



## Hello Everybody Its AGM time again

Another year has slipped by and our 10th Annual General Meeting will be upon us soon, ie. on Saturday 9th October at 1130 hrs, in the Auditorium, 2 Bde HQ, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin. (See Notice and Agenda).

As usual, coffee will be available in the Officers Mess from 1030 hrs onwards and a light lunch will be provided, free of charge, after the meeting. Those wishing to avail of the lunch are asked to contact the Hon Secretary, Lt Col John Rigney, on or before Tuesday 5th October. He will also take apologies from those who cannot attend.

Elections to the Executive Committee will take on a more than usual importance this year as a number of the office holders, including the President, Vice President and Hon Treasurer and some of the regional representatives will not be going forward for re-election. We would ask our members not to be backward in coming forward for the Committee and especially, we appeal to our southern, western and Naval Service members to be represented on the Committee. The work is not onerous and making a contribution to the progress of the Association and to the wellbeing of its members, former colleagues in arms, can be rewarding in a personal way.

ARCO is going from strength to strength and is now well established. It has come a long way since it was formally launched in the Constitution Room of the Shelbourne Hotel on 24/6/94 and followed by a reception in the Mansion House. 30 new members joined during the membership year ending 28/2/04, giving us a strength of 590 on that date. So far this year, 17 have joined. We would remind members that there is a standing request to all to canvass for new members to ensure a growing association, going forward.

It is also worthwhile reminding all our members that much has been achieved in recent years in improving the lot of our older members - medical cards for the over 70's, abolition of the 2% health levy also for the over 70's, the Free Schemes, increased tax exemption thresholds for over 65's, pre 1953 SW contribution scheme, increased inheritance tax threshold, etc. Current issues being pursued include, four SW (modified) contributions to equal one full contribution to enable over 65's be eligible for a half rate old age pension, the Free Schemes and medical card be available to those who had to retire on health grounds as is the case for those on SW Invalidity benefits. Financial support for carers and the financing of long term care are also issues being pursued. ARCO has played a leading role in these issues through its membership of the National Federation of Pensioners Associations. It is important to continue with this active role into the future, but practical help is needed from our members based on their experience and expectations. New initiatives on our part in conjunction with other pensioner associations are essential to improve the lot of the retired and to keep the powers that be on their toes.

It is no harm in pointing out that it is working civil servants and politicians who deal with such matters at official level. Our younger members would be more in tune with such people and with the overall situation and therefore have an important role to play. Everyone benefits in the long run!

### NOTICE TO MEMBERS

The 10th Annual General Meeting of the Association of Retired Commissioned Officers will be held in the Auditorium, 2nd Eastern Brigade Headquarters, Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin 6, on Saturday 9th October 2004 at 1130 hrs.

### AGENDA

1. Opening address by the President, ARCO.
2. Minutes of 9th Annual General Meeting - 11/10/03.
3. President's Report.
4. Report of Hon Secretary.
5. Report of Hon Treasurer to incl audited A/Cs.
6. Report of Hon Membership Secretary.
7. Elections to Executive Committee.
8. Appointment of Auditors.
9. Any other business:  
Army Golf Societies - competitions/prizes.  
ARCO Website.

John Rigney, Lt Colonel,  
Hon Secretary,  
ARCO.  
10/9/04

15 Monastery Park,  
Clondalkin,  
Dublin 22.  
Tel: (01) 4593704

## ARCO Award to the Top Cadet - 2004



2/Lt Paul Amoroso being presented with An Claoimh Gaisciochta by Col John Ryan, President, ARCO, in the company of the Minister for Defence, Chief of Staff and Commandant, The Cadet School

The members of the 79th Cadet Class were commissioned on 5/7/04. In all, 46 were commissioned and the highlight of the occasion was the presentation of An Claoimh Gaisciochta to 2/Lt Paul Amoroso. Paul is from Dublin and had completed two years of a degree course in Chemistry at UCD before becoming a Cadet. He hopes to complete his degree in UCG. He represented the Cadet School at the International Law of Armed Conflict in San Remo and his interests include rugby, reading and music. His first posting is P1 Comdr, APC P1, 3 Inf Bn. ARCO wishes him every success in his career in the Defence Forces.



## Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Service

All our members, including those of general rank, have benefited in their pensions, on the parity principle, from all increases in pay as agreed under 'Sustaining Progress' so far. However, as serving generals were outside the scope of the Benchmarking Body which reported in June 2002, retired generals naturally got nothing in their pensions from that exercise. Serving generals were actually benchmarked by the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Service per its Report No. 38, dated 25/9/00. Following acceptance of that Report by the Government, the increases in pay recommended were implemented on a phased basis over the following two years. ARCO did not publish a Newsletter back in those days and details of that Report were not disseminated to members.

Our retired generals may have felt a little bit out of it over the past few years when reading about all the pension increases other retired members were getting under the 2002 Benchmarking Body. The truth is that nothing has happened on their front since the last Review Body over four years ago. It is only natural that they hold a legitimate expectation of another Review Body, and soon, so that the value of their pensions be restored.

The Review Body was set up initially in 1969, but was given new terms of reference in 1991 to act as a standing body with the primary function of advising the Government, every four years (the first review to commence in January 1991) on the general levels of remuneration appropriate to those coming within its remit - in our case - general officers. There has been ongoing slippage in relation to this four year commitment. The review per Report No. 38 dated 25/9/00, ie. the last one, should by right have reported in 1999, to ensure the four year commitment. If this had happened, the next one would have reported in 2003 and be well completed and implemented by now. One complete review has now been lost.

The ongoing slippage is very unfair to our serving generals; pay relativities have dropped vis-a-vis comparable positions in the private sector, and differentials have been eroded vis-a-vis officers junior to them. It is doubly unfair to retired generals, particularly as they have no control over events and, as pensions are outside the remit of the Review Body, they don't really know where they stand.

The expectation of a new, albeit belated, Review Body this year has now been dashed. Members may have read about this in the Irish Times early in July. Whilst those serving were officially informed at the time, as usual, pensioners were not. The position now is that during the Mid Term Review (6/04) of 'Sustaining Progress' the Social Partners reached agreement that the Benchmarking Body will commence a benchmarking review in the second half of 2005, to report in the second half of 2007. The Minister for Finance was anxious for a closer alignment of the timing of the next Review Body, on Higher Remuneration in the Public Service and the Benchmarking Body, and decided that the next Review Body Report should not be finalised until about the same time as the Benchmarking Body Report, ie. the second half of 2007!

All this may appear logical but will the lost Review be made up? Our Newsletter will keep you informed of developments.

## The Military History Society of Ireland

We endeavour to advise members on activities which may appeal to them in retired life and on the appropriate voluntary bodies providing such activities. We have already published short articles on 'Probus', 'The Active Retirement Movement', 'McKee Officers Club', 'The Military Heritage of Ireland Trust'. We are indebted to Commandant Eamonn Kiely for this note on 'The Military History Society of Ireland'.

The Society studies Irish wars and Irishmen at war. It was founded in 1949 by a group of academics with a deep interest in Irish Military history and by distinguished retired Army Officers. It currently has a membership of 800 and is open to anyone with our shared interest.

Its activities include seven lectures between Autumn and Spring each year on military history at Griffith College, South Circular Road, Dublin. It holds two outings yearly into the field to a battle site. Retired officers will be reminded by this of their days in the Military College, but we can assure you it will be much more relaxed. International tours are organised every second year. Last year saw the Society visit Sicily and southern Italy. Previous ones were to The Crimea, South Africa, France, USA, etc. Next year will be to Vienna, Budapest and Prague. Three major seminars were held in recent years on such subjects as The Irish Civil War, The Emergency and The Irish UN Involvement. It was at Emergency one that Lt Col J.P. Duggan dropped the bon mot about the Irish reserve officer in Malta answering the call to arms in 1940, having had a partiality for the ladies and a good drop of whiskey, gained the soubriquet 'Balls of Malta'.

The Society's journal 'The Irish Sword' is highly esteemed among academics and is widely quoted in learned articles. There have been over 90 issues to date. The current President of the Society is Colonel Donal O'Carroll and the membership secretaries are Col Pat Kirby (US) and Capt Paraic Keane. Annual membership subscription is €32.00 and the address is MHSI, Newman House, 86 St. Stephens Green, Dublin 2.

### *Ar dheis De go raibh a n-Anamacha*

Comdt Martin Hayes	08/03/04
Brig Gen P.D. Hogan	11/03/04
Comdt Thomas Maher	26/03/04
Lt Col Arthur O'Riordan	21/04/04
Capt Brendan O'Dea	01/05/04
Comdt Patrick Boyle	05/05/04
Capt John Boyle	15/05/04
Lt Col John Whelan	24/05/04
Lt Col Thomas Stapleton	27/05/04
Capt John Connolly	29/07/04
Col Gerry Gill	06/08/04
Col Tom Moriarty	20/08/04





## Notice Board

### Recent Publication

**'Independent Consumer Guide to personal loans and credit'**, available from the Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority, PO Box 9138, College Green, Dublin 2. Helpline 1890777777. Web site [www.itsyourmoney.ie](http://www.itsyourmoney.ie) The Authority is a statutory body to regulate financial services and help consumers make informed financial decisions. A quote - 'we have produced this publication using guidance on plain English techniques from the National Adult Literacy Agency'. Would that those who produce rules and regulations get similar guidance!

### LUAS

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs has announced that free travel pass holders will be entitled to use the LUAS service free of charge, at all times, without restriction. A ticket will not be required but the travel pass must be produced, if requested by an inspector. Incidentally, nothing is free in this world. The overall cost to the Exchequer of the Free Travel Scheme will be €52 million this year.

### European Health Insurance Card

This is now available, on application from your local Health Board centre from 1/6/04. An application takes about 10 days to process, longer if others on the application form, such as a spouse, do not have Personal Public Service Number (PPSN). Another application to your local Dept of Social and Family Affairs will be necessary to get this number.

### 'The Irish at War'

A major Irish Military History Exhibition is due to open in the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, Dublin 7, late next year, at an estimated cost of €9million, including construction. It will tell the stories of Irish soldiers throughout the many campaigns and wars they were involved in, right up to the present day. More information will be given in our next Newsletter. A National Appeal for Military History material has been launched, contact: 01-648 6467.

### ARCO Website

The grapevine does not always work! Did you ever miss, for instance, a retirement presentation you really wanted to attend? One suggested solution would be to set up an ARCO website, with appropriate links. A website would also help to put ARCO on the map. To carry this idea forward, the Committee need first to know how many members are 'online' and are interested. If interested, please contact [dorchalee@hotmail.com](mailto:dorchalee@hotmail.com). The subject will come up for discussion at the AGM on 9/10/04.

### DF Benevolent Fund Concert

This annual concert in aid of the 2nd Eastern Brigade's own fund will be held on Saturday, 16/10/04 in the National Concert Hall, Dublin. Massed bands of Army School of Music, accompanied by the 100 strong Tallaght Choir, will provide an evening of entertainment.

Staying with the subject, the ARCO Executive Committee has again agreed a donation of €1000.00 to the Officers A/C, DF Benevolent Fund, to be used solely for the benefit of ex-officers and their dependants.

## Your Good Health

by Col Joe Laffan

A mature individual in apparent good health can hopefully enjoy a life expectancy according to well established averages relating to age, sex, race and location. As you know well, this life expectancy can be reduced in those who are smokers, who drink heavily, or who are markedly overweight. On the other hand what can be done to enhance the expectation of life of those who do not handicap themselves in these ways? Well, there are a few suggestions I can make.

The elderly are prone to suffer from infections, some of which can now be prevented by vaccines. Pneumonia is a particular example, and often causes death following accidents, such as severe falls or broken legs. For some years vaccines have been available to protect against a group of organisms which commonly cause severe pneumonia, using a single dose injection. They are especially recommended for anybody who has diabetes. Bear in mind that they are not effective so far against all bacteria causing pneumonia. Another useful precaution is a yearly flu vaccine. The benefits of flu vaccines are harder to determine, as there may be little, if any, influenza in the community for several years.

Secondly, older people tend to suffer from arthritis, especially of hips or knees, which can progress, if untreated to the end stage of permanent pain, or confinement to the house or even to bed. If a person has this trouble to the extent that it interferes with walking, or getting into or out of a car, it is wise to consider surgical treatment. Operations for replacement of hip or knee joints have a high rate of success, and can transform marvellously the life style of a sufferer, and should be considered early rather than later. Many put off treatment for years through fear of surgery.

Lastly, for some years there have been reports that a small daily drink of wine, preferably red wine, confers benefits on heart and circulation. The benefit is thought to come partly from the alcohol content, and partly from the red constituents of the wine. I have been unable to locate convincing scientific evidence confirming or otherwise this claim. Besides, to obtain credible proof would require a difficult scientific survey of several thousand subjects who would take the small daily drink of wine, and compare their progress and mortality over a period of five or more years with that of a similar population of abstainers. However, there is no evidence to show that this practice is a bad thing, and it happens to be a pleasant activity, I have adopted it myself.

### Pension Increases due

**National Agreement 'Sustaining Progress' Mid Term Review** Notifying pension increases is becoming a regular feature of the Newsletter. By now you will have received the 2% from 1/7/04. This will be followed by another 2% from 1/12/04 and will complete the increases agreed under part 2 (Pay) of 'Sustaining Progress'. The scheduled Mid Term review of the pay aspects of that Agreement was completed by the Social Partners on 18/6/04 and will result in increases for the Public Sector as follows:-

1.5% from 1/6/05, 1.5% from 1/12/05 and 2.5% from 1/6/06.

### Benchmarking

The final instalment of increases due to all ranks up to and including that of Colonel under the Benchmarking exercise ie. 25% of the increases, will become due on 1/6/05 also.

The Mid Term review has also confirmed agreement that the Benchmarking Body will commence another benchmarking review in the second half of 2005, to report in the second half of 2007. Our members will be kept informed through the Newsletter.



## BACK TO THE DARK CONTINENT

In 1960, as ARCO members recall, Lt Col Murt Buckley commanded the 32nd Infantry Battalion, the first Irish unit sent abroad on UN peacekeeping in the Congo. Forty three years later, in Dec 2003, Lt Col Pdraig Moran commanded the 90th Infantry Battalion deployed in Liberia. While company sized missions had been sent to Somalia and Eritrea, Liberia was only the second, battalion sized Irish deployment to the Dark Continent.

The new mission UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia) has many similarities with the Congo Mission (ONUC). Essentially, it involves providing peace and security, to allow a country recover from conflict and restore the rule of law.

The Irish contingent currently consists of an Infantry Battalion (427), a ranger special operations task group (36) and eight staff officers at UNMIL HQ, including the Force Chief of Staff, Brig Gen Bob Fitzgerald. The battalion was especially organised and equipped to fulfil its role as the Force Commander's Rapid Reaction Reserve. The main feature is that the unit is essentially APC borne, with 19 normal MOWAG Piranha APCs, 2 Command Post Mowags and an armoured Mowag ambulance. The unit has 4 AML 20s, 2 AML 90s, 26 Nissan GRS, 8 DAF (4X4), 3DROPs (8X8), and 9 other special purpose vehicles.

The deployment to Liberia took on board many lessons learned, after the hard way, in ONUC and on many other missions. The logistical operation to deploy the unit was most impressive. Coordinated by Log/Ops (formerly 'Q' Admin) under, initially, Lt Col Joe Dowling and, subsequently, Lt Col Pat Hayes, the logistics operation involved moving 1345 metric tons of stores, 172 items of rolling stock, 137 twenty-foot containers, 508 personnel (contingent + engineers) and 60 days rations, over 5,000km to the mission area. With the help of the field engineers, a complete fully equipped camp, Camp Clara, was set up to act as the base for the contingent.

On 27 Nov 2003, before the main body of the unit arrived in Liberia, the contingent had, tragically, its first casualty. SGT Derek Mooney of the ARW Group died in a traffic accident on the outskirts of the capital Monrovia.

The ARW Group featured, on January 6th, in a highly successful rescue operation freeing 35 hostages taken by renegade forces. The rangers were dropped into Gbapa 300km North of Monrovia, freed the hostages, and captured the renegade commander and deputy commander.

The 91st Infantry Battalion under Lt Col Tom Behan, have just replaced the 90th and the Irish commitment will continue until the end of 2005.

## The Cedar Room, Church of the Sacred Heart, Arbour Hill. The Church of the Defence Forces.

The Cedar Room is a place of prayer and remembrance, set aside, to bear testimony to the ultimate sacrifice made by 47 members of the Defence Forces who died while on active service with the United Nations in Lebanon, between 1978 and 2001. The initiative for the Room came from the Head Chaplain, Monsignor John Crowley, and it was opened on 25/4/04 at a ceremony attended by, amongst others, the Minister for Defence, Chief of Staff, his Eminence, Bishop Ray Field and families of the Deceased.

The Cedar Tree has long been associated with Lebanon, with some 400 growing near Beirut and believed to be over 1500 years old. It is only appropriate, therefore, that the remembrance room be called the Cedar Room, because of the place that tree and Lebanon holds in the memory of those who served there. Incidentally, a cedar tree is actually growing outside the Church, having been presented by the Lebanese Ambassador on 14/7/03.

The Room is suitably furnished with paintings, flags, etc. The names of the 47 deceased are inscribed on bogwood of a yew tree found in Boora Bog, Co Offaly, and reputed to be over 5000 years old. The Cross is fashioned from shrapnel collected following an Israeli air and artillery attack on southern Lebanon during their so called operation 'Grapes of Wrath' in 1996. Arbour Hill Church is open only on Sundays for 10 o'clock Mass. To visit the Church and Cedar Room outside that time, arrangements need to be made with the Head Chaplain's office, Telephone 01-6774878.

### *New Members Welcomed Aboard*

Lt Col James Roche  
Lt Col Niall Daly  
Comdt Michael Lynch  
Lt Col Laurence Foley  
Brig Gen James Saunderson  
Lt Col Peter Archbold  
Lt Col Desmond Johnston  
Lt Col Sean Dunne  
Capt Mark O'Connor  
Col Michael Lucey  
Comdt Kevin Heffernan  
Lt Col Gerry Mullins  
Col Oliver Macdonald  
Cdr James Goulding  
Lt Col Jim McNamara  
Capt Justin Martin  
Col Thomas Hodson

### **Personal Column**

*We congratulate Lt Col John Hamill on his recent election as President of RACO. We look forward to his support in pension matters and in other areas of interest to retired officers. John is O/C2 FAR and is a son of the late Lt Col Sean Hamill who would have been well known to our older members.*