IN THIS ISSUE: FAMILY HISTORY • THROUGH THE LENS • EYEWITNESS

IRELAND'S MILITARY STORY

ISSUE 8 WINTER 2017/2018 RRP: €7.50

IN FRIENDSHIP AND IN SERVICE

Supporting the RAF Family
The Royal Air Force Association, Republic of Ireland

IRELAND'S EMERGENCY FORTRESS FORT SHANNON, COUNTY KERRY

By Pat Dargan

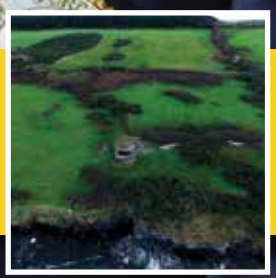
THE 'DOWN' SPITFIRE MK IIA

By the Ulster Aviation Society

THE RAF'S BEST FIGHTERS ARE ON THE GROUND

Interview with Frank Brien, Royal Air Force Association (ROI)

INSIDE:



ARE YOU THE IRISH DEFENCE FORCES' ELDEST VETERAN

An Cosantóir – the Defence Forces Magazine and Ireland's Military Story have teamed up with Military Archives and the National Museum of Ireland in search for the oldest veterans of the Irish Defence Forces.

We would like to find the eldest veteran in each Corps/Service and record their story.

If you served or know anyone who served in the following Corps/Services: Air Corps, Artillery, Cavalry, Coastwatching Service, Construction Corps, Engineers, Infantry, Local Defence/ Security Force, Local Defence Force (LDF)/ Fórsa Cosanta Áitiúil (FCÁ), Medical, Marine/ Naval Service, Signals, Transport, Military Police, or Ordnance please get in touch.

As part of an ongoing Oral History project, the Veterans accounts will be recorded and deposited for future generations in Military Archives and the National Museum, and published in both magazines.

A reception will be held in the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin, in the New Year, date TBC.

IRELAND'S MILITARY STORY
Become part of Ireland's leading military history magazine.

THE DEFENCE FORCES MAGAZINE
AN COSANTÓIR

museum
National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Óglaigh na hÉireann
DEFENCE FORCES IRELAND

PLEASE CONTACT:

Wesley Bourke: Tel: +353 (0)86 8321137 /editor@Irelandsmilitarystory.ie
Wayne FitzGerald: Tel: +353 (0)45 44 5307 magazine@military.ie

FB: DefenceForces
Twitter: @defenceforces
FB: National-Museum-of-Ireland-Decorative-Arts-and-History
Twitter: @NMIreland
FB - Ireland's Military Story
Twitter - @IRMilitaryStory

IRELAND'S MILITARY STORY

Publisher:
Reveille Publications Ltd.
PO Box 1078
Maynooth
Co. Kildare

ISSN
Print- ISSN 2009-8847
Digital-ISSN 2009-8855

Editor
Wesley Bourke
editor@irelandsmilitarystory.ie

Photographic Editor
Billy Galligan

Photographer
Ken Mooney
photographer@irelandsmilitarystory.ie

Sub-Editor
Una Ryan

Subscriptions
subscriptions@irelandsmilitarystory.ie
General enquires: info@irelandsmilitarystory.ie

To advertise with us please contact advertising@irelandsmilitarystory.ie

Graphic Designer
Rob Lewis
rob@minxdesign.ie

Digital Media and Marketing
Declan Brennan

Printer
GPS Colour Graphics Ltd.
Alexander Road
Belfast
BT6 9HP
Northern Ireland
Phone: +44 28 9070 2020

Distribution
Warners Group Publications Plc
West St,
Bourne PE10 9NB,
United Kingdom
Phone: +44 1778 391000

Digital distribution
MagazineCloner.com

Contributors

Frank Brien
Ernie Cromie
Pat Dargan
Seán Feast
Catherine Fleming
Lar Joye
AP (Tony) Kearns
Ian Loftus
Stephen MacEoin
Peter McWilliams
Stephen Riley
Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas

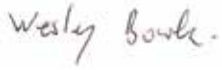
Front cover

Editor's Note

The Royal Air Force (RAF) is soon approaching its 100th anniversary. Ireland and the RAF date back to those early days. In those early years there were several Royal Flying Corps, RAF and United States Navy stations around the country. The RAF presence in Northern Ireland remained prominent throughout Second World War and Cold War. Today the welfare of those who served in the RAF is provided by the Royal Air Force Association. The Branch in the Republic of Ireland is made of over 200 members. Several are veterans of the Second World War, including pilots who flew in the Battle of British and Coastal Command, ground personnel, and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. It was a privilege to meet these men and women and to hear tales from a time that will soon be resigned to the history books. Many of its other members served in various capacities throughout the Cold War and up to the present day. Veterans groups around the world are like a family. The RAFA are no different. Its volunteers make sure that those in need are cared for. In many cases this can be as simple as a house visit to someone who lives on their own. At other times it is remembering those who served.

To find out the full story of the RAF in Ireland you do not have to travel very far. In a hanger at Long Kesh in Lisburn is the largest private collection of aircraft on the island. The Ulster Aviation Society has 36 civilian and military aircraft in its collection. Made up of volunteers, this group of aviation historians are dedicated to the restoration, preservation and education of all things aviation. There you can see examples of the very aircraft which the veterans in the RAFA spoke to us about.

Yours in history,
Wesley Bourke



Interested in submitting an article or photographs? Here at Ireland's military story we welcome submissions from our readers. For further information please contact the editor at: editor@irelandsmilitarystory.ie or visit www.irelandsmilitarystory.ie

Contents

Contents

With Thanks

We would like to thank the following for their support and help in this issue.

An Cosantóir – the Defence Forces magazine
Dáire Brunicardi
Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
Fortress Spike Island
Fortress Study Group
Irish Air Corps Museum
Irish Defence Forces Military Archives
Irish Defence Forces Press Office
Irish Guards Association
James Scannell
Military Heritage of Ireland Trust
National Museum of Ireland
Organisation of National Ex-servicemen and women
Royal Air Force Association
The Irish Guards Association
The Royal British Legion
Ulster Aviation Society

DISPATCHES

Medal Awarded to Survivors of Jadotville

At a ceremony in Custume Barracks, Athlone, on December 2nd, survivors of the Siege of Jadotville were awarded with a medal inscribed - An Bonn Jadotville. Along with the words 'cosaint chalma' and 'misneach' – the Irish words for 'valiant defence' and 'courage'.

The surviving men of A Company, 35th Infantry Battalion, along with the family members of deceased members, received the Jadotville Medal in honour of their courage during the four-day attack and siege in the Congo on September 13th, 1961. Serving with the United Nations, the peacekeepers came under attack from Katangese Gendarmerie. After ammunition and water ran out the peacekeepers stood down and were taken prison on September 17th.

The medals were presented to the veterans by the Minister of Defence, Paul Kehoe TD.

(Photos courtesy of Defence Forces Press Office)

Irish Defence Forces Veterans' Day

The Minister with Responsibility for Defence, Mr Paul Kehoe TD, along with the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, Vice Admiral Mark Mellett DSM, recognised, honoured, and commemorated former servicemen and women, and their families at McDermott Square, Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh Camp, on October 8th.

This was the fourth such Veterans' Day to take place, an event that is now held annually and rotates between the various military installations nationwide. The Defence Forces especially remembered all members who paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving at home or on overseas service with a ceremonial wreath laying commemoration led by Minister Kehoe and the Veteran Associations.

In recognition of the contribution made by the veterans throughout the Easter 1916 commemoration year, the Minister presented the three veterans organisatioins (the Organisation for National Ex-Servicemen and Women (ONE), the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) and the Association for Retired Commissioned Officers (ARCO), with a commemorative certificate.

Service for James Samuel Emerson VC

A service was held on December 3rd, in Collon Church, to mark the 100 anniversary of James Samuel Emerson VC. James Samuel Emerson was born on August 3rd, 1895, in Collon, County Louth. He enlisted into the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion, The Royal Irish Rifles, in Dublin, on September 16th, 1914. He served as a machine gunner and was promoted twice. On August 1st, 1917, he was posted to the 9th (Service) Battalion (County Tyrone), The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers as a (Temporary) Second Lieutenant.

On December 6th, 1917, during the German counteroffensive after the Battle of Cambrai against the Hindenberg Line, Emerson led his company in a local counterattack north of La Vacquerie and cleared 400 yards of trench. Although wounded he remained for three hours, all other officers having become casualties, with his company, refusing to go to the dressing station, and repeatedly repelling bombing attacks. Later, leading his men to repel another attack, he was mortally wounded.

His award appeared in the London Gazette (Supplement) no. 30523 and the citation stated:

'For repeated acts of most conspicuous bravery. He led his company in an attack and cleared 400 yards of trench. Though wounded, when the enemy attacked in superior numbers, he sprang out of the trench with eight men and met the attack in the open, killing many and taking six prisoners. For three hours after this, all other Officers having become casualties, he remained with his company, refusing to go to the dressing station, and repeatedly repelled bombing attacks. Later, when the enemy again attacked in superior numbers, he led his men to repel the attack and was mortally wounded. His heroism, when worn out and exhausted from loss of blood, inspired his men to hold out, though almost surrounded, till reinforcements arrived and dislodged the enemy'.

He has no known grave and is remembered, along with six other Victoria Cross recipients, on the Cambrai Memorial to the Missing.

(Photos by Oliver Breen)

Fenian Monument Restored

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the 1867 Fenian Rising, the National Graves Association unveiled the newly erected replacement cross on the Tallaght Martyrs memorial on Saturday October 14th, in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin.

The Rebellion of 1867 was organised by the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Fenian Brotherhood with attacks in Canada, Ireland and the UK. Veterans of the American Civil War played a significant role. One such planned engagement took place in Tallaght. On the morning of March 5th, 1867, several thousand men gathered on Tallaght Hill armed and ready for a fight. A small separate contingent engaged in battle at the police station in Tallaght village they were routed by a forewarned and well-armed police force. However, the real disaster was that the large gathering on Tallaght were left leaderless and the hoped for rising petered out.

As a mark of respect to the departed historian Dr. Shane Kenna, who held a particular interest in this period, Shane's mother Olive performed the unveiling. The Lord Mayor/ Ardmhéara of Dublin, Mícheál MacDonncha, was also in attendance.

(Photos by Ken Mooney)

DISPATCHES

Plaque Unveiled to John Moyney

On September 12th, the Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan with Councillor John King unveiled the plaque to commemorate the bravery of Lance-Sergeant John Jack Moyney VC, 2nd Battalion, Irish Guards, in Rathdowney, Co Laois. The unveiling marked the centenary of Rathdowney native Jack Moyney's heroic actions 100 years ago on September 13th, 1917, in Belgium when, after holding out in enemy territory for 96 hours, he then led his 15 men in a charge through enemy lines to safety.

The London Gazette (Supplement), October 16th, 1917 said, 'Lance Sergeant John Moyney, Irish Guards (Rathdowney, Queen's County). For most conspicuous bravery when in command of fifteen men forming two advanced posts. In spite of being surrounded by the enemy he held his post for ninety-six hours, having no water and little food. On the morning of the fifth day a large force of the enemy advanced to dislodge him. He ordered his men out of their shell holes, and, taking the initiative, attacked the advancing enemy with bombs, while he used his Lewis gun with great effect from a flank. Finding himself surrounded by superior numbers, he led back his men in a charge through the enemy, and reached a stream which lay between the posts and the line. Here he instructed his party to cross at once while he and Pte. Woodcock remained to cover their retirement. When the whole of his force had gained the south-west bank unscathed he himself crossed under a shower of bombs. It was due to endurance, skill and devotion to duty shown by this noncommissioned officer that he was able to bring his entire force safely but of action'.

John died in Roscrea, County Tipperary on November 10th, 1980. His Victoria Cross is displayed at the Irish Guards Regimental Headquarters, Wellington Barracks, London.

In total 35 Irish men were awarded the Victoria Cross (36 were issued) for actions during World War I.

(Photos by Ken Mooney)

Remembrance Sunday

On Sunday November 12th, President Michael D. Higgins, attended the British Legion Annual Service of Remembrance at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. On the same day the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD, took part in the annual Remembrance Day ceremonies which took place in Enniskillen. The Taoiseach laid a wreath at the Cenotaph in Enniskillen before attending a Remembrance Service in Saint Macartin's Cathedral.

(Photos by Patrick Hugh Lynch, Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacth, and Oliver Breen)

Annual National Seaferers' Service

The annual National Commemoration Seafarer's Service at City Quay, Dublin, took place on Sunday, November 19th. The ceremony took place at the Seafarers' Memorial that is dedicated to honour seamen lost while serving on Irish merchant ships from 1939-1945.

(Photos by Patrick Hugh Lynch, Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht)

State Thomas Ashe Commemoration

On Friday, September 22nd, Glasnevin Cemetery hosted the official State commemoration of the centenary of the death of Thomas Ashe (1885-1917). Originally from Kerry and a teacher by profession, Ashe was a prominent activist in most of the major nationalist organisations of the pre-independence period, including the Gaelic League, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and the Irish Volunteers. Ashe was responsible for leading the Irish Volunteers at the battle of Ashbourne in Co. Meath, the most significant military engagement outside Dublin during the Easter Rebellion. Imprisoned, he was later released, and became a key figure in the reorganisation of the republican movement in 1917. Imprisoned for making a seditious speech, in August 1917, he and a number of other republican prisoners went on hunger strike in Mountjoy Gaol. Thomas Ashe died on September 25th, 1917, as a result of force-feeding. He was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery. The funeral was a significant event, Michael Collins delivered the funeral eulogy and a firing party of uniformed Irish Volunteers fired a salute over his grave.

Ashe was a native Irish speaker, a talented piper and founding member of the Black Raven Pipe Band, as well as a keen sportsman who was active within the GAA; particularly the Round Towers Lusk GAA Club. The ceremony included musical performances from Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and a piper from the Black Raven Pipe Band.

The ceremony culminated with the formal State commemoration with participation by members of the Defence forces. Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphreys TD laid a wreath on behalf of the Irish Government. Wreaths were also laid by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council, the Deputy Mayor of Fingal and the Leas Cathaoirleach of Kerry County Council on behalf of the people of, respectively, Dublin, Kerry and Meath, where Thomas Ashe's legacy is particularly felt. Wreaths were also laid on behalf of the family of Thomas Ashe and also by the chairman of Glasnevin Trust.

Speaking in advance of the event, Minister Humphreys said that: 'Thomas Ashe was a member of that revolutionary generation that laid the foundations of the modern Irish State. The State, together with members of the family of Thomas Ashe, will mark his life and legacy with a sensitive and fitting commemoration that reflects his great love of his country and his heritage. In this Decade of Centenaries, my consistent priority is to promote commemorations that are respectful and inclusive. I thank Glasnevin Trust for their continued partnership over the years and for their assistance in organising this event'.

John Green, Chairman of Glasnevin Trust added: 'As we reflect on the short life of Thomas Ashe, it is extraordinary how much he achieved. From the Gaelic league to the Gaelic fields; from his school to his community; from the Irish Volunteers to the IRB; he was a leader. His tragic death sometimes overshadows his many talents and achievements'.

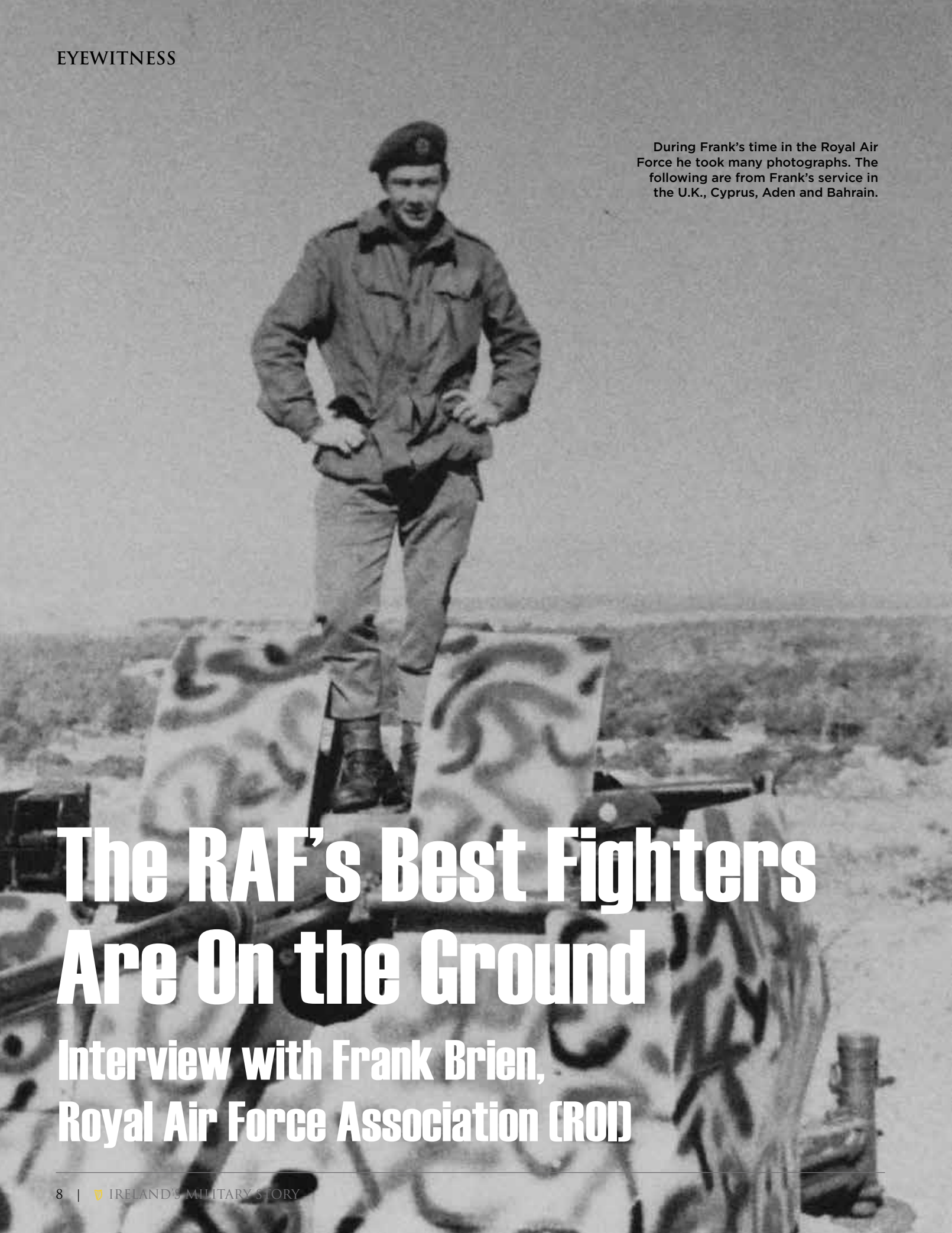
(Photos by Ken Mooney)

Armistice Day Commemoration

On Saturday November 11th, the Glasnevin Trust hosted an event to mark Armistice Day, commemorating the end of the First World War. In 2008, Glasnevin Trust and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission set about the task of marking previously unmarked graves in Glasnevin Cemetery of World War I and World War II graves of soldiers, sailors, air men and women. This task is now complete and in addition, 104 headstones or Gallipoli markers have been placed on family graves wherein the remains of the fallen lie. In addition, the Trust, along with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, relocated World War I and World War II commemorative screen walls from the Prospect Gate area to a more prominent location near Glasnevin's Mortuary Chapel.

Glasnevin Trust Chairman, John Green, lead a wreath-laying ceremony at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Commemorative Screen Walls and Cross of Sacrifice. Wreaths were also laid by the British and French ambassadors, and on behalf of the Lord Mayor of Dublin. The event also included the unveiling of a number of Victoria Cross Commemorative Paving Stones, dedicated to Irish awardees of the Victoria Cross.

(Photos by Patrick Hugh Lynch, Dept. of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht)



During Frank's time in the Royal Air Force he took many photographs. The following are from Frank's service in the U.K., Cyprus, Aden and Bahrain.

The RAF's Best Fighters Are On the Ground

Interview with Frank Brien, Royal Air Force Association (ROI)

Gun crews deployed around RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus.

Seeking adventure Frank Brien served with the Royal Air Force (RAF) from 1963-1968. Within a very short time, he found himself in Cyprus, Aden and Bahrain with the RAF Regiment.

Finishing school in Donnycarney in June 1963, I was looking for adventure. The RAF had a romanticism about it, becoming a pilot is what everyone dreamed of. So I signed up thinking I was going to have a holiday to Butlins. Boy was I in for a shock. That September I was sent to the School or Recruit Training at RAF Innsworth in Gloucestershire. My God, basic training was tough and life changing. You were transformed from civilian to service person within a matter of weeks.

Following basic training I was posted to the RAF Regiment. Let me explain what the RAF Regiment is. The RAF Regiment was formed for the sole purpose of providing close defence of RAF airfields. The Battle of France during 1940, demonstrated the vulnerability of airfields, which had been long considered safe, to modern fast mobile warfare. In January 1942, the Regiment was formed after King George VI signed a Royal Warrant for 'a Corps formed as an integral part of the RAF'. The regiment's first home was in Filey with instructors seconded from the Brigade of Guards and the Royal Marines. The Depot has since moved three times, firstly to Belton Park, then to RAF Catterick in 1946. Essentially it was a defence force within the RAF, so it could look after and defend its own bases. We have a very proud tradition and proud that we can defend the RAF.

Within the regiment, companies are known as 'squadrons' and platoons are referred to as 'flights'. During World War II, the regiment developed two distinct types of squadrons: The light anti-aircraft units were equipped with Bofors L40/60 guns; and the rifle or field squadrons, which deployed and were equipped as an army infantry company. Throughout the North African Campaign, five field squadrons and five anti-aircraft flights earned reputations as robust hard-hitting units. Following D-Day the RAF Regiment expanded to its peak strength of 85,000 officers and men organised into 240 squadrons. It was in Burma that the RAF Regiment fought for ten long days to defend the airstrip of Meiktila deep behind enemy lines during March 1945.

After the war RAF Regiment units found themselves in 'Bush Fire' wars and on peacekeeping operations around the world such as the Malayan Emergency and was

Frank in uniform at RAF Innsworth.

Live firing on the range at RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus.

Left and right: On patrol in Aden.

also attached to Hong Kong for internal security duties. Essentially, we looked and dressed very similar to the rest of the RAF, however, we wore web belts and short leather gaiters. Initially we trained on the Rifle No. 4 .303" and later moved onto the L1A1 Self-Loading Rifle (SLR). We always prided ourselves on our ability to do drill and the smartness of our turnout. To this day whenever the RAF is on parade at national ceremonies it is represented by the Queen's Colour Squadron. We always had a motto in the regiment, 'The RAF's best fighters are on the ground'.

It was then off to the Regimental Training Depot at RAF Catterick in Yorkshire. Here you learned your soldiering skills. Tough, but not like basic. As our role was airfield defence we were all also trained on the Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) role. At this time the regiment was equipped with the Bofors L/70. This was a 40mm anti-aircraft gun using the 40 × 364R round firing a slightly lighter 870 g shell with a 1,030 m/s (3,379 fps) muzzle velocity. The rate of fire was over 300 rounds per minute. The carriage was power laid. Following that I was then sent to the Driving School just outside Blackpool. A wonderful posting. Every weekend we were allowed into Blackpool.

Cyprus

It was then off to RAF Akrotiri on the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean. I was posted to No. 34 LAA Squadron. This was a large base. Hostilities on the island had erupted on December 21st, 1963, between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots. I arrived in April just before the main United Nations (UN) peacekeeping force. They had started to arrive the end of March. Our job was to provide stability for the local communities.

Left and right: Scenes from Aden.

By the end of May the UN had taken over all these peacekeeping duties and we were back in base and a routine of training set in. The Irish Defence Forces deployed to the island around the same time and we used to meet them up at Nicosia on a Sunday at mass. A funny story was that in the British forces a rank with crossed swords indicates a general. When our guys would see the Irish Defence Forces guys they'd say 'heh Paddy how come you have so many generals?' Of course they were getting mixed up with the Irish rank of Commandant.

As we were an anti-aircraft unit we undertook some range practice. The L/70 was an amazing piece of equipment. It could be radar operated but we used electrical sites. Twice a year we'd head to the range. Six guns on the firing line. A plane would fly over pulling a drogue. You could imagine six guns firing four rounds a second. Another crisis loomed on the horizon. This time at the bottom of the Arabian Peninsula. We were deployed to Aden.

Aden

Aden today is part of Yemen. Britain established a territory there in 1839, to provide a base for ships heading to India. In 1931 Aden was made a Crown Colony. By the 1960's, the region had been plagued by years of unrest. In order to stabilise the region, Britain sought to create a federation between Aden and the surrounding protectorates. In 1962, the British government announced that Aden would be maintained as a permanent British garrison east of Suez.

Hostilities started on December 10th, 1963, when the NLF launched a grenade attack against the British High Commissioner of Aden, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis

On April 4th, 1962, the Federation of South Arabia was formed from the fifteen British protected states of the Federation of Arab Emirates of the South (today South Yemen). The Colony of Aden joined the Federation on January 18th, 1963. The day after Aden joined the Federation, Muhammad al-Badr of the Yemenese monarchy was overthrown and civil war ensued between forces backed by Egypt and monarchist forces backed by the British. The conflict soon spread throughout the region.

The Federation formed the Federal Regular Army (FRA) and Federal National Guard (FNG). The Egyptians backed the National Liberation Front (NLF) who quickly infiltrated the Federal forces. The NLF were a radical movement formed in 1962, aimed at expelling Britain from what they called South Yemen. The NLF were also supported by tribes in the Radfan area of the country, as well as Yemeni tribesmen. Hostilities started on December 10th, 1963, when the NLF launched a grenade attack against the British High Commissioner of Aden, Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, as he arrived at Khormaksar Airport to catch a London-bound flight. A woman was killed, and fifty other people injured. A State of Emergency was declared the same day.

In 1964, a second nationalist group, the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY), also began terrorist activities against the security forces and the NLF. The violent insurgency campaign in Aden was marked by a series of bombings, shootings and grenade attacks. To support the Federation forces, the British deployed the 24th Infantry Brigade in 1964. By 1965, nine squadrons were stationed at RAF Khormaksar. These included transport units, helicopters and a number of Hawker Hunter fighter bombers. The RAF Regiment deployed No. 34 LAA Squadron in 1965, and No. 27 LAA Squadron 1965/66. This was a very tough posting for six months. It was known as an Active Service deployment, which meant you were on duty 24/7. Very

A selection of images from RAF Muharraq in Bahrain.

rarely did you ever get some time off, if you did you were confined to barracks. If you were ever off base you always had to have an armed escort. For example, I used to go to mass every Sunday. The bus would come to pick us up and there would be two armed guards on it. It was a very hostile environment.

On such deployments, the squadrons dropped their LAA role and became field squadrons with three flights; identical to an infantry company. The base there was big with a large married quarters area and it was our job to defend it. We were deployed outside the RAF base alongside the regular Army units. It was very interesting as at that time the Irish Guards, the Welsh Guards, and the Parachute Regiment were there, and we did a lot of work together. For several operations we would form part of a battalion with the Army units and deploy with them.

Area and cordon searches were very common. We'd set up a check point and would then be required to search any vehicle

coming through for arms. This was very difficult work. We didn't speak Arabic, so we needed interpreters, and the culture was alien to us. On one occasion a car was pulled over. There looked like there was somebody hiding and lying in the back. One of our guys was ordering him to get out of the car. As it turned out it was a corpse and the driver were simply transporting it. Really tough six months. It was then back to Cyprus and a normal routine. A few months later I was posted to No. 27 LAA Squadron on their return from Aden and rotated back to the UK.

By 1967, the Federal government began to collapse, and Britain announced a withdrawal. In September negotiations were sought with the nationalist groups over Britain's withdrawal. After months of fierce street fighting, the last British troops left Aden in November 1967.

I was now stationed at RAF Leeming in North Yorkshire when I got word that I was part of the unit that would represent the RAF at the Royal Tournament. The tournament was an annual military tattoo and pageant, held by the British Armed Forces. This was a wonderful experience. We spent two months in London mixing with loads of regiments from around the Army, the Royal Marines and Navy. By the time I was finished here my unit had redeployed to Cyprus, so I was sent to RAF Bicester where I spent a year. This was another nice posting as we were not far from Oxford. In 1966, No.1 LAA Squadron had returned from RAAF Butterworth, Malaysia, along with No.26 LAA Squadron, – from RAF Changi, Singapore, to whom which I was assigned. While here I was sent for six months to Bahrain in the Persian Gulf.

Frank Brien today in his RAFA (ROI) blazer.

Bahrain

Bahrain is an island country, situated between the Qatar peninsula and the north-eastern coast of Saudi Arabia. The Royal Air Force established RAF Bahrain on May 22nd, 1943, as part of RAF Iraq Command, part of 83 Expeditionary Air Group in the Middle East. It was later renamed RAF Muharraq in 1963. There was not much there when we arrived. There was no married quarters and no aircraft. The county was not hostile, and the job was very much routine guarding the base. An amazing experience nonetheless and I was able to take a few photographs while I was there.

Royal Air Force Association (RAFA)

I left the RAF in 1968 as a Senior Aircraftman or Corporal in army terms. I came home, settled down and got married and pretty much forgot all about it. I was always in the RAFA. One day I was reading their newsletter and read that the RAF Regiment was forming their own association. I was then invited to a reunion at RAF Catterick. This would have been in the 80's. The Troubles was still on at that time and I had to write and get special permission to travel over with my wife and children in the car. At the reunion I met another Irishman who'd served in the Regiment, he hadn't come home though. He said 'Frank, you are the only member we have in the Rep. of Ireland'. We had such a lovely time my wife said to me 'when we go back we're getting in touch with the RAF branch in Ireland and getting involved'. I've been involved ever since and am the RAFA Rep. of Ireland Branch Standard Bearer.

RAF Pilots and Aircrew 1939 - 1945

During the Second World War the Royal Air Force (RAF) had several uniforms depending on what rank, what trade, and what theatre they were deployed to. There are several uniforms and photographs in the Ulster Aviation Collection of pilots from Ireland or with an Irish connection that give an insight into what they wore.

As the RAF uniforms and equipment during this period is vast, this article is an introduction to the uniforms and equipment of the pilots and aircrew.

Photographs highlight some of the famous Second World RAF and Fleet Air Arm aviation legends from Ireland such as Wing Commander Brendan Eamonn Fergus Finucane, DSO, DFC & Two Bars from Rathmines in Dublin. He is credited with twenty-eight aerial victories. Lieutenant Commander Eugene Kingsmill Esmonde, VC, DSO was a Fleet Air Arm Swordfish torpedo bomber squadron commander. He went to school in Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare. Esmonde earned his Victoria Cross when he led his squadron against elements of the German fleet making the Channel Dash from Brest in an attempt to return to their home bases on February 12th, 1942. He was killed in the attack. Another shows Sub Lieutenant Peter Lock who flew the Grumman F4F Wildcat — JV482 that is in the Collection.

A uniform and photograph of Flight Lieutenant Frank Rush has a local connection. Born in Canada, his parents were from the Falls Road in Belfast. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and sent to the United Kingdom. He served with 502 'Ulster' Squadron Coastal Command and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar. Sadly, he died in a crash flying a Catalina back in Canada in 1949.

Service Dress Uniform

In April 1920, the Air Ministry Weekly Order 332 detailed a full-dress uniform consisting of a single-breasted jacket in blue/grey with a stand-up collar. Rank was indicated in gold braid on the lower sleeve. Insignia indication pilot, aircrew, trade, and unit was also worn.

Other Ranks Service Dress Uniform

The Other Ranks Service Dress uniform was worn by air crews until 1941, and by ground based staff until 1943. It was replaced by the War Service Dress. It was made from blue/grey barathea wool, with four front pockets, brass king's crown buttons, and a waist belt.

The uniform of Flight Lieutenant Christopher Kitchen Johnston

Frank Rush of 502 Squadron. Front row second from left.

Officers Service Dress Tunic

The Officers Service Dress tunic was worn by flying officers and by ground based officers. Made of blue/grey barathea wool the tunic featured four brass buttons, two top pleated pockets, two lower bellows pockets and a fixed waist belt. Officers Service Dress were tailor fitted.

War Service Dress

It was found that the earlier four pocket service dress was not efficient for aircrew and a design similar to 1937 British Army battle dress was trialled in 1939. Introduced in 1940, the War Service Dress, was essentially a blue/grey version of the British Army's battle dress. It was initially only worn by air crew. In 1943, it was authorised to be worn by all ranks and trades.

Made of soft wool serge, the War Service Dress tunic was different to the Army battledress in that it had a lined stand up collar and the pockets were pointed and based on the earlier four pocket RAF Service Dress tunic. Rank markings were worn on shoulder epaulets.

Officers Peaked Service Dress Cap

The Royal Air Force Service Dress Cap was worn by all pilots and ground based officers, the was design had the Duck Bill peak and squared off. A soft peaked cap was worn by flying officers.

Other Ranks Peaked Service Dress Cap

This cap was worn by all other ranks with the service dress uniform. Made of blue serge wool, the cap had a black high shine peak.

Field Service Cap

The blue/grey serge, barathea wool Field Service Cap or Forage Cap, was authorised by Air Ministry Order A93/36. Worn from December 1939 onwards, this cap replaced the earlier peaked service cap for all Other Ranks apart from the Military Police, Motor Transport Drivers, and Apprentices. Officers also wore a Field Service Cap. It was private purchase and made of a higher quality fabric which is smoother and smarter.

Boots

During the war there were several patterns of boot. The 1941 pattern boot for example were made from brown suede leather with front length zip and fully lined with sheepskin.

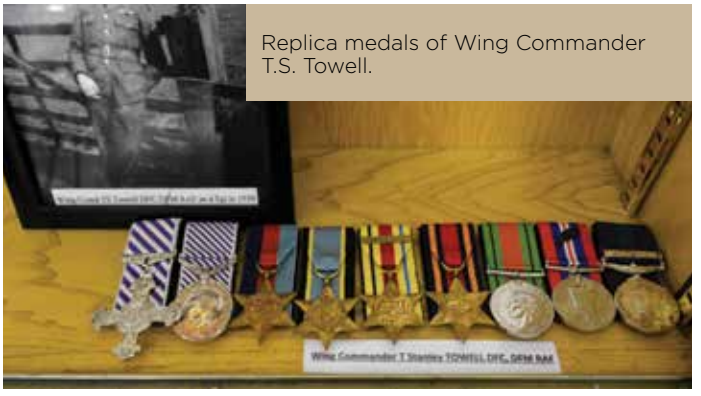
Flight Operations

Throughout the war RAF pilots and crews wore various piece of equipment. Including: flight helmets, trousers, boots, oxygen masks, gloves, goggles.

Wing Commander T.S. Towell as a Sergeant in 1939.

B-6 Flying Helmet

The B-6 Flying Helmet was a very common flying helmet during the war. Made with ear-cups for earphones, the helmet was insulated with sheepskin. The helmet was made of brown chrome leather consisting of six vertical panels, meeting at a single narrow central ridge panel that runs from front to rear. A rectangular horizontal panel across the forehead has two zipped padded leather oval housings to the ears and leather chinstrap. The helmet is lined with buff-coloured chamois and has a rectangular length of brown-coloured material sewn to the inside of the forehead. The inside of the oval earcups are padded for comfort. Over this shearling helmet usually went the Mk VIII RAF Goggles.



Replica medals of Wing Commander T.S. Towell.

The Leslie Irwin Sheepskin Flying Jacket or 'the Irwin'

The standard flying jacket used by RAF pilots and crews during the war was designed by the American aviator Leslie Leroy Irvin in 1926. Irwin was the inventor of the rip-cord parachute system and, in 1919, was the first man to make a premeditated free-fall jump from an aeroplane. To produce his parachutes Irvin set up Irvin Air Chute in 1919, to manufacture parachutes for the U.S. government.

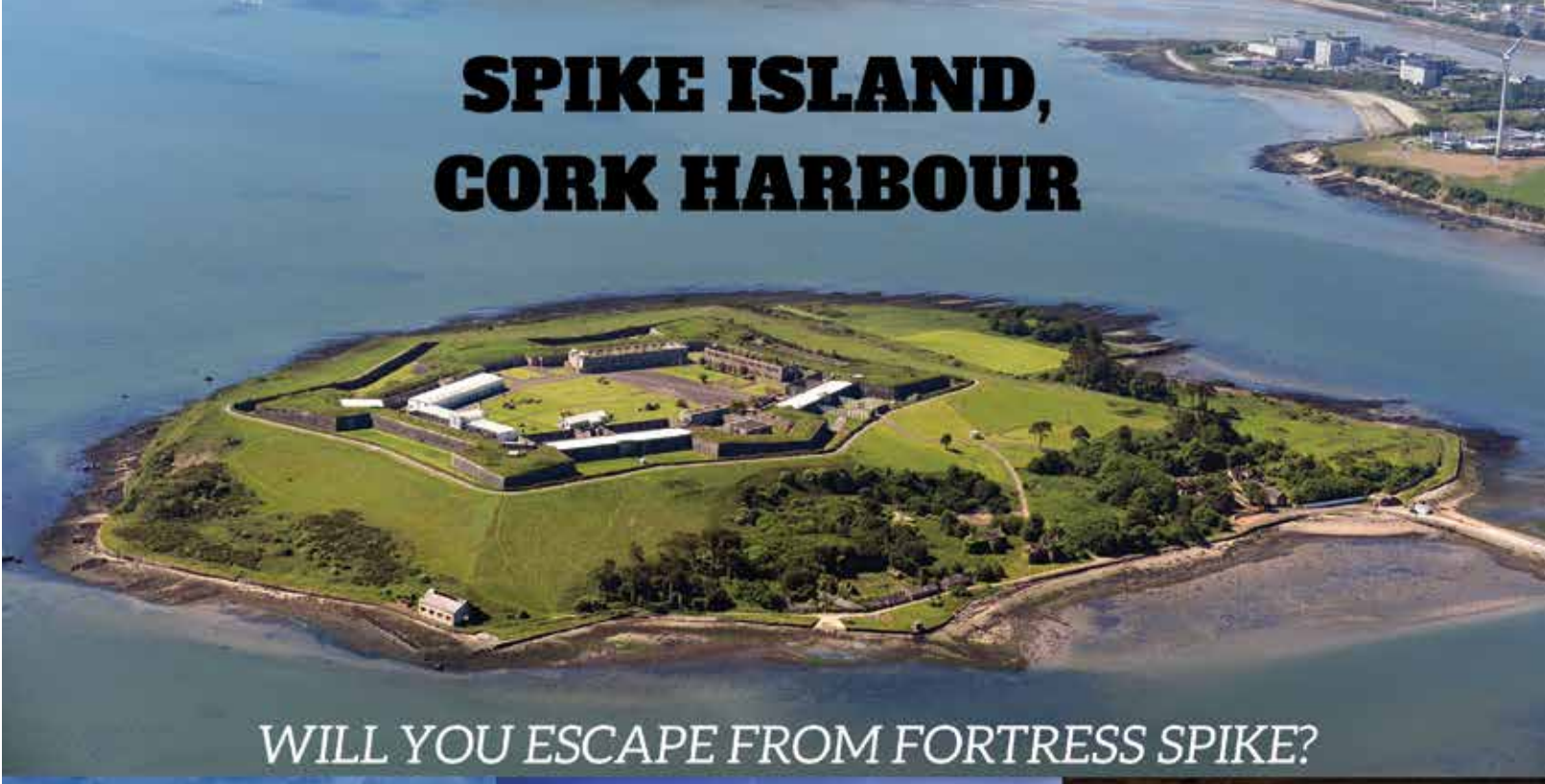
During the inter-war years, aircraft very quickly started to operate at higher and higher altitudes. At 25,000ft ambient temperatures can reach −50 °C (−58 °F). As cabins were uninsulated, a warm, thick flight jacket was an essential piece of equipment for every member of the crew.

Made from heavyweight supple sheepskin, the jackets thick natural wool provided incredible insulation. Brown leather exterior sheepskin, with brown leather bindings with a warm honey inside. The jacket had long sleeves zipped to enable gauntlets to be worn. The wide fur collar could be raised providing insulation around the neck and lower part of the head and face. A belt was fitted at the waist to ensure draughts couldn't drop the pilot's body temperature. The original jackets didn't have pockets as these were not needed.

In 1926 he opened a factory at Letchworth in England. In 1931, production began in the UK. The pre-war jacket was almost exclusively manufactured without horizontal seaming, but with body panels joined vertically, thus required fewer seams and making assembly quicker and easier. The large panels used large quantities of wool. As the Second World War raged, sheepskin became scarcer. Jackets were made in a patchwork to save on wool.

Irwin's parachute and flying jacket gained worldwide use. During the war Irvin had to use subcontractors in order to meet demand; thus, resulting in variations in colour, quality, and design.

SPIKE ISLAND, CORK HARBOUR



WILL YOU ESCAPE FROM FORTRESS SPIKE?

"THE ISLAND FORTRESS BUILT TO DEFEND AN EMPIRE, THAT BECAME THE LARGEST PRISON IN THE WORLD..."

Discover 1300 years of Irish history on Spike island, from the 6th century monastery to the 200 year old Fortress, from the famine era prison that held 2300 inmates to centuries of island homes.

REACHED BY FERRY FROM KENNEDY PIER, COBH

FULLY GUIDED TOURS - AUDIOGUIDES - CAFE - ISLAND WALKS - MUSEUMS - FORTRESS - PRISONS - PICNICS - KIDS ACTIVITIES

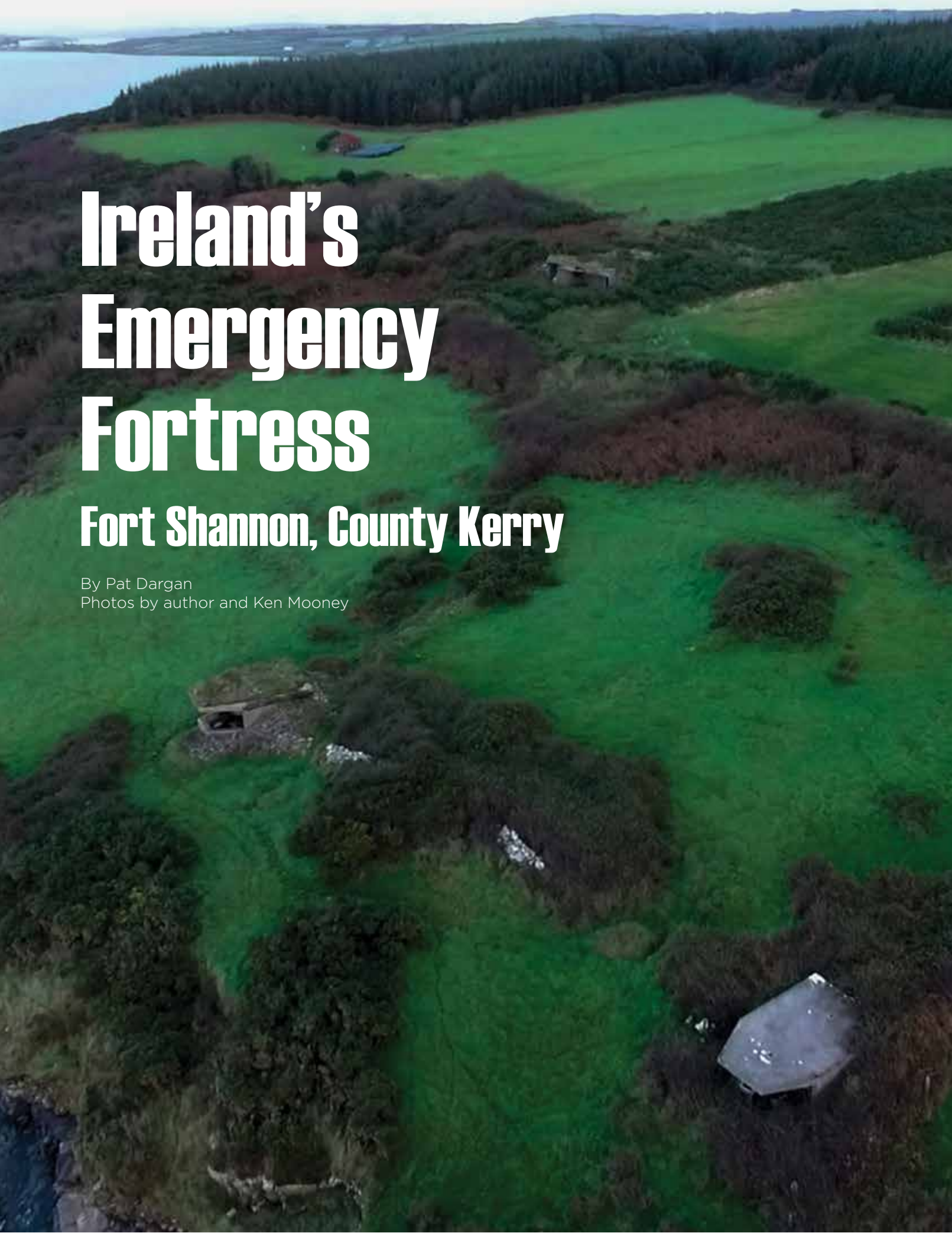
Irish Tourism Industry Awards 2017
RECOGNISING SUCCESS and INNOVATION

www.spikeislandcork.ie
email: admin@spikeislandcork.ie

CHAMBERS IRELAND Local Government AWARDS 2016 SHORTLISTED

Designated a HeritageISLAND PREMIER ATTRACTION
www.HeritageIsland.com

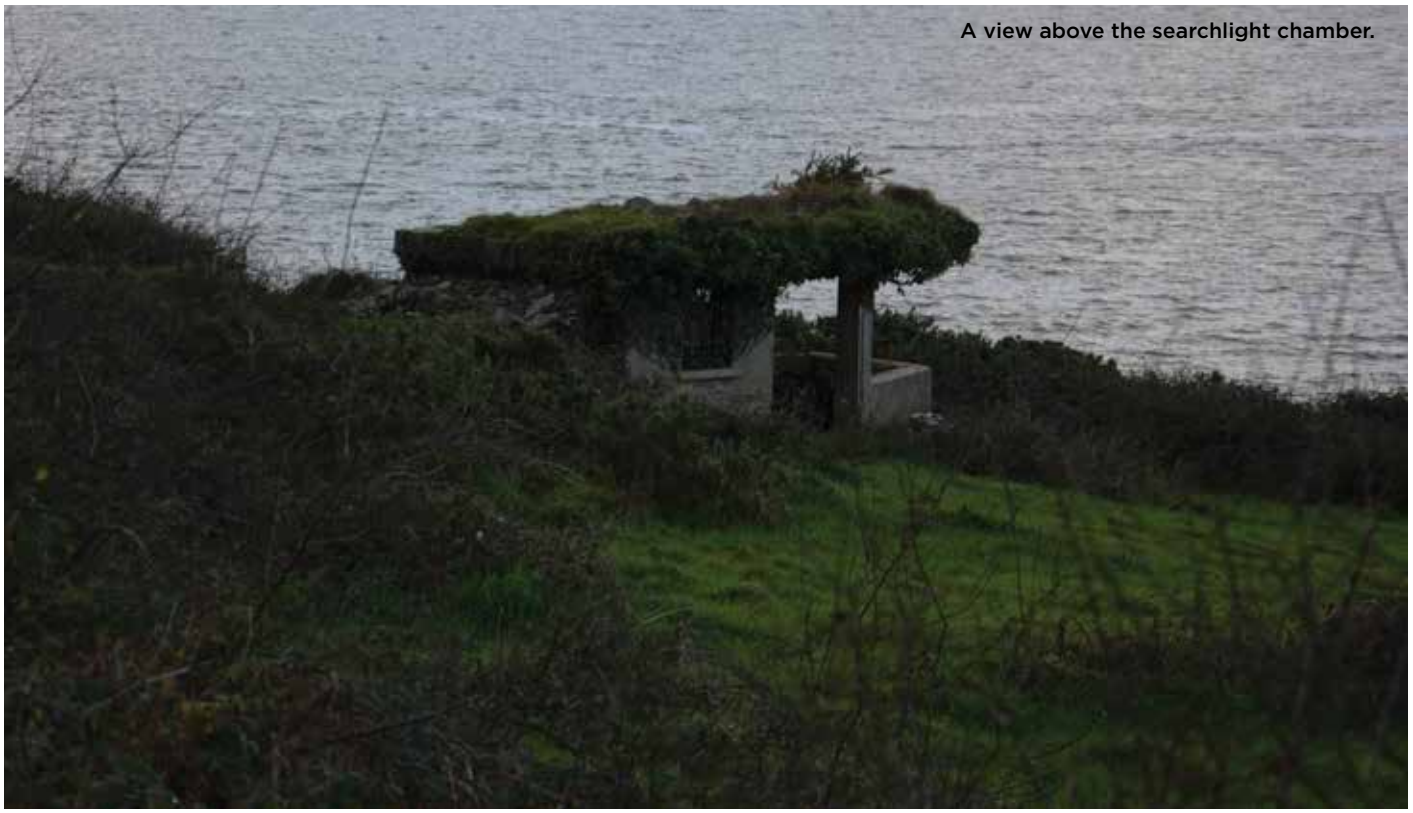
SPIKE ISLAND CORK HARBOUR



Ireland's Emergency Fortress

Fort Shannon, County Kerry

By Pat Dargan
Photos by author and Ken Mooney


A view above the searchlight chamber.

During the Second World War a vast range of forts and military defence installations were constructed across the European war zone. These included, for example, the German Atlantic Wall that stretched from Spain to Norway, which was laid out to guard the coast against an Allied invasion, or the British defence system built to defend the country against a possible German attack. Here an equally extensive range of gun emplacements, anti-invasion obstacles, and forts were constructed in coastal, estuarial and inland positions. During the same war time period, the Irish government built only a single large-scale military installation: Fort Shannon on the County Kerry side of the Shannon Estuary. The Irish government was concerned that an invasion force could strike up the Shannon to Limerick and quickly reach the interior of the country.

Coast Defence Artillery

As Ireland took a neutral position in the war, it was felt that such an attack could originate from Germany or Britain. The government established a number of coastal defence forts around the coastline around the same time, but these were essentially the nineteenth century structures that the British authorities had kept under the Anglo/Irish Treaty. The forts were handed over to the Irish government in 1938.

When World War II broke out the coastal defence installations became vital to the defence of Ireland's deep-water ports. There were five Coast Defence Artillery installations in the Southern Command and two installations in the Western Command. Manned by the Artillery Corps, Coast Defence Artillery Detachments were deployed as follows:

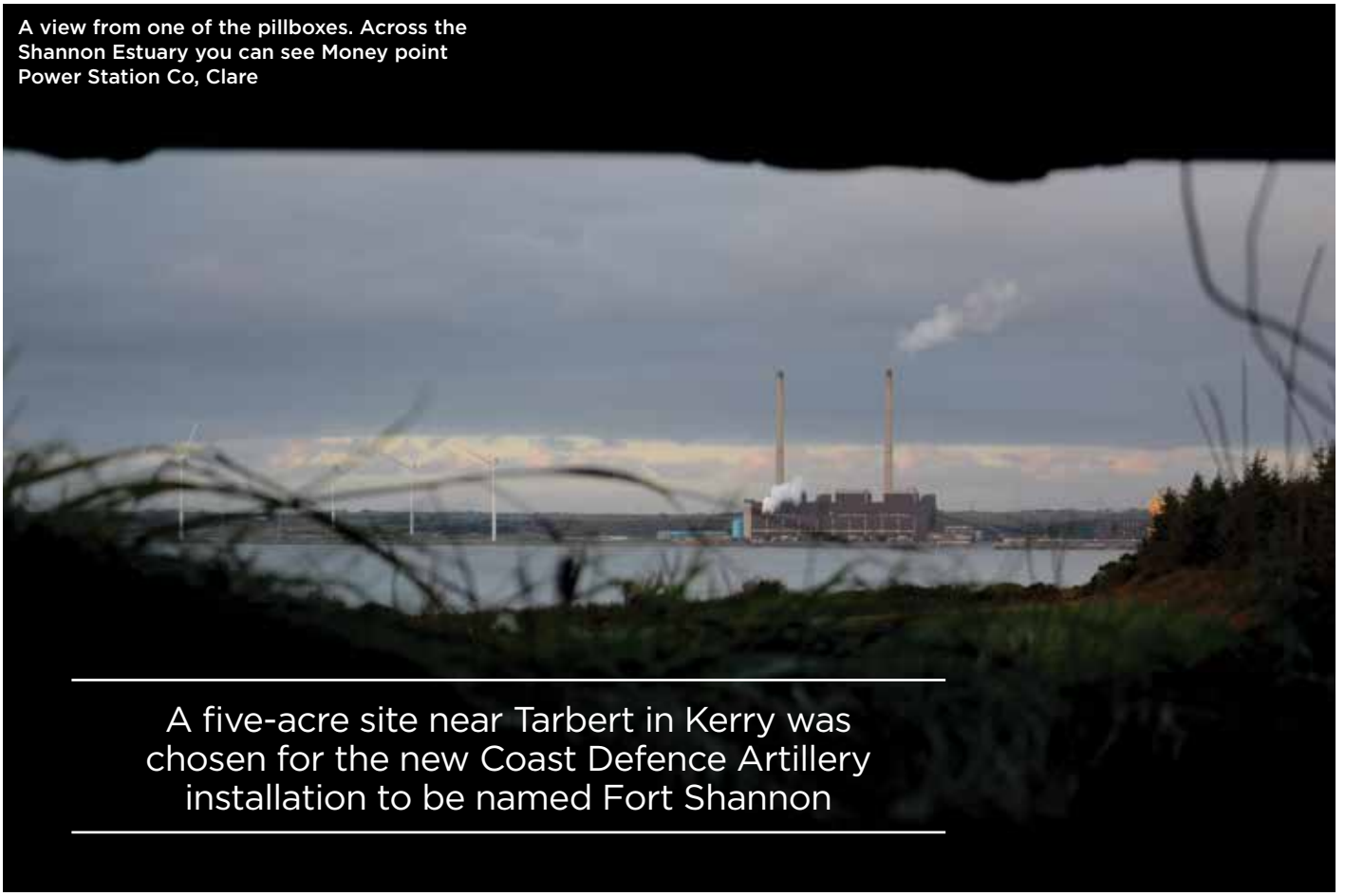
Southern Command
Forts Westmoreland, Carlisle and Templebreedy in Cork Harbour, Co. Cork.
Fort Berehaven in Bantry Bay, Co. Cork.
Fort Shannon on the Shannon estuary, Co. Kerry, from 1942.

Western Command
Forts Dunree and Lenan in Lough Swilly, Co. Donegal.
Armaments varied between installations. They included some 26 coastal artillery pieces: 9.2", 6", 4.7", 60-pounders with a number of naval 12-pounders and Hotchkiss 3-pounders.

The forts and their guns were manned 24/7 all year round. They had a primary role of the defence of the respective harbour. Furthermore, these harbours were deemed 'controlled ports'. This gave Coast Defence Artillery a secondary role of 'Control of Examination Anchorage'. This meant that all ships entering the harbours had to be searched and deemed 'Safe' by the Examination Service.

The Coast Defence Artillery installations were supported by the Corps of Engineers Coast Defence Company. Headquartered at Fort Camden in Cork Harbour, the unit consisted of 232 all ranks. Its main task was the engineering support of the coastal defence installations and the provision of seventeen searchlights. The engineers were deployed to all coastal installations except Fort Lenan which had no searchlights.

The installations were further augmented by detachments of the regular Army, Local Defence Force and the Marine Service/Marine Inscription Service.



A view from one of the pillboxes. Across the Shannon Estuary you can see Money point Power Station Co, Clare

A five-acre site near Tarbert in Kerry was chosen for the new Coast Defence Artillery installation to be named Fort Shannon

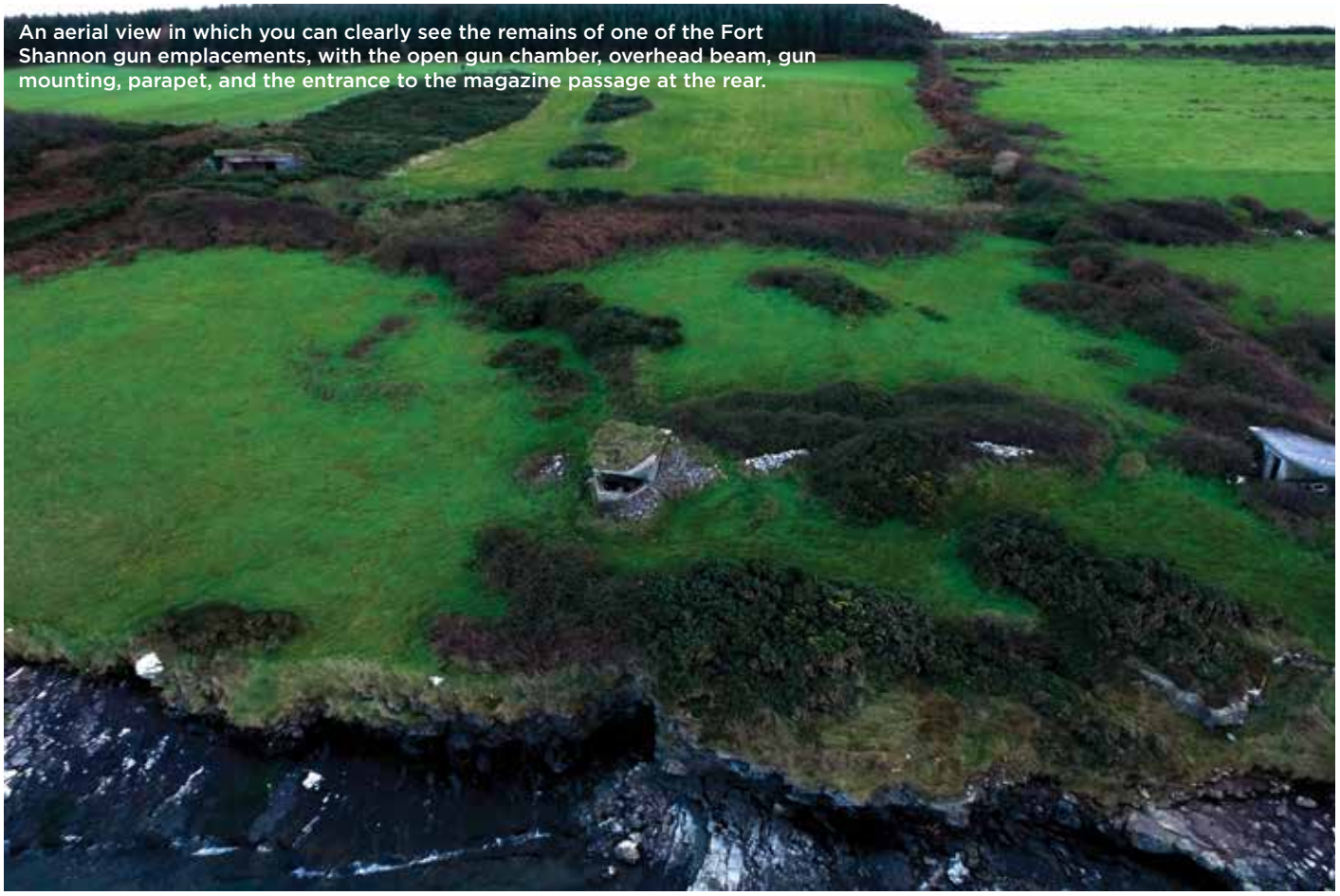
Fort Shannon

In 1941, it was decided that the Examination Service for the Shannon estuary, based at the port of Cappa on the Clare side, would need artillery support. A five-acre site near Tarbert in Kerry was chosen for the new Coast Defence Artillery installation to be named Fort Shannon. It was to be armed with a battery of 6" guns, a machine gun platoon and a searchlight detachment.

Commandant Mick Sugrue came from Fort Carlisle (now Fort David) to assume command and oversee the construction. Gunners were dispatched from Kildare Barracks and the Cork Harbour Forts. Land was bought and leased. Communication by day and night across the estuary was assured by the building of Look Out Posts (LOPs), and augmenting these with wireless and telephone. Thus, Loop Head, Kilcraudaun Head and the Examination Service on the north shore were linked with Doon Head, Scattery Island and Fort Shannon. Close liaison was maintained with the Harbour Master at Limerick, who held a naval rank of Lieutenant Commander. He was responsible for movement of all shipping in and out of the estuary.

Fort Shannon was not a fort in the strict military sense, but a pair of coastal defence guns positioned at Ardmore Point, overlooking the Shannon estuary, a short distance down river from Tarbert. The site is roughly oval in plan, set on a broad ledge high above the estuary, with the largely undefined boundaries swinging along the southern inland boundary. The terrain rises sharply from the water to an approximately level position - although it could easily be scaled in an assault - and rises slightly again a little further inland; with a farm-style gateway on both the east and west sides. The site for the fort was, however, carefully chosen. Ardmore Point projects into the estuary and faces downstream to cover a point where the width of the navigable channel is limited between Scattery Island on the north bank and Carrig Island on the opposite side. Consequently, an enemy vessel seeking to pass between the islands is forced to present its bow, or front, directly to the fort so that it can engage only its forward armament in an attack.

Today Fort Shannon is very overgrown with trees and shrubs. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the main military elements. The two gun emplacements can be seen overlooking the estuary: one near the east side of the oval, the other in a more central position. West of these is a pair of searchlight enclosures near the river edge, with the Power House and Communications Building on the higher level behind, while three machine gun pillboxes can be seen stretching along the curved southern boundary. The Power House and Communications Centre is a single story domestic looking stone-built building with a galvanised steel hipped roof and four large rectangular windows facing the estuary. The doorway to the interior is on the landward side.


An aerial view in which you can clearly see the remains of one of the Fort Shannon gun emplacements, with the open gun chamber, overhead beam, gun mounting, parapet, and the entrance to the magazine passage at the rear.

Gun Emplacements

The two gun emplacements in the centre of the site are the most obvious features of the fort. Each consists of a gun chamber, behind which an underground passageway provides a link to the magazine. The gun emplacements in both cases were built with mass concrete sides and roof, inside which the gun chamber was open to the estuary, except for a low parapet behind which the gun was positioned. Overhead a heavy metal beam remains built into the underside of the roof, which allowed the gun to be manoeuvred into position on its mounting that still remains. There are two stores at the rear of the gun chamber with the entrance to the magazine access passage between. The dogleg route of the access passage leads to the magazine. This was also provided with an external concrete stairs leading to ground level near, the doorway to the magazine chamber. The inclusion of the dogleg was presumably to minimise the force of a blast from an artillery or air strike, on either the gun chamber or the magazine. Both magazines were of mass concrete construction and were completely underground. They were given no windows, but each had small roof apertures to provide some degree of ventilation. During the construction period it seems as if the top soil of the site was stripped away and once the concrete structures were completed the soil was returned to partially cover the sides and roofs of the emplacement and magazine for camouflage purposes.

The Guns

Both guns were 6" Breach Loading (BL), Mk VII, coastal defence guns, manufactured by Vickers between 1902 and 1903. Although the manufacture of these guns dates from the early twentieth century, they were the standard British coastal defence weapon of the period and remained so for the duration of the war. Initially each of the Shannon guns was supplied with 120 rounds and it took a ten man crew to load, operate and fire each gun with a capacity of eight rounds per minute. Today the Shannon Fort guns are no longer present, but seem to have been transferred to Fort Dunree Museum in Co. Donegal where they have been partially restored and are on display.


Emblem of the 7th Field Engineer Company, with date, built into the wall of the underground bunker.

Searchlights

The two anti-aircraft searchlights were housed in a pair of flat roofed concrete structure, each with a wide aperture that allowed the searchlight to be directed across


Overgrown machine gun pillbox.


Searchlight chamber.


A 6 inch Mk VII coastal defence gun, similar to those that existed in Fort Shannon, being test fired in Grey Point Fort Museum, Helen's Bay, County Down in 2014.


A restored Ordnance QF (Quick Firing) 4.7 inch coastal defence gun. These guns were used on Bere island and Fort Dunree. This gun is on display in Fort Mitchell Museum, Spike Island.

and down the estuary. The positioning of the lights would have provided sufficient scope to illuminate any would-be attacker attempting to sail up the estuary, under the cover of darkness. Today the concrete structure, the rusted metal drum of the lamp, and the parts of the concrete housing is all that survives.

Pillboxes

The three flat roofed mass concrete pillboxes placed on the raised ground around the landward perimeter overlook the site. Each of the boxes is set into the ground with a square plan a small entrance doorway and narrow vertical slot on each of the four faces. The purpose of the pillboxes was presumably to provide machine gun cover against a direct assault from either the river or the landward side.

In the case of an attack, the defence capabilities of Fort Shannon would have been restricted, not least by the limited stock of ammunition held. Furthermore, the rate of fire of the two guns would have been slow and the concrete structures would not have been sufficient to withstand a concentrated bombardment.

Called into action

Throughout the Emergency years the gunners and engineers of Fort Shannon guarded their posts. The only shots fired were during practise. Its personnel were called out on one occasion however. According to an article on Coast Defence Artillery in An Cosantóir, November 1973, by Commandant J. E. Dawson and Lieutenant C. Lawler, the men of Fort Shannon went to the rescue of the Merchant Vessel E.D.J. after it went aground near Cappa during a gale. Thankfully no lives were lost.

The fort closes

The fort experienced only a limited lifespan. It was abandoned at the end of the Emergency in 1946, when Commandant Mick Sugrue evacuated the fort on May 31st, 1946. Only a small skeleton crew remained behind for a short period after. Today the fort lies abandoned and derelict. Whatever wooden support buildings that originally existed have now disappeared. Fortunately, a restored example of the Fort Shannon gun-types can be seen in Fort Mitchell (Fort Westmorland) Museum on Spike Island, while in Grey Point Fort Museum in Co. Down, a pair of similar guns is maintained in working order, one of which was successfully test fired as recently as 2014. Nevertheless, Fort Shannon remains an important feature of Irish military history and today the dilapidated and neglected state of the site reflects poorly on the authorities responsible for its upkeep. This is particularly so, when contrasted with other similar fortifications around the Irish coastline, such as the museums at Fort Dundee, Fort Mitchell and Gray Point Fort, where restored and heavy and light weaponry are clearly and attractively presented to visitors.

Lancaster No. R5689 (VN-N) of No. 50 Squadron RAF flying over Swinderby, England.

Meeting his fate Among the Clouds Above

In 1939, Joseph 'Joe' Kiernan left his home in Mullingar for a new career that would take him above the clouds of Nazi Germany.

By Catherine Fleming, Joe's niece

Regarded as the 'brains' of the family, Joe left his family home after completing his studies at St. Finian's College; he was 19 years old. He left behind his parents, Elizabeth and Joseph, and four siblings, Bridie, Willie, Kathleen, and Lilly. He was talented at drawing and travelled across the Irish Sea to train as a Draughtsman with the Ministry of War. The black clouds of war were gathering on the horizon and with its inevitable beginning in September 1939, Joe joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) and due to his academic skills, he was selected to be a pilot. We know of Joe's story because of the many letters he wrote to his cousin May who lived in England. These letters would later be sent to Joe's family in Mullingar. Due to the strict censorship at the time, Joe clearly could not always write about what he was doing. At times he just mentions where he was based and comments on things like the accommodation, but little else.

RAF Boscombe Down: Aircraftman

Our journey begins with him in early December 1940. He is on his way to the RAF base at Boscombe Down in Wiltshire where he would stay for a little over a month. The base had four grass runways and the trainees stayed in Nissen huts laid in precise rows. The huts were made of corrugated iron on the outside and lined with wood on the inside. With concrete floors Joe found he could get no sleep but shivered despite being buried under the five blankets he had been allocated. That winter was on record as one of the coldest since 1889, with temperatures dropping to -21 F in Cumbria. For this young man the cold and the feeling of constant hunger was his introduction to Boscombe!

In the early morning the lads had to walk about a mile in freezing conditions to wash and get their breakfast. A lorry did come to collect them, but Joe found that it was always too early or too late. All the young men were anxious to begin their flying course, but knew they had to wait until a vacancy arose in one of the flying schools. They were really disappointed as they were 'stuck on ground defence'. Sometimes they were allowed down to the huge hangars to look at the planes and dream of a time they would be at last able to get some flying time. During this period several units were stationed at the base. No. 35 Squadron operating Handley

The only two photographs of Joseph 'Joe' Kiernan. The date and location for both is unknown.

Page Halifax; No. 56 Squadron operating the Hawker Hurricane I; No. 109 Squadron operating the Whitley, Anson, and Vickers Wellington; and No. 249 Squadron operating the Hurricane.

Joe met with two sergeant pilots one afternoon walking across the grass runway and had a good chat with them about the course. They told him the mathematics part was of primary school level and one of them kindly gave him a loan of some books to study. This pilot wrote home for more books to be posted to the novice. Joe was a little overawed at this kind gesture, but one can imagine a seasoned pilot being empathetic with the enthusiasm of these 'young whipper –snappers!' Anxious to keep on top of his studies, Joe had already written home to Ireland for his geography books to be sent over. At this time one letter to his cousin May, he mentions a young blonde WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) he saw in the dining hall but felt she was out of his league.

1/7 Flight No. 9 Receiving Wing: Aircraftman 2nd Class

By February 1940, Joe was with 1/7 Flight No. 9 Receiving Wing, S Stratford on Avon. The receiving wing units were for new entrees to receive their uniform and kit, and for their paperwork and medicals to be processed. Joe and his fellow recruits were billeted in the Stratford Hotel. Here Joe comments that they had 'hot water' and 'indoor games' and 'football'. The men however, were bored and frustrated and a valuable lesson was soon learnt.

His letters indicate he had been refused a weekend pass twice. He also applied for a five day leave pass. This was 'thrown out'. He decided that he would 'rip off to London' with three other chaps for the weekend. However, he had no idea that 48 other trainee pilots had the same idea! As he tells us in his letter 'the o/c thought it was mutiny and a general alarm was sent out'. The allure of a weekend in the cosmopolitan capital must have had a strong pull for these young men. Joe knew nothing of the furore that was going on at the base until he returned after the weekend.

All of the miscreants were 'confined to barracks' for one week and fined one day's pay. The routine for the week was quite punishing. The men rose at 5.00 am. in order to be properly shaved, dressed and buttons gleaming for Reveille at 6.30am. They had to then march to the guard room for inspection which was a mile away. After a 7.00am breakfast they were assigned fatigues: scrubbing, polishing, sweeping etc. From 10 until 12 noon they had drill and at no time were they allowed to 'stand at ease'. The day continued with each minute carefully planned; more fatigues, drill, inspection more fatigues and tea at 5.30pm. Even then they were not allowed rest but endured instruction and final bout of fatigues! Then they marched back to the guard room for final inspection and walked the mile back to their hotel. 'Lights out' order was given for 10.00pm.

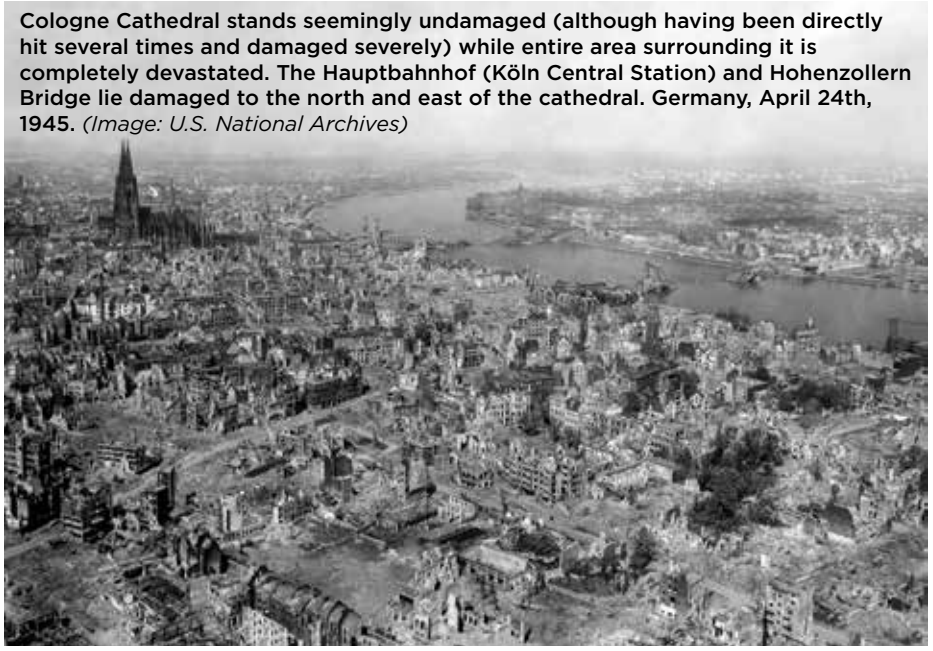
Writing this to his young cousin, Joe was very philosophical and resigned about it all:

'I survived and feel better for it. Now, if you join the RAF, when the time comes, don't lark about and piss off for 48hrs, it's not worth it. We lost our privileges and were going to be taken off our course'.

No. 4 Elementary Flight Training School, RAF Brough: Leading Aircraftman

His next letters put him over a year later stationed in Brough near Hull, East Yorkshire, with RAF Training Command, 51 Group, 4 EFTS (Elementary Flying Training School). When he started flight school we are not exactly sure. What we do know from his letters is that he had been learning to fly the de Havilland DH82a Tiger Moth. This was the standard RAF biplane trainer. Joe made his first solo flight in a Tiger Moth on July 2nd. Joe writes that the runway was grassy and wind-swept as it bordered the River Humber.

'It was a marvellous feeling; I took off lovely, circled around the aerodrome, but coming in to land was about 400 feet too



Cologne Cathedral stands seemingly undamaged (although having been directly hit several times and damaged severely) while entire area surrounding it is completely devastated. The Hauptbahnhof (Köln Central Station) and Hohenzollern Bridge lie damaged to the north and east of the cathedral. Germany, April 24th, 1945. *(Image: U.S. National Archives)*

One of Joe's many sketches that he drew during his time with the Royal Air Force.

high. Round again I went, and this time I got down all right. Today I had 20 minutes of flying solo and did very well. Tomorrow we have mid-term exams…. not much time to study'.

The days for the student pilots were spent continuously learning long-distance map reading, and the theory of night flying. Joe had to learn Blind Approach Training – that is flying on the sound of radio beams. In a poignant statement he noted that it was 'really interesting and might save my life one day'. It would be at Brough that instructors decided, upon examining the pilots' style of flight and confidence, who would go on to join Bomber Command.

In his letters, Joe was quite concerned about the bombing of Dublin which took place on a beautiful starry night in May 1941, some weeks previous, at precisely 2.05am. 40 people were killed among terror and pandemonium and over 100 were seriously injured.

'That's not too far from Mullingar and I think 'Gerry' must surely have passed over there, at some time',

During the second half of 1941 and into 1942, Joe seems to have moved around quit a bit. By now he had learned how to fly twin engine aircraft, most likely the Avro Anson, and is learning the various skills as a bomber pilot, one of which is flying at night. His letters indicate that he has now been promoted Sergeant Pilot.

RAF Middleton: Sergeant Pilot

A letter dated January 3rd, 1942 from the Sergeants Mess at RAF Middleton, St. George, Durham. This base was opened in 1941. It was the most northerly bomber base in England used for the night bomber offensives against Germany.

'We had a time getting here. On Dec. 29th we left Brize Norton to go to Topcliffe, Yorks. (Brize was the largest station of the RAF 65 miles west north west of London). After a lot of fooling around at Kings Station we eventually got under way with our kit bags gone on another train! Some idiot put them on the wrong one.
Finally, we disembarked at some God forsaken dump where an RAF lorry arrived and picked us up about 3.00am on 30th Dec. On arriving at Topcliffe a short time later, we got 'supper' and there nobody knew anything about us. That night or morning we slept on the chairs in the anti-room as there was no accommodation for us elsewhere.
The following morning after breakfast we had to pay our abominable mess fee. We are to train for Blind Approach- flying on the sound of radio beams. It's very interesting and may help to save my life someday, if it doesn't drive me 'scatty' before then!
Now we leave here on Tuesday, so we weren't told whether we go back to Brize Norton, or go to OTU or get a few days leave...I don't know. The OTU's are all over the place so like Eddie Byrne I too may go to Scotland. Here I met one of the EFTS boys, he's going on Halifax 4 -engine bombers and he has just finished OTU on Whitleys. What's in store for me I just can't imagine.
Remember me in your prayers, JOE'

By early January 1942, one can sense a sort of maturity and fatalism entering his letters. The Battle of Britain was over with the RAF suffering losses of approximately 544 fighter pilots. Joe and his comrades were well aware that 'the chop' could strike at any moment. He showed his Catholic roots by thanking his cousin for the Rosary beads she had sent. These would be returned to his mother after his death. He begs for letters stating, 'You'd be surprised what a difference a letter can make'.

RAF Finningley: Sergeant Pilot

A letter dated February 4th, 1942, puts Joe at RAF Finningley in south Yorkshire. At this time No. 25 Operational Training Unit was operating out of Finningley and at the time was phasing out Handley Page Hampdens for Vickers Wellingtons and Avro 679 Manchesters. The flying conditions are not pleasant with 'slushy snow' and 'winds'. OUT's were one of the final steps in an aircrews' training period before they reached an operational squadron.

No. 50 Squadron, Lancaster VN-D in formation with other Lancaster's possibly also of No. 50 Squadron, during a daylight operation (c. 1944-45). (Image: www.lancaster-archive.com)

'The powers-to-be are rushing us through the ground course. We are scheduled to fly on Sunday next starting on Wellingtons. The flying equipment has been issued to use battle-dress included. After three or four weeks on Wellingtons we go on to Manchesters'.

During training, one of his friends, Tommy, was killed at take off. According to Air Ministry over 8,000 men were killed in non-operational flying; training or accidents during war years. Another close friend Bill McCleod was lying seriously ill in hospital. His plane had pronged when he was coming in to land. Two of McCleod's crew were killed in this accident. Joe wrote ironically: 'That's Life-Luck of the game! I guess'.

The crews were now being picked and Joe found himself in 'a motley crew'. The co-pilot was a Scotsman, the navigator an Englishman, and the wireless operator an Australian. Although the crew may change again Joe hoped not 'as the fellows are real diggers!' The crews flew with an experienced pilot and either Joe or a recovered McCleod would act as co-pilot.

At this stage in the war, the RAF had stepped up its bombing campaign on Nazi Germany. Bomber Command had a regular front line strength of around 400 aircraft. They were in the process of transitioning from the twin-engine medium bombers to the newer more effective four-engine heavy bombers such as the Handley Page Halifax and Avro Lancaster. To imagine today what the bomber crews had to endure over the skies of Nazi Germany is unconceivable. The first ever 1,000 bomber raid by the RAF was conducted on Cologne on the night of May 30th/31st, 1942. Codenamed Operation Millennium, the massive formation had to be augmented with aircraft and crews from Operational Training Units and from Flying Training Command. Some crews had to be made up of student pilots, just like Joe. For 90 minutes, starting at 00.47am on the 31st, 868 bombed Cologne in a 'bomber stream'; the first time this tactic had been used. It was hoped that such a concentration of bombers would overwhelm the German defences.

The 1,455 tons dropped, two-thirds of which were incendiaries, started 2,500 separate fires. These fires quickly engulfed the city in a firestorm which left 12,840 buildings damaged or destroyed. Residential buildings suffered the worst with some 13,010 destroyed, 6,360 seriously damaged, 22,270 lightly damaged. The RAF lost 43 aircraft.

RAF Scampton: Sergeant Pilot

Joe's next letters place him at RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire. We are not exactly sure what unit he was with here or since when. We do know that at this time 83 Conversion Flight and 49 Conversion Flight were operating from this station and converting crews to the four engine Avro Lancaster. By July 1942, Joe's mood is one of frustration. According to his letters the waiting for active service seems intolerable. His wait would soon be over.

RAF Syerston, 207 Squadron: Sergeant Pilot

An operational tour for an RAF bomber crew consisted of 30 non-aborted, operational sorties. Joe's first foray into the heat of battle finally came in late August. As part of 207 Squadron, based at RAF Bottesford, his plane was one of 113 bombers to head out over enemy territory to bomb Nuremberg on the night of August 28th/29th. Nuremberg was dear to the Nazi heart as it was the site of their great pre-war rallies. Incendiary bombs were also used in this raid.

Over Nuremberg, Pathfinders used 'target indicators' for the first time, to mark the aiming point. These were tiny little incendiary balls released from a single bomb which burned brightly for five minutes. This was deemed long enough to guide the bombers to their target. Approaching from the south, the squadron's crews were able to make fixes from the river, canal and autobahn which were clearly visible in the bright moonlight. The town received only moderate damage despite the accuracy of the markers. Again, the force suffered heavy losses with the Wellington Squadrons bearing the brunt of the casualties. Of the 159-aircraft dispatched, 23 were reported missing - 14 Wellingtons, 4 Lancasters, 3 Short Stirlings and 2 Halifaxes. Joe's crew was not one of them.

The squadron relocated to RAF Langar on September 21st, owing to the Bottesford runway surface breaking up and needing urgent repairs. Joe's second mission was a night-time bombing raid on Munich which took place on the night of September 19th/20th. The distance was enormous at 2,000kms round trip mostly over enemy territory. 68 Lancasters and 21 Stirlings took part.

In a German letter dated October 19th, 1942, Prof. Carl Muth stated the raid over Munich was apocalyptic. More than 400 people were killed: 'Houses toppled over like boxes. Whoever experienced this single hour will never forget it as long as they live'.

Joe found the killing of civilians deeply disturbing and on his last visit home told his

mother as much. He said he always thought he could hear the screams of the casualties on the return leg of the mission. Of course, he knew that was impossible but in those days, no one had known of 'post traumatic stress' one just had to get on with it and do what was expected.

A Bomber Command veteran, Peter George, wrote in the Daily Mail, June 12th, 2012 'No one talked about the raids. That's what it meant to fight in Bomber Command in WW2. Very much alive one minute, in the prime of life; very dead the next, shot down, wiped out, obliterated. The courage needed was breath-taking! It took incredible guts to keep going, time after time, when the odds were so heavily stacked against them!'

50 Squadron: Sergeant Pilot

Joe's last letter is dated November 14th. 1942, from RAF Swinderby. Although not in his letters, we do know from family members, that Joe managed a short leave home to Ireland to see his family. His younger brother Willie was serving in the Cavalry Corps with the Irish Army and stationed in Longford. Getting word, somehow, that his brother was home, Willie borrowed a bike and cycled the 42kms home to see him. Both brothers were keen on boxing. Joe mentioned it in his last letter, that he was sore from boxing in his free time in the gym. Willie was to become the All-Ireland Boxing Champion for the Army and went on to start the Ballagh Boxing Club in Co. Wexford. Before he left for England, Joe gave his younger brother his watch and pen and told him not to worry; everything would be alright. When his mother asked him, 'What if the Germans get you?' Joe's reply was 'Mam, Gerry will never get me alive'.

By the end of 1942, Joe was now posted to 50 Squadron. His third raid was part of the 19-week Battle of the Ruhr. The city of Duisburg was their target. Duisburg was a centre of chemical, iron and steel works. Based at RAF Skellingthorpe all the crews could do was wait on the morning of January 8th, 1943. From the moment, usually around 11am, when the crews discovered they were flying that night, until take off they lived the day with strong determination not to show their fear. Like other crews Joe's probably nominated one of their group to 'water' the tail and thus give the aircraft good luck! They had a total acceptance of their fate but that did not stop knees from knocking and a dry mouth from lack of saliva.

As pilot, Joe sat on the left-hand side of the cockpit. There was no co-pilot. Beside him sat 23-year-old Sergeant Phillip Fisher from England; his Flight Engineer who sat on a folding chair. Philip's position no doubt became very uncomfortable during the long flights. He was in charge of everything mechanical on the Lancaster. Phillip would start the engines, control the throttles, get the wheels up and trim the flaps. The Navigator sat at a table facing left directly behind the pilot. His job would prove all the more difficult this night as fog reduced visibility and cloud was dark and heavy. His unenviable job was to keep the plane on course at all times, reach the target and guide the men home safely. Young Eric Charles from England had to keep transmitting messages to their base as Wireless Operator. Both gunners were only 20-years-old and their job was the loneliest. They were separated from the rest of the crew and jammed into unheated turrets; one mid-upper and one at the rear of the fuselage. Their job was to advise the pilot of enemy aircraft movements in order for him to take evasive action.

When the crew heard a gunner shout 'WEAVE' it meant the FLAK from the anti-aircraft guns were training them or a fighter had them in its sights. The night of January 8th/9th, there was no escaping the FLAK for Joe's Lancaster B MK 1 coded VN-T W4800. Despite Joe's efforts to speed up, weave and twist, the plane and its crew were badly hit. They struggled onwards due south for maybe minutes. It must have felt like a lifetime for the young crew. Finally, they crashed 30kms south near Dusseldorf. All seven were killed. They now became part of the 55,000 men of Bomber Command who gave their lives when fate called them among the clouds. Joe was posthumously promoted to Flight Sergeant. His family were devastated when they received the news.

Joe's Resting Place: Flight Sergeant

On a country road between Cleves in Germany and Grennop in Holland on the German side of the border lies the largest Commonwealth Cemetery of either World War in terms of area. It contains 7,654 graves and is called the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery. At the end of the war in 1945, the remains of thousands of soldiers and airmen were brought from western Germany to lie here. Nearly 4,000 airmen are buried here, all brothers united. My uncle Joseph Kiernan is one of these.

'My brief sweet life is over.
My eyes no longer see.
No Christmas tree, no summer walks,
no pretty girls for me.
I've got "the chop. I've had it.
All the nightly ops. are done.
Yet in another hundred years,
I'll still be twenty one'.
RAF Skellingthorpe Memorial

Catherine Fleming is a retired primary school teacher from Scoil Na Mainistreach, in Celbridge, Co. Kildare. While there she set up the history squad encouraging students to explore family and local history. Catherine's mother Kathleen, Joe's sister, served in the Auxiliary Transport Service while her father Tom served in Medical Corps of the Irish Defence Forces. They are stories for another time. Thank you to Mike Connock from RAF No. 50 and No. 60 Squadrons Association for all his assistance in helping researching Joe's RAF service.

Members of the Royal Air Force Association, Rep. of Ireland Branch, at their annual garden party at Leopardstown Park Hospital, Dublin.

In Friendship and In Service

Supporting the RAF Family
The Royal Air Force Association, Republic of Ireland

Photos by Michael Coyne

Founded in 1929, the Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA) is committed to providing confidential, professional and fair services to members of the wider Royal Air Force family from the youngest recruit to the oldest veteran and their families. On-going training and support for welfare volunteers and staff ensures services are consistent and of the highest possible standard. All are treated with dignity and respect at all times. There is one branch of the RAFA in the Republic of Ireland. This year was a big year for the branch as for the first time the annual European Area Conference was held in Dublin.

The RAFA is the charity that supports the RAF family. When someone in the RAF family needs help, the charity they turn to is the Royal Air Forces Association. The RAFA helps develop a strong sense of community and feeling of wellbeing amongst all Service personnel and their families by encouraging unity and a feeling of community.

Service charities and organisations such as the RAFA, Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and the Royal Air Force Families Federation play a key role in this wider Royal Air Force community. This community is more commonly known as the Royal Air Force Family, and all the organisations work closely with the Royal Air Force to provide the necessary welfare and support to all who are part of it.

Today, there are over 1.5 million people in the RAF family who are either serving or who have served in the RAF (whether as a regular or reservist) and their spouses, partners or dependent children. The RAFA has over 65,000 members in over 400 branches worldwide. They are at the heart of the Association. Many members volunteer their time to deliver welfare services, raise essential funds and help in countless other important ways. A large number of the volunteers who support the crucial welfare work have been trained to nationally accredited standards. The RAFA have over 540 volunteer Honorary Welfare Officers make over 102,200 welfare visits and calls offering personal support to meet each individual's and family's needs.

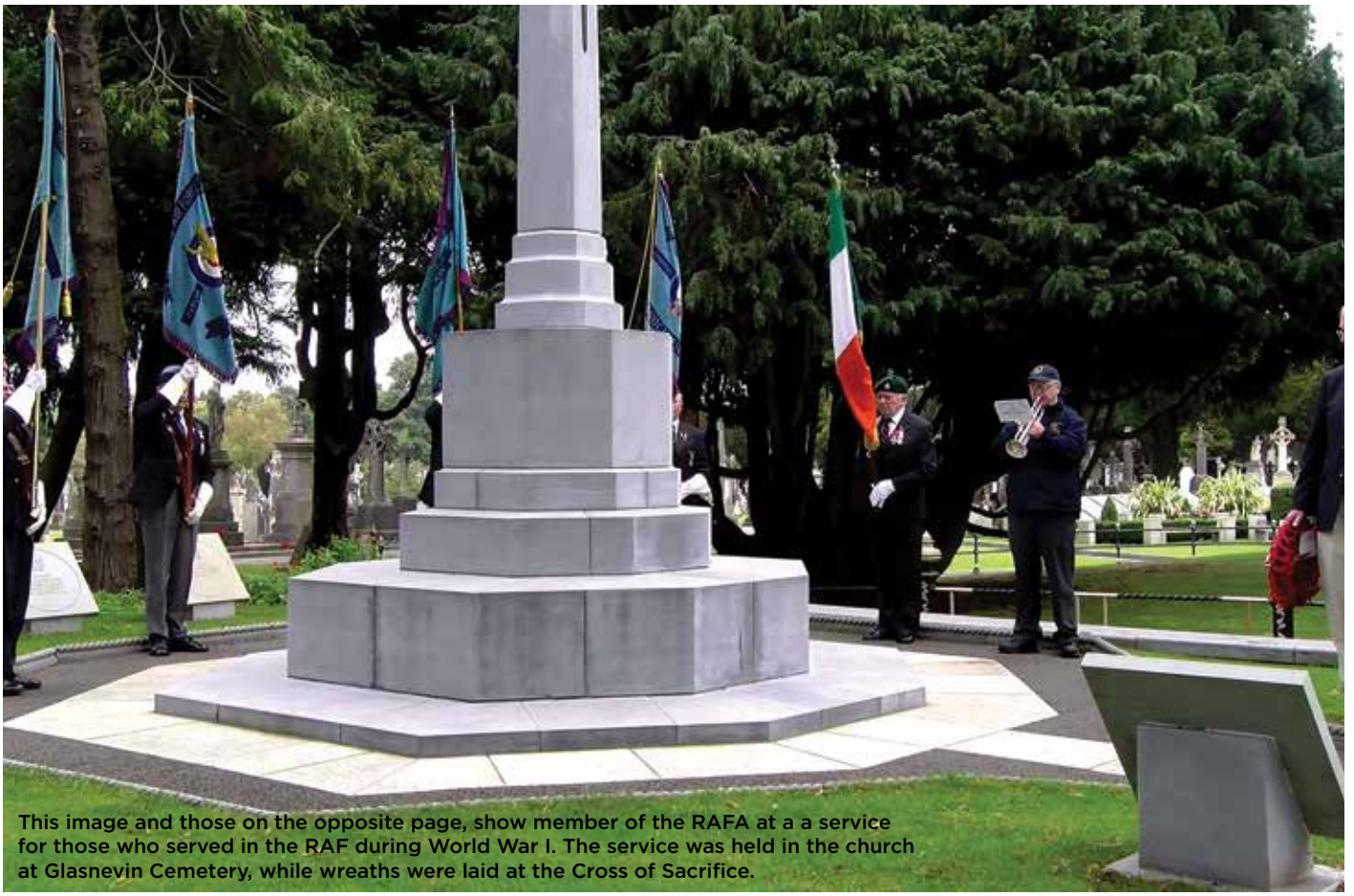
Standard bearers of the RAFA at a ceremony in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin.

Just some of the roles undertaken by the RAFA include:

- Give expert advice and professional assistance on War Pensions and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, achieving more than £540,000 in pension and compensation payments.
- Every year the RAFA help 2,500 people enjoy a much-needed Wings Break. The Storybook Wings initiative has supported 2,300 RAF children who struggle when their parent is not at home – whether on deployment or working away during the week.
- The RAFA funds the refurbishment of 30 comfortable contact houses on stations where, for example, a separated parent can spend a precious weekend with their children.
- Assist around 50 RAF veterans or their widows/widowers to lead safe, independent lives in the RAFA sheltered and supported housing.
- Through the RAF Families Federation, the RAFA give RAF personnel and their families the chance to influence future policy
- Distribute more than £1.8m in welfare grants to serving and ex-serving personnel.
- Work with Alabaré and The Soldier's Charity to help homeless ex-military personnel to rebuild their lives.

Chairman of the Rep. of Ireland Branch is Pete McWilliams. From Rathdrum Co. Wicklow, Pete joined the RAF when he was 17 on March 10th, 1967. He served for 12 years as an electronic technician telecommunication; specialising in cryptography and secure communications. 'When I served, explained Pete, 'it was at the height of the Cold War. I saw service in Oman, Gibraltar, Germany and the United Kingdom along with other detachments around Europe, the Middle East and Near East'. When Pete left the RAF, he went into the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (T) as a Warrant Officer Instructor in the RAF Air Cadets. 'The motto of the RAF is "Per Ardua ad Astra", "Through Adversity to the Stars". It's a wonderful motto,' continued Pete, 'We are all very proud of our service'.

The Rep. of Ireland Branch was founded in 1947, and incorporated the following year. The branch has 230 members from all over the country. These members are mostly



This image and those on the opposite page, show member of the RAFA at a a service for those who served in the RAF during World War I. The service was held in the church at Glasnevin Cemetery, while wreaths were laid at the Cross of Sacrifice.

made up of RAF veterans who served as far back as World War II. Pete told us the role of the branch here in the Rep. of Ireland: 'A registered charity here, our main function is welfare. We look after veterans or their families who have fallen on hard times. The kind of help we give ranges from giving them a tank of oil to help them get through the winter, to providing a social outlet for members. We have outings here in Ireland and abroad, along with a meet up every month in the National Yacht Club in Dún Laoghaire. It is our way of fighting loneliness and isolation. We are very grateful to those who support us such as Leopardstown Park Hospital where several of our veterans stay'.

Over the weekend of October 6th/8th, the Republic of Ireland Branch hosted the European Area Conference at the Marine Hotel in Sutton. Representatives from branches in France, Germany, Guernsey, Jersey, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland joined the Republic of Ireland Branch for the event.

The British Ambassador to Ireland, HE Robin Barnett, gave the opening address:

'For me the RAF is a perfect example of effectiveness and professionalism. It is also very much an international fellowship. Pilots and airmen from many nations helped us succeed in winning the Second World War. One of the great things about the RAF is its very large international family and one of the great things about the RAFA is that it exists to help look after the members of that family. When you are part of such an organisation for a long period of time you build up a sense of friendship and comradeship and common purpose. And I think the work the RAFA does in keeping that spirit alive for everybody who served in the Royal Air Force is something really special. I think it is great that you are here in Ireland. People sometimes forget that many people from Ireland served in the RAF and indeed continue to do so. Today veterans are treated with the respect and honour they deserve. It is a real success story when around the world there are a great many challenges'.

Brexit was high on the agenda at the conference. Especially how it will affect those members outside the United Kingdom. During the conference the Rep. of Ireland Branch received several awards. Frank Brien, the branch Standard Bearer, was awarded an Area President's Certificate and badge for his outstanding work over many years, representing the branch at formal and informal events. Tony Breen, was awarded the Wally Marriott Trophy in recognition of the huge efforts he puts into supporting the branch's social gatherings and visiting veterans in his local area. The branch also received a Certificate for contributing £7,500 to the Wings Appeal in 2016/17.

European Area President, Air Marshal Philip Sturley (Retd)

I had a full career in the RAF for 37 years. I was born in Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo. When we were young we moved to England. I

Air Marshal Philip Sturley.

went to a really good Jesuit school. Part of joining that school we had to join the cadets. I joined the Air Cadets and fell in love with flying. My mother wanted me to be a priest. She gave me her blessing to join the RAF. I was the only person in my family to join the military. I flew fighters for most of my career.

My family was in quite a hard way. My father died when I was about 14 and I nearly had to leave school. The RAF gave me a scholarship. It was both to stay in school and to go on to university. At Southampton University I studied aeronautics and astronautics engineering. While there I flew the Chipmunk, which was the basic trainer at the time. I spent three years thereafter which I received my commission in 1972 and then went on to RAF Cranwell where I flew the jet Provost. Following that I went up to up to Valley for advanced fighter training on the Hawker Hunter. From Chipmunk to Provost and then the Hunter is incredible considering what they do now.

My first tour was with the F4 Phantom at RAF Coningsby where we did a lot of detachments to Germany. You must remember this was the time of the Cold War. My job as a fighter reconnaissance pilot was to watch out for the Russians along the border. I did several tours there and ended up commanding No. 2 Squadron. I went on then to get promoted and do several staff jobs. I came back to fighters flying the Tornado and commanded RAF Cottesmore in Rutland in 1992. In 1998, I was appointed Air Officer Commanding No. 38 Group, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff in 2000, and Chief of Staff to the Air North Commander in 2003 before retiring in 2005.

During all of this I learned to become a glider pilot. The RAF have a very strong glider training programme. This has become a passion of mine, particularly racing gliders. I go every year to the Alps and to the Andes in Chile. When you are flying with your unit you don't have time for sport flying. Gliding is great fun.

In my career I've flown a total of 110 different types of aircraft. The famous Royal Navy pilot, Captain Eric Melrose 'Winkle' Brown, achieved over 400 types.

After I retired I served as President of the Royal Air Force Association for six years. The RAFA is the largest single-service charity within the British Armed Forces. It is aimed at people in need who have served in the RAF. If they need help the RAFA is there for them and increasingly people need help. When you think of it at the end of the Second World War there were a million people in the RAF. We have estimated that there are a couple of million people who have served at some stage in the RAF. As the population ages they will need at some stage help. It maybe simply in need of a friend and keeping in touch.

The RAFA is a vast family. As you can see from this conference there are members here from all over the European area. They are all here this weekend to discuss, how best to do well by our people. It is important to

European Area Council members at this years conference in the Marine Hotel in Sutton. L-R: Brian Darke (Luxembourg Branch Secretary), Central Council Representative Peter McWilliams (ROI Branch Chairman), Elected Member Dr Bryan Pattison (Swiss Branch Chairman), Life Vice-President Air Marshal Sir Christopher Coville, RAFA President Air Marshal Sir Baz North, Mr Malcolm Mason (Amsterdam Branch Chairman), Vice-Chairman Mrs Beryl Dennett Stannard (Sud-Ouest France Branch Chairman), Vice-President Mr Mick O'Connell (Guernsey Branch Chairman), Vice-President Mr Peter Clarke (Jersey Branch Vice-Chairman), RAF Association President Mr Bob Hunt (North Costa Blanca Branch Chairman), European Area President Air Marshal Philip Sturley, HE Robin Barnett British Ambassador to Ireland, Mr Malcolm Mason (Amsterdam Branch Chairman), Vice-Chairman Mrs Beryl Dennett Stannard (Sud-Ouest France Branch Chairman), Vice-President Mr Mick O'Connell (Guernsey Branch Chairman), Vice-President Mr Peter Clarke (Jersey Branch Vice-Chairman), Overseas Area Director Mrs Sarah Waugh.

The Wings Appeal is the main fundraiser by the RAFA. These two photographs show the President of the RAFA, Air Marshal Sir Baz North, presenting awards at this years conference. (Right) Mr Frank Brien Republic of Ireland Branch, receiving a certificate for his outstanding service to the Branch down the years. (Left) Mr Peter Clarke Jersey Branch, receiving a certificate for contributing £10,000 or more to the Wings Appeal in 2016/2017.

remember you don't have to be a member of the RAFA to benefit from its services. All you have to do is to have served.

We want people to be members and get involved in the activities and make them feel wanted. An important initiative these days is what we call 'befriending'. This is having somebody in each area that goes out and checks that those on their own are all right. Beside the financial burdens, loneliness can be one of the biggest problem for people. Typically, you find people are too proud to admit they need help, so we have to keep an eye out for them.

We have been lucky over the years with the calibre of people it has recruited. Having a network of branches throughout the United Kingdom and abroad means we have an extensive network that can reach out to the larger family.

The Royal Air Force is coming up to 100 years. By that time, I will be in the service for 50 years, half of its life. We are very proud of our history. Although we are the youngest of the services when you look at our performance in that time and even today, the RAF is the service of choice. Whether it by deployments to deal with crisis in Syria or Iraq, or the gales and floods in the Caribbean, it is the air force that gets there first.

The 'Down' Spitfire Mk IIa

The Spitfire Mk2a Replica, in the markings of the 'Down' Spitfire as flown by P/O Walter McManus at the time of his fatal crash. It's seen here in front of a modern icon, the Titanic Centre in Belfast.

By the Ulster Aviation Society

A long-term goal of the Ulster Aviation Society was to have a Spitfire in their collection. The Spitfire is one of those iconic fighter aircraft that is simply legendary. Renowned for its speed and performance in battle it is a must for any aviation collection. The Spitfire has a poignant significance with Northern Ireland as 17 Spitfire Mk IIa's were funded by the people of the North during the Second World War. The 'Down' Spitfire was the only one of these 17 which served in Northern Ireland during the war.

In December 2013, years of fundraising and research finally paid off, the Ulster Aviation Society took delivery of a Spitfire Mk IIa Replica.The aircraft was subsequently painted in the markings of the 'Down' Spitfire P7823 of 504 Squadron as flown by P/O Walter McManus.

Walter McManus served with the Royal Canadian Air Force with the 504 Squadron Royal Air Force (RAF) at Ballyhalbert in the autumn of 1941. It was one of 17 Spitfires purchased through the Belfast Telegraph Spitfire Fund, set up through donations of thousands of individuals as well as businesses and private organisations. Each aircraft bore the name of a community, county or region in Northern Ireland; such as Enniskillen or the Mourne Mountains. Spitfire P7823 was named after County Down, and was the only aircraft from that fund which was based in Northern Ireland. It was flown by a number of pilots in the squadron, among them Cecil Austin, father of BBC presenter Wendy Austin.

The last pilot of P7823 was a Canadian from Ontario, Walter McManus. He was killed when the aircraft crashed and burned in January 1942, north of Lurgan. His remains rest in a small churchyard at Ballycranbeg, near Ballyhalbert. The cause of the crash was never determined.

Aged 27, Walter had joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in 1941 and was married, to Kathleen Hunt, only a few weeks before the RCAF sent him overseas. He was one of many Canadian airmen who served in RAF units. Walter, from southern Ontario, was a new member of a law firm there. He had bright prospects ahead. Walter and Kathleen, from the city of Hamilton, had married in May 1941. Photos from the occasion show a beautiful bride smiling proudly beside her husband, handsome in his new uniform.

Shortly after the wedding, Walter shipped out to England from Halifax, taking time only to send a quick telegram to his bride, promising to return, 'with all possible haste'. 'Meanwhile,' he added, 'keep interested and interesting and don't worry about anything. I love you very tremendously and won't leave you again'. He was never to return to Kathleen.

Condolences flooded back to Kathleen, his new bride, from his RAF comrades and from people throughout the Ards peninsula. One was from Gwendoline Rhodes of The Warren, Donaghadee. 'I met your husband some time ago while working in the YMCA mobile canteen,' she said. 'He was always most welcome in our

Spitfire Mk IIa

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Built by	Castle Bromwich
Crew	1
Role	Fighter
Specifications	
Engine	Rolls-Royce Merlin-XII 12-cylinder inline
Cooling type	Water
Power	1,135 hp (846 kW) at 12,250 ft (3,734 m) 100 Octane fuel, +9 pounds lb/in^2 boost
Maximum speed	354 mph (570 km/h) at 17,550 ft (5,349 m)
Rate of climb	2,995 ft/min (15.3 m/s) at 10,000 ft (3,962 m)
Service ceiling	37,600 ft (11,460 m)
Wing loading	25.4 lb/ft^2 (122 kg/m^2)
Combat range	405 mi (651 km) on internal fuel
Wingspan	36 ft 10 in (11.23 m)
Wing area	242.1 ft^2 (22.5 m^2)
Length	29 ft 11 in (9.12 m)
Height	9 ft 10 in (3.02 m)
Empty weight	4,541 lb (2,059 kg)
Loaded weight	6,172 lb (2,799 kg)
Armaments	8 x 7.7 mm Browning machine gun, wing-mounted (350 rounds per gun)
Armour	38 mm Bulletproof glass in cockpit front 4 mm Steel plate in pilot's seat 6-7 mm Steel plate behind the pilot

The Spitfire dedication at the Ulster Aviation Hanger - April 25th, 2015.

house and often used to spend his 24 hours leave with friends of ours.... We enjoyed his company so much'.

Walter's widow remarried after the war—coincidentally to another Royal Air Force officer, Edward Nolan. He was a native of County Kerry. The couple made their home in Ontario. Both have since died, but their three children have been in regular contact with the Ulster Aviation Society and have donated several items of memorabilia which will be displayed at the spring tribute.

Spitfires had a short but interesting association with Northern Ireland. The first one appeared in July 1939, at an air show at Belfast Harbour Airport. But it wasn't until the arrival of 504 Squadron at Ballyhalbert in 1941 that Spitfires arrived in any numbers. In fact, 504 Squadron was the only Spitfire unit to be based here which could claim to have been involved in bringing down an enemy aircraft. The aircraft in question was a Junkers Ju88, shot down on August 23rd, 1942, when attacked by a succession of Spitfires while attempting to return to its base in France from a Luftwaffe reconnaissance mission over Belfast.

Other Spitfire units were based in Northern Ireland, often quite briefly, during the Second World War. Among them was 133 Squadron with an American pilot who achieved a unique slice of fame after his Spitfire crashed in a Donegal bog in 1941. Donegal is in Ireland, which was neutral during the war and young Roland 'Bud' Wolfe was interned there, but after two escapes he eventually ended back with 133 Squadron. The remains of his aircraft were retrieved from Inishowen in 2011, following search and research by Jonny McNee, who has exhibited bits and pieces of that Spitfire from time to time in conjunction with the Ulster Aviation Society.

Among the other RAF squadrons assigned to Northern Ireland for varying periods of time were numbers 41, 74, 130, 134, 152, 485 and 501 Squadrons. Three squadrons of the U.S. Army Air Force's 52nd Fighter Group also put in a brief appearance at Eglinton and Maydown. Two Polish squadrons of the RAF, numbers 315 and 303, flew out of Ballyhalbert between early July 1943 and late April 1944. Their reputation for fearless action against enemy aircraft was well known, and they found the lack of hostile activity somewhat frustrating, but were off to more demanding assignments elsewhere by the summer of 1944. Several Spitfire and Seafire units of the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm were also based in Northern Ireland from time to time, though usually for periods of short duration.

Spitfires weren't always used in an aggressive role during the war. Meteorological flights flew out of Aldergrove during the later years of the conflict. After the war, those flights continued to the end of 1948, and 502 (Ulster) Squadron of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force flew fighter versions from 1948 to 1951.

The Ulster Aviation Society's Spitfire replica has been very popular wherever it has appeared at various community events in the past few years.

Lockheed Hudson No. 91 was on charge to the R&MB Sqn. And would have been an excellent long range reconnaissance aircraft had more been available. It is seen here at Baldonnel prior to a flight to Rineanna.

Emergency Over Irish Skies - Part 5

The Irish Air Corps 1939 - 1946

By AP (Tony) Kearns
Photos courtesy of Irish Air Corps Museum

Over the previous four issues, aviation historian AP (Tony) Kearns, has outlined air operations over Neutral Ireland during the Emergency period. With limited resources the Irish Air Corps and Irish Air Defence Command defended Irish skies during an uncertain period. Co-operation with the Allied powers allowed for air corridors over Irish air space and the safe return of crashed Allied aircraft. In this final part to this series, Tony gives an overview of the Irish Air Corps in the latter half of the war years.

War Over Irish Waters

By the spring of 1940, it was generally agreed that the war at sea (the land war had not yet begun) had been favourable to the Allies, notwithstanding the disastrous Norwegian Campaign. The German Navy did not emerge unscathed from this campaign, losing one third of its cruisers and almost half of its destroyer force. The occupation of Norway by the German forces did, however, transform the situation. Operating from their new bases, the Luftwaffe was in a position to harass shipping in the North Sea. Regular reconnaissance sorties of the Northern Sector were carried out and progressively extended to Northern Ireland and Donegal during the period of mid-1940.

The main threat to Allied and indeed non-belligerent shipping, prior to July was generally from the U-boats and, to a lesser extent surface raider, though the latter were successfully held in check. With the fall of France and the Low Countries in June,

The wreckage of an RAF Boston bomber.

Germany now commanded the Western seaboard from the Arctic Circle to the Pyrenees, with the airfields of the occupied countries being utilised by the Luftwaffe.

A new and serious threat to the convoys in the Western Approaches developed with the arrival of a new Luftwaffe unit, Kampfgeschwader K.G. 40, equipped with the Focke Wulf FW 200 Condor four-engine reconnaissance bomber. This formation moved to the Atlantic Coast at Brest for a brief period following the surrender of France, but by August 1940 had relocated to a more permanent base at the former French Air Force airfield at Merignac, near Bordeaux. From there it immediately commenced operations around the Irish coast. This unit averaging no more than some seven aircraft on strength and perhaps as few as four serviceable at any given period sank 90,000 tons of shipping within a matter of ten weeks. Its operations ranged from the Coasts of Spain and Portugal, west of Ireland, the Irish Sea, and as far as the Arctic Circle. 1./K.G.40 was commanded by Oberstleutnant Edgar Petersen 38.

Thereafter, other units commenced operations around the Irish coasts with shorter-range aircraft, including the Heinkel He 111 and He 115, Junkers Ju 88, Dornier Do 17 and Blohm Voss BV 138 of the Kustenfliegergruppen with the obsolete Dornier Do 18 seaplane putting in the odd appearance.

Routes

Four main routes were used by the Condors operating from Bordeaux and were carefully worked out for navigation, fuel consumption, weather reports and rigidly adhered to on the outward sector, with a less flexible procedure adopted for the return leg. The first route was south as far as Lisbon, passing close to the Spanish and Portuguese coasts, from Lisbon into the Atlantic to approximately 17 to 18 degrees west then moving north towards Ireland, before finally heading back to Bordeaux. The second route was flown westwards from the base again to 17 or 18 degrees west, then returning to base after a ten to fifteen hours patrol. The third route brought the aircraft up the coast of Brittany, northwest towards the coast of Cornwall, which it tended to avoid, and into the Irish Sea. It would then track across Ireland on a north westerly course towards Erris Head (Look Out Post 62). On reaching this point it would move into the North Atlantic for some 350 miles, then to Bordeaux either directly or via the Irish Sea. It occasionally flew on to Norway, overnighted and returned the following or on a subsequent day. The fourth track usually took it northwest from Bordeaux to the southwest tip of Ireland (using the Bull Rock as a navigating point), then out into the Atlantic returning directly to base.

Initially orders were issued to respect Neutral Irish airspace to avoid the possibility of British intervention if neutrality appeared to be blatantly violated. The crews, therefore, tended to avoid crossing Ireland except when unavoidable or in an emergency. By Late 1940, however, this ban according to German sources was lifted. The reporting times from the Look Out Post's (LOPs) supports in a general way the approximate times of Condor sightings. The Condors route was often reported crossing the coast at Cork and then tracking north west over Galway and exiting to the Atlantic across North Mayo. This can be confirmed by the related reports from the LOPs.

The armed reconnaissance patrols, which formed the main function of K.G. 40, usually commenced in the early morning from their base at Bordeaux-Merignac. The aircraft were usually airborne around 04.30hrs to 06.00hrs. local time (the crew having risen two hours earlier), with a planned time in the patrol area around 09.00hrs. Patrols were usually by a single aircraft but depending on the particular operation. The crew often included a meteorologist or 'Frog' to make weather observations and transmit the findings by radio to base. However, occasionally two FW 200 Condors would operate as a team on a crossover patrol, or if they were relieving one and other in a patrol area. On some occasions it would be reported that same day as crossing from the west coast tracking south east and noted on occasions a thin wisp of smoke from an engine in trouble. The aircraft commander, having made the decision to route over neutral territory in order to reach its base using the shortest route, perhaps with an injured crewman as a result of an encounter. It clearly indicates the inability of the Air Corps to prevent such incursions of Irish territory by Luftwaffe or Allied Air Forces due to the lack of intercepting fighters in the Air Corps inventory.

Crash landings

One aspect of the Air Corps operations to keep them busy was the recovery of the crashed aircraft of the belligerents. The number of crashes has been variously recorded as 163 to 200. Irish Army and Air

Hawker Hurricane I seen here flown by F/Lt Don West RAF. This aircraft was used during the conversion course which was run by F/Lt West. This photo was taken a few days after he had airtested the Hurricane following its repairs and first flight in Air Corps service.

Corps Crash Crews spent many weeks in difficult conditions salvaging aircraft from mountainsides or bogland with inadequate equipment and tools and at times in savage weather conditions. While many aircraft were trainers, others were armed reconnaissance aircraft with armaments on board. The sites had to be clear of unexploded bombs and or depth charges prior to any salvage operation commencing.

On the first day of war two flying boats landed in Neutral Waters, a Lerwick landed at Dun Laoghaire and a Sunderland landed at Skerries Co. Dublin, after leaving Dun Laoghaire the Lerwick proceeded to Skerries to assist the Sunderland to get away before the ebb tide stranded it. In the instances of aircraft being refuelled and allowed to depart, the fuel uplifted was usually refunded in double the amount. On some occasions when an Allied aircraft landed the pilot often tried to destroy the aircraft or equipment. An order was issued by the Royal Navy that Fleet Air Arm aircraft with radar on board, in the event of an emergency landing in Ireland were not to destroy their equipment. When Swordfish NR890 from 811 Squadron Royal Navy force landed in Sligo on September 4th, 1944, the pilot requested permission to destroy the radar and equipment on board. He was told that it was not necessary and in order to convince him he was allowed to phone the British Legation in Dublin. They instructed him not to destroy the aircraft or equipment and that all facilities would be accorded to him. Such was the co-operation at this stage.

Air Corps Acquisitions

Acquiring aircraft for the Air Corps was to be a recurring problem during the Emergency and when some aircraft were supplied they were of the obsolete types since withdrawn from the Royal Air Force (RAF). This resulted in receiving six Hawker Hind biplane aircraft on June 1st, 1940, the only obvious benefit was that three of them had dual controls and were taken on charge by the Schools. The other three went to the Fighter Squadron and fighter aircraft in the true sense they were not. The British Ministry of Defence notified the Air Corps that five Miles Magisters were available from RAF stocks resulting in five pilots travelling by air from Collinstown to Speke in Liverpool to inspect the five Magisters at RAF Sealand. The five pilots were Captain T. Kennelly, Captain Cummiskey, Captain Moynihan, Lieutenant Devoy and Lieutenant O'Byrne. Following acceptance test flights, the five made plans to fly to Baldonnel. Some previous delivery flights from Britain used the route to Carlisle to Stranraer, Newtownards and then south to Baldonnel thus minimising flying over water, however, on this occasion they flew direct from Sealand arriving at Baldonnel on June 7th, 1940, after a 1hr 15min. flight. The six were still in their RAF trainer markings and following inspection and painting were taken on charge by the Elementary Flight Training Section (EFTS) of the Schools.

Due to the lack of spares, the number of operational aircraft available diminished alarmingly. As a consequence, coastal patrols were by request only and not daily as in the early years. It was seriously considered if the Air Corps was an effective unit within the Defence Forces. Following further requests for aircraft thirteen more aircraft were received in 1941 and 1942, but as in the example of the Hawker Hinds these too were also obsolete biplanes and in contrast to the Hinds had between them up to as much as 500 flight hours each, these proved to be well worn aircraft. Again, as in the case of the Hinds a number of them had dual controls and went to the Schools, the remainder were taken on charge by the Reconnaissance & Medium Bombing Squadron. Their service lives were short.

Army Co-operation – the Autumn Manoeuvres 1942

In September 1942, a major exercise was carried out in the Munster area and generally referred to as the Autumn Manoeuvres. The airfield at Rathduff Co Tipperary was used by the 1st Air Component with Lysanders and Hectors. Preparations were completed by the end of August and personnel who were to be housed in bivouacs and aircraft parked in the open, arrived before the end of the month. Fermoy and Glenville were used by the Walrus and Magisters. In this occasion the Magisters were operated in communication, observation and message dropping sorties. The Ansons remained at Rineanna and operated from there. There were difficult operating conditions encountered at Rathduff due to the extremely hard and uneven surface. This resulted in some nose up incidents and undercarriage damage in addition to collisions. The Air Corps suffered a loss early into the exercise when Walrus No. 20 suffered engine failure on September 3rd, it crashed at Castletownroche and was a write off. The pilot Lieutenant T. P. O'Mahony survived the crash. Generally, the exercise was considered a success but purely from an army co-operations aspect.

The exercise left only one Walrus remaining, No.18, it had been rebuilt after its mishap during the delivery flight. Walrus No. 19 had been damaged after landing at Baldonnel on September 19th, 1940, which occurred during taxying to the tarmac. While turning downwind a gust of wind lifted the tail and then bounced back heavily to the ground causing damage to the fuselage. It was decided to rebuild

A RAF Wellington crash Co. Clare.

Walrus No. 18 utilising the wings of Walrus No. 19. Walrus No. 20 was the aircraft taken on the unauthorised flight by Lieutenant Alan Thornton allegedly to attempt to fly to France. The Walrus was forced to land at St. Evel in Cornwall and all on board arrested and returned to Ireland, the Walrus was collected by an Air Corps crew and flown back to Baldonnel.

Windfalls

During a combat over the Irish Sea between Luftwaffe Heinkels from III/KG55 and RAF Hurricanes from 79 Squadron based a Pembrey it resulted in the Air Corps acquiring their first Hawker Hurricane. Pilot Officer Paul Mayhew ran low on fuel and was unaware of his location, but thinking that he was over Wales when he had to force land in Co Wexford, on September 29th. 1940. He was interned and the Hurricane P5176 was subsequently purchased, repaired and entered service with the Advance Training Section of the Schools as No. 93. Two more Hurricanes followed but these were of a later Mark II, with Merlin XX engines and extended armament. They too went to the Schools after repair, following protracted negotiations and purchase as Nos. 94 and 95.

On January 24th, 1941, a Lockheed Hudson from 233 Squadron RAF Coastal Command on return from an Atlantic patrol forced landed in Sligo due to lack of fuel. It had taken off from Aldergrove at 09.20 to provide escort to Convoy HG50 off the west coast of Ireland. After leaving the area to return to base they encountered bad weather and to add to their difficulties lost radio contact. A wheel up landing was accomplished at Skreen, Co. Sligo, with apparent minimal damage, but subsequently discovered to have a twisted fuselage. This was not encountered until it had later passed through the hands of Aer Lingus and then to a Belgian Company. The Hudson, serial number P5123 and coded ZS-W was recovered by the Air Corps and flown to Baldonnel by Captain Ivan Hammond of Aer Lingus and also a reserve officer in the Air Corps. It was repaired and entered service with the Reconnaissance & Medium Bombing Squadron. The Hudson was an ideal reconnaissance aircraft and was the military version of the Lockheed 14 passenger aircraft. Aer Lingus had two Lockheed 14's but sold them without suggesting that the Air Corps would have use for them. There seemed to have been a breakdown between the Department of Industry & Commerce and the Department of Defence resulting in Major P. A. Mulcahy, OC Air Corps, expressing his displeasure at the sale pointing out that these two aircraft were especially suitable for long range reconnaissance.

There was another windfall on April 24th, 1941, when a Fairey Battle TT on a Training flight from West Freugh in Scotland force landed on Tramore Racecourse, Co. Waterford. The Battle serial number V1222, was flown to Baldonnel by Lieutenant Des Johnston, who reported on landing that the Battle was in poor condition with a considerable amount of fumes entering the cockpit. Powered by a Merlin engine, it had been converted as a target tower but lacked the attachments. Following overhaul and acquiring the necessary target towing gear it eventually entered service as such and was a welcome replacement for the De Haviland Dragon No.18 which had been written off in a crash. The Windfall Hurricane , Hudson Battle and a Miles Master (a Mk I) was purchased at an agreed price of £14,000 sterling.

New Deliveries

By this time Hurricanes and Miles Masters (advance trainers) had been promised to the Air Corps. As a result, Flight Lieutenant Don West RAF arrived in Miles Master III DL670/G-AGEK at Baldonnel in July 1942 to commence the pilot conversion course for the Miles Master, due for delivery in the coming February and the Hurricane conversion course utilising the three Hurricanes Nos. 93, 94 and 95.

It was to be early 1943, before the next delivery of aircraft arrived at Baldonnel when six Miles Master II were delivered by Air Corps pilots from Newtownards on February 10th. They were allotted the serial Nos. 97 to 102 and three of them were taken on charge by the Fighter Squadron. The following month the Fighter Squadron was ordered to Rineanna. The Reconnaissance & Medium Bomber Squadron and Coastal Patrol Squadron were disbanded, and the aircraft returned to Baldonnel and distributed to the Schools and later to the newly formed GP Flight (General Purpose Flight). The Masters being advance trainers provided an opportunity for the pilots to prepare for the long-awaited Hurricanes.

The first four Hurricane Mk I's arrived

four months later when four Air Corps pilots collected the Hurricanes from RAF Newtownards. An arrangement was made whereby the two Mk II Hurricanes, No. 94 and 95, were to be returned to the RAF at the same time. Commandant Billy Keane and Captain Paddy Swan flew Nos. 94 and 95 respectively to join with the two other pilots. Shortly after 15.00hrs on July 7th, Captain Paddy Swan took off in Hurricane No. 103 followed by Captain O'Byrne in Hurricane No. 104, Commandant Billy Keane in Hurricane No. 105 and Captain Mossie Quinlan in Hurricane No. 106.They landed at Baldonnel 45 minutes later. The four aircraft were taken over by the Chief Aeronautical Engineer (CAE) for inspection and painting prior to handing over to the Fighter Squadron at Rineanna. They were used aircraft in the very sense of word with many hundreds of hours on the airframes and would otherwise have been withdrawn from RAF service. Some of them had almost 1,000 airframe hours with others up to 6oo hours, most of which was combat or with Operational Training Units. The remainder Hurricanes when delivered and numbered No. 107 to No. 114 were not in much better condition, but with marginally lower airframe hours.

The period of activity at Rineanna could not be described as particularly hectic. The recurring difficulty of spares for the aircraft and the lack of fuel restricted the flying hours per aircraft coupled with the difficulty of obtaining such items as aircraft tyres. Consequently, the number of hours accumulated by the Hurricanes following withdrawal from service was very low. By this time there were no calls for fighters to scramble to intercept intruding aircraft as by now German activity around the coast had decreased significantly.

In March 1945, six Hurricane Mk IIc were collected at Newtownards and delivered to Baldonnel by Air Corps pilots. These cannon armed aircraft were in better condition with lower hours on the airframes and after inspection at Baldonnel went to the Fighter Squadron at Rineanna. It was a short posting for in May the Squadron took up occupation in Gormanston and considered by all to be a happier location.

With the complement of Hurricanes available, although of two different marks, it was suggested that another fighter squadron be created and went as far as implementing a cadre structure, but with no aircraft at that stage being attached. It was to be known as No. 2 Fighter Squadron. It was not in any event implemented due to the condition of the earlier Hurricane aircraft.

Sergeant Pilots Up to July 1943, all pilots in the Air Corps were of officer rank until 31 aspiring pilots with the rank of private commenced training some months later. The aircraft used were the Miles Magister for initial training followed by the Miles Master advance trainer to attain their wings and Sergeant status to be followed by advance flying training on the Hurricanes. They were then posted to the Fighter Squadron and would have also manned the second squadron had it been formed. Of the 31 pilots at the start of the course 20 Sergeant Pilots completed the two-year course.

Aircraft in distress

Rineanna was a sometimes haven for lost aircraft of the Allies. United States Flying Fortresses, B24 Liberators and C47 Dakotas as well as RAF aircraft were received and supported as aircraft in distress. An example of the preparations set in place and how it evolved, for a lost aircraft is illustrated when a US Navy Liberator from Fleet Air Wing 7 based in Devon was returning to its base with hydraulic trouble, believed to have been because of an engagement over the Bay of Biscay. The pilot, Lieutenant Willis, radioed that he was going to try to land at St. Davids airfield in Wales. How Neutral Ireland became involved in the incident unfolds through documents of the Irish Air Defence Command in Irish Military Archives. It is yet another indication of the close but covert co-operation with the Allies during the war.

At 23.55hrs on January 20th, 1944, the British Air Attaché in Dublin contacted the duty officer at Army HQ in Dublin stating that a Liberator was in distress with one engine out of action and running low on fuel; 'could landing facilities be provided at Rineanna?' He was assured that facilities would be provided. The telephone link from the Air Attaché's office to London was manned on a 24-hour basis for such eventualities. Shortly after the Air Corps detachment at Rineanna was notified to stand by for a night landing., and also the nearby radio station at Ballygireen was requested to keep a watch and search for a service aircraft in distress, frequencies unknown. The Air Attaché's office was informed at 25 minutes past midnight that the facilities were in place. However, no further word was heard from that office. It was not until 01.15hrs that news was received that the Liberator was now reported at 51.10N and 09.20W and had been instructed to proceed to Rineanna.

At 01.46, Central Control at Air Defence Command reported that the aircraft had crossed the Irish Coast at Waterford and was proceeding north into Tipperary. British radar later reported it over Kilkenny (which indicates the range and coverage of radar stations in the United Kingdom at that time) moving south west and having a problem in homing on to Rineanna. Baldonnel was then ordered to standby for a night landing, but Lieutenant Willis apparently having got his bearings from British D/F sources, opted for St. Davids in Wales, where he successfully executed a landing with one wheel hung up. At 20.20hrs. all units involved were notified to close down with thanks being expressed all round.

As the war came to an end the pilots, crew and ground personnel of the Irish Air Corps, the staff at Air Defence Command and the observers of the Look Out Posts could rest assured that they had stood firm during testing times. They had been called upon to intercept belligerent aircraft and defend Irish airspace against modern and well-equipped air powers. The wars end, however, brought a new trial for Neutral Ireland – the Cold War.

Tony Kearns has a life long interest in Irish Military Aviation history, particularly the Air Corps and the Emergency period including the Allied and German operations over and around neutral Ireland. He is a volunteer researcher at the Irish Air Corps Museum and Heritage Centre

An aerial view of the Ulster Aviation Society collection in No. 1 hanger at Long Kesh.

Keeping Ireland's Aviation History Alive

The Ulster Aviation Collection
Photos by Ken Mooney and courtesy of Ulster Aviation Society

Keeping in line with our Royal Air Force theme we decided to pay a visit to the largest collection of aircraft on the island of Ireland – the Ulster Aviation Collection. Housed within an ex-Second World War hangar at Maze Long Kesh, outside Lisburn, Co. Antrim, this collection of 36 aircraft, aviation artefacts, complemented with several historical collections, tells the story of aviation in Ireland. Resident historian, Ernie Cromie, was there to greet us and take us around.

I have to admit I am an aviation buff, so this visit was a treat for me. I've been to the Irish Air Corps Museum and to several aviation museums abroad, I was not expecting to find such a collection on our own doorstep. Ernie explained that the collection was started back in 1984, by the Ulster Aviation Society who were then based at Castlereagh College in East Belfast. The Society is made up of volunteers who research, restore, educate and fund raise to keep aviation history alive.

Aviation in Ireland dates right back to the early days of flight when inventor Harry Ferguson took to the air in 1909. Since that time both military and civilian aviation has made a huge impact on the island. From a military point of view, Ireland's geographical position placed it in a significant strategic location during the First and Second World Wars, and the Cold War. This strategic position has ensured a unique aviation history. During the First World War both British and United States aircraft operated from all around Ireland. Again, during the Second World War and the Cold War Royal Air Force, Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm and United States aircraft operated in and out of Northern Ireland, while the Irish Air Corps patrolled the airspace of southern Ireland. Internationally Northern Ireland is well known in the aviation world. The aviation giant Shorts Bombardier needs no introduction. Their aircraft designs have put Belfast and Northern Ireland on the world's aviation map. Northern Ireland is further known as the birthplace of the ejection seat pioneer, James (later, Sir James) Martin. Martin-Barker Ltd has a test facility at the former RAF Langford Lodge near Crumlin in Co. Antrim. It is used for testing, and houses a 6,200 feet (1,900 m) high-speed rocket sled track.

There are certain aircraft in the collection that you can't help but go 'WOW'. Aircraft such as the Spitfire are simply aviation legends.

The Collection

There is no escaping the aircraft collection. You are simply gobsmacked from the minute you enter the hangar. On entering you are met by a Blackburn Buccaneer. Beside it is a replica of the Second World War 'Down' Spitfire. Two aircraft from two different eras. The replica of the Rolls Royce Merlin piston driven Spitfire stands elegantly by the side of its larger Cold War jet cousin.

The Buccaneer was a British carrier-borne attack aircraft designed in the 1950's for the Royal Navy. With a crew of 2 (Pilot and Observer) it stands at 63 ft 5 in (19.33 m) in length and has a wingspan of 44 ft (13.41 m). Powered by 2 × Rolls-Royce Spey Mk 101 turbofans, it could reach a top speed of 667 mph (580 kn, 1,074 km/h) at 200 ft (60 m). The engines on display alongside the Buccaneer are huge compared to that of Rolls Royce Merlin engine of the Spitfire. I asked Ernie why is the aircraft lifted off the ground. 'When we received the Buccaneer at Langford Lodge our former site, it was flown in in excellent condition. Which means everything still works. We have her off the ground so we can raise and lower the undercarriage, the air brake and fold and unfold the wings, which keeps the hydraulics in working order. To get her flying again would cost huge funding. Our aim is to get her to a condition whereby she can taxi out onto the ramp'.

Each aircraft has a story to tell. The English Electric Canberra B.2 for example became the first jet to make a nonstop unrefuelled transatlantic crossing. The flight covered almost 1,800 miles in 4h 37 min. Originally conceived as a high altitude unarmed bomber, the Canberra first flew on May 13th, 1949, and entered service with the RAF two years later as the PR.3. In Jan 1960, the Canberra PR.9 entered service with No. 58 Squadron at RAF Wyton and the first operational sortie was flown three months later. The Canberra could reach a ceiling of some 60,000 ft.

The PR.9 was the photo-reconnaissance version with fuselage stretched to 68 ft (27.72 m), and a wingspan increased by 4 ft (1.22 m). The PR.9 has a hinged nose to allow fitment of an ejection seat for the navigator. A total of 23 of this variant were built by Short Brothers & Harland. During 1962, PR.9s were used to photograph Russian shipping movements during the Cuban crisis.

Throughout the Cold War the PR.9 flew missions when and where surveillance was called for with in more recent years the aircraft being deployed for operations over Rwanda, Kosovo the 2003 Gulf conflict and Afghanistan in 2006. XH131 was the third aircraft from the PR.9 production line at Belfast and is the oldest surviving example of the type. The aircraft was purchased with the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, and transported to Northern Ireland to join the collection during December 2010. 'The last pilot to fly XH131 in Afghanistan in 2006, was Flight Lieutenant Leckey from Northern Ireland'.

Another example is the Westland Wessex, the British version of the Sikorsky S-58 'Choctaw', developed under license by Westland Aircraft (later Westland Helicopters). An American-built Sikorsky HSS-1 was shipped to Westland in 1956, to act as a pattern aircraft. The example on display in the collection, XR517, first flew in January 1964, and was stationed with No. 18 Squadron and coded G. In 1968, it was transferred to No. 72 Squadron and from 1971 until 1992, was based at RAF Aldergrove initially carrying the code AN. For 32 years, from 1969, Wessex helicopters of No. 72 Squadron assisted the civil power and supported the security forces during the 'Troubles'. In addition, it had a search and rescue function. It could carry 16 fully-armed troops or lift a 4-ton under-slung load. After its service in Northern Ireland it returned to England with No. 60 Squadron at RAF Benson. It was acquired by the Society in 2004, from Dick Everett of Shoreham and trucked from there to its original home at Langford Lodge.

There are certain aircraft in the collection that you can't help but go 'WOW'. Aircraft such as the Spitfire are simply aviation legends. Stephen Riley tells us more on the 'Down' Spitfire in our Quartermaster's store. Others such as the McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II are simply the last aircraft you would expect to see in Ireland. The Society's Phantom is currently being repainted. But even under all the protective sheeting you can make out the slick design of this Cold War jet. The Royal Air Force and Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm employed the Phantom for air defence, close air support, low-level strike and tactical reconnaissance. Ernie explained that the British version of the Phantom were assembled in the United

De Havilland Vampire T.11 — WZ549

Alouette III (SA 316B Mark III) — 202

Canberra PR.9 — XH131 with its nose open for the navigator to get in and out.

States, but fitted with British avionics and 2 x Rolls-Royce Spey Mk.203 engines. These engines could produce 12,140 lbf (54.0 kN) (dry thrust) and 20,515 lbf (91.26 kN) (with afterburner). A formidable defence against any incoming Soviet aircraft. Entering service in 1969, the aircraft was a very familiar sight over Western Germany and in the latter years patrolling the South Atlantic from the Falklands. 'The reason why we got one for the collection was that virtually all the Phantoms for British service were flown across the Atlantic into the RAF maintenance unit at RAF Aldergrove in Antrim. The unit prepared the Phantoms for military service'.

Three Phantom variants were built for the United Kingdom: The F-4K variant was designed as an air defence interceptor to be operated by the Fleet Air Arm from the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers; the F-4M version was produced for the RAF to serve in the tactical strike and reconnaissance roles. In the mid-1980's, the third Phantom variant was obtained when a quantity of second-hand F-4J aircraft were purchased to augment the United Kingdom's air defences following the Falklands War with Argentina. The first batch of Phantoms produced for the United Kingdom received serials in the XT range. The Phantom in the collection is XT864 and it had spent its latter years guarding a gate at Leuchars in Scotland.

Another aircraft that has to get special mention is that of the famous Irish designer, Henry George 'Harry' Ferguson. Born in 1884, at Growell, near Hillsborough, in Co. Down, Harry became gripped by the exploits of the Wright Brothers and the new flying machines of the early 20th century. With the help of his brother Harry designed and built the Ferguson monoplane. The Irish aircraft took off from Hillsborough on December 31st, 1909. He became the first Irishman


Phantom F-4 — XT864


Puma HC1 — XW222


Shorts Tucano — G-BTUC


Replica 'Down' Spitfire Mk IIa

to fly and the first Irishman to build and fly his own aeroplane. In the collection is a flying replica of the Ferguson Flyer 1911. You may have seen it in flight on Dick Strawbridge's BBC programme earlier this year. For the programme members of the Ulster Aviation Society built this flying replica. Dwarfed by a Shorts SD-330, it is baffling how this vintage design could possibly fly. Ernie could see the question in my face. 'Yes, it flew. The Society's own William McMinn, took it into the air last May at Magilligan Point, near Limavady for BBC. He said it was a bit hairy,' Ernie laughed.

Restoration

One hangar is dedicated to the several aircraft under restoration. All the work is done by the volunteers. The aircraft come to the Society in varying conditions. Some aircraft such as the Fairchild 24W-41A Argus needed a lot of work. This was a four-seater light transport/communications aircraft used by the RAF and the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). It last flew in 1967, after having a bad crash in Cork. 'We were given her five years ago and have done extensive work on her. We have a big job to get an engine as this model used a rare Scarab engine. We've covered her in linen, whereas she originally was covered in cotton'. During the Second World War Argus aircraft were based at what is now Belfast City airport with the ATA.

The Grumman F4F Wildcat — JV482 is a long-term project. Originally, she was stationed on HMS Searcher (D40) in 1943. In 1944, the aircraft carrier was in port and the aircraft were flown to Long Kesh. 'The reason she's still here is because on Christmas Eve 1944, JV482 was last flown by a 19-year-old pilot by the name of Peter Lock, who only died earlier this year and who was ordered to take her up for an air test. She got to about 800 feet and the engine went on fire. He managed to ditch her in Portmore Lough, near Lough Neagh. It never sank below the surface as it was in shallow waters'. When you see the original images of the aircraft as it was taken out of the water, it is unconceivable that it could be brought back to life at all. Ernie told us that souvenir hunters had picked at the fuselage and wings. The Society recovered the aircraft in 1984, the first aircraft in the collection. Bit by bit the volunteers have begun to rebuild this World War II naval fighter. 'There is a lot of work still to be done, all the skinning is brand new'.

A very unique aircraft currently being restored is the Fairey Gannet, a British carrier-borne aircraft from the Cold War. With a crew of three, it was developed for the Fleet Air Arm for anti-submarine warfare and strike attack requirements. It had two distinct features: double folding wings and its double turboprop engine driving two contra-rotating propellers. The Armstrong Siddeley Double Mamba ASMD 1 turboprop engine drove contra-rotating propellers through a combining gearbox.

The Collection

Phantom F-4 — XT864 (currently being re-painted)
Blackburn Buccaneer S2B — XV361
Canberra PR.9 — XH131
BAC Jet Provost T3A — XM414
De Havilland Vampire T.11 — WZ549
Hawker Sea Hawk FB.5 — WN108

Second World War
Spitfire Mk2A Replica — P7823 'Down'
Grumman F4F Wildcat — JV482 (currently being restored)
Fairchild 24W-41A Argus — HB612 (currently being restored)

Shorts Bombardier
Shorts SD-330 — G-BDBS
Shorts Tucano — G-BTUC
Shorts Tucano Prototype — ZF167 (currently being restored)
Shorts Sherpa SB.4 — G-14.1 (currently being restored)

Light Transport Turboprop
Percival P.57 Sea Prince T.1 — WF122 (Needs restoration)

Miscellaneous
Air & Space 18A Gyroplane — EI-CNG
V-1 flying bomb Replica
Quicksilver Ultralight
Rotec Rally 2B Microlight — G-MBJV
Himax R-1700 — G-MZHM
Aerosport Scamp
Clutton-Tabenor Fred Series 2 — G-BNZR
Evans VP-2 — G-BEHX
Pitts Special S-1A — N80BA (Needs restoration)
Sea Hawker EI-BUO
Vintage
Ferguson Flyer 1911 Flying Replica

Helicopters
Puma HC1 — XW222
Westland Wessex HC2 — XR517
Westland Scout — XV136
Alouette III (SA 316B Mark III) — 202
Robinson R-22 — G-RENT

Support Vehicles
Bedford QL Fuel Bowser — RAF 206180 (Reg. 53 GPP)
Amazon Thorneycroft Crane


V-1 flying bomb Replica

(currently being restored)
Ferguson Mk3 Tractor (on temporary loan only)

Post War
Fairey Gannet AS4 — XA460 (currently being restored)

Cockpit Noses
Canberra B2 Nose — WF911 (currently being restored)
Devon C2 Nose — VP957 (currently being restored)

The Exhibitions

The Collection is complemented by several collections. One currently being put together is on Ireland during the First World War. Ernie showed us a map of Ireland detailing all the Royal Flying Corps/Royal Air Force bases and United States Naval Air Stations around the island. It seemed like they were everywhere: from Lough Foyle to Castlebar and from Tallaght to Waterford. Two images caught my eye. A Handley Page V/1500 and an image of Women's Royal Air Force. Handley Page V/1500 were a World War I bomber. As it turns out several were built by Harland and Wolff in Belfast. The image of the ladies in uniform is captioned WRAF Dublin circa 1918/1919. An incredibly rare image.

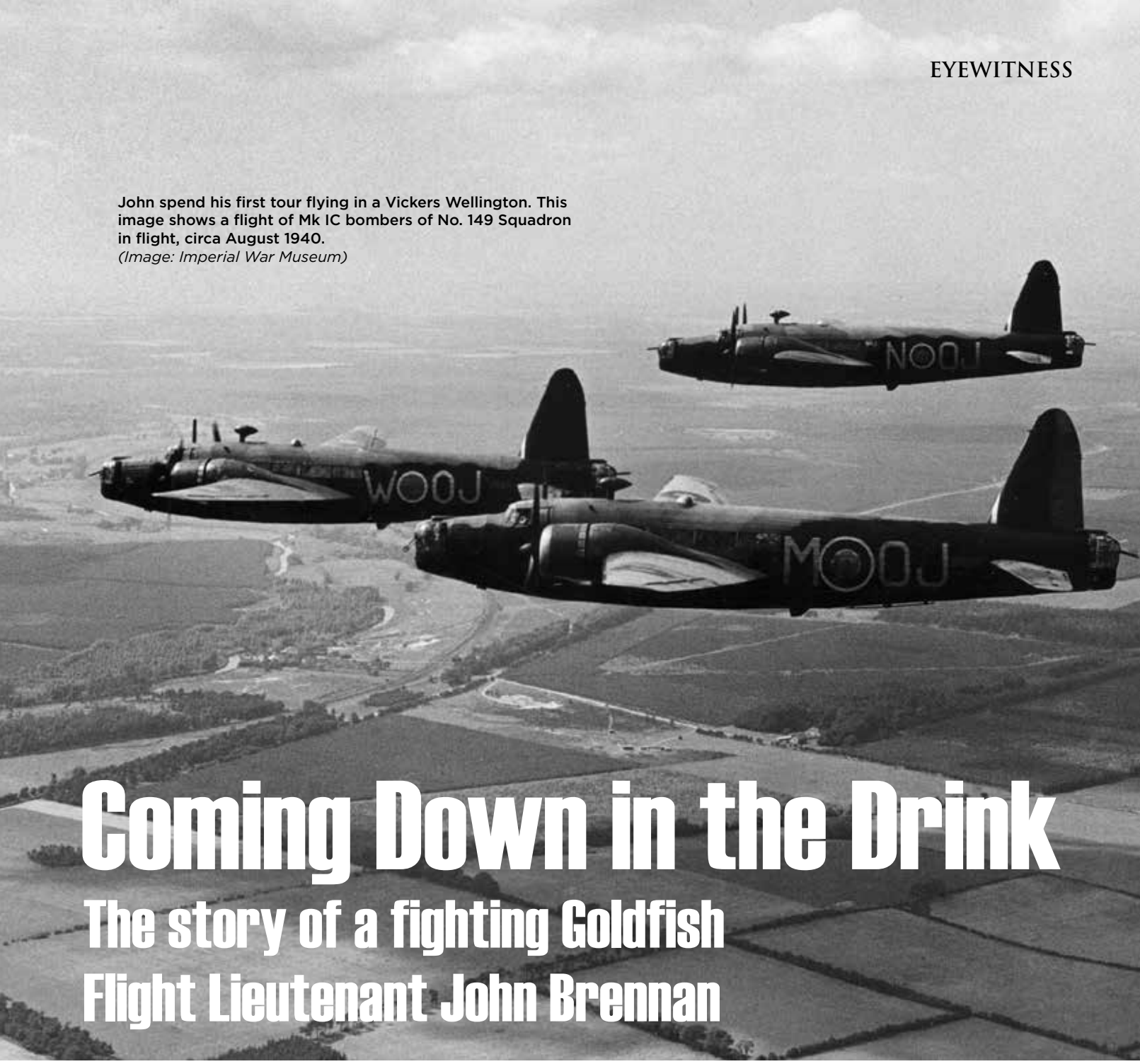
The Aldergrove Room for example tells the story of the war over the Atlantic during World War II. People often forget that Derry was the largest naval base in the British Isles during the Second World War. At the time it was home to a broad range of Allied aircraft and ships including: the Canadians, Danish, Dutch, Polish and the United States. A picture of a Swordfish shows it was flown by pilots of the Royal Netherlands Navy who operated out of Maydown, in Co Derry. Other exhibit rooms tell the personal stories of famous Irish pilots from World War II such as Royal Canadian Air Force pilot, Flight Lieutenant Frank Rush. Born in Canada, his parents were from the Falls Road. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with bar while flying with the No. 502 'Ulster' Squadron Coastal Command.

This article is only an insight into the vast stories that are housed in the hangars of the Ulster Aviation Society. If you become a member you will have access to their regularly journal which has endless articles on Irish aviation history. You can also keep an eye out for in your local bookstore for titles by the Societies members such as Guy Warner, Ernie Cromie and Joe Gleeson.

The Ulster Aviation Society turns 50 next year. Keep an eye out for celebration events.

All visits from the public are organised by prior arrangement. We cater for group visits, school trips (children's groups should be around 30 max.) and tour groups.

Ulster Aviation Society,
via Gate 3 – Maze Long Kesh,
94-b Halftown Road,
LISBURN,
Co. Antrim,
N. Ireland, UK BT27 5RF
E: info@ulsteraviationsociety.org
Web: www.ulsteraviationsociety.org



John spend his first tour flying in a Vickers Wellington. This image shows a flight of Mk IC bombers of No. 149 Squadron in flight, circa August 1940.
(Image: Imperial War Museum)

Coming Down in the Drink

The story of a fighting Goldfish Flight Lieutenant John Brennan

By Seán Feast

Born January 5th, 1921, John Brennan was an Irishman who need not have fought in the war at all.

John Brennan joins the Royal Air Force

A sense of adventure, however, and the need to escape an over-bearing mother took him from his village in Ballylinan, a small, farming village on the borders of County Laois and Kildare, to London as a 16-year old boy where he trained as a chef before joining the Royal Air Force within the first few weeks of war breaking out:

'I'd read in the national newspapers about the exciting trips that the heroic crews of the Wellingtons and Whitleys were flying over Germany, and that on occasion they had to fight off determined attacks from the German Luftwaffe. In the thick of the action were the air gunners, and despite never once having fired a shot in anger or even having held a gun or rifle, I was determined to become one of their number'.

After Initial Training Wing (ITW) where John learned the rudiments of service life, he was eventually posted to RAF Yatesbury, a Signals School, to become a wireless operator and thence onwards to RAF Stormy Down for an air gunnery course:

'There were classroom lectures on gunnery and gunnery practice, and of course we learned how to strip and rebuild a variety of different weapons, including the Browning .303s, such that we could do it blindfolded…

We shot on the ranges and using cine guns, and in the air firing at a drogue. We would operate in pairs: one aircraft would tow the drogue while the pupils in the other aircraft would shoot at it; then we would swap. The pilots were nearly all Polish, and it would always make me smile when they came on intercom and said "dropz the droguesz"…

Firing at a drogue was not as easy as it sounds. With air gunnery, you do not shoot directly at the target, but rather at the point in the sky where you expect the target to be when your bullets arrive, taking into account wind speed, air speed, bullet drop, angle of attack etc, and you had to get it right or you could shoot down the aircraft and not the drogue!'.

Qualifying as a wireless operator/air gunner, John progressed to an Operational Training Unit (OTU) at RAF Harwell to become part of a crew. It was while he was at Harwell that he took part on his first operation, dropping propaganda leaflets (and a couple of 250-pound bombs) over France on what was called a 'Nickelling' Raid.

'I remember very little about the operation, other than that there were six of us who set out and only four came back. We were all carrying leaflets as well as two 250lb general-purpose (GP) delayed-action bombs. It was a very long trip for an inexperienced crew, but I never gave a thought for those men who went missing. It didn't seem to affect me one way or another'.

John in uniform - Note John's air gunner's brevet.

148 Squadron RAF Kabrit – Operations over the Middle East

Having survived his first taste of enemy action, John was posted to 148 Squadron in the Middle East. Their transit flight took them via Gibraltar, with John manning the front turret of a Wellington. Flying onwards to Malta, they ran into enemy fighters:

'The danger came as we approached Pantelleria, a small island in the straits of Sicily. We knew that there were squadrons of Italian and German fighters close by, but perhaps somewhat closer than we thought…

Then, as I peered out in front of me, I thought I saw a speck in the sky. I blinked and looked again. It was still there, only the speck seemed to get steadily bigger. It was not a smudge on the Perspex or some other trick of the eye. Then there was no mistaking it was another aircraft, and it was closing fast. Recalling the hours spent on aircraft recognition, I identified it as a single-seat Messerschmitt Bf109, Germany's best fighter, and making its way straight towards us in a head on attack…

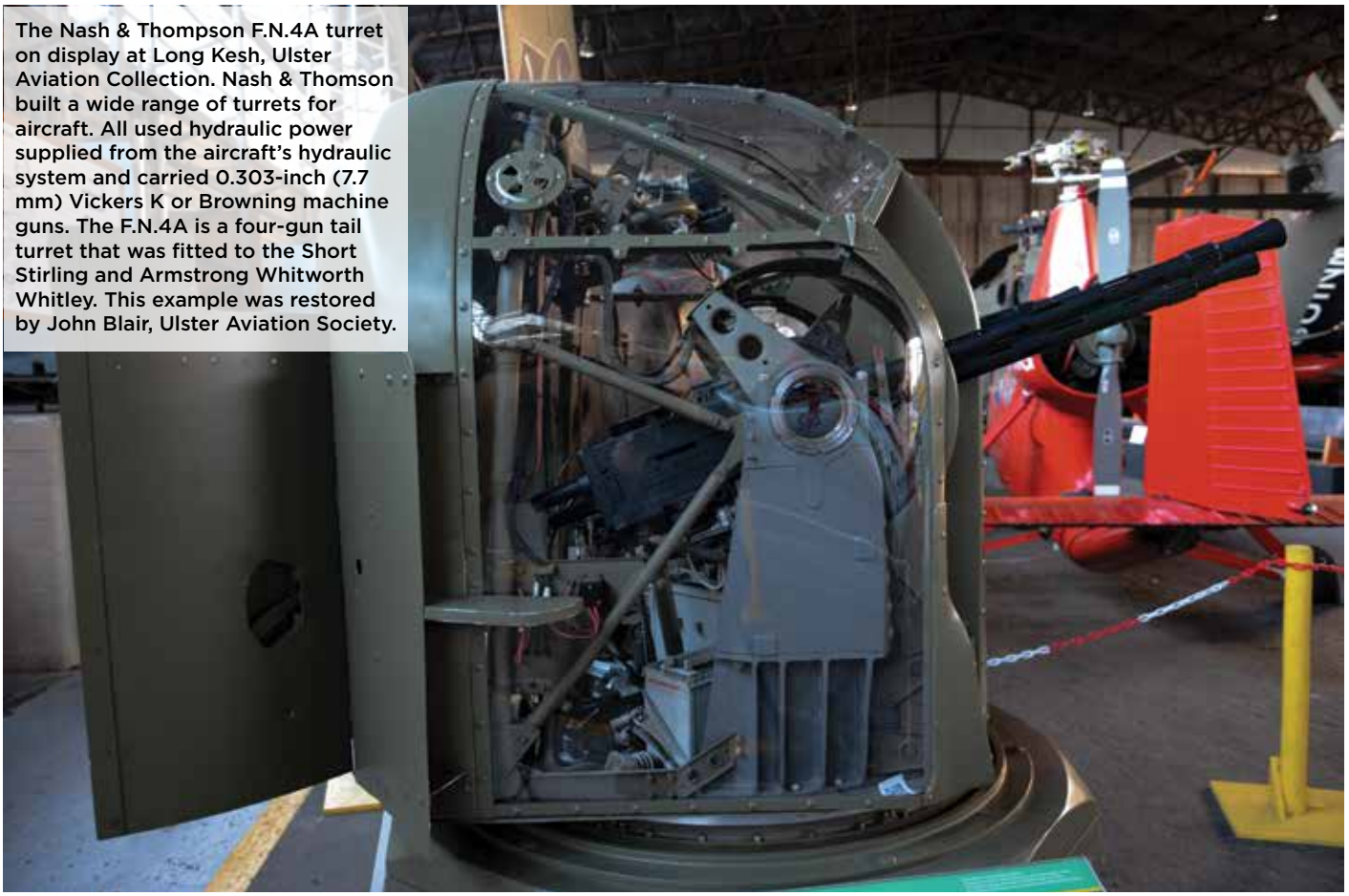
I lined the fighter up in my sites, released the safety catches on the guns, and called to the pilot to take evasive action. I then squeezed both triggers and opened fire'.

John gave the enemy a long burst but seemingly without effect. The fighter flashed by and prescribed a large arc in the sky as it turned to attack again, this time from the rear.

'The pilot took terrific evasive action and I kept blazing away, the smell of cordite from the spent cartridges filling my nostrils and the brass cases falling around my feet and onto the floor. Almost as suddenly as it had begun, it was over. The fighter broke off the attack and again became little more than a speck in the sky as it disappeared. He was probably low on fuel, and it had certainly been a lucky escape'.

Arriving in Malta in the middle of an air raid, they were again lucky to survive after their aircraft was blown upside down on landing. It was another two weeks, however, before they could get off the besieged island and reach Shallufah, their initial destination, before being transported to RAF Kabrit in Egypt to begin operations.

John joined the crew of an officer, Pilot Officer Donald Crossley, an old-Harrovian, who he considered brave but rather cavalier in his attitude to danger. The conditions at Kabrit, for non-commissioned officers, were primitive at best, and boredom was a constant enemy, prompting some



The Nash & Thompson F.N.4A turret on display at Long Kesh, Ulster Aviation Collection. Nash & Thomson built a wide range of turrets for aircraft. All used hydraulic power supplied from the aircraft's hydraulic system and carried 0.303-inch (7.7 mm) Vickers K or Browning machine guns. The F.N.4A is a four-gun tail turret that was fitted to the Short Stirling and Armstrong Whitworth Whitley. This example was restored by John Blair, Ulster Aviation Society.

of the NCOs to rebel in a little-known but potentially very dangerous mutiny. Accommodation was especially rough; they slept in scrapings in the ground, and bed posts had to be coated in creosote to keep the scorpions at bay.

'Sleeping on the ground was not an option; it was too cold and too uncomfortable. I fashioned my own bed by acquiring a stretcher and mounting it on four-gallon cans, one at each corner. I smothered each of the cans with creosote at the base to stop any unwelcome visitors from crawling into my bed during the night. I then put the straw palliasse on top and covered it in blankets to make it more comfortable'.

With Rommel on the move, and the threat that British and Allied forces might be overrun, John and his crew began flying daily sorties to the heavily-defend port of Benghazi in what was known as 'the mail run', bombing enemy ships that were offloading vital supplies to The Desert Fox and his Afrika Korps. They also flew supplies to the resistance forces in Crete, and it was during one of these operations in March 1942, that he nearly came to grief:

'Flying conditions were far from ideal. There was cloud up to around 10,000ft, and you could clearly see an electric storm brewing on the horizon. Despite these conditions, we managed to make a successful landfall over the coast of the island before the problems really started. One of our engines, which must have been running rough for a little while or couldn't cope with the extra strain being placed upon it in the cloud, suddenly caught fire'.

Slowly starting to lose height. John was ordered to throw out everything that wasn't bolted down, including his guns. It wasn't enough, and his pilot was obliged to attempt a landing on water:

'When we hit the water, the noise was intense, a loud scraping sound as though the bottom of the aircraft was being sliced open. It seemed to last an eternity before it finally stopped and the aircraft slew to one

side as the water washed over the wings'.

Clambering into a dinghy, they were lucky. After four hours of drifting, their throats dry and their voices hoarse from shouting, they were spotted by a friendly aircraft who steered a fast boat to their rescue. John thus became a member of the Goldfish Club, a club exclusively for members brought down and rescued from the sea.

Given 'survivor's leave', John spent the next few months of his tour out 'in the blue', preparing advanced landing grounds in the desert from which the bombers could operate on a temporary basis, as the front line shifted. After more than 300 hours of operational flying, comprising more than 40 raids, he was deemed 'tour expired' and posted home. He was commissioned, and spent the next 18 months instructing in Kinloss, Scotland, surviving yet another accident in which his pilot crashed into a mountainside, but John emerged unscathed.

78 Squadron at RAF Breighton – Operations over Europe

Volunteering for a second tour, John joined 78 Squadron at RAF Breighton in the summer of 1944, being crewed with one of the flight commanders, Squadron Leader Duncan Hyland Smith, a most experienced pilot. Interestingly, while John had flown all of his first tour as an air gunner, he spent his second tour as a wireless operator. He also swapped two engines for four, as his new squadron was equipped with the Handley Page Halifax.

The differences between his first and second tour were stark: the lonely, uncomfortable existence of a pseudo hermit exchanged for the warm comforts of an officers' mess and beer on tap. The long flights over a barren desert contrasted with shorter but equally dangerous trips over northern Europe.

'We flew, ate and drank as a crew, each one depending on the other. We were like a family, a unique bond that couldn't be broken. Perhaps, as nearly all of us were officers, it was different as we could mess together. But it was more than that. It was a different culture. More inclusive. We felt we belonged. We counted. We hadn't been forgotten'.

John arrived on the Squadron just a few weeks after the invasion of Europe. It was an intense period of operations, attacking flying bomb sites, and tactical targets in support of the ground troops attempting to break out from the beachheads. As his tour progressed and the Allies advanced, they returned to the bombing of German cities. They also started bombing in daylight. One raid, John remembers in particular, was an attack on the Ruhr:

'Hyland-Smith was leading the formation and as we crossed the coast, 'Smithy' instructed me to go to the astrodome behind the cockpit and look out for fighters and other aircraft in the vicinity…

We were part way across Holland, en route to the target, when the rear gunner came onto the intercom to say that two of our aircraft were inching closer and closer to our tail. 'Smithy' acknowledged the call and inched the throttles slightly forward to give us more speed…

I am not sure precisely what happened next but I did see the result. Somehow the two aircraft that were gaining on us collided with one another and I saw them go down. It was terrible watching the two-aircraft twisting and turning like sycamore leaves as they fell to the ground. I reported what I was seeing to the skipper and he told me to watch for parachutes. Sadly, I didn't see anyone make it out'.

With so many aircraft in the sky at once, collisions were a constant threat, as were the German nightfighters and flak:

'On one night, I had a clear warning of trouble. A blip appeared on my fighter warning radar at a range of about 4,000yds. I watched it closing quickly to around 2,000yds at which point I warned the skipper to 'corkscrew' to port. 'Smithy' then flung the aircraft into a series of left-handed dives and turns in a corkscrew motion and the fighter was lost. Although we would occasionally be splattered by flak, this was the only occasion we were intercepted by a fighter. Compared to many others in the Squadron, we seemed to live a charmed life'.

Preparing to take off on another raid, John had a more amusing experience:

'As the aircraft in front took off and disappeared into the haze, 'Smithy' pushed

John Brennan in later life.

the throttles forward, assisted by the flight engineer to ensure that the levers did not slip back and lose vital power at the critical time. The torque generated by this huge surge of power needed to be controlled by use of the rudders to keep the aircraft straight and level but on this occasion, the Halifax swung so suddenly and violently that we veered dangerously close to the control tower, causing the CO to jump back in alarm and fall off his feet. He was, as you can imagine, not very happy with us and told us on our return that he would 'have our garters for a necktie!'

Happily, the wing commander did not carry out his threat. John came closest to death, however, while on a training flight, in a brand-new Halifax:

'We took off and made height, climbing through the cloud to get above it and into clear sky. With the altimeter reading 20,000ft, we were still in cloud, and Smithy said that he would continue to climb until we were through it. No sooner had he called out our height than the aircraft appeared to stall and fall into a spin. The dive became faster and the spin more deadly, the centrifugal forces pinning me under my table…

"Smithy' was fighting a losing battle with the controls and ordered us to prepare to bale out. I tried to raise my right arm to unclip my parachute but could not move it. (Parachutes for everyone except the pilot were in two parts. The individual wore a harness to which the separate 'pack' had to be attached

Johns Medals including DFC and Africa star.

before baling out.) I just thought, well this is it and waited for the end...

The altimeter showed we had fallen more than 18,000ft before 'Smithy' was at last able to regain control of the aircraft at around 2,000ft as the ice on the wings melted away, and the flying characteristics of the aircraft returned. It was one of the only times I had been truly afraid…

We arrived back at Breighton and landed without further issue. The following day the engineering officer reported that some of the wing bolts and engine mountings had been sheered off. The fuselage and tail fins were also twisted. The aircraft was declared a write off and I believe it was later scrapped'.

John says that he never feared death, other than how he might be killed:

'If I were afraid of anything then it was how I would die. Would I be blown to pieces or burn to death? Would I be trapped in the aircraft by centrifugal forces, fully conscious and waiting for the impact? I hoped, as I think we all did, that if we did have to die that it would be quick, and we'd know nothing about it. The Halifax had a better survivability rate than the Lancaster, but it was never discussed. No-one ever thought they would die'.

Happily, John completed his second tour of operations in March 1945, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for bravery. His citation mentions that he had completed 63 operations in total, including those in the Desert. The war ended shortly afterwards, and John opted for a permanent commission. In later life, he became an archivist and librarian, before finally retiring to live in Bedfordshire. He died on April 20th, this year aged 96, and was at the time the last surviving wartime member of the Goldfish Club. Before he died John told his story to Seán Feast who then published the story in Coming Down in the Drink - the Survival of Bomber 'Goldfish' John Brennan DFC.

Seán Feast is the author/co-author of 15 titles for Grub Street, Fighting High and Woodfield, and has an established pedigree and audience. He has a particular specialism in Bomber Command with books such as 'Master Bombers', 'Heroic Endeavour', and 'A Pathfinder's War'. He was one of the main authors to contribute to the official book released in conjunction with the unveiling of the Bomber Command memorial. He is also a regular contributor to various aviation magazines, primarily 'FlyPast' and 'Aeroplane Monthly', and a volunteer for the International Bomber Command Centre. Professionally, he is a journalist by training, and runs an international PR and Advertising agency with key clients in military and defence.

Martin O'Meara VC

Irish-Australian Hero of the First World War

By Ian Loftus

It has been estimated that more than 6,000 Irishmen may have served in the Australian military and naval forces during the first World War, and that nearly 900 were killed or died of wounds or sickness during that conflict. Of these Irishmen, only one was awarded the Victoria Cross, the British Empire's highest award for valour.

Martin O'Meara

Martin O'Meara was born near the village of Lorrha in Co. Tipperary in November 1885, the son of Michael and Margaret O'Meara who farmed in the area. Martin seems to have left Ireland and travelled to South Australia during the first half of 1912, and worked as a farm labourer north of Adelaide, and then as a railway construction labourer at Port Augusta. During early 1913, he left Port Augusta and moved to the Adelaide area, where he laboured on other railway construction projects during 1913. He left South Australia and travelled to Western Australia during early 1914, working as a farm labourer near the town of Pinjarra before making his way south to the Collie area during 1914 or 1915, finding work as a railway sleeper cutter.

O'Meara enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in August 1915, and was allocated to the 16th Infantry Battalion, Royal Western Australia Regiment in October 1915. He sailed from Western Australia in December 1915 and arrived in Egypt in early 1916. Shortly after arriving he was transferred to the 4th Machine Gun Company and trained as a machine gunner, transferring back to the 16th Battalion in May 1916, shortly before the unit sailed from Egypt to France where he was to serve on the Western Front.

The 16th Battalion served in the 'nursery' sector in northern France during the first part of July 1916, but travelled to the Somme in mid-July 1916. In early August 1916, the 16th Battalion received orders to move closer to the front line near the village of Pozières, and on August 8th, 1916, supported the 15th Battalion which attacked German trenches between Mouquet Farm and Pozières. It was at this point that O'Meara started to demonstrate great bravery. A 16th Battalion officer, Captain Ross Harwood, observed that:

'On the night of the 8/9th I saw No.3970 Pte. O'Meara, M., out into "No Man's Land" where it was being severely shelled and remove wounded men to places of safety where he rendered first aid and thence subsequently he assisted to carry them down to the Dressing Station. I personally saw him remove not less than 6 men mostly of the 15th Battalion A.I.F. and the Suffolk Battalion. One of the wounded whom I saw him remove in this is Lieut Fogarty of the 15th Battalion A.I.F.'.

Another 16th Battalion officer, Second Lieutenant Frank Wadge, noted:

'I am able to identify Lieut Fogarty of the 15th Bn to whom he rendered first aid and whom he subsequently brought into trench. This Officer was wounded and had been lying in No Man's Land for almost four hours the enemy fire at this point was so dense that it had been impossible to make a search for wounded but such conditions did not deter O'Meara … I saw O'Meara on a number of occasions attending to or bringing in wounded men from the area over which the Battn had advanced and from No Man's Land. I estimate that a number of men rescued by him is not less than 20'.

On morning of August 9th, 1916, another attack on the same trenches was ordered, this time by the 16th Battalion. Despite the success of the operation, there were many casualties. Major Percy Black of the 16th Battalion later noted that:

'During the advance of the Bn on the night of 9-10th a number of men were wounded and left lying on the ground over which the advance had been made…'.

O'Meara remained active as a scout in No-Man's Land in front of the battalion's forward positions during this time, as later noted by Major Black:

'On the morning of the 11th Aug O'Meara was on scouting duty in No Man's Land. At this time some three machine guns were firing over the section of ground which he was examining and it was also being very heavily shelled by H.E. shells. About ten minutes after I saw him go over the parapet into No Man's Land I saw him return carrying a wounded man whom he had found lying in a shell hole in No Man's Land. Having dressed the wounds of this man, he returned to No Man's Land in pursuance of his duties as a scout'.

That evening the battalion's Commanding Officer reported that his men were again being shelled by the Germans, and that the shelling threatened to cut off supply routes between the front line and the rear positions.

Lieutenant Lynas later noted that Martin O'Meara made two trips to the ammunition dumps at the rear to bring vital supplies to the front:

'During Friday night's operations I required more ammunition and bombs on the left section, most of the reserve stocks having been buried owing to there being no communications saps, and the perfect hail of shells that were blowing the parapets to pieces. I would not detail anyone for this job. O'Meara went of his own initiative to the Bn Dump twice, returning with S.A.A and bombs; on his second return he managed to guide a fatigue party across and relieved us of our shortage. During these trips he located wounded men and carried three of them back to the Dressing Station. This man has been responsible for the evacuation of at least 20 men under conditions that are indescribable'.

The Commanding Officer of the 16th Battalion encountered Martin O'Meara after his men had withdrawn:

'On the evening of the 12th inst after my Battn had been relieved I met O'Meara near Chalk Pits going in the direction of POZIERES. He had previously been sent down as a guide to "D" Coy. When I asked him where he was going he informed me that he had just heard of 2 wounded men of the Bn who had not been brought in from No Man's Land. He was subsequently seen by Lieut Cook in the front trenches. The following day the attached note was received from him by my Scout Officer. During the latter stages of the relief of the Battn a very heavy German Artillery barrage was put down over the Communication trenches south of Pozieres. In order to carry out his mission of mercy this man voluntarily returned through the barrage referred to after having reached a position of comparative safety'.

> "I saw O'Meara on a number of occasions attending to or bringing in wounded men from the area over which the Battn had advanced and from No Man's Land. I estimate that a number of men rescued by him is not less than 20"

O'Meara sustained shrapnel wounds on 12 August 1916, but remained on duty and reported to a dressing station later that day. He later recalled:

'That was my first experience of war, and it was pretty hot, too, I can tell you. We were carrying up ammunition under heavy shell fire – a sort of fatigue party – and of course a lot of fellows were wounded. I went out to do what I could do for the poor chaps that were lying all around waiting for the stretcher bearers and helped a lot of them to get in out of danger. I went down to the cookers and got some hot tea and went out again with a stretcher and brought in more'.

Following the battle, Lieutenant Lynas reported to the Commanding Officer that:

'I respectfully beg to draw your attention to the conduct of Pte O'Meara during the recent operations of this Bttn. Pte O'Meara is the most fearless and gallant soldier I have ever seen; besides during the arduous duties imposed on him by reason of his being in the Scouting Section efficiently and cheerfully this man used to fill in his time bringing in wounded under all conditions'.

O'Meara was hospitalised with shrapnel wounds to his abdomen, and subsequently evacuated to London where he was admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital at Wandsworth. On September 8th, 1916, whilst at Wandsworth, an announcement was made that he had been awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions at Pozières and Mouquet Farm the previous month:

'HIS MAJESTY THE King has been graciously pleased to award the Victoria Cross to the undermentioned soldier:- No. 3970 Private MARTIN O'MEARA For most conspicuous bravery. During four days of very heavy fighting he repeatedly went out and brought in wounded officers and men from "No Man's Land" under intense artillery and machine gun fire. He also volunteered and carried up ammunition and bombs through a heavy barrage to a portion of the trenches, which was being shelled at this time. He showed throughout an utter contempt of danger, and undoubtedly saved many lives'.

Australian troops on the deck of the battleship Prince of Wales in Mudros Harbour, Greece, before the Gallipoli landing.

Albert Jacka VC, with fellow VC recipient Martin O'Meara, 1916. Both were recuperating from wounds in England.

O'Meara left hospital in October 1916, and visited his home in Ireland before returning to his battalion. It was later reported that he had 'arrived home quietly last week. He came without giving notice to any one, walked from the station along the disused railway to his home, and it was only when he made his personal appearance that the news spread like wild fire of his return'.

He returned to his battalion on the Western Front in late 1916, and was involved in fighting on April 9th, 1917, near Bullecourt where he was wounded in action for the second time; he was evacuated but his wounds cannot have been very serious, as he returned to the battalion less than three weeks later.

He was presented with his Victoria Cross by King George V at Buckingham Palace in London on July 21st, 1917. On August 8th, 1917, O'Meara was wounded in action for the third time near Messines in Belgium, this time with shrapnel wounds to his buttocks, back and right thigh. He was evacuated to England and admitted to the Bath War Hospital. O'Meara visited his family in Ireland again in November 1917, and rejoined the 16th Battalion on the Western Front in January 1918.

On March 13th, 1918, he was promoted to Corporal, which brought him a pay increase from six shillings per day to ten shillings per day, and on March 22nd, 1918, he was appointed Acting Sergeant. On April 15th, 1918, he, for reasons unknown, reverted to the rank of Corporal at his own request.

On August 31st, 1918, O'Meara was promoted to Sergeant and then travelled back to England. Australia needed to maintain the ongoing recruitment of new soldiers, and it was hoped that Victoria Cross recipients could inspire more men to enlist. Most, but not all, Victoria Cross recipients seemed happy to return to Australia. O'Meara did not want return to Australia. In August 1918, the AIF Headquarters was advised:

'I am to inform you that the G.O.C. A.I.F. admires the fine spirit shown by 3970, Cpl. M. O'MEARA, V.C., 16th Battalion, in electing to remain on duty overseas in lieu of accepting the furlough to Australia which has been offered to him. In view, however, of Cpl. O'MEARA'S long service in the A.I.F., the G.O.C. directs that he should be returned to Australia on leave. This will meet the wishes of the Australian Government, and the trip to Australia will ensure for Cpl. O'MEARA a well-earned rest. Will you please arrange for Cpl. O'MEARA to report at an early date to A.I.F Administrative Headquarters, who have been instructed to arrange his passage to Australia'.

O'Meara subsequently travelled to Liverpool where he boarded a troopship bound for Fremantle in Western Australia; he arrived on November 6th, 1918, and was quarantined because of risks associated with an influenza epidemic.

O'Meara was still in quarantine when the war ended on November 11th, 1918, but had a serious mental breakdown and was taken to an army mental hospital on November 13th, 1918. He was reported as 'suffering from Delusional Insanity, with hallucinations of hearing and sight, is extremely homicidal and suicidal, and requires to be kept in restraint'.

In January 1919, he was transferred to the Claremont Mental Hospital, at that time Western Australia's main mental hospital. A later medical report on O'Meara noted that:

'On observation at Claremont Asylum attacked attendants without provocation, but apparently instigated by voices – Depressed and restless – Strikes attendants without cause

Plague in honour of O'Meara at the Western Australia State War Memorial located on Mount Eliza.

O'Meara's Victoria Cross.

– Sullen and morose – will not speak at times – Suicidal'.

He was a very difficult patient; his first night at Claremont saw him escape from his straight jacket. His overall behaviour did improve over the following months, but tended to be characterised by unpredictable violent outbursts.

The treatment of returned soldiers with mental health conditions became a topic of discussion during early 1924, and General Talbot Hobbs visited Claremont and found that returned soldiers were in unsuitable conditions; on January 27th, 1924, Perth's Sunday Times published a strongly-worded editorial:

'It is well known that amongst the terrible legacies of the war is the mental affliction of many of our brave soldiers … It has come to our knowledge that those poor fellows who may be in any way violent or judged hopelessly insane – frequently only a matter of opinion – have been removed from Stromness and placed in the Hospital for the Insane at Claremont, there to herd with the mentally deranged of all nations ... The Hospital for the Insane may be a desirable sort of residence or it may not – most people will incline to the latter opinion – but it is certainly no place to put our mentally afflicted soldiers'.

He was presented with his Victoria Cross by King George V at Buckingham Palace in London on July 21st, 1917. On August 8th, 1917, O'Meara was wounded in action for the third time near Messines in Belgium, this time with shrapnel wounds

Conditions for the formers soldiers at Claremont started to improve after the article was published. In May 1924, it was reported that:

'We are glad to report that the improvement in certain individual cases has been excellent … a V.C. hero [O'Meara], who … was deemed to be in a hopeless condition and was addicted to violent outbreaks, is now enjoying the limit of freedom, and spends most of his days in the open grounds tending a garden. It is hoped that he will soon regain the full vigour of his health and be well enough to return home'.

In September 1926, O'Meara was transferred to the new Soldiers' Mental Hospital Lemnos, where he spent the next nine years. On November 6th, 1935, his deteriorating mental health and increasingly violent behaviour resulted in him being transferred back to the Claremont Mental Hospital where he died on 20 December 1935. He was buried at the nearby Karakatta Cemetery on December 21st, 1935.

His Victoria Cross medal, which had remained in his possession, is now held by the Fremantle Army Museum in Western Australia.

Ian Loftus is based in Perth, Western Australia and has worked for the Australian, Western Australian and Northern Territory Governments in a range of policy, stakeholder engagement and communications roles. Ian is author of The most fearless and gallant soldier I have ever seen, the first biography of Martin O'Meara VC, Australia's only Irish-born Victoria Cross recipient of the First World War.

This 4.5 inch howitzer, sitting on the waterfront of Alexandria, Virginia, was one of the cannon in the same 1959 shipment of war material from Ireland that contained the "Ivy Patch" 18-pdr gun.

The Ivy Patch Gun

Possible 'Four Courts' Irish Field Gun Returns Home

By Kenneth L. Smith-Christmas, Lar Joye, and Commandant Stephen MacEoin

A potentially very significant 18-pounder Mark II field gun arrived home in Ireland last year, after having been gone for more than fifty years. This gun was made in Scotland during World War I for the British Army, and it could very well have later played a significant role in Irish history, before being sold as surplus scrap metal to an American international arms dealer in 1959, and then finally ending up in a patch of English ivy at a now-shuttered dinner theater in northern Virginia, not far from Washington D.C. The story of its discovery and return is a tale of coincidence and chance, as well as energetic efforts on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Irish 18-pounders

At 4am on June 28th, 1922, two 18-pounder field guns (serial numbers as yet unknown) opened fire on the Four Courts in Dublin, Ireland, in an action that signaled the beginning of one of the most heartbreaking episodes in Ireland's long and turbulent history—The Irish Civil War. Six 18-pounder guns (two Mark I's and four Mark II's) had been 'loaned' by the British Army to the fledgling National Army of the Provisional Irish Government, in order to quell the growing rebellion against the newly established Irish government. A visceral and implacable division had erupted between the Irish nationalists who had spent years fighting the 'Forces of the Crown' to bring independence to Ireland. One side, the 'Free Staters', supported the 1921 Anglo Irish Treaty with the British government that gave Ireland the same status as other Dominions, like Canada and Australia, but not a complete break from the British Empire. The opposing faction, soon to be dubbed the 'Irregulars' or 'anti-treaty', would not be satisfied with anything but full independence, and a group of them had holed up in Dublin's Four Courts building, an imposing Georgian edifice alongside the River Liffey. The Provisional Government demanded their surrender, but when it was refused, they opened fire.

After three days of shelling with light 'wire-cutting' shrapnel rounds from these two guns, the defenders surrendered when their munitions magazine exploded, and the building caught fire. Recent historical research indicates that the explosion was more likely caused by the rebel forces mining the building, rather than from the bombardment. Sadly, the building also contained the Public Records Office, as well as the Four Courts, and it, too, was destroyed. The end result was not only the destruction of a beautiful building, but also the loss of 700 years of archives. Although the building was later rebuilt and re-opened as a judicial court, its loss is still felt today. However, the end of this siege just marked the beginning of a sad, and brutal, conflict that tore close long-time friendships and families asunder, until it ended some eighteen months later. Indeed, except among academics and historical enthusiasts,

the subject is still avoided by many people in Ireland today, as the memories are too searing.

The Irish Free State came into effect on December 6th, 1922. Between 1926 and 1941, the Irish Department of Defence acquired additional Mark I and Mark II, as well as more modern Mark IV, 18-pounder guns from Britain. During World War II, the British government also supplied Ireland (on December 29th, 1937, under the new constitution, the Irish Free State was renamed Ireland) with other military gear and weapons. Concurrently, this 'Ivy Patch' Mark II cannon, like all of Ireland's artillery, was modernised with pneumatic tyres, as well as with a braking system for towing behind motor vehicles. It then continued to serve in the Irish Army, until 1958, when it was sold for scrap metal as part of a shipload of artillery and machine guns to the relatively new firm of International Armament Corporation (Interarmco) of Alexandria, Virginia, (a small city, just down the Potomac River from Washington D.C.).

Interarmco

'Interarmco', also later known as 'Interarms', was founded in the mid-1950's. Its organiser and president, Sam Cummings, was a savvy and resourceful weapons purchaser who found 'untraceable' arms for certain governmental agencies during the 1950's, and also acquired surplus military arms abroad for civilian sales in the United States. His travels and dealings took him all over the globe, and while in Argentina, he approached the government there and offered to empty its warehouses of obsolete military weapons at 'bargain basement' prices. Accordingly, he proposed an offer that the Argentines accepted, and old brick warehouses along the waterfront streets of what is now upscale 'Old Towne' Alexandria, Virginia, were soon packed to the ceilings with thousands of M1891 and M1909 Argentine Mauser rifles, hundreds of machine guns, swords, and even 7,000 steel cavalry lances, as well as 542 assorted cannons of all types.

The Argentine cannons, mostly of German manufacture, but also from other countries, eventually were dispersed in the local area, across the United States, and around the world. As was the case with the rifles, they were sold at very low prices. Coincidentally, this huge purchase took place in 1959, a few months after the 'Ivy Patch' 18-pounder gun arrived in Alexandria on a Finnish cargo ship, the SS Finnmerchant, from Dublin, as part of a shipload of other obsolete surplus Irish cannons (among which were Mark I and Mark II 18-pounders, 4.5" howitzers, and anti-artillery guns, as well as some 60-pounders) and more than 850 machineguns.

The 'Ivy Patch' Gun

The owner of a then recently-opened dinner theatre and restaurant, overlooking the banks of the Occoquan River a few miles to the south of Alexandria, purchased this 18-pounder gun from Interarmco and set it up among his outdoor gallery of other antiques—old fire engines, farm machinery, and curiosities. Among the other curiosities on the premises was a US-made World War II searchlight, also painted battleship gray like the 18-pounder gun, as well as other similarly painted cannons. There the gun sat in an ivy patch for the next forty-plus years, until the ivy had nearly covered it, and the once-thriving dinner theater declined.

Concurrently, this 'Ivy Patch' Mark II cannon, like all of Ireland's artillery, was modernised with pneumatic tyres, as well as with a braking system for towing behind motor vehicles. It then continued to serve in the Irish Army, until 1958

In February 2006, Ken Smith-Christmas, one of the staff curators at the planning office for the forthcoming National Museum of the U.S. Army, was sent to England, in order to, among other tasks, inspect the restoration work that was being done to an original World War II LCVP (landing craft, vehicle, personnel) wooden landing craft from the Normandy Invasion of 1944. A private firm near Portsmouth, England, was doing the restoration. After checking out the work that had been done to the landing craft, Ken accompanied the owner on a tour of his facility. When Ken noticed a British 18-pounder gun under restoration, he casually asked about it, since he had a life-long interest in World War I. The owner replied that it was being restored for the military exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, and that it was one of the guns that had fired on the Four Courts in 1922. Ken was very impressed to hear that, as Irish military history had also been a favorite topic of his for many years, and he then asked the owner where the gun had been found.

Ken heard the owner's reply of 'Argentina', and that really piqued his interest, since he had grown up in the Alexandria area, and remembered the many fenced lots on the Alexandria waterfront that held all sorts of cannons from Argentina. In fact, when Ken was still in high school, he had tried to buy one of these cannons—a 1903-dated Krupp 77mm field gun— from a man who had acquired it from one of these lots, and had it sitting in front of his house in a neighboring subdivision. At any rate, Ken also knew of the plans to establish a military museum in Dublin, as he had met its director, Lar Joye, the previous summer at a conference of the International Committee of Museums of Arms and Military History (ICOMAM) that was held in Canada, and he had eagerly listened to Lar's presentation about the new 'Soldiers and Chiefs' exhibition that was coming soon to Dublin's former Collins Barracks. However, Ken didn't give the gun in the restoration yard much further thought, and simply looked forward to seeing it in the new museum whenever he could get an opportunity to visit Dublin again.

A few years later, Ken was stuck in one of the inevitable evening rush hour traffic jams while driving home from his museum planning office in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. While waiting for the line of cars ahead of him to finally move, Ken noticed that he was across the highway from the Lazy Susan Dinner Theater, and recalled that

The 'Ivy Patch' Irish Free State 18-pounder gun, as it was discovered on the grounds of a declining dinner theater in Virginia, about 2008. English ivy had grown up and around the gun over the years, nearly obscuring it from view.

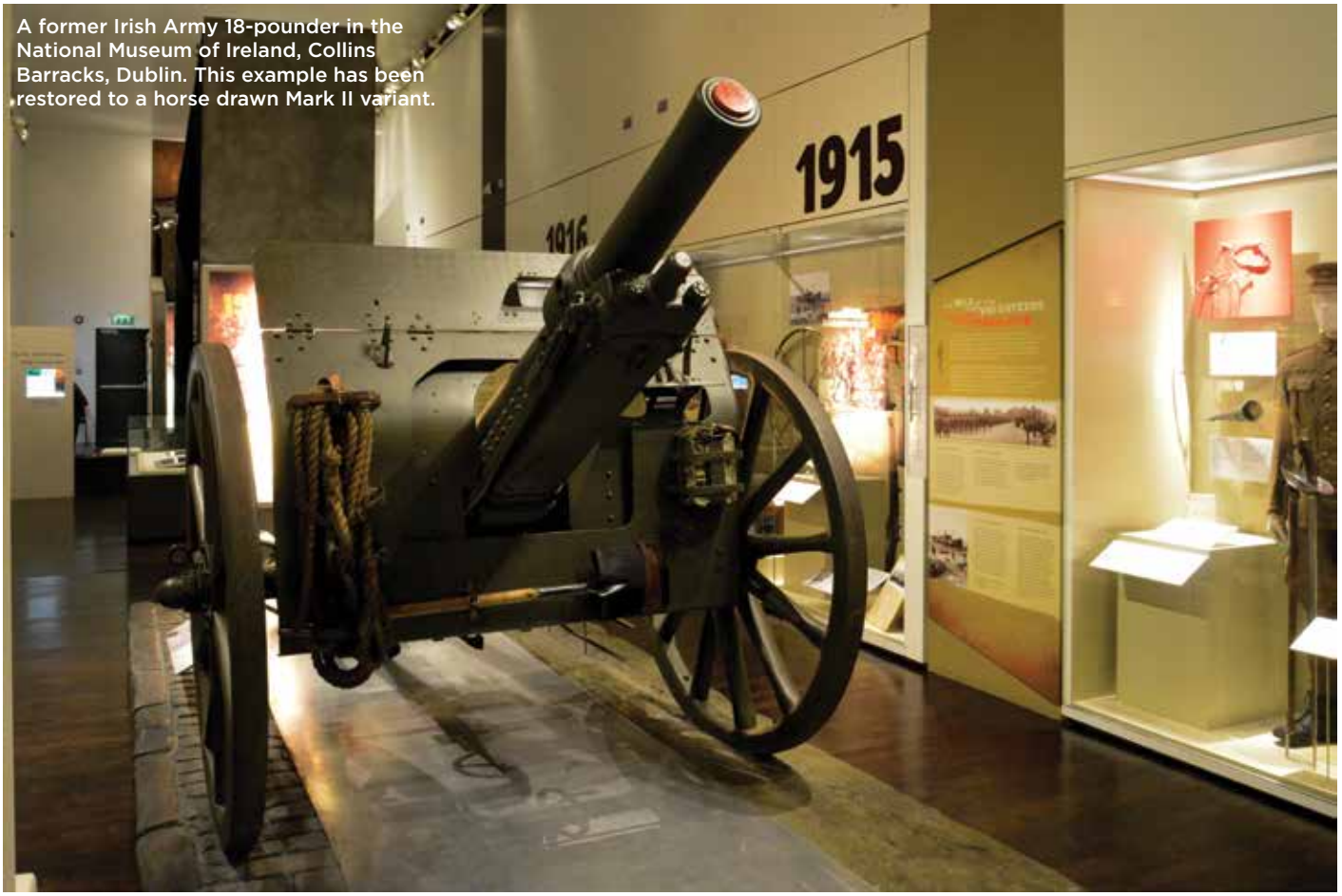
This image and above left shows the Irish delegation viewing the gun, while meeting with the owner in February 2016. Left to right, are Commandant Stephen McEoin, Museum Director (and reserve artillery officer) Lar Joye, and Colonel Conor FitzSimons (Irish Representative to the UN).

The 'Ivy Patch' gun, loaded for shipment back to Ireland, under the supervision of Lieutenant Colonel Paul Carey.

this locale had played a part in a book that he had been reading about Confederate guerillas during the American Civil War. There had been a firefight between Colonel John Mosby's partisan rangers and a troop of New York cavalry near the Occoquan River, and it had centered around an old house on the hill where the dinner theater now stood. Ken had only visited the dinner theater once, and at night, many, many years before, so, out of curiosity, and in frustration at the barely-moving traffic, he drove up the winding access road to see if the old house was still there. While killing time, and walking around the premises, he stumbled across the Irish Free State-marked 18-pounder gun in the ivy patch. The rubber tyres were rotting away and only the barrel, breech, and shield were still visible above the ivy.

Recalling the 'Argentina' statement by the restorer in England, and knowing that Interarms was the only logical source of the gun, Ken surmised that this gun, too, must have come from Argentina, as a part of the 1959 Argentine shipment. The two people manning the office at the dinner theater informed Ken that the present owner would never part with the gun, as it was one that his grandfather had acquired, and, as such, it had become a proud family heirloom. Ken left a business card with the staff members and asked them to let him know if there was ever any intention to dispose of the gun. He contacted Lar Joye sometime later about it, but since Lar was very busy with his newly opened museum, and Ken understood that Lar already had what had been described to him as a real 'Four Courts' gun, neither of them were too concerned about it. According to the dinner theater staff, the present owner didn't want to let it go, and even if he did, getting it back across the Atlantic would be a quite a feat.

When Ken was finally able to visit Lar at his museum in Dublin's Collins Barracks in June 2013, he saw the same restored 18-pounder gun on exhibit that he had last seen seven years before in England. During a tour of the galleries, Lar told Ken



A former Irish Army 18-pounder in the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin. This example has been restored to a horse drawn Mark II variant.

that this gun on display was a Mark IV, and had later been updated, but then had been restored back to its original World War I configuration. Although the artifact label addressed the use of 18-pounders by Irish gunners in World War I and at the Four Courts, this gun, contrary to what Ken had been told earlier in England, had not actually fired on the Four Courts. Lar pointed out that he had been searching for a Mark I or Mark II gun from 2003 to 2006, but could not find one in Ireland. Apparently, no one knew what had happened to the Irish Army's Mark I's and Mark II's, but it was rumored that they had been sold to Argentina or Bolivia. This was most likely the reason for the restoration company's confusion about the gun's history and its origins. At this point, Ken reminded Lar about the gun in the ivy patch back at the dinner theater in Virginia, and, although Ken couldn't recall any of the markings on it—other than the 'FF' (Irish Defence Forces emblem) on the breech— or its model designation, Lar said that it might be of interest to the museum, after all.

In December 2014, Lar contacted Ken about the gun in the ivy patch, and asked him if he would photograph it. At that time, Ken, now retired, was en route to his winter home in Key Largo, Florida, but promised that he would photograph it when he returned from Florida the next spring. However, Ken suffered a near-fatal abdominal aortic aneurysm the following February, so he had to put that project on the back burner when he finally got back to Virginia. Lar reminded him about it the following August, and, while on an errand in northern Virginia a few weeks later, Ken happened to pull off the road by the entrance to the dinner theater. Although he didn't have his camera with him, he went up to check on the gun.

Ken found the gun still lying in the patch of ivy and, while he was looking at it, he happened to meet the current owner. The owner didn't reveal his last name, but he and Ken soon discovered that they shared a mutual interest in historical firearms, and the owner verified that his grandfather had, indeed, acquired the gun from Interarms in the early 1960's. Ken noted down the serial number and the markings on the gun, and pointed out the interesting potential provenance of the gun to the owner. When asked if he would be willing to part with it, the owner said that, since his wife was of Irish ancestry, he might consider it.

Ken reported to Lar that the gun was, indeed, a Mark II, and returned a few weeks later to photograph the gun. When he arrived, he saw that the dinner theater was now closed for good, padlocked gates had been erected at the entrance and exit, and the offices looked deserted. He called the telephone number on the door, and tried to email the owner for days afterwards—all to no avail. Finally, he suggested to Lar that he ask the military attaché at the Irish embassy in Washington to send a letter to the address listed on the dinner theater's

Where Are These Cannons Now?

When the SS Finnmerchant was unloaded on the Alexandria, Virginia, waterfront, in February 1959, there were not only dozens of pieces of artillery and limber/caissons, in crates and on the deck, but also 843 crates of machine guns, on board the ship. On 22 July 1958, the Irish government had disposed of all of it as scrap metal, since there was not a market in Ireland, or in Europe, for these items at the time, as anything but scrap steel. In fact, the cost of shipping the guns to America was more than Sam Cummings had paid for the entire shipment.

The artillery consisted of seventeen 18-pounder field guns and trailers (limber/caissons), twenty-two 4.5" howitzers and trailers, and six 60-pounder guns and trailers, along with twenty-three crates containing five 12-pounder guns, four 3-inch anti-artillery guns and mounts, tons of spare parts, and inert ammunition. The serial numbers for the four AA guns were: 1449; 1675; 1677, and, 1711. The five 12-pounder 'Land Type' quick firing guns were: 1070 (Drill Purpose); 1544; 1654; 1703, and, 1803. The serial numbers of the five Mark I 18-pounder guns were: 6460; 7209; 7470, and, 10392. The serial numbers of the twelve Mark II 18-pounder guns were: 2819; 2908; 3484; 4254; 4770; 5605; 7554; 7765; 8577; 8976; 9168, and 10756. Number "9168" is the repatriated "Ivy Patch" gun. The ten Mark I 4.5" howitzers were numbered: 20; 135; 861; 1405; 1653; 1686; 1770; 1814; 2132, and, 3109. The twelve Mk II 4.5" howitzers bore the serial numbers: 2209; 2763; 2839; 2871; 3340; 3350; 3376; 3455; 3559; 3588; 3617, and, 4032. Finally, the six massive 60-pounder guns were numbered as: 1603; 1618; 1634; 1637; 1667, and 1688. These artillery pieces were sold in the local area, across the United States and Canada, and perhaps elsewhere, but aside from the 'Ivy Patch Gun', a Mark II 4.5" howitzer (Serial Number 2839) in a private collection in Virginia, and two more 4.5" howitzers at the Pennsylvania State Museum in Boalsburg (near State College in Pennsylvania), the whereabouts of the rest of them is, at present, unknown to the authors.

now-defunct website, in hopes that the owner would be curious about the return address on the envelope, open it, and contact Lar at the museum. While Ken was down in Key Largo again for the winter, his close friend in Alexandria, Bob McDonough (also a student of Irish history), kept a watch on the gun to ensure that it didn't stray, and stayed in communication with Lar.

Lar sent several letters to the owner, Glenn Graves, and thankfully, Glenn responded. Since the Republic of Ireland does not have a military attaché in Washington, Lar contacted Colonel Conor FitzSimons, the Irish Defense Forces official representative at the United Nations in New York (and a fellow artillery officer), and arranged a meeting in Virginia for February 2016. Colonel FitzSimons, Commandant Stephen MacEoin (the then director of the Irish Military Archives), and Lar met with Glenn, and found that he was very keen to have the gun returned to Ireland. Glenn was the perfect host to the three Irishmen, and they all spent a delightful winter's day in a Virginia field, talking about the Civil War— the Irish one, and not the American one!

After Stephen MacEoin worked out the finer details of the agreement with Glenn, he and Lar recommended the acquisition of the gun to the Chief of Staff of the Irish Defense Forces. The Chief of Staff, in turn, dispatched Lieutenant Colonel Paul Carey, Executive Officer of the J4 Branch, Defense Forces Headquarters, to pick up the gun and transport it back to Ireland. Paul Carey journeyed to the former dinner theater in July 2016, and the gun arrived back in Dublin by the first week of August 2016. This certainly was a remarkably quick turnaround from the initial visit to the arrival of the gun. The ivy patch gun is currently being restored.

Research is ongoing, both at the British National Archives in London, and at Military Archives in Dublin to learn exactly which Mark I and Mark II guns were acquired by the Irish Free State prior to July 1922, and hopefully, which ones actually fired on the Four Courts. Finally, the entire operation is emblematic of the benefits that the museum community receives from membership in ICOMAM. Had it not been for Ken and Lar's fortuitous meeting over dinner at the ICOMAM Canada conference in 2005— when they not only became professional colleagues, but good friends—this potentially significant gun would still be sitting in an ivy patch, and unknown to the world, or even worse, possibly melted down for scrap metal.

The authors thank Michael J. Parker, Esq., formerly of Interarms, for his kind assistance in the preparation of this article, and, of course, Glenn Graves, for his very generous donation of the gun to the National Museum of Ireland. Glenn E. Hyatt, Stefan Rohal, Paul Smith, and Robert McDonough provided information on extant machineguns and cannon from the 1959 'Irish Shipment'. The greater part of this article was published previously in the online ICOMAM Magazine in the winter of 2016, and was intended for an international, not a specifically Irish, audience.

A life-long student of military history and artifacts, Ken Smith-Christmas retired from a 37-year career in military museums—primarily the U.S. Marine Corps, and the U.S. Army. In retirement, he pursues his deep interest in Irish military history, and assists the international museum community in firearms legislation.

Camden
FORT MEAGHER

Internationally recognised as being "one of the finest remaining examples of a Coastal Artillery Fort in the world" Camden Fort Meagher is the ideal day out.

65% of the Fort is located underground in a labyrinth of tunnels and chambers which are just waiting to be explored. The Fort is a prime location to watch ships passing through Cork Harbour, especially from our harbour view tearooms!

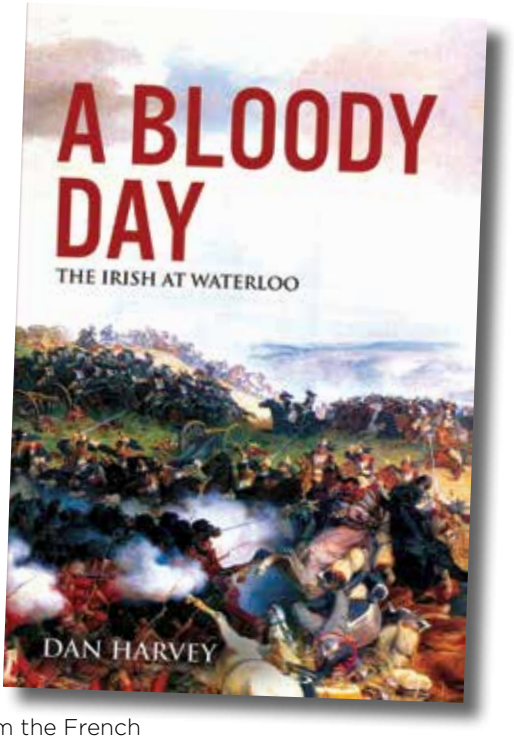
The Fort has limited opening times and operates a seasonal schedule. For times and further information, please visit:

www.camdenfortmeagher.ie

follow us on facebook

A Bloody Day: The Irish at Waterloo

by Dan Harvey
Paperback: €14.99



At least one third of the British army that faced the French forces of Napoleon at Waterloo on June 18th, 1815, were, like Wellington himself, Irish. Yet such a substantial Irish participation in an event that decided the fate of Europe is not readily brought to mind by the British, nor indeed by the Irish themselves, when mention is made of the battle. In this book, Dan Harvey seeks to redress the balance. He retells the story of Waterloo with a keen military eye, examining specifically how the thousands of Irishmen who took part on the battlefield helped to ensure victory. Napoleon himself acknowledged the Irish role. Speaking of the 27th Inniskillings, he said, 'I have seen Russian, Prussian, and French bravery, but anything to equal the stubborn bravery of the regiment with castles in their caps, I have never witnessed'.

Within the grand narrative of the Battle of Waterloo – one that marks the end of Napoleon's career as conqueror and the beginning of an extended peace in western Europe – little is known of the formidable efforts made by the Irish who supplemented the strength of the British Army and, in no small measure, directed the outcome of this vital moment in the history of the world.

Through empirical research, Dan Harvey has delivered a book that reveals the manoeuvres that the Irish mounted against the French and the courage that they displayed at so many points within the confrontation. Harvey examines attacks from the French infantry, cavalry and Imperial Guard, revealing how Irish soldiers bore the brunt of Napoleon's frontal assault; they suffered many casualties but were also witness to countless feats of valour. A Bloody Day brings the actions of the Irish at Waterloo into focus, unravelling the true import of their deeds on Sunday, June 18th, 1815.

Lorrha People in the Great War

By Gerard O'Meara
Paperback: €25.00

The most northerly parish in Tipperary, Lorrha is well known for its ancient and medieval monastic settlements. However, it also has a significant military history as recounted by this book.

In the early years of the 20th century, it was perceived as an active republican parish. In fact, many people from Lorrha served during the great War, whether it was with the Irish or the British Regiments or Commonwealth and American forces. They fought in all theatres of war whether with the infantry, cavalry, artillery or air force. They were granted numerous awards for valour including the Victoria Cross to Martin O' Meara of Lissernane.

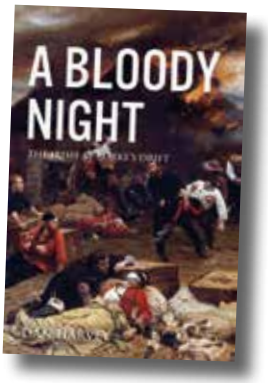
This book details their background, their families and their post-war lives. It is as much a family and local history as well as a military treatise.

Fighter Aircraft Since 1945

By Frank Schwede
Paperback: £10.39

The world's first jet engines were already available shortly before the end of the Second World War, but they had not been developed to a high enough standard to take part. This changed after 1945 when, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, one technological development surpassed the others and records tumbled almost every week. The era of the piston engine was finally over and jet fighters now dominated the skies. By the mid-1950s their speed had already reached double that of the speed of sound; an achievement which a few years earlier, would have sounded to many like science fiction.

A Bloody Night: The Irish at Rorke's Drift



by Dan Harvey
Paperback: €14.99

The word Zulu means 'heaven', but for the suddenly besieged and minute British garrison at Rorke's Drift, it represented a hellish horde of warriors from the Zulu nation. In what was to become a famous clash of the 1879 Anglo-Zulu war, thousands of poorly armed but well-trained Zulus had unexpectedly begun to hurl themselves in a head-long, deadly onslaught against the hastily barricaded one-time trading station and mission hospital. A fight for survival to the bitter end followed. To stay alive, the hugely outnumbered defenders had to check their individual fears, hold their composure, and show resilience when it really mattered. The defence of Rorke's Drift was an epic encounter and an exceptional piece of soldiering. Its tale of courage in adversity against impossible odds endures; the little-known but significant role of those Irishmen present is no less absorbing a story, and all the more intriguing for its unheralded heroism.

A Bloody Night documents the terrifying struggle of these Irishmen as thousands of poorly armed but well-trained Zulus unexpectedly hurled themselves in a head-long, deadly onslaught against their hastily barricaded trading station and mission hospital. The battle, a defining clash in the 1879 Anglo-Zulu war, was a bare struggle for survival; the deeds and heroics of the Irish soldiers, subdued within the grand narrative, were no less exceptional than that of their English counterparts. Dan Harvey brings examples of their sheer resilience to the fore.

The defence of Rorke's Drift was an epic encounter and an exceptional piece of soldiering. Its tale of courage in adversity against impossible odds endures; the little-known but significant role of those Irishmen present is no less absorbing a story, and all the more intriguing for its unheralded heroism.

Family Histories of the Irish Revolution

Edited by Ciara Boylan, Sarah-Anne Buckley and Pat Dolan
Paperback: €24.95

Some of the stories from current and retired staff at NUI Galway have been buried for generations, and their publication sheds new light on the complex politics of memory in post-independence Ireland. They tell of the famous – Peadar O'Donnell, Tom Kettle and the Sheehy-Skeffingtons – and the forgotten, including accounts of nationalists and unionists, British army soldiers and Irish Volunteers, members of Cumann na mBan and the RIC.

The contributions discuss how family history and memory was imparted, and aim to explore the legacy of this on succeeding generations. An introduction from the editors, a foreword by President Michael D. Higgins on ethics and memory, and a background chapter from Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh weave together key themes, including gender, memory, violence, reconciliation and family history.

Adventures of a Cold War Fast-Jet Navigator

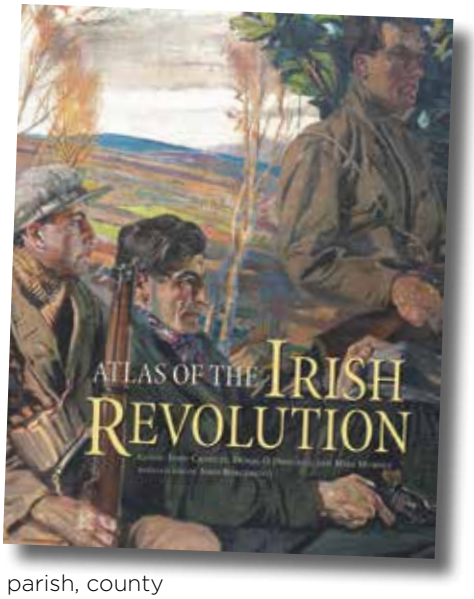
The Buccaneer Years
By David Herriot
Hardback: £20.00

David Herriot served almost 40 years in the Royal Air Force as a navigator, first on the Buccaneer S2 and subsequently on the Tornado GR1. This volume recounts his early career operating the Buccaneer on three operational flying tours plus a tour as an instructor on the Operational Conversion Unit. With almost 2500 hours on an aircraft that was operated at high-speed, in all weathers and at ultra-low-level, his task in the rear seat was a demanding one. But Herriot was more than just the guy in the back of a Buccaneer; he was, quite routinely, and often to the exasperation of his seniors, the life and soul of any party that was taking place either at home base or when overseas defending the flanks of NATO.

This is an epic adventure for the aviation enthusiast, particularly those with affection for the Blackburn Buccaneer, and is one that provides a great deal more than the usual introduction to a specific aircraft type and the people who flew it. Here the reader will find an absolute insight into life on a fast jet squadron, at work and mischievous play during the Cold War and they will be introduced to some of the modern Royal Air Force's greatest characters.

Atlas of the Irish Revolution

Edited by John Crowley, Donal Ó Drisceoil and Mike Murphy
Assistant Editor: John Borgonovo
Hardback: €59 £55



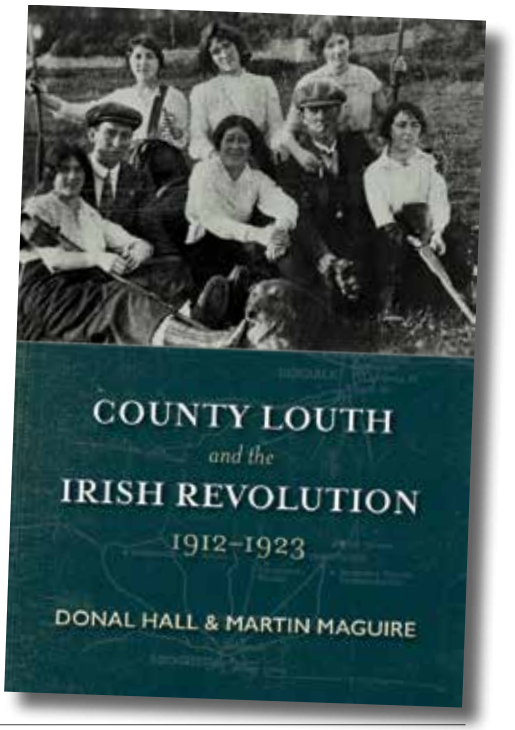
The Atlas of the Irish Revolution is a landmark publication that presents scholarship on the revolutionary period in a uniquely accessible manner. Featuring over 350 original maps and 700 images, the Atlas includes over 100 contributions by leading scholars from a range of disciplines. They offer multiple perspectives on the pivotal years from the 1912 Home Rule crisis to the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923.

Using extensive original data (much of it generated from newly-released archival material), researchers have mapped social and demographic change, political and cultural activity, state and non-state violence and economic impacts. The maps also portray underlying trends in the decades before the revolution and capture key aspects of the revolutionary aftermath. They show that while the Irish revolution was a 'national' event, it contained important local and regional variations that were vital to its outcomes. The representation of island-wide trends stand alongside street-level, parish, county and provincial studies that uncover the multi-faceted dynamics at play.

The Atlas also captures the international dimensions of a revolution that occurred amidst the First World War and its tumultuous aftermath. Revolutionary events in Ireland received global attention because they profoundly challenged the British imperial project. Key revolutionaries operated transnationally before, during and after the conflict, while the Irish diaspora provided crucial support networks. The often-neglected roles of women and workers are illuminated, while commentators consider the legacies of the revolution, including collective memories, cultural representations and historical interpretations. The Atlas of the Irish Revolution brings history to life for general readers and students, as well as academics. It represents a ground-breaking contribution to the historical geography of these compelling years of conflict, continuity and change.

County Louth and the Irish Revolution, 1912–1923

By Martin Maguire and Donal Hall
Paperback: €19.99
Hardback: €39.99



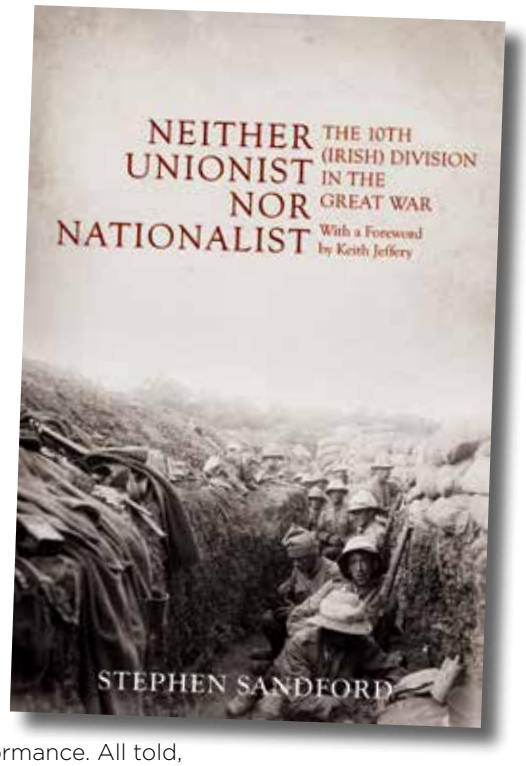
County Louth and the Irish Revolution, 1912–1923 explores the local activism of the IRA and how revolution was experienced by rural and urban labourers, RIC men, republican women, cultural activists, and Big House families. Events were increasingly shaped for all these groups by the developing reality of partition, transforming a marginal county into a borderland and creating a zone of new violence and banditry.

The expert contributors to the first-ever local history of the county during this period bring to light a wealth of fascinating stories that will appeal to the general public and historians alike. Critically, these stories reveal new findings about the early military skirmishes in County Louth by republican figures such as Seán MacEntee and Frank Aiken; the controversial sectarian massacre at Altnaveigh; and how the Civil War made a fiery battlefield of Dundalk and Drogheda.

County Louth and the Irish Revolution, 1912–1923 documents the complexity of the local experience as the national revolution merged with long-established antagonisms and traditions, the effects of which have shaped the county ever since.

Neither Unionist nor Nationalist: The 10th (Irish) Division in the Great War 1914-1918

By Stephen Sandford
Paperback: €24.99
Hardback: €44.99

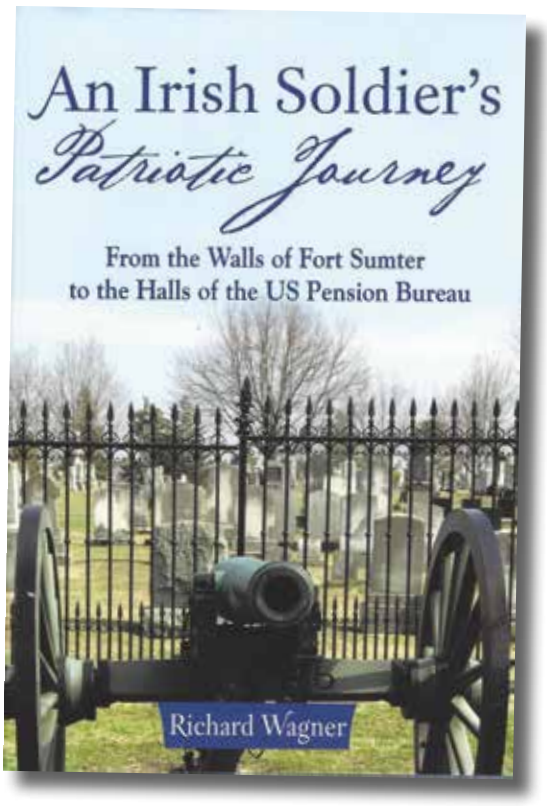


This is the first major history of the 10th (Irish) Division in more than ninety years. Unlike the 36th (Ulster) and the 16th (Irish) Divisions who have been well served by historians in recent years, the history of the 10th has been largely overlooked. This book emphatically rectifies this long oversight and in so doing brings the complicated story of the Irish divisions in World War 1 to completion. Using newly available sources, regimental medal rolls, newspaper reports, obituaries, census returns and Commonwealth War Graves records, the author subjects the 10th to a ground-breaking analysis, unearthing an unprecedented amount of evidence crucial to understanding its formation, composition and battle-history from Gallipoli to Palestine.

Fascinating and vital details concerning ethnicity, age, religion, employment and social background confound expectations and reveal that the 10th was neither as Irish nor as nationalist as previously believed. The author's research has shed new light on the effects of regimental morale and discipline on combat performance. All told, this new divisional history- the first in twenty years of any British division in the war- can lay legitimate claim to being the definitive account of the 10th (Irish) Division and will be the benchmark against which future histories of the division are written.

An Irish Soldier's Patriotic Journey -

From the Walls of Fort Sumter to the Halls of the US Pension Bureau
By Richard Wagner
Paperback: $17.99
Hardback: $35.95



John Doran wrote to the United States Bureau of Pensions toward the end of his life with a pleading message:

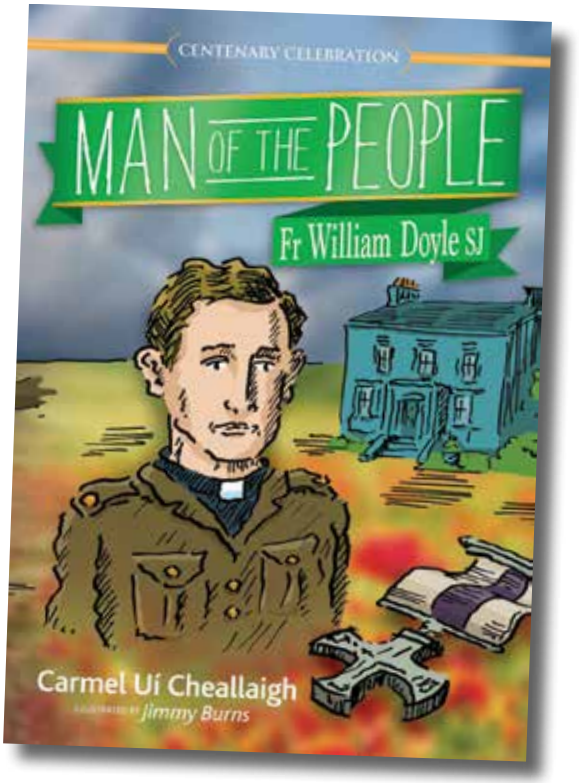
"I have been compelled to cease all work, and I am unable to support myself and family on the small pension allowed me. I am a broken-down old man and pray for an increase."

It was a sad end for an Irishman who had come to America in 1857 looking for a better life—someone who learned the trade of iron molding before enlisting in the First Regiment of United States Artillery. Doran participated in most Civil War encounters from Fort Sumter to Appomattox, earning promotions from private to sergeant while serving in the 'fighting first' until 1874.

During the war, he suffered starvation, sleep deprivation, extreme fatigue, an eye injury impairing his vision, a foot injury causing a debilitating limp, an ear injury, and numerous other infirmities in the line of duty. Somehow, he survived to return to his family and iron molding in Meriden, Connecticut, in 1874. But injuries haunted him, and he was forced to give up manual labor and fight for the next twenty-one years for a small stipend for his military service.

Man of the People – Fr William Doyle SJ.

By Carmel Uí Cheallaigh
Illustrated by Jimmy Burns
Paperback: €5.95



Willie Doyle lived a life of great generosity, kindness, courage and holiness. One hundred years on, his example and values are more relevant than ever. How did this young boy from Dublin become a hero of World War I?

This is the first ever children's book about Fr. Willie Doyle, published to coincide with the centenary of his death, at the third battle of Ypres on August 16th, 1917. It is suitable for reading ages 6 – 9 years and ideal for classroom use also.

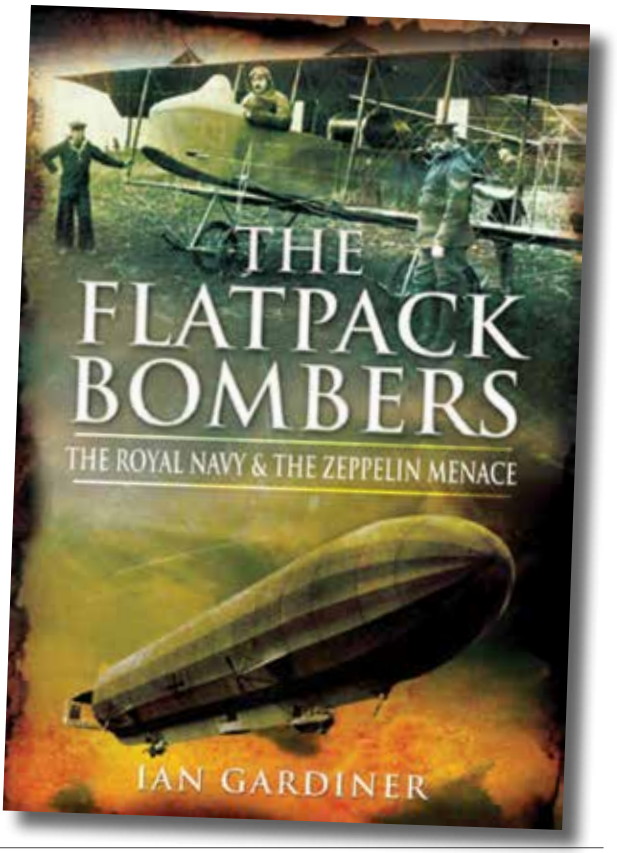
It demonstrates his many attributes, from a young boy in Dalkey, to spells teaching in Belvedere and Clongowes and his ordination in Milltown, before finally making the ultimate sacrifice, as chaplain to the Irish battalions on the battlefield of World War 1 in Belgium.

He is especially important, as he reached across the divide, socially and religiously, and was admired by anyone he came into contact with, always remembered for his compassion and cheerful disposition.

Complete with maps of Dalkey and Ypres and tributes from his army colleagues, it's an informative and well researched read. Written in a fiction style, with short chapters, simple language, and charming illustrations, it offers huge potential for inter-generational discussion. The book finishes with an inspirational quote from Fr Doyle, his words as pertinent today as they were back then.

The Flatpack Bombers

The Royal Navy & the Zeppelin Menace
By Ian Gardiner
Hardcover: £15.99



Our vision of aviation in the First World War is dominated by images of gallant fighter pilots duelling with each other high over the Western Front. But it was the threat of the Zeppelin which spurred the British government into creating the Royal Flying Corps, and it was this 'menace', which no aircraft could match in the air at the beginning of the war, which led Winston Churchill and the Royal Navy to set about bombing these airships on the ground. Thus in 1914, the Royal Naval Air Service, with their IKEA-style flatpack aeroplanes, pioneered strategic bombing. Moreover, through its efforts to extend its striking range in order to destroy Zeppelins in their home bases, the Royal Navy developed the first true aircraft carriers.

This book is the story of those largely forgotten very early bombing raids. It explains the military and historical background to the first British interest in military and naval aviation, and why it was that the Navy pursued long distance bombing, while the Army concentrated on reconnaissance. Every bomber raid, and every aircraft carrier strike operation since, owes its genesis to those early naval flyers, and there are ghosts from 1914 which haunt us still today.

Please contact us if you would like your event added to our calendar page: info@irelandsmilitarystory.ie

Calendar of events - Winter/Spring 2017/2018

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
December 2nd, 12:00	London Irish Rifles Association's Founder's Day (158th Anniversary).	Connaught House, London.
December 8th, 20:00	Military History Society of Ireland Lecture: Dr. Sylvie Kleinman '1798: The French in Mayo - a case study in military occupation'.	Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin 8.
December 9th, 14:00	Western Front Association Lecture: Bill Gibson 'Irish Golf and Golfers Experiences of War and Revolution 1914 -1916'.	Lecture Theatre, National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Benburb St., Dublin 7.
January 12th, 20:00	Military History Society of Ireland Lecture: Harman Murtagh 'French Military Intervention in Ireland 1689-1691'.	Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin 8.
February 8th, 18:30	Western Front Association Lecture: Mike Jackson, ''Review the Revisionist: a reconsideration of the 'Shot at Dawn' controversy'.	Public Record Office Northern Ireland, 2 Titanic Boulevard, Titanic Quarter, Belfast.
February 9th, 20:00	Military History Society of Ireland Lecture: Tom Barlett 'Napoleon Bonaparte and Ireland, 1796 – 1916'.	Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin 8.
February 21st, 19:00	Lecture: Kevin Myers 'Role played by chance in Irish history'.	Little Museum of Dublin, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.
March 8th, 18:30	Western Front Association Lecture: Ronan McGreevy, subject TBC.	Public Record Office Northern Ireland, 2 Titanic Boulevard, Titanic Quarter, Belfast.
March 8th/9th, 10:00	Centre for Cross Border Studies Annual Conference 2018: 'The Good Friday Agreement in All its Parts: Safeguarding the Totality of Relationships'. Opening keynote speaker will be Dr. Martin Mansergh, a key architect of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. The pre-dinner speaker on Thursday evening will be Mr Tony Connelly, Europe Editor for RTÉ.	Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dundalk, Co. Louth.
March 9th, 20:00	Military History Society of Ireland Lecture: Nicholas Perry 'The Destruction of the Irish Divisions, March 1918'.	Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin 8.
March 10th, 10:00	Military History Society of Ireland Annual General Meeting.	Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin 6.
March 14th, 13:00	Lecture: Patrick Hugh Lynch 'Click and Create – The Photographer's view of Commemoration in Ireland'.	Public Records Office, Titanic Quarter, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
April 1st, 12:00	Department of An Taoiseach: Annual 1916 Commemoration Ceremony.	General Post Office, O'Connell Street, Dublin 1.
April 9th, 20:00	Military History Society of Ireland Lecture: Adrian Gregory 'You may as well recruit Germans: the conscription Crisis 1918'.	Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin 8.
April 12th, 18:30	Western Front Association Lecture: Robin Masefield, 'The History of Palace Barracks (up to 1969) and Holywood as a Garrison Town'.	Public Record Office Northern Ireland, 2 Titanic Boulevard, Titanic Quarter, Belfast.
May 2nd, 10:00	Department of Defence: Annual Arbour Hill Commemorative Mass and Wreath Laying Ceremony.	Arbour Hill Cemetery, Arbour Hill, Dublin 7.
May 22nd, 12:00	Military Heritage of Ireland Trust Directors' Meeting, Arbour Hill. Followed by the Annual General Meeting at 14:30.	Lecture Theatre, National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Benburb St, Smithfield, Dublin 7.

SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND SAVE!

IRELAND'S MILITARY STORY

Make sure to subscribe to Ireland's Military Story and secure your copy now. Receive a copy of the magazine straight to your home or read on your computer, tablet or smart phone.

Subscription

4 issues of Ireland's Military Story PLUS a copy of the annual Ireland's Military Story in Focus only

€45 Worldwide*

All prices include P&P and VAT

*All print subscribers will also receive a copy of the digital magazine.

**All subscribers will have full access to our online archives.

To subscribe please fill out the form and send to:

Subscriptions
Reveille Publications Ltd
PO Box 1078
Maynooth, Co. Kildare
Republic of Ireland.

You may also subscribe online by visiting www.irelandsmilitarystory.ie

For readers who enjoy digital/kindle formats please visit our website for details **Or** download our Ireland's Military Story app via **www.pocketmags.com** and read the latest edition on any smart phone or tablet.

YES! Please subscribe me for one year

€45 Worldwide* ☐

Name:

Address:

Email:

☐ MC

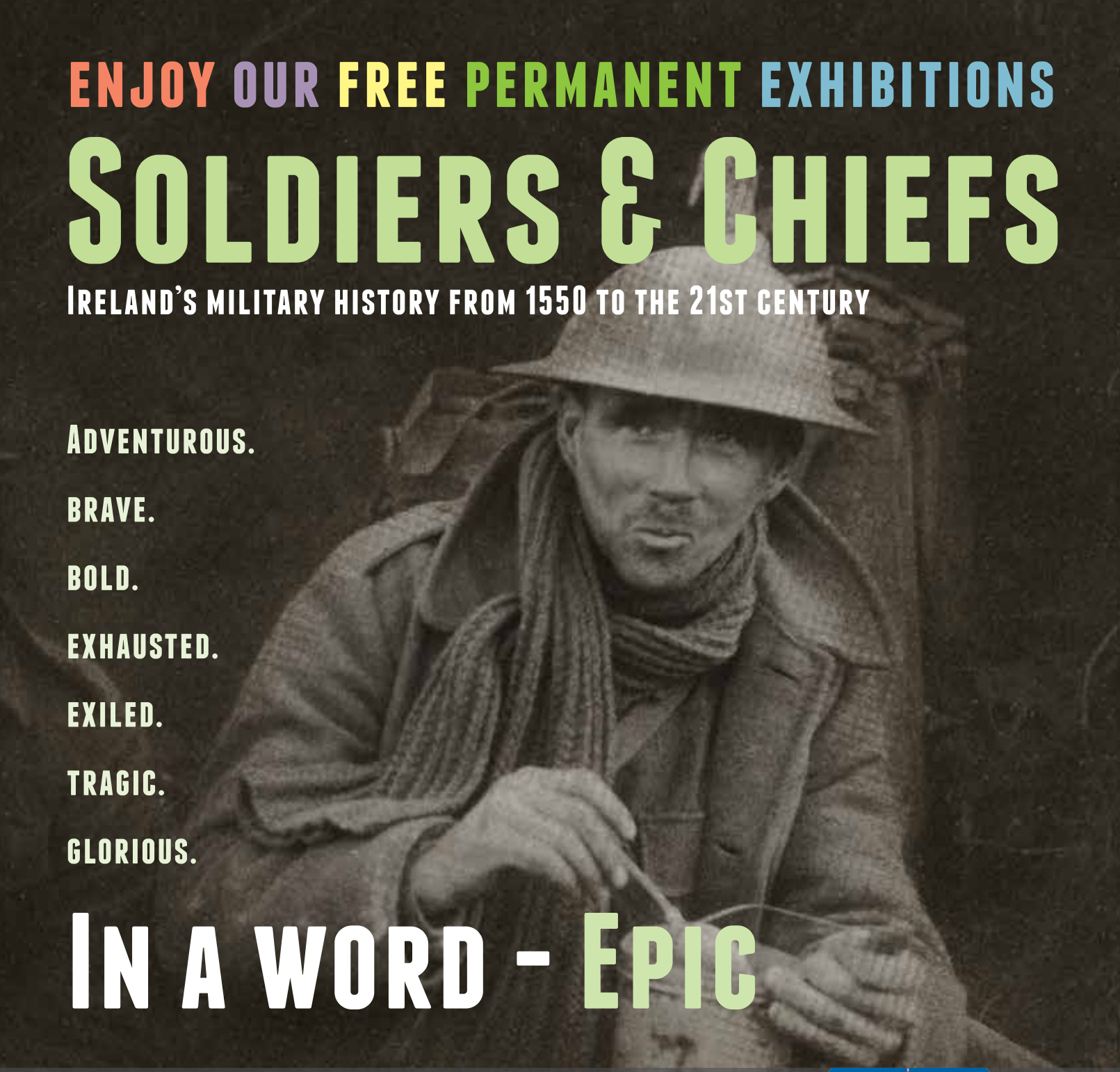
☐ Visa

Expiry Date 3 Digit CVV No. Signature

ENJOY OUR FREE PERMANENT EXHIBITIONS

SOLDIERS & CHIEFS

IRELAND'S MILITARY HISTORY FROM 1550 TO THE 21ST CENTURY



ADVENTUROUS.

BRAVE.

BOLD.

EXHAUSTED.

EXILED.

TRAGIC.

GLORIOUS.

IN A WORD - EPIC

museum
National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Decorative
Arts & History

Free admission to the greatest collections of Irish heritage, culture and history in the world.
LUAS Red Line - Museum Stop

Museum Café & Museum Shop. New Exhibitions, family programme and events for people of all ages.
Visit www.museum.ie

Open: Tuesday to Saturday 10am to 5pm.
Sunday 2pm to 5pm.
Closed Mondays
Including Bank Holidays

Collins Barracks
Benburb Street, Dublin 7
Tel (01) 6777 444
info@museum.ie

SAME GREAT ORGANIZATION.
BRAND NEW LOCATION.

Did you, a member of your family or friends serve in the U.S. Armed Forces? Are you a combat veteran, or did you serve in a forward-deployed unit? If so, then you are invited to become a founding member of the FIRST Irish-based Post of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.

The Post will be located in the middle of Ireland, at the exclusive and historic Kinnitty Castle Hotel, and it will fall under the VFW Department of Europe.

Fellowship is guaranteed, as is military service camaraderie and friendly rivalries as we join together to support fellow veterans, service members and their families in our host country.

For more details, contact the VFW at Ireland@vfw.org. Eligibility requirements listed at www.vfw.org.

VFW

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.