

# RETIRED AIR CORPS PILOT ON FUNDRAISING MISSION FOR CANCER SANCTUARY CENTRE

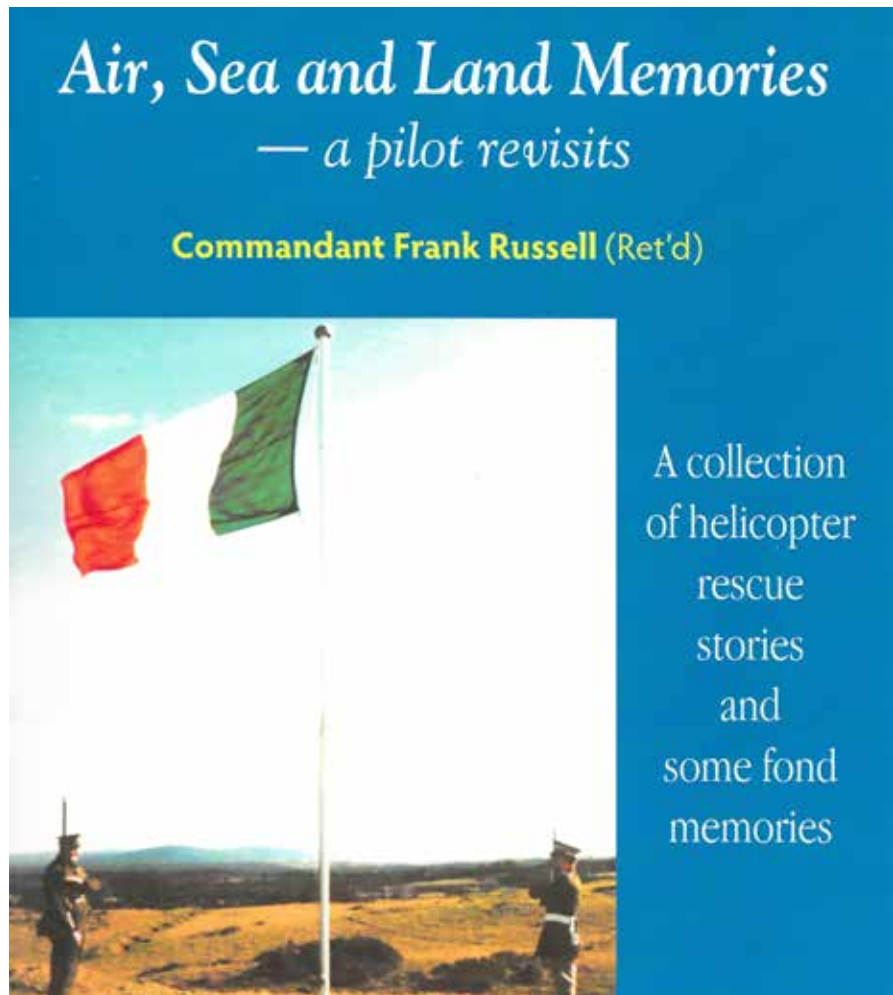
A collection of helicopter rescue stories and photographs, covering a career that spans nearly 50 years as a Search and Rescue pilot in the Irish Air Corps, are included in a new book 'Air, Sea and Land Memories – a pilot revisits' by retired Army Comdt Frank Russell, which has been published to raise funds for a cancer sanctuary centre in Co. Westmeath.

In August 1972 Frank Russell, then a young Irish Air Corps Lieutenant, set off on his first search and rescue mission. Little did he know that his first time flying a real mission as a helicopter pilot was almost to become his last.

The task for Frank and his crew on setting off from Casement Aerodrome, near Dublin, was to assist in the rescue of two French sailors reported overboard from their trawler near Inishshark Island, off Cleggan, Co. Galway. What happened next is recounted in the opening chapter of his new book entitled 'Air, Sea and Land Memories – a pilot revisits'.

During that first mission Frank recounts that upon arriving at the scene, they spotted the two sailors stranded on top of a large rock near the cliff face. Unable to make a normal rescue due to the proximity of the cliffs to the rock, it was necessary to approach backwards, with Frank as the pilot being directed by a crew member. Although wet and exhausted both French sailors were physically uninjured and were flown back to their trawler.

Frank also did a tour of duty with the UN Truce Supervisory organisation based in Damascus and Jerusalem. In 1995 he moved to the Accident Investigation Unit in the Department of Transport where he stayed until his



The book's cover photograph (published in a commemorative supplement to mark the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising in *The Sunday Press* in 1966) shows 20-year-old Frank Russell in his No.1 Army Cadet Uniform (right) and Volunteer Sean Duffy in his original Irish Volunteer uniform both 'presenting arms' to the national flag at the Curragh, Co. Kildare.

retirement in 2009.

In 1998 he was diagnosed with neck cancer and in 2007 with prostate cancer. Both were successfully treated, despite being told in 1998 that he would be 'lucky to last two years' by a doctor. Originally from Blanchardstown in Dublin, the retired Army Commandant now lives in the Burren, near Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare.

#### LAZARUS COMMUNITY FORUM

Frank co-founded the Lakelands Area Retreat & Cancer Centre (LARCC) in 2002 – the only cancer support centre

that provides an adult residential programme in Ireland. Located at Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath, the LARCC Cancer Support Sanctuary endeavours to give emotional and psychological help to both people living with cancer and their supporters.

It provides a homely supportive environment where patients and family members can participate in a range of courses, obtain information and experience complementary therapies. Services include counselling, nursing support, a telephone helpline, breast care services, manual lymphatic



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Comdt Frank Russell (left) pictured with other members of the Dauphin Crew in 1986 – Capt Jim Corby, Sgt Eoin Sherry and Sgt Dick Sullivan.



Frank Russell, then a young Irish Air Corps Lieutenant, set off on his first search and rescue mission in August 1972.

drainage therapy, bereavement support and pamper days.

Listening to cancer patients on social occasions during their stay on the LARCC Residential programme gave Frank the idea for an online community forum, in order to open doors otherwise shut to ordinary cancer patients to express their thoughts and feelings on their condition.

The Lazarus Community Forum on the centre's website [www.cancersupport.ie](http://www.cancersupport.ie) also enables cancer patients to share their stories in order to help others to cope with the diagnosis, treatment and recovery process.

Since the Cancer Support Sanctuary was established, over 20,000 individual sessions of support and telephone counselling have been delivered by the team. A registered charity, the centre is mainly funded through donations and contributions from the public.

The book, which aims to raise funds for the centre at Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath, is available from Hayes Print Publishing in Ennistymon, Co. Clare. Phone: 065-7071125 or email [info@hayesprint.ie](mailto:info@hayesprint.ie). The book costs €20 plus postage.



For further information on the LARCC Cancer Sanctuary Centre visit [www.cancersupport.ie](http://www.cancersupport.ie).