



Cumann na nIarl - Oifigeach Coimisiúnta

newsletter

Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

Issue No: 24. June 2013.

ARCO Web Site: www.iarco.info

Pay Talks and Pensions

Pay talks have taken place over the past number of months at sectoral level at the Labour Relations Commission (LRC). At the Defence Sector talks RACO and PDFORRA met with representatives of DPER, DOD and the Military Authorities. The talks were chaired by Mr Kevin Foley, the Director of the LRC's Conciliation Services Division, who acted as facilitator.

Association of Retired Commissioned Officers

Our Association (ARCO) has followed the development of the Pay Talks over the past number of months with a growing sense of alarm and frustration. Since we were not party to the talks and as other pensioners associations were likewise excluded, we know that the concerns of pensioners are not high on the agenda. We had hoped that the LRC Proposals on the Draft Public Service Agreement 2013-2016 would cast some light on the implications for pensioners, however, the report contains very little information on the future intent for us. We have awaited clarity of the position over the last number of weeks, but again none has been forthcoming.

The Association has informed Ministers Shatter and Howlin that up to now Public Service Pensioners have had no representation or input to a process that materially affects them. Those on the union side have stated that they do not represent our interests. These talks will have serious implications for pensioners, but their voice has not been heard. This Association has urged both Ministers as a matter of urgency to put in place a mechanism whereby the interests of pensioners will be fully considered in any future negotiations.

ARCO Annual General Meeting 2013

The ARCO AGM will take place in the Catering Complex, McKee Barracks, on Saturday, 5th October 2013 at 1130hrs.

Motions should be submitted to the Hon Sec by Friday, 13th September 2013.

The agenda (see www.iarco.info after 13 Sept 13) will include a proposal to adopt a new set of Rules for our organisation.

Coffee will be available in the Officers Mess, McKee, Barracks, Officers Mess from 1045 hrs.

Ceremonies - Oglagh na hEireann

On the 24th November a ceremony attended by the President and An Taoiseach will be held at the Garden of Remembrance to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Irish Volunteers. The Defence Forces have booked the Rotunda and an archival exhibition will be displayed there over the week end 24/25 November.

Payment of Pensions

The Department of Defence has advised ARCO that it is their intention that the payment of the monthly pension cheque will change from the current 20th of the month to an end of the month payment in the next year. The Department are anxious that pensioners who have financial and other commitments due to the current payment date will be given ample time to make adjustments to their personal arrangements. The Department's intention is to phase the change over a number of months. The payment of the December cheque will continue to be made prior to Christmas. It is also anxious to hear from pensioners who may have particular difficulty with this proposed change.

Defence Forces Memorial, Merrion Square

A military Guard will provide a ceremonial party at the DF Memorial on each Saturday during June, July and August.

Local Property Tax

The Department advised that it will be possible for pensioners to pay their Local Property Tax through a deduction at source from their pension from the Department of Defence. For further information please see www.revenue.ie "Your Guide to Local Property Tax & how to pay and file".



High Level Planning Group (Hlpg) Nagorno – Kharabakh



The disputed region of Nagorno Kharabakh is situated in the highlands between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Once a Russian Oblast (Independent Province) and thus ruled and protected by the USSR the area became an area of dispute after the dissolution of the USSR. Nagorno Kharabakh was populated mainly by Armenians who wished better communication with what they saw as their homeland – Armenia.

The Nagorno-Karabakh War was an armed conflict that took place from February 1988 to May 1994, in the small enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in south-western Azerbaijan, between the majority ethnic Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh backed by the Republic of Armenia, and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

As the war progressed, Armenia and Azerbaijan, both former Soviet Republics, entangled themselves in a protracted, undeclared war in the mountainous heights of Karabakh as Azerbaijan attempted to curb the secessionist movement in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The enclave's parliament had voted in favour of uniting itself with Armenia and a referendum, boycotted by the Azerbaijani population of Nagorno-Karabakh, was held, whereby most of the voters voted in favour of independence. The demand to unify with Armenia, which proliferated in the late 1980s, began in a relatively peaceful manner; however, in the following months, as the Soviet Union's disintegration neared, it gradually grew into an increasingly violent conflict between ethnic Armenians and ethnic Azerbaijanis, resulting in claims of ethnic cleansing by both sides. Full-scale fighting erupted in the late winter of 1992. International mediation by several groups including the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) failed to bring an end resolution that both sides could work with. In the spring of 1993, Armenian forces captured regions outside the enclave itself, threatening the involvement of other countries in the region. By the end of the war in 1994, the Armenians were in full control of most of the enclave and also held and currently control approximately 9% of Azerbaijan's territory outside the enclave. A Russian-brokered ceasefire was signed in May 1994 and peace talks, mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group, have been held ever since by Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The Karabakh conflict would have been resolved in 1997. A peace agreement could have been concluded and a status for Nagorno-Karabakh would have been determined. Ter-Petrosyan noted years later that the Karabakh leadership approach was maximalist and "they thought they could get more." Most autonomy proposals have been rejected, however, by the Armenians, who consider it as a matter that is not negotiable. Likewise, Azerbaijan has also refused to let the matter subside and regularly threatens to resume hostilities. On 30 March 1998, Robert Kocharyan was elected President and continued to reject calls for making a deal to resolve the conflict. In 2001, Kocharyan and Aliyev met at Key West, Florida for peace talks sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). While several Western diplomats expressed optimism, failure to prepare the populations of either country for compromise reportedly thwarted hopes for a peaceful resolution. Refugees displaced from the fighting account to nearly one million people. An estimated 400,000 Armenians living in Azerbaijan fled to Armenia or Russia and a further 30,000 came from Karabakh. Many of those who left Karabakh returned after the war ended. An estimated 800,000 Azeri's were displaced from the fighting including those from both Armenia and the enclave. Various other ethnic groups living in Karabakh were also forced to live in refugee camps built by both the Azeri and Iranian governments.

The situation on the contact line between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict zone has been an issue of concern for the international community for

some time. There are daily incidents, with dozens killed each year on both sides as a result of sniper fire and other cease fire violations. The cease fire is not independently supervised, but the OSCE holds regular monitoring visits. Many consider that the monitoring regime is inadequate, but there is little chance of the sides agreeing to expand it unless there is movement in the process to resolve the conflict.

The High Level Planning Group was established after the Budapest summit of the OSCE in December 1994 with an open-ended mandate issued on 23 March 1995. According to the OSCE the group "is mandated to make recommendations to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on developing a plan for the establishment, force structure requirements and operation of a multinational OSCE peacekeeping force for the area of conflict dealt with by the OSCE Minsk Conference."

The High Level Planning Group (HLPG) is a mixed Ambassadorial and seconded military planning element which continually prepares, on behalf of the OSCE for a mission in Nagorno – Karabakh. The HLPG sends ceasefire monitoring teams of an Ambassador, Field Service members and observers to the area 2 or 3 times a year or whenever there is a serious incident. The HLPG briefs the biannual meetings of the OSCE council and the MINSK group.

The HLPG is located in Vienna. It is composed of eight officers seconded by OSCE participating States, and one fixed-term contracted staff member. The OSCE conducts monitoring of the contact line between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces. On

Thursday, 12 April 2012, according to Armenian media quoting sources in Nagorno-Karabakh a monitoring mission was conducted. From the Armenian side the monitoring team was Field Assistants of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office Antal Herdich (Hungary) and Irjie Aberle (Czech Republic), as well as representative of the OSCE High-Level Planning Group (HLPG) Colonel Andrey Barashkin. From the Azerbaijani side the monitoring was led by the Coordinator of the Office of the Representative of the Chairman-in-Office, Peter Kee (Great Britain), Field Assistant Hristo Hristov (Bulgaria) and a representative of HLPG İlhami Deirmenoglu (Turkey).

A monitoring mission is typically conducted in the following manner. A team flies to Yerevan, Armenia and continues by road to Stepanakert/Khankendi to observe and monitor the situation from an area in Nagorno – Karabakh. The local military then provide liaison and escort the team to the area of conflict scheduled for monitoring. A second team flies to Baku or Tbilisi and continues by road to view the line from Azerbaijan, in an area opposite the team in Nagorno - Karabakh. They are provided with liaison by the Azeri Army. The liaison is necessary to ensure the area can be monitored without an accidental exchange of fire. Communications and signals are maintained between the OSCE teams. They also conduct debriefs with the local area commanders and community leaders to gauge the military and political situation.

The Defence Forces are currently represented on the HLPG by Lt Col Michael Dolan, who is based in Vienna. He will also assist on the monitoring missions as required.



Friends of the Curragh Museum



The Curragh Local History Group (CLHG) (vide <http://www.curragh.info/home.htm>) was founded in the 1990s by some people, both Military & Civilian including Reggie Darling, in the Curragh and since then has done an enormous amount of work on the history of not only the Camp but also on the Social and Local history of the greater Curragh Area.

In the autumn of 2010 the Mil Authorities, after a long period of agitation by both Mil Personnel and people incl. CLHG members, opened a State of the Art Museum dedicated principally to the Camp

(<http://www.curragh.info/museum.htm>)

As official funding was short the General Officer Commanding the Curragh could not provide Military personnel to open it on Sundays and asked the retired Officers who lived locally if they would help out with this task. They were more than happy to do so as many of them were members of the CLHG.

Arising from their involvement and the need for continuing funding to develop the Museum as well as the need for the CLHG to obtain suitable display cabinets and other necessary back up for their collection a joint body called the Friends of

the Curragh Museum was established at the end of 2011 with the following Objectives

- To foster and promote the study of the history of the Curragh
- To acquire, insofar as it is possible, items of historical interest concerning the Curragh so that they can be put on Public Display.
- To assist in the provision of suitable means of display for such items.
- To raise funds for these objectives.

A number of fund raising projects are being initiated but there is a need for members of the Friends and anyone who is interested in joining should contact either

Col Joe O'Sullivan (Retd.), Tipper Rd., Naas, Co. Kildare,
Mob: 087 6799409 Email: joeosullivan@eircom.net
OR

Hon Treas: Lt. Ray Bonar, 28, Cherrygrove, Sallins Rd.,
Naas, Co. Kildare raybonarwhb@gmail.com
Membership costs €15 Single or €20 Family.



Keep a Weather Eye on your Skin

By Dr Maurice Collins, MICGP FFOM

When you think about it, your skin is the largest organ of your body. In an adult, it covers an average of 20 sq feet. It is also, perhaps, your most abused and insulted tissue. It has probably suffered assault by abrasives, irritants, chemicals, undue heat and cold and, most of all, by ultraviolet light.

One of the consequences of such repeated irritation of our body tissues is that they may eventually undergo neoplastic or new growth, changes.

There are three fundamental layers in our skin. The outermost is the epidermis, which provides a waterproof barrier and gives us our skin tone. It has no blood supply and contains melanocytes, the specialized cells that produce melanin, which is responsible for our skin colour. Below this is the dermis, which contains fine blood vessels, connective tissue, hair follicles and glands. Below this again lies the subcutaneous, or hypodermis, layer, which is made up of coarser connective tissue, blood vessels and fat.

The most benign of the new growth changes that may occur in the skin is keratosis, which involves a thickening and hardening of patches of the skin. There are different forms of keratosis, induced by different irritants but the commonest form is solar, or actinic, keratosis, which results from ultraviolet exposure. Actinic keratosis is a benign condition but there is a low risk of cancerous change and it should, at a minimum, be kept under observation. There are various treatments available, including 5-fluorouracil cream (which causes moderate irritation of the area as it works), cryosurgery (freezing with liquid nitrogen) and deep shave excision.

Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) is the commonest form of skin cancer.

Fortunately, it is also the least aggressive. Most common in over 50 year olds, it arises from the basal cells of the epidermis and usually begins as a small, sore-like, swelling that seems to get better and then recurs and may bleed. They most commonly appear on the face and neck, are slow growing and do not appear to expand significantly over a 2 month period. In time BCCs are locally invasive, that is they can spread to adjoining tissues, but they only rarely metastasize (spread to distant parts of the body). Treatment is primarily of a surgical nature and may include curettage, local excision or Mohs micrographic or cryosurgery.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) is about one quarter as common as Basal Cell Carcinoma. It arises from the squamous, or scaly, cells of the skin and, as it is associated with fair skinned people with a history of sun exposure, is mostly seen on the sun-exposed surfaces of the body. It is commoner in men than women. SCC begins as a small, often reddened, swelling which can be tender and have a scaly appearance. Sometimes they are slow growing and referred to as being "in situ" or Bowen's Disease. These are localized and easily excised at this stage. Other forms are more rapidly growing and noticeable expansion is visible within a 2 month period. They may breakdown centrally and have raised outer margins. They require urgent referral, the diagnosis is usually confirmed by a biopsy and primary treatment is surgical. Squamous Cell Carcinomas that are not in situ can metastasize to distant parts of the body and treatment becomes more complex.

Nowadays most people are well aware of Melanoma, the malignant tumour that arises from the melanocyte cells of the epidermis. As with the other forms of skin tumours, sunburn and repeated ultraviolet exposure of the skin, especially of fair skinned Caucasians, are the major risk



Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC)

factors. We all have moles, or pigmented spots, on our skin and, as we get older, we develop an ever-increasing number of them.

The major warning signs of potentially nasty change in a mole are:

- Change in size.
- Development of irregular colour.
- Development of irregular shape.

Minor warning signs are:

- Mole size greater than 7mm.
- Inflammation or oozing of a mole.
- Change in sensation.

Melanoma is the most aggressive of skin cancers. It is not as common as other forms of skin cancer but the incidence is ever increasing and it also increases with age. It is very prone to metastasis and, consequently, early detection and referral is crucial. Primary treatment is surgical and follow up is intense. Secondaries, if detected, may be treated with chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation and local surgery. Regrettably, melanoma remains the leading cause of death from skin disease.

The treatment of all forms of cancer is improving but the most important factor contributing to a favourable outcome remains early detection. There is no tissue in the body that can be better examined on a regular basis by yourself and/or a loved one, so be good to yourself and keep a weather eye to your skin to pick up any changes early!

Nepal and The Golden Triangle, India.

By Sheila and Brian O'Connor

In our continuing effort to see the world Sheila and I travelled to Nepal and India last March and April. In addition to seeing the sights in these countries there were family reasons for travelling to the sub continent. Our grandson was working in Nepal and Sheila's mother had lived in Agra for some years as a child in the 1920s.

NEPAL

On the 19th March 2013 we boarded an Ethiad flight to Abu Dhabi and on to Kathmandu. Abu Dhabi airport was a kaleidoscope of nations, clean, efficient and wealthy. The palm Islands were visible from the air. The flights were comfortable with staff that cared for passengers and after 14 hours we landed in Kathmandu. The city was similar to South Lebanon after an incursion. Buildings half complete, streets being repaired, shops downstairs and living quarters above. The biggest impact was seeing the city's population, there are 3.2 million cheerful people living in Kathmandu almost as many people as live in Ireland. The people were friendly and made visitors welcome. Due to the dust and fumes everyone wears face masks to filter the air and contrary to popular opinion the streets are not full of hippies high on whatever.

Our first few days went on sight- seeing and we visited many temples. The journeys by car were hair-raising as the roads were in various stages of repair. The sights and scenery in the Kathmandu valley are fabulous. There is a large variety of sights as the area was traversed by many nations on route to India and the Far East.

We visited the Monkey Temple in Kathmandu, so called because there are holy monkeys living in the north-west parts of the temple.



The Tibetan name for the site means 'Sublime Trees' for the many varieties of trees found on the hill. For the Buddhist Newars, the original Nepali residents, Swayambhunath occupies a central position; it is probably the most sacred among Buddhist pilgrimage sites. For Tibetans and followers of Tibetan Buddhism, it is second only to Boudhanath.



In the centre of Kathmandu is the Dubar square home to numerous temples and holy sights' of both the Buddhist and Hindu faiths. This area is where all major festivals take place. We were there for the "Holi" festival where everyone throws water and coloured powder at each other so all day pink, green, yellow and red bodies walk around the city in similar coloured clothes.



Patan to the South of Kathmandu is one of the major cities of Nepal. It is best known for its rich cultural heritage, particularly its tradition of arts and crafts. As in most areas of Nepal pigeons abound and are considered sacred. They are fed by the locals to bring good luck.



On the second Wednesday of our visit we booked into the Everest flight, one of twelve planes that leave Kathmandu airport every morning to fly to the Himalayas and visit Mount Everest, the Earth's highest mountain with a peak at 8,848 metres (29,029 ft) above sea level. It is located in the Mahalangur section of the Himalayas. The mountain and the range attract many highly experienced mountaineers as well as capable climbers willing to hire professional guides (Sherpa's). The flight departs at first light, approx 0630hrs and heads north to the mountain range, the pilot then turns East and heads to Everest. With your ticket you get a brochure showing the Himalaya range and 8 of the highest mountains in the world which are in the area.



The passengers are limited in number to the number of windows on the plane; our flight had 16 people aboard. The first view is of a snow covered barrier set in a clear blue sky. As you travel along the range you see many signs of habitation in the valleys below. Its hard to believe that people live at those heights but they do. Some of our time was spent visiting a child's charity Just- One which is run by an Irishman Declan Murphy from Cork (where else). The organisation looks after street children helping them to re-enter mainstream Nepalese society. These children have left home to work and live on the streets where they can make more money than in their local villages. For more visit info@just-one.org



INDIA

The Golden Triangle is formed by the Indian cities of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

DELHI, NEW DELHI, CAPITAL OF INDIA



The street scenes in Delhi are exotic and varied. With a population of 22 million plus, this brings vividly to mind what the word teeming means. The city shows all the different facets of Indian life, from abject poverty to opulence. This city has many monuments dedicated to all the religions and historical eras.

At the centre of New Delhi stands the 42 m high **India Gate**, an "**Arc-de-Triomphe**" like archway in the middle of a crossroad. It commemorates the 70,000 Indian soldiers who lost their lives fighting for the British Army during the World War I.



During nightfall, India Gate is floodlit while the fountains nearby make a lovely display with coloured lights. Surrounding the imposing structure is a large expanse of green lawns, which are a popular picnic spot and a hive of cricket activity.

AGRA

Probably the most famous of Indian cities due to the Taj Mahal, Agra was an important stop on our journey. Sheila's mother lived in Agra in the 1920s. She went to school in St Anthony's College, Agra. We visited the college and relived some of her life there.



The Taj Mahal is a white marble mausoleum in Agra. It was built by the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan to honour his favourite wife Mumtaz Mahal. The Taj Mahal is widely recognized as "the jewel of Muslim art in India and one of the universally admired masterpieces of the world's heritage". In 1983, the Taj Mahal became a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The white dome of the monument is the most recognised component of the Taj Mahal, it is actually an integrated complex of structures. The construction began around 1632 and was completed around 1653, employing thousands of artisans and craftsmen.



JAIPUR

We travelled on from Agra and spent some days in a safari park looking for tigers which we heard but never saw. We then continued overland across northern India where we saw vast areas under cultivation. Due to its temperate climate, the temperature only gets up to 35C, the area is the main grain growing area in India.

We were housed in a 'modest' 3 star hotel which used to house a Shah. (View of his roof garden)



Our visit in the area includes a trip on an elephant up into the Rajasthan Fort and tours of the city's temples. The Palace quarter encloses the sprawling Hawa Mahal palace complex, formal gardens, and a small lake. Nahargarh Fort, which was the residence of the King Sawai Jai Singh II, crowns the hill in the northwest corner of the old city. The observatory, Jantar Mantar, is one of the wonders of the age. The city was the location where the comedy-drama film, The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel was set and filmed.



Finally back to Delhi for the return journey to Dublin. The sights were amazing but the overriding impression was of the millions of bright, cheerful and happy people.



Departure of Long Serving Excom Members

Comdr C. O'Donnell	-	NS Rep
Comdt Peter Dunne	-	E Bde Rep
Col Mick Lucy	-	E Bde Rep

Have retired from the EXCOM after many years of devoted service to ARCO. We wish them all the best in the future and good health in the coming years.

Welcome to ARCO's New Members:

Lt Col Andrew Richardson	Lt Col John Egan
Comdt Michael Geraghty	Lt Cdr Ronan Boyle
Comdt Jeremiah Crowley	Comdt Kieran Herbert
Lt Col Joseph Scanlon	Lt Col Michael Carroll
Capt Paula O'Riordan	Col Declan Carbery
Comdt John O'Callaghan	

Deceased Officers

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-Anamacha

Our condolences to the families and friends of those comrades who passed away since our last newsletter.

M.G. Patrick J. Carroll	15 August 2012
Capt Mary J. O'Sullivan Macklin	12 September 2012
Lt Col Brian Hardwick	26 November 2012
Capt Richard Conron	2 January 2013
Col Denis Byrne	3 January 2013
Col Terence O'Brien	11 January 2013
Comdt Seamus Coughlan	9 February 2013
Capt Jack Jones	9 February 2013
Lt Cdr Eugene Furness	26 February 2013
Capt Karl Dunleavy	27 February 2013
Lt Col J. P. Duggan	10 March 2013
Comdt Jerh Brennan	17 March 2013
Fr Ronnie Neville	19 March 2013
Lt Col John Rigney	19 March 2013

Air Corps Commissioning December 2012



An Cliaomh Gaisciochta

Lt Paul McDermott, Air Corps is pictured receiving An Cliaomh Gaisciochta from Brig Gen L. MacNamee (Retd), President, ARCO. The award took place at Baldonnell. Also present were Lt Gen S. McCann, COS, Mr A. Shatter, TD, Minister for Defence, and Brig Gen P. Fry, GOC, Air Corps.

Army Commissioning January 2013



An Cliaomh Gaisciochta

Lt Stephen Cunningham is pictured receiving An Cliaomh Gaisciochta from Brig Gen L. MacNamee (Retd), President, ARCO. He is a son of Maireid and Domnick of Harolds Cross, Dublin. The ceremony took place at the DFTC, Curragh on 25 January 2013.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The EXCOM are actively involved in representing the associations concerns regarding the provisions of the PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS (SINGLE SCHEME) AND REMUNERATION BILL 2011. Due to the ongoing discussions a report will be held until the AGM and the next newsletter. Updates are posted regularly on

our website at www.iarco.info

The newsletter is issued in Spring and Autumn. Articles or items of interest are always welcome. If you have something to contribute please send it to the editor at brianandsheila@eircom.net or post to Col B. O'Connor (Retd) 92 The Paddocks, Naas, Co. Kildare.