Officer Course



1 Cn Cois troops enjoying a midday sail courtesy of Pte O'Griofa

ON PARADE



1 Cn Cois troops on a Battle PT for unit fitness



The 69th Recruit Platoon ready for their 50km run for Archie's Army



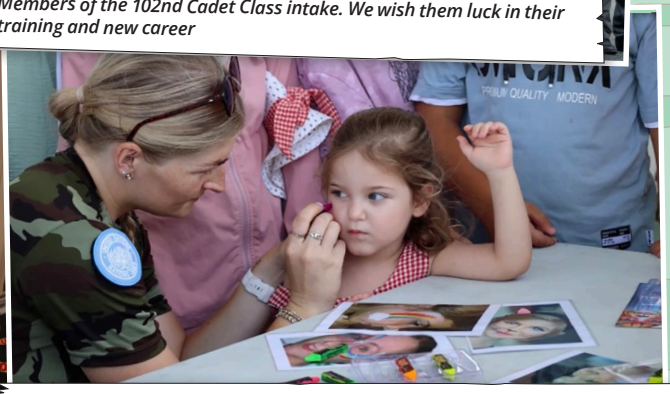
The arrival of one of the new C295 after landing in Baldonnel Aerodrome



Members of the 102nd Cadet Class intake. We wish them luck in their training and new career



The Defence Forces Gala Concert recently took place in the National Concert Hall. Members of the Defence Forces School of Music are pictured here with Uachtarán na hÉireann attending his last concert as Commander in Chief of the Defence Forces



Cpl Jenny Scott serving with the 126 Inf Bn UNIFIL interacting with the local community



The Veterans Day Parade took place in September in McKee Barracks



Members of the Air Corps at the Bray Air Display

ONE

Organisation of National Ex-Service Personnel

www.one-veterans.org

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Phase 2 of the ONE Home Expansion Plan was recently launched with homes in Cork City, Limerick City and Newbridge, Co. Kildare, with an invesment of €3.5 Million.

As part of our Annual Fuchsia Appeal, we are reaching out to the Military and Veteran Community to support these homes.

Will you donate the price of a coffee (€5.00) once a month in support of Homeless Irish Veterans?

BAVAC

BUY A VETERAN A COFFEE







Serving Members & Pensioners can have this amount deducted at source.

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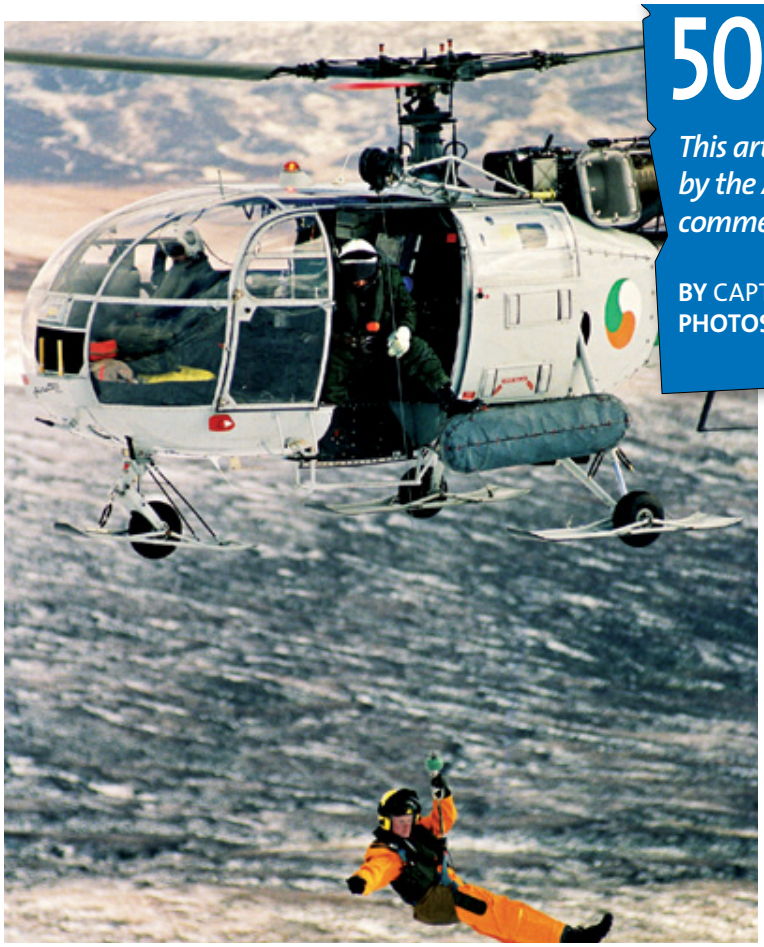
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FROM THE ARCHIVES

AN COSANTÓIR VOLUME 73, ISSUE 10, DECEMBER 2013/JANUARY 2014



50 Years of Heli Ops

This article has been reproduced from a booklet put together by the Air Corps to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the commencement of helicopter operations.

BY CAPT DAVID BROWNE AND LT COLIN GALLAGHER
PHOTOS 105 SQN (PHOTOGRAPHIC)

The decision by the Irish Air Corps to purchase helicopters wasn't arrived at through major strategic planning, but rather as a result of a number of tragedies from the late '50s onwards. In 1957, following a boating accident in which five people tragically drowned on 22nd October near Clare Island, an inter-departmental committee was set up to investigate the position in regard to arrangements for rescue on the occurrence of sea and air disasters, and to make recommendations. They concluded that better radio communications at sea and a 24-hour coordination service would suffice – and that the requirement for helicopters to save lives would be so rare that it wouldn't warrant being introduced.

In 1961 two shipping incidents where lives were lost (one in October near Eagle Head off the Mayo coast and a second in December off the Wexford coast) prompted a rethink of this strategy. When the involvement of RAF helicopters reduced the number of fatalities from the Halronnel off Wexford, a second committee concluded in 1962 that the men saved from the Halronnel could not, in all probability, have been saved by any other means. This report was presented to the Minister for Transport and Power Mr Erskine Childers who, after the very harsh winter of 1963, raised seven questions to the Dáil, all relating to the establishment of a helicopter rescue service. The official Dáil report (Vol 199, No 1, Tuesday 22nd January, 1963) included a paragraph stating that "The Government have decided that some helicopters should be acquired which will be available for sea and air rescue work... and the service will be administered by the Minister for Defence."

No 3 Operations Wing was originally established under the name of Helicopter Flight in 1963 with the arrival of two SA 3160 Alouette III helicopters. The decision was made to commence a search-and-rescue (SAR) service, operated by the Defence Forces, with the Air Corps providing the aircraft, and the Naval Service providing the Rescue Co-ordination Centre. The Alouette III, having originally been designed to meet a French Army requirement for a medical evacuation helicopter during the Algerian campaign, would suit the role very well. At the time these helicopters were so rare and in demand, the original course was carried out on an Alouette II.

The first two helicopters, A195 and A196 arrived on 26th November 1963. The first SAR mission took place on 23rd December 1963, only three weeks after the service had gone operational, while the first air ambulance took place in February 1964 after a period of heavy snowfall in the west. The men of Helicopter Flight quickly distinguished themselves in those early days with a series of particularly daring rescues on Muckish and Glendalough to name but a few.

These original two helicopters were augmented over the coming years with a further six Alouette IIIs, bringing the total fleet to eight airframes by 1974. At this time Helicopter Flight was upgraded to squadron status. To date, 18 DSMs have been awarded to crews of these helicopters, which provided a SAR service until August 2002.

As the political situation in Northern Ireland deteriorated in the 1970s, the unit saw two new tasks develop to an unprecedented level: those of Army Support and support to An Garda Síochána. Based at Finner Camp, Monaghan Bks and Cavan Bks, these aircraft were used extensively for border recce, observation and limited troop transport. During this period they transported everything from VIPs such as Eamonn de Valera, to IEDs from Coleman's Island, while also maintaining a SAR service for the public.

This intense operational activity of the Alouette IIIs led to reduced availability for training of new crews, so in 1978 sanction was given for the purchase of two SA 342L Gazelle helicopters. This aircraft was at the time the primary training helicopter of the British Army Air Corps, as well as the principal anti-tank helicopter of the British and French armies. From this moment, all helicopter conversion courses would be flown on the Gazelle, and this would last until June 2003.

In 1981 the Defence Forces leased an AS330 Puma helicopter. As fortune had it, the country would then experience the harshest winter in living memory, with the highest recorded snowfalls. The Puma was invaluable to Operation 'Snowman', the greatest air relief operation the state had ever seen. Despite this, the lease for this aircraft was discontinued in 1982.

In 1986 the unit was upgraded to Wing status with the introduction to service of the AS365Fi Dauphin II helicopter. The Dauphin was at the time the first aircraft in the country to be equipped with a 'glass' cockpit, replacing the traditional 'boiler gauges' of the Alouette III with television-screen-style cathode ray tube (CRT) instrument readouts. This gave the Wing a 24-hour SAR capability for the first time in its history, and began a new era of SAR.

In 1997 the unit began supporting the recently founded Garda Air Support Unit at Baldonnel and continues to this day to exclusively provide pilots, technicians and an operating base for An Garda Síochána.

On the night of Thursday 1st July 1999, the unit suffered the loss of a full crew and aircraft while deployed on SAR duty. Dauphin 248 was on its first night of a new deployment in the Southeast on 24-hour SAR duty in Waterford Airport when a call for assistance was received to search for a boat reported lost off Dungarvan in poor visibility. Following the successful completion of the mission and with further assistance provided, the helicopter was flown back to Waterford Airport just after midnight. However, visibility at the airport had deteriorated to such an extent that each attempt to land at the airport had to be abandoned. With the helicopter now low on fuel, the crew made the decision to perform a coastal approach, but tragically struck high sand dunes near Tramore during the attempt. The complete crew of Capt Dave O'Flaherty, Capt Mick Baker, Sgt Paddy Mooney and Cpl Niall Byrne lost their lives in the impact. The Distinguished Service Medal was posthumously awarded to each of the crew for acting in the truest spirit of the unit's motto, Go Mairidís Beo (That Others May Live).

The introduction of a leased Sikorsky S-61 in Sligo for SAR and the introduction of a second Garda helicopter in 2002 enabled the remaining Alouette III pilots to develop the Army Support role to the greatest degree ever experienced. The pilots began to train to the NATO standard of helicopter drills for the first time, and with the permanent withdrawal of SAR in 2004, the way forward to a dedicated military role for the unit was assured.

September 2005 saw the arrival of the Eurocopter Deutchland EC-135 for 302 Squadron. This was the first green-coloured helicopter operated by the Air Corps since the Puma of the early 1980s. These helicopters continue to give excellent service today in the areas of pilot conversion training, recce and aerial photography.

In November 2006, 301 Squadron took delivery of the first two Augusta Westland AW 139s. Now, for the first time, it had an all green, militarily capable fleet. This former SAR squadron now had a dedicated military role to be developed, but many of the traditional skills learnt would lend themselves to this new task, particularly in the skills of fast roping and abseiling.

Ironically, by 2007 the incredible Alouette III was still in service. Forty-four years of continuous operation saw the coming and going of the Gazelle, Puma, Dauphin, S61 and Squirrel helicopter types, not to mention many other fixed-wing aircraft. Not bad for an initial £50,000 each!

The Alouette III remains the most important aircraft ever operated by the Air Corps, having saved more lives, given longer service, given more positive exposure to the Defence Forces, and offered the best value for money compared to any other air asset. But then, the new fleet is still young.

No 3 Operations Wing today consists of four squadrons: 301 Tactical Helicopter Squadron, which employs six Augusta Westland AW139s; 302 Training and ISTAR Helicopter Squadron, which operates two Eurocopter EC135P2s; 303 Deployment & Technical Support Squadron, which carries out day-to-day and heavy maintenance on the helicopter fleet; and 304 Policing & Security Squadron, which employs two EC135T2s and a BN Defender 4000 fixed-wing surveillance aircraft. (304 Squadron is jointly operated by the Air Corps and An Garda Siochána in carrying out the gardaí's day-to-day airborne security operations). Wing HQ consists of the Operations Cell, which coordinates flying missions, training and associated taskings; the Orderly Room, which carries out all day-to-day administration; and the logistics staff, who deal with everything from survival equipment and mission supplies, to the procurement and maintenance of flight-planning computers and transport. ■











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