

Cumann na nIar Oifigeach Coimisiúnta

Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

Newsletter

Issue No. 4

Spring 2003

KEEPING YOU POSTED.

We are into another year, and we hope to keep you, our members, posted on the events, mainly of the latter half of the last year and regarding our plans and ambitions for the Association in 2003 and beyond. Your Executive Committee also takes the opportunity, on this our first Newsletter of 2003, to extend best wishes to all our members for the coming year and to express appreciation and thanks for the loyal support during the past year.

AN CLAIOMH GAIS-CIOCHTA, ITS SECOND RECIPIENT.

We are consolidating our association with the Cadet School, The Military College. Colonel John Ryan, our President, was our representative at the Commissioning Ceremony last July, and presented An Claiomh Gaisciochta to the leading Cadet of the 77th Cadet Class, now 2nd Lieutenant John Ahern. It is for all of us a most meaningful dimension to be represented at the Commissioning Ceremony and we take a certain pride and delight in being identified with the achievements and aspirations of the army of tomorrow.

2nd Lieutenant Ahern is a native of Athlone and is the son of Lt Colonel Ger Ahern, O/C 6 Inf Bn. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from NUI, Galway, prior to joining the Army. His interests include football, rugby and rowing. He was gazetted to the 1 Cn Cois.

SUSTAINING PROGRESS - SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT 2003 - 2005.

This is the successor to the PPF and has just been published. It remains now to be ratified by all concerned. However, in relation to the pay elements and the benchmarking for the public service, the reality is that there is nothing else on offer!

Pay increases - public service (to last 18 months).

A pay pause of 6 months to be followed by:

3% from 1/1/04, 2% from 1/7/04, 2% from 1/12/04.

Benchmarking.

Rate 1(Line): Colonel 11%, Lt Colonel 11% Commandant 13%, Captain 6.5%, Lt 6.5%.

Rate 2(SSO's, NS, etc): 15% all ranks.

Rate 3(Doctors, Dentists): 3% to 14.5% - details to be agreed.

The MSA will be increased in line with the increases granted for each particular rank above.

Payments:

25% back dated to 1/12/01, 50% from 1/1/04, 25% from 1/6/05.

Pensions will be increased in line with the with the dates and percentages above.

THE FLEET REVIEW TELESCOPE - OUR AWARD TO THE BEST CADET, NAVAL SERVICE.



Commodore Liam Brett, fmR F.O.C.N.S. making the presentation to Ensign Elaine Browne at the Commissioning Ceremony on 2/9/02.

We have extended the scope of our Association to incorporate the Naval Service Commissioning Ceremony. The Naval Service equivalent award to the Best Cadet, The Military College, An Claiomh Gaisciochta, is the Fleet Review Telescope, a concept researched and developed by Commodore Liam Brett, fmR F.O.C.N.S. and a member of the ARCO Executive Committee.

The first-time recipient is Ensign Elaine Browne, gazetted to the NS

Engineering Branch. She participated in the historic deployment of the L.E. Eithne to S.E. Asia in Feb/Mar 2002, visiting Malta, Eritrea, India, Singapore and Hong Kong. Elaine is a native of Athlone and a graduate of Our Lady's Bower. Her interests include Rowing, Basketball and Motor Racing. She has represented her country in international Rowing Competitions. We renew our congratulations to her and extend our good wishes for her future career in the Naval Service.

BUDGET 2003 AND OUR OLDER MEMBERS.

Taxation.

In the light of the deterioration in the country's finances, expectations were not high that the Minister would have much largesse to distribute among the elderly. He did however, manage to remove 12,000 from the tax net by increasing the Income Tax Age Exemption for persons aged 65 years and over, by €2000 to €15,000 for single persons, and by €4,000 to €30,000 for married couples. Hopefully, some of our members will benefit from this.

Hearing Aid Grant.

This has been increased to €700 per unit. The grant is, however, PRSI contribution based, except for Medical Card holders. Tax relief per Form MED 1 is also available.

Free Telephone Allowance.

This has been extended to persons aged 70 years and over who reside in Nursing Homes and have their own telephone account.

Rural Transport Initiative.

The Minister allotted further funding of €500,000 towards the cost of this Initiative in respect of Free Travel Pass holders. The Initiative was first established in 2001 to address the problem that significant numbers of people in rural areas experienced difficulties is accessing the basic essential services because of the shortage of public transport services in their areas. It is community based and there are now eight pilot schemes up and running in areas from West Cork, East Clare to Leitrim/Cavan, with many areas in between, and with a further 26 area developments proposed and due to be soon implemented. Those of our members who feel they can benefit from this Initiative should contact Area Development Management, Ltd, Holbrook House, Holles St, Dublin 2, Tel:01/2400700, or Email: enquiries @ adm .ie, to ascertain the position in their own community area.

CAOGA, 50 YEARS, UP AND RUNNING.

Brigadier General Bill O'Carroll was a captain in the 2nd Battalion in Cathal Brugha Bks when he singularly took the initiative of submitting a case to authority for the foundation of a group insurance scheme for officers. His submissions and the concerns he expressed on behalf of widows and children of deceased officers were appreciated.

From modest beginnings in 1952 throughout the intervening 50 years, CAOGA has thrived on the support and endorsement of its membership to be the significant force and influence it represents in today's army. Sadly, Bill O'Carroll died in February 2000, but he died in the knowledge that his initiative was magnificently successful and beneficial for such a number of his contemporaries, their successors and their families. The Committee, chaired currently by Col Donie O'Regan, has consolidated the organisation and has enhanced the scope of cover. The upper age limit has been extended to 65, and more recently, to 70 years. Significantly, in the year 2000, CAOGA extended their scope of cover with Irish Life Group Assurance on terms that compare most favourably with terms of all the other firms in the market.

My personal appreciation to Comdt Liam Campbell, current Secretary of CAOGA, for the provision of material and for help on this item. Many members of ARCO are also members of CAOGA because of the extension of the age limit to 70 years. In the years to come, more and more will be members of both, particularly if the age limit is further extended. This will create the opportunity for co-operation between both organisations, for the mutual benefit of both member-ships. ARCO salutes CAOGA on its 50th anniversary and wishes it every success in the future.

MEMBERSHIP - THE LAPTOP ERA.

It was our late esteemed member, Lt Colonel Martin Bates, who laid the ground-work and convinced us that we needed computer technology to keep a handle on memberships, subscriptions and records generally, of our very disparate organisation. He worked from home on his own personal computer, and he began to establish a very organised database of membership. He brought details to the meetings which helped the Executive to establish exact parameters of membership and finance. At a simple fundamental level we were able to identify the mystery of multiple subscription - some banks were deducting subscriptions on a monthly rather than a yearly basis - and so, refunds as appropriate were made and the system was stabilised.

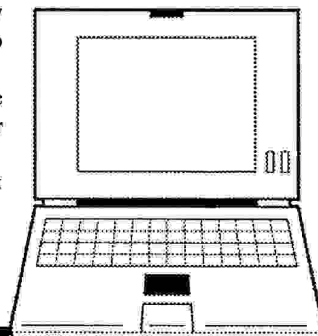
After Martin's sad passing, we were convinced to acquire a laptop computer to contain and develop the records. Colonel Neil O'Brien stepped in, and now, in his role as the Association Hon Membership Secretary, has redefined the database to a sophisticated degree. We move forward in the 21st century with contemporary technology and with confidence in the system.

ARGO is focused on its members and on the objectives of the Association to promote, safeguard and protect their interests. We

have up to 560 members at present, which is about 60% of the potential. Obviously we would like to realise a target closer to that potential and, in this context, we would encourage members to bring to the notice of others the profile of our Association, to encourage them to participate. There really is strength in numbers when we are representing our concerns in the political forum.

Some membership features:

- * 1/3 of our membership is made up of officers who retired early from the Defence Forces to take up new careers.
- * Others who retired on age grounds are still in their late 50's or early 60's.
- * Our membership year is from 1st March to 28th February. Sadly, 16 members died during the year, but 52 new members joined.



THE 8th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 12/10/02.

This was held in the Auditorium, 2nd Eastern Brigade, Cathal Brugha Bks, and was presided over by Colonel John Ryan, our President. 32 members attended and there were 25 apologies. A minute's silence was observed for all deceased members.

Hon Secretary, Capt Chris McQuaid, in his report covered the activities of the Association over the past year, in particular, Communications, Media, External Meetings, Correspondence, Ceremonial, Pension matters, Subcommittee on MSA and the proposed Indexation of pension increases.

Hon Treasurer, Colonel Jim Fagan, distributed copies of the Audited Accounts for the year ended 28/2/02. His report indicates a continuing satisfactory management of our finances. Our current account was in credit by the amount of €440.00, with the bulk of our financial assets in separate deposit accounts: €20,000.00 in the EBS and €7,600 in the ICS/BOI. The major provisions are in respect of the purchase of our computer equipment (€4,300) and the cost of our presentations to the Best Army Cadet and Best NS Cadet. Overall the situation is viable and stable, but it is prudent to conserve our resources for future contingencies and commitments.

Hon Membership Secretary, Colonel Neil O'Brien, reported that the Association has 576 members and he gave details of the extent to which the purchase of the Laptop computer and printer had made such a difference in the control of our membership affairs.

Incoming Executive Committee: For your information and to facilitate communication, the following is the detail of your Executive Committee in coming year:

President	Col John Ryan	01/8313731
Vice President	Col Harry Crowley	045/431415
Hon Secretary	Capt Chris McQuaid	01/4516958
Hon Treasurer	Col Jim Fagan	044/56315
Hon Membership Sec	Col Neil O'Brien	01/2983284
Eastern Branch Reps	Maj Gen Fergus O'Connell	01/2834271
	Col Jim Mortell	01/8411505
Curragh Branch Reps	Col Donal O'Carroll	045/432541
	Comdt Gerry Ryan	045/431450
Galway Branch Rep	Lt Col Ned Cusack	091/555257
Naval Service Rep	Cdre Liam Brett	021/4353448
Co-options	Lt Col Danny Flood	056/61758
	Comdt Terry McNulty	01/4903846
	Lt Cdr J.J. Grannell	01/4951426

(No one came forward to represent the Cork, Limerick, Athlone, Air Corps or other areas).

THE ACTIVE RETIREMENT MOVEMENT.

In keeping with our effort to provide information to our members (in this case our older members), we would suggest that those aged 55 years and over, consider the Active Retirement Movement. It aims to help older people have a full, happy and healthy retirement, by offering organised opportunities for a wide range of activities - holidays, outings, socials, creative and learning programmes, indoor and outdoor sports, community work, etc.

Founded in 1978, the Movement is based on a network of associations, affiliated to the Federation of Active Retirement Associations, and having a total membership of over 13,000. Some associations meet every day, others less frequently, and activities vary in accordance with the choices of the members. For information on an association near you, or on one which caters for your interests, contact the

Federation of Active Retirement Associations,
2nd Floor, Shamrock Chambers,
1-2 Eustace St, Dublin 2.
Tel: 01/6792142,
Email: fara @eircom .net.

PROBUS

Probus is one of the fastest growing organisations in the world and there are currently 117 Probus clubs in Ireland. It is an association of retired and semi-retired men and women who join together in autonomous clubs. The word "**Probus**" is an abbreviation of the words "PROfessional" and "BUSiness", but membership is not restricted to these specific groups. It embraces retired and semi-retired people from all walks of life and represents people from every field of endeavour. The lower age limit is 55 years and there is no upper age limit.

The basic purpose of a Probus club is to provide regular gatherings of persons who, in retirement, appreciate and value opportunities to meet others in similar circumstances of a similar level of interest. Club members hold regular meetings to conduct club business and usually to hear a guest speaker, or participate in organised activities, such as visits to places of interest, social activities, etc.

Probus clubs do not operate under a centralised control. Each operates under the umbrella of the local Rotary club. They do, however, hold an Annual Rally and last year's was held in Tralee, and was addressed by the President of Ireland.

Two of our Executive Committee members, Cdre Liam Brett and Lt Col Danny Flood, hold office in their local clubs and would be willing to give further information and advice on Probus to any ARCO member with an interest in joining.

NOTICE BOARD.

Capt Chris McQuaid invites you to savour WAGNER.

Our former Hon Secretary has been elected as chairman of the Wagner Society of Ireland at its inaugural meeting in January this year. He invites your interest and involvement in the affairs of the Society, whose objectives are "to further the understanding of the music of Richard Wagner .. to promote and organise cultural activities .. to assist members who may one day wish to attend performances at the Bayreuther Festspiele and .. to maintain membership of the Richard Wagner Verband .." It is proposed to organise a series of social events, comprising opera attendance, recitals, courses and travel. Chris would welcome contact in the above context, phone: 087/9150545 or 01/4516958 (evenings).

The National Day of Commemoration 2003.

This will be on Sunday, 13/7/03, with the Ceremony held in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, followed by a reception. Whilst the Ceremony is open to the public we would like to encourage our members and spouses/partners to attend, with medals, to show the flag! It will also be an opportunity to meet former colleagues, both serving and retired. Notice of the Ceremony is generally published in the newspapers in the week prior to the Day.

Notice Board Features.

We would like to develop the content of this feature by way of feedback from you, our members. If you have comment, suggestions, photographs, articles, etc, that you would like to see published here, do contact Terry McNulty at 01/4903846.

PERSONAL COLUMN.

Lt Col Sean Clancy, 100 plus, and still very much in focus.

There was a magnificent photograph in the dailies of Lieutenant Colonel Sean Clancy on the occasion of his 100th birthday, inspecting a special guard of honour at McKee Barracks. His appearance and bearing was as impressive as any member of the guard he inspected - a wonderful example of an old soldier who has retained his personality and appearance so well beyond the century mark. Our Association, in the spirit of identifying with such a wonderful occasion, presented Sean with a special bottle of **Midleton Reserve** Irish Whiskey, suitably inscribed and in a presentation box. We trust he was able to toast the memories of his career in the Forces and that he will enjoy many more years to savour that special birthday. If you know of others in that age bracket, we would like to hear about it and to give honourable mention thereof in our Newsletter.

Capt Chris McQuaid.

We regret that our Hon Secretary, Capt Chris McQuaid has had to resign the the Secretaryship of ARCO on personal grounds last December. Chris was first elected at the 7th AGM on 13/10/01 and re-elected the following year. The Executive Committee paid tribute to him at its December meeting for the out-standing contribution he made to the Association whilst Hon Secretary and wished him well in the future. (See also **NOTICE BOARD**).

Lt Col Brian O'Keeffe, General Secretary, RACO.

ARCO congratulates Brian on his recent promotion to the rank of Lt Colonel, and wishes both himself and RACO every success in the future.

More congratulations.

ARCO is proud of its representatives in the Oireachtas and congratulates Capt Billy Timmins, FG, on his recent re-election to Dail Eireann and Capt John Minihan, PD's, on his nomination as Senator to Seanad Eireann.

MSA PENSIONABILITY FOR THOSE WHO RETIRED PRE 1/8/90.

Your Executive Committee is reviewing this long-standing issue with a view to putting a strategy in place for 2003.

There is no doubt but that much time and effort has been put into resolving this matter since the establishment of ARCO in 1993, but unfortunately, we have been unable to persuade the Minister and his Department of the merits of our case.

They hold the view, inter alia, that the MSA is a separate allowance within the military remuneration structure and that their policy is in line with the established practice in other areas of the public service in relation to the pensionability of allowances. Other reasons are also given, i.e. the substantial cost implications involved (€6.7m) and that a change in policy could extend to other groups with similar claims for pension increases. We hold the opposite view, i.e. that the MSA is an integral part of pay (per the finding of the Gleeson Commission) and therefore should be treated as pay for pension purposes, i.e. that the parity principle should apply. We also hold that cost and what others might do should not be issues. Unfortunately, the Commission on Public Service Pensions agreed with the official side, which does not help our case.

We are under no illusions but that this is an uphill battle, as indeed it always was from the very start. However, we owe it to the 480 surviving retired officers of that era and 360 widows to keep the issue alive, in the hope of achieving a breakthrough sometime.