

‘Fancy the Royal Irish captured Moore Street’

Towards the end of March 1916, Michael had finished his six weeks training course at the Trinity College Officer Training Corps and was sent for further training to Ballykinlar, Co. Down. For Michael and his fellow trainees, the wooden billets at Ballykinlar were a far cry from the comforts of a plush hotel in the centre of Dublin. On 18 April, Michael began a process of constant letter writing to family and friends. He wrote to his younger brother Bernard who had just made his First Confession. Michael was pleased to hear the news that young Bernard was going to become a soldier. Not British soldier, but, as all first confesseees are told, a soldier of Christ.¹

Officers Company, Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down. April 18th 1916.

Dear Bernard,

I was very pleased to hear from Mother that you have made your First Confession and still more pleased to hear that you are going to become a great soldier by making your First Holy Communion. I will see you I hope on Thursday next as I am getting a few days leave. I suppose you have grown quite a big chap since I saw you last. Have you lost all your chilblains yet.... I hope to be able to bring up my rifle and bayonet to show them to you and also a few other arms of destruction used in this war.... Please remember me to Mother Bridgid and other nuns. Your fond brother Michael.

Michael spent Easter week 1916 in Carrickhill with his mother and the rest of his family. On a rainy Easter Sunday morning, Michael left Carrickhill to return to Ballykinlar. He got the Great Northern train from Amiens Street in Dublin and arrived back in camp in the early hours of Easter Monday morning and consequently missed the beginning of the Easter Rising in Dublin by one day. Had he been in Dublin, he would have been called up. He wrote to his mother on Tuesday 25 April.²

Officers Company, Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down. April 25th 1916.

Dear Mother,

I arrived here quite safe about 1:00 o'clock on Monday morning. We stopped in Newry and had supper with a fellow called Frank, his father is a Veterinary Surgeon there. Do you know who has just got a Commission in the R.A.M.C - Willie O'Neill, theson. I heard there was a great racket in Dublin with the Sinn Feiners and that there was some damage done to the Post Office.

¹ Ibid.Letter from Michael Wall to Bernard Wall 18 April 1916.

² Ibid.Letter from Michael Wall to his mother 25 April 1916.

I have not seen any papers yet so I cannot say that it is true. It poured rain all the way back on Sunday from Drogheda and it is still raining.... When are you going to the opera. Write and tell me if it was any good. I am sending a few cigarette pictures, I suppose Bernard will be pleased to have them. Do you know what you might do - send me on every Saturday night's Herald as they publish the Roll of Honour of the different schools. Must close now. Give my love to Auntie and all at C.H. I remain, your fond son, Michael.

Please excuse scribble as I have a bad pen.

Officers Company
Ballykinlar Camp
Co. Down.

April 15th 1916.

Dear Bernard.

I was very pleased to hear from Mother that you have made your First Confession and still more pleased to hear that you are going to become a great soldier by making your First Holy Communion. I will see you I hope on Thursday next as I am getting a few days leave. I suppose you have grown quite a big chap since I saw you last. Have you lost all your chilblains yet? I hope you have. How is Duncan? I expect you and he are as thick as cream by this. I hope to be able to bring up my rifle and bayonet to show them to you and also a few other arms of destruction used in this war. There is very little news down here to tell anybody but I will tell you all about camp life when I see you. Please remember me to Mother Bridget & the other nuns.

I remain,
Your fond brother
Michael.

Michael's letter to his brother Bernard from Ballykinlar Training Camp, Co. Down dated 18 April 1916.

Officers Company
Ballykinlar Camp
Co. Down

April 25th 1916.

Dear Mother

I arrived here quite safe about 1.00.
on Monday morning. We stopped in Newry and
had supper with a fellow called ~~no~~ Marks,
his father is a Veterinary Surgeon there. Do you
know who has just got a commission in the
R. A. M. C. - Willie O'Neill the father son. He
travelled down on the train with us and I
think he went to Belfast. I hear there was a
great racket in Dublin with the Sinn Féiners
and that there was some damage done to the
post office. I have not seen any papers yet
so I cannot say that it is true. It poured
rain all the way back on Sunday from
Belfast and it is still raining. I never saw
such rain and this place is in a queer state
of mud & water. Cyril and Bernard I am
sure must be very downhearted. When are

you going to the opera. Write and tell
me if it was any good. I am sending a few
cigarette pictures I suppose Bernard will
be pleased to have them. Do you know
what you might do - send me on ~~every~~ every
Saturday night's Herald as they publish
the Roll of Honour of the different schools. Hurst
does not. Give my love to Auntie & all at C. H.

I remain
Yours fond son.
Michael.

Please excuse scribble as I have a bad pen.

Michael's letter to his mother from Ballykinlar Training Camp, Co. Down dated 25 April 1916.

At the time of writing his letter, like many of the people of Dublin, the rising came as a surprise and of no great importance to Michael. It is interesting to note that his reference to the rising came as item number three in his letter, i.e. after the *supper with Frank* and news about *Willie O'Neill obtaining a commission in the R.A.M.C.* However, again reflecting the general change of public attitude when the full scale of the rising was realised a week or so later, the event became item number one in his next letter home and his ambivalent attitude had changed.³

Officers Company, Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down. 6th April 1916.

(Note. Michael dated this letter the 6th of April in error. He more than likely should have dated it the 26th April 1916.)

Dear Mother,

I hope this letter finds you all well and safe at Carrickhill. Wasn't it a terrible week. I hope Auntie has not sustained any damage as I saw the paper that there was an outbreak at Swords but whether it is true or not I cannot say. I got back to camp too soon. I wish I had been in Dublin. It would have been great. Fancy the Royal Irish captured Moore Street under Col. Owens. One of our officers was killed - Lieut. Ramsey. I am sure Mrs Clifford must have been in a terrible state. About six hundred of the Rifles left here on the Tuesday after Easter and they held the railway embankment at Fairview. Have you been to see poor old Dublin yet. There are a good many of our fellows gone up to Dublin for the weekend armed to the teeth with revolvers. Of course they had to motor up.

The bugle sounded the alarm Saturday morning at one o'clock and we had to turn out as quickly as possible. I managed to get out in five minutes with my clothes on anyway and a rifle and bayonet. Some fellows ran out in their pyjamas. Then we were served out with fifty rounds of ammunition each and we were told that a party of Sinn Feiners had left Newry and were coming on to Newcastle with the intention of attacking the Camp. Then we started off and posted pickets and sentry groups and barricaded all the roads. That brought us up to 6:30 a.m. Then we had breakfast after which we were to fall in at eight o'clock. This gave us an hours rest and we all set to sharpening our bayonets on the door step. I have got an edge on mine like a razor.

³ Ibid. Letter from Michael Wall to his mother 26 April 1916 from Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down..

At eight o'clock, a portion of our platoon went off to dig a trench overlooking Dundrum and my party were sent out with wire cutters and gloves and we put up barbed wire entanglements and then occupied the trenches. We were relieved at 8:00 p.m. but had to stand by so I was up for two nights and days. But we were sorely disappointed as the beggars never came out at all. Of course we were confined to camp up to Wednesday last and now we can go about freely enough. As soon as the train service is restored I will try and go up. I would like to see Dublin. I suppose Joe barricaded the house and had his air gun ready. What about Cyril and Bernard ? Have they gone back to school yet. I saw Mrs Fogarty of Artane House in Newcastle on Wednesday and there are a couple of fellows here very keen on Miss Fogarty. I hope this letter will reach you all right, I'm sure it will as I see the Rotunda Rink is made into a post office. I must close now but I hope to hear from you soon. Give my love to all at Carrickhill and kindest regards to Auntie. I remain, your fond son, Michael.

Officers Company
Ballykinlar Camp
Co. Down.

April 6th 1916.

Dear Mother

I hope this letter finds you all well and safe at Enniskill. What a terrible week. I hope Auntie has not sustained any damage as I saw in the paper that there was an outbreak at Swords but whether it is true or not I cannot say. I got back to camp too soon. I wish I had been in Dublin. It would have been great. Stoney the Royal Irish captured three Steiners and two. One of our officers was killed - Lt. Ramsay. - I am sure Mr. Blifford must have been in a terrible state. About six hundred of the Rifles left here on the Tuesday after Easter and they held the Railway embankment at Fairview. Have you been to see poor old Dublin yet. There ~~was~~ are a good many of our fellows gone up to Dublin for the week end armed to the teeth with revolvers. I saw one they had to motor up. The bugle sounded the

alarm Saturday morning at one o'clock and we had to turn out as quickly as possible. I managed to get out in five minutes with all my clothes on my way. As and a rifle and bayonet. Some fellows ran out in their pyjamas. Then we were served out with fifty rounds of ammunition each and we were told that a party of Sinn Feiners had left ~~the~~ the O'Henry and were coming on to Newcastle with the intention of attacking the camp. Then we started off and posted pickets and sentry groups and barricaded all the roads. That brought us up to 6.30 a.m. Then we had breakfast after which we were to fall in at eight o'clock. This gave us an hour's rest and we all set to sharpening our bayonets on the stone step. I have got an edge on mine like a razor. At eight o'clock a portion of our platoon went off to dig trenches overlooking Dundrum and my party were served out with wire cutters and gloves and we put up barbed wire entanglements and then



Group of Officer Cadets at Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down in April 1916.

Michael is the third man standing in from the left hand side.

On Easter Monday 24 April 1916, the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment were stationed at Richmond Barracks in Inchicore, Dublin. The battalion was under the command of Lieut.-Colonel R.L. Owens. The main function of the 3rd Royal Irish was to train new recruits for the regiment at the front in Flanders and France. The participation of the 3rd Royal Irish in putting down the rebellion of 1916 is recorded by the historian of the Royal Irish (18th Foot), Brig. General Stannus Geoghegan C.B. On the morning of 28 April when the rebellion had died down, a party from the Royal Irish under Major Morrogh and Company Sgt. Major Banks, succeeded in capturing the Republican flag from the roof of the General Post Office.⁴

Feelings about and reactions to the Easter Rising among the thousands of Irish men serving in the British Army at the time varied from surprise, anger, fear for the safety of their families in Ireland, to disillusionment, apathy, scorn and sympathy for the rebels and reaction in the form of retribution and revenge. The rising also created doubts and uncertainty in the minds of some in the army and government about the loyalty and commitment of Irish troops to the war. The feelings and reaction expressed by Michael Wall were typical of the feelings expressed by many of the Irish men at the front.

News about the rising in Dublin was slow to reach the front lines in Flanders, France and beyond. The authorities did their best to contain the news.⁵ The rising was a great surprise to the Irish men at the front. Michael Wall was surprised and delighted to learn that his regiment had taken Moore Street from the rebels. He told his mother that he was 'sharpening' his bayonet ready for any encounter with 'the beggars' in Sinn Féin. This young, upper middle class Catholic Irish man, educated by the Christian Brothers in St. Joseph's and O'Connell's School in Dublin, was totally against the Rising and had he had his way, would have given the 'beggars' a taste of his sharpened bayonet. Private George Soper was a signaller serving with the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers in France. Having read about the rising in the Irish newspapers, he wrote to Miss Monica Roberts in Dublin on 20 May 1916. 'I was more than surprised when I heard of the Rebellion in Ireland and I could scarcely believe it until I read it in the papers...'⁶ The Irish serving overseas heard about the rising in various ways. While serving with the Royal Artillery in Mesopotamia, Tom Barry found out about the rising from a bulletin posted in his unit's orderly room.

⁴ Geoghegan, S. *The Campaigns and History of the Royal Irish Regiment 1900 to 1922* vol. II (Cork: Schull Books, 1997). Pp. 102 - 104. For many years the captured flag was kept in the Imperial War Museum in London as a kind of battle trophy the Royal Irish had captured from the rebels. Soon after it was taken down from the GPO it was photographed being held up by a group of officers, one of whom was a young Kerry man named Capt. Dick Burke from Dingle in Co. Kerry. Dick won the Military Cross at the Battle of Messines Ridge in June 1917 and after the war lived in Killester with his wife and two daughters. In 1966, the 50th anniversary of the Rising, in an act of reconciliation, the flag was returned to Ireland by the Imperial War Museum and is now on display in the National Museum of Ireland in Kildare Street, Dublin.

⁵ Denman. p.142.

⁶ "Monica Roberts Collection," (Dublin: RDFA Archive). Letter from Pte. George Soper 2nd RDFG to Miss Roberts 20 May 1916. These letters sent to Miss Roberts were donated to the archive of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association in April 2005 by Monica's daughter, Mrs Mary Shackelton.

He found the news, ‘a rude awakening.’⁷ *The Irish Times* continued to print during the rising. When other papers resumed printing, they reported that Irish troops felt betrayed and angered by the rising. It could be argued that Irish newspapers, particularly *The Irish Times* may have had some influence over the men’s negative attitude towards the rising and the Irish volunteers. Some of the nationalist newspapers gave their support to the Irish regiments for putting down the rising. On 5 May 1916, *The Freeman’s Journal* sang their praises. ‘Not regiments of professional soldiery of the old stamp, but reserves of the Irish Brigade who had rallied to the last call of the Irish leader, true Irish Volunteers...defending their city against the blind self-devoted victims of the Hun.’⁸ Press reports emphasised that nationalists in the trenches felt let down. On hearing the news, Lieutenant Patrick Hemphill speculated on 29 April. ‘I suppose they’ll hang the ringleaders. It’s what traitors deserve. It appears to have been got up by Roger Casement.’⁹ German newspapers were aware of the Dublin rebellion and this news travelled to the German lines at the front.

They raised placards opposite the Irish lines informing them of the rebellion in Dublin. One read: ‘Irishmen! Heavy uproar in Ireland. English guns are firing on your wives and children 1st May 1916’.¹⁰ The placards asked the Irish to desert, little heed was paid to the German enticements. The official war diarist of the 9th Royal Munster Fusiliers recorded a revenge taunt on 21 May when his battalion hung up an effigy of Roger Casement in full view of the German trenches. Their war diary recorded that the effigy ‘appeared to annoy the enemy and was found riddle with bullets.’¹¹ Anger followed surprise which turned to retribution. Michael Wall’s anger turned to retribution by wanting to have the rebels sent out to the fire step on the front line where he was. Almost a year after the rising, he reckoned, ‘those Sinn Feiners should be sent out here to do a few nights on the fire step, I will guarantee it will cool their air down.’¹² Private. Christy Fox of the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers felt the same way as Michael Wall. He remembered the poverty in Dublin following the strikes in 1913 during the lockout. Writing to Miss Monica Roberts in Dublin, Fox noted: ¹³

I am glad to hear all the trouble is over in Dublin. I would like to have a few of those rebels out here; I can tell you I would give them 2 Oz. of lead. But in ways the poor fools, that’s what I would call them, were dragged into it by Connolly and a few more of his colleagues. Deed (sic) I know them very well, the lot of robbers. I remember the strike in Dublin, look at the way Dublin was left poverty stricken that time.

⁷ Denman. p.142.

⁸ Ibid. p.142.

⁹ Leonard, Jane. "The Reactions of Irish Officers in the British Army to the Easter Rising of 1916 " in *Facing Armageddon. The First World War Experienced*, ed. Cecil H and Liddle P H (London: Lee Cooper, 1996). p.262.

¹⁰ Denman. p.129.

¹¹ Ibid. p.130.

¹² "Wall, 2nd Lieut Michael 6th Royal Irish Regiment." Letter from Michael Wall to his mother 14 April 1917.

¹³ "Monica Roberts Collection." Letter from Pte. Christy Fox, 2nd RDF, 12 May 1916.

It is the same click that has brought on all that destruction on our dear old country. However they are put down now and I only have one hope and that is I hope they are down forever.

Such sentiments were common amongst the ranks of the 2nd RDF in France. Writing to Miss Roberts on 11 May 1916, Pte. Joseph Clarke told her what he and many of his comrades felt about the rising in Dublin.¹⁴

I was sorry to hear of the rebel rising in Ireland, but I hope by the time this letter reaches you, the condition will have changed and things normal again. There is no one more sorry to hear of the Rising than the Irish troops out here, it worries them more than I can explain. Their whole cry is, if they could only get amongst them for a few days, the country would not be annoyed with them anymore. Some of the men in this battalion is very uneasy about the safety of their people and one or two poor fellows have lost relatives in this scandalous affair. We just have had some men returned off leave and they tell us that Dublin is in ruins. It is awfully hard to lose one's life out here without being shot at home. The Sherwood's lost heavily but I expect the Rebels got the worst of the encounter. We of the 2nd Battalion, the Dublins, would ask for nothing better that the rebels should be sent out here and have an encounter with some of their 'so called Allies', the Germans. I do not think anything they have done will cause any anxiety to England or her noble cause. We will win just the same. These men are pro-German pure and simple, and no Irish men will be sorry when they get justice meted out to them, which, in my opinion, should be death by being shot.

Edward Heapey, a sergeant with the 8th Dublins also wrote to Miss Roberts and expressed similar views. 'I wish I had my way with the Sinn Feiners. I would put every one of them out here and make them do some real good fighting and make them realise what war is like.'¹⁵ Men in France were worried about the safety of their families back in Ireland. Private Andrew Lockhart of the 11th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, a battalion in the 36th(Ulster) Division, was worried that the Irish volunteers would cause trouble around his home farm near Bruckless in Co. Donegal. 'I was glad to hear that things are getting quiet in Ireland, had you any trouble with them at home.'¹⁶ Private Christy Fox was very worried he had not received any letters from home following the rising. Since he lived near the Linenhall Barracks, he was worried if any of his people were caught up in the fighting. By the end of May 1916 he had received word that all was well.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid. Letter from Pte. Joseph Clarke, 2nd RDF, 11 May 1916.

¹⁵ Ibid. Letter from Sgt. Edward Heapey, 2nd RDF, 18 July 1917..

¹⁶ "Lockhart, Private Andrew, 11th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers," (Dublin: RDFA Archive). 18 May 1916.

¹⁷ "Monica Roberts Collection." Letter from Pte. Christy Fox, 2nd RDF, 12 May 1916.

I'm glad to be able to tell you I have got news from home, all my people are quiet safe. There was a few people killed where I live. Those two men that were dug up in the cellar in 177 North King Street, I live in the house facing it at the corner of Linenhall Street. There were four men killed in a house only three doors from me at 27 North King Street, I live in 24 when I'm at home and I knew one of them well.(Who killed them, rebel or soldier?)

In the weeks and months after the rising and its impact had become apparent, the rising had created a conscientious dilemma resulting in disillusionment in the minds of Irish men serving at the front. Nationalist officers in particular believed the rising was a stab in their back and damaged the prospects of Home Rule. Captain Stephen Gwynn, a nationalist MP serving with the 6th Connaught Ranges told his fellow Nationalist MP, a dejected Major Willie Redmond MP, who incidentally was Michael Wall's commanding officer in the 6th Royal Irish, 'I shall never forget the men's indignation. They felt they had been stabbed in the back.'¹⁸ Gwynn's subsequent speeches to the House of Commons and his letters to the press were bitter about the damage done to Home Rule.¹⁹ Redmond had been on leave in England at the time of the rising, in turn wrote to Stephen Gwynn. 'Don't imagine that what you and I have done is going to make us popular with our people. On the contrary, we shall both be sent to the right about at the first general election.' The fighting in Dublin devastated him too. Redmond was extremely upset on hearing the news. It was Patrick Pearse's appeal to the 'Gallant German allies' that particularly shocked him.²⁰ The rising had undermined his political life's work also. His wife wrote that, 'often since the rebellion he said he thought he could best serve Ireland by dying.'²¹ Tom Kettle too was aghast with the rising. He denounced the venture as madness. He saw it as destructive of what he had striven for throughout his adult life. The death of his brother-in-law added to his disillusioned and depressed state after the rising.²² Robert Barton, a Wicklow landowner, was gazetted from the Inns of Court OTC to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers just as the rebellion began. He too became disillusioned with the war and grew in sympathy for the Sinn Fein movement. By June 1916 he felt that, 'everyone is a Sinn Feiner now...Ireland will never again be as friendly disposed to England as she was at the outbreak of the war.'²³ One Anglo-Irish officer, noted: 'There were far too many Dubliners fighting with Irish regiments, in France and elsewhere, for the population to feel that this was the right moment to embarrass England.'²⁴

¹⁸ Denman. p.144.

¹⁹ Leonard. p.264.

²⁰ Denman, Terence. *A Lonely Grave - the Life and Death of William Redmond* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995). p.97.

²¹ Ibid. p.123.

²² Lyons, John B. *The Enigma of Tom Kettle* (Dublin: The Glendale Press, 1983). p.284.

²³ Leonard. p.261. In December 1918, Barton was elected Sinn Fein MP for West Wicklow and was one of the signatories to the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921

²⁴ Jeffrey, K. *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). p.45.

The knock-on effect of the executions added to the feelings of disillusionment and feelings of self-doubt that emerged amongst the ranks. Some men questioned whether they had made the right choice in joining the British Army. Men like 2nd Lieut. O'Connor Dunbar of the Royal Army Service Corps. He was a friend and colleague of Monk Gibbon who wrote about Dunbar's participation in the gun-running at Howth and was a Redmondite National Volunteer. Gibbon stated that, 'it had taken the Easter executions to make Dunbar begin to doubt the wisdom of the step he had taken.'²⁵ Tom Kettle was also distressed by the executions; he was friendly with several of those who were shot. His wife Mary and Francis Skeffington's wife Hanna were sisters. The murder of Francis Sheehy Skeffington deeply effected Kettle. His murderer, Capt. Bowen-Colthurst and Kettle wore the same uniform. Kettle too began to doubt his vocation.²⁶ Writing in 1970 about 'that affair in April 1916' and the executions in particular, William Mount, an ex-officer with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and friend of Sean Heuston, stated, 'there were times when I wondered if we were on the right side. That was a cowardly, unforgivable thing to do.'²⁷ John Lucy of the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles was anguished by the news of the rising. He noted that, 'my fellow soldiers had no great sympathy with the rebels but they got fed up when they heard of the execution of the leaders.'²⁸ These sentiments were published twenty years after the Armistice and were not an attempt to exonerate him.²⁹ The poet Francis Ledwidge was deeply troubled by the executions in Dublin. 'Yes, poor Ireland is always in trouble', he wrote to an Ulster protestant friend on the day the first leaders were executed. 'Though I am not a Sinn Feiner and you are a Carsonite, do your sympathies not go to *Cathleen ni Houlihan*? Poor MacDonagh and Pearse were two of my best friends and now they are dead, shot by England.'³⁰

Apathy too was a feeling expressed by some nationalist minded men who felt they could do little more but get on with the task in hand at the front. Lieut. Michael Fitzgerald serving in the Irish Guards noted. 'We were too preoccupied with what was in front of us and what we had to do...whatever might happen in Ireland after we'd gone we could do nothing about it. That was our attitude.'³¹ There were others who found the whole affair uninteresting. Anthony Brennan of the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment wrote in 1937. 'Although we were mildly interested, nobody took the thing very seriously.'³² The Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion Irish Guards was summoned to the War Office in June 1916 to discuss the political situation in Ireland.

²⁵ Dungan, Myles. *They Shall Grow Not Old* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997). p.31.

²⁶ Lyons. p.285.

²⁷ Leonard. p.266.

²⁸ Denman. *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War*. p.143.

²⁹ Satterthwaite, D. "How Did the Easter Rising Affect the Nationalism of Irish Soldiers Serving in the British Army During the Great War," (Oxford: The Queen's College, Spring 2006). p.14.

³⁰ Jeffrey. p.54.

³¹ Dungan, Myles. *Irish Voices from the Great War* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995). p.53.

³² Satterthwaite. p.36.

The Irish Guards were, and still are, the senior Irish regiment in the British Army and were recruited from all over Ireland although strongly rural and Catholic in its composition. The officer of the Guards summoned noted that the rising made 'no impact on the men of the battalion.'³³ (85)

For Unionist officers and men of other ranks of Unionist persuasion, particularly from Ulster, feelings and reaction to the rising fell along predictable lines. The rising disrupted the war effort and was a useful reminder of nationalist treachery. At the time of the rising, Basil Brooke, later Viscount Brookeborough, was a regular officer in Dublin. He was on special leave as his wife was having a baby. He felt ashamed, 'for his country, for his regiment and for those who had died in the war.'³⁴ Major Frank Crozier serving with the Royal Irish Rifles in France, a regiment that recruited mainly in loyalist areas of Belfast, found very little talk of the rising amongst his men of the events in Dublin.³⁵ And yet there was concern shown amongst some of the Rifles. The trench journal of the 14th Royal Irish Rifles, the pre-War UVF Young Citizen Volunteer battalion wrote in its editorial comment. 'Speaking for ourselves, we'd rather have seen a little less mercy to some of the rebels...what kind of death do those insurgent dogs deserve...Ugh! Doesn't it make your blood boil lads.'³⁶ One man who would later become a Unionist MP for North Down, Lieut. Walter Smiles, serving with the Royal Naval Armoured Train, hoped that Carson would be appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland.³⁷

Whether unionist, nationalist or indifferent in political sentiment, there was a certain amount of sympathy and indeed solidarity expressed towards the Irish Volunteers by Irish men in the British army at the time of the rising. Nationalist officers in particular were keen to emphasise the sensitivity with which Irish regiments handled themselves in the rising when contrasted with the heavy-handed methods used by non-Irish units subsequently. Captain Eugene Sheehy, son of former Home Rule MP and brother-in-law of Tom Kettle, stressed the restraint with which his battalion, the 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, had conducted itself in the rising.³⁸ The 4th RDF was based in Templemore, Co. Tipperary and much like the 3rd Royal Irish, was a training battalion for both officers and men of other ranks prior to them being sent to the 1st and 2nd (Regular) RDF battalions in France and or Gallipoli. In April 1916, the 4th RDF had a battalion strength of 1,600 officers and men divided up into five companies. Some 85% of the new recruits were Roman Catholic and 15% were Protestant. In contrast however, about 70% of the officers were Protestant and 30% were Roman Catholic.³⁹

³³ Denman. *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War.* p.143.

³⁴ Leonard. p.259.

³⁵ Denman. *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War.* p.143.

³⁶ Bowman, T. *Irish Regiments in the Great War-Discipline and Morale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). p.127.

³⁷ Leonard. p.263.

³⁸ Ibid. p.260.

³⁹ "Dickson, Lieut 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers Diary," (Dublin: RDFA Archive, 1962).

One officer of the Leinster Regiment declined to command the firing party at the execution of Joseph Plunkett. He cited their childhood friendship and was excused his duty.⁴⁰ Robert Barton, spent the week in Richmond Barracks and was in charge of gathering prisoners' effects after their surrender. The prisoners found Barton sympathetic and helpful.⁴¹ One of the volunteers who was captured by the 3rd Royal Irish Regiment was Commandant W. J. Brennan-Whitmore, Director of Field Intelligence and Officer Commanding the North Earl Street area of the City. In his book *'Dublin Burning'*, Brennan described his treatment by the Royal Irish at Richmond Barracks:⁴²

At this time, the 18th Royal Irish Regiment was in occupation of Richmond Barracks. To my great surprise, we were not segregated and isolated. The members of the garrison were allowed to mix freely with us in the barrack room in which we were temporarily housed. We were not the only insurgent prisoners confined in this great military barrack and many of my men recognised and had a great powwow with city friends and acquaintances. I would have felt very much out of it and alone but that the Royal Irish was the territorial unit of County Wexford. I knew many of the soldiers and they knew me. We were received and treated with the greatest kindness by the NCO's and men of the 18th.

However, in contrast to Sheehy and Brennan-Whitmore's positive account on the handling of Irish volunteers by the 4th RDF and 3rd Royal Irish, there was an amount of hostility shown to the Irish Volunteers. Lieut. Arthur Killingley of the same 4th RDF presents a contradicting account. When they arrived at Kingsbridge Railway Station from Templemore, Killingley and his men came across a batch of Irish Volunteers who had been taken prisoner. His concerns and doubts about his men's attitude towards their fellow countrymen were soon answered. His men he noted, 'booted the prisoners with great gusto.'⁴³ Moreover, on Thursday afternoon 27 April, the Commanding Officer of the 4th RDF, Col. Meldon, issued special orders from the battalion headquarters at Broadstone Station to 'E' Company headquarters near the Richmond Hospital for an officer and machine gun crew to proceed to high ground on the North Circular Road, and, according to Major T.C.H. Dickson, from there to 'spray with machine gun fire Aughrim Street and Grangegorman districts. No reason was given but possibly rebel escapists were thought to be collecting.'⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Leonard. p.260.

⁴¹ Ibid. p.261.

⁴² Brennan-Whitmore, W.J. *Dublin Burning* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996). pp. 121-124.

⁴³ McCann, B P "The Diary of 2nd Lieut. Arthur V.G. Killingley. 'A' Company. 4th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers Easter Week, 1916," *The Irish Sword* Vol XX, no. 81 (Summer 1997). p.247.

⁴⁴ "Dickson, Lieut 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers Diary."

Dickson took a Maxim gun, a sergeant and two other men with him to carry out the order. Facing where the cattle market used to be on the North Circular Road in Dublin is a line of beautiful red bricked three story terraced houses known as Altona Terrace. At this point on the North Circular, i.e. at Altona Terrace, the road rises. Standing on the roof of one of these terraced houses, one had a panoramic view of the Grangegorman area, i.e. the target of Col. Weldon's order. Grangegorman was a very poor area of the Dublin's north west inner city with a myriad of narrow streets. The area was also synonymous for the mental hospital built in its midst. The hospital was then known as the Richmond Asylum. From the roof top of one of these houses on Altona Terrace, according to Dickson, the Dublins gave Grangegorman, 'a good spraying of about 1,000 rounds which must have broken several hundred slates and windows and kept everyone indoors for a while.'⁴⁵ It wasn't the first time the Dublin Fusiliers fired off a machine gun into civilian houses in their own city. On the same day, further on down their cordon line at the end of the North Circular Road at Dorset Street, in order to flush out snipers, Lieut. Killingley claimed that, 'a machine-gun of ours at the five cross-roads peppered a few suspected houses.'⁴⁶

Whether there were Irish Volunteers in the houses in Grangegorman or on the North Circular Road or not, firing a machine gun indiscriminately into and over civilian houses was a despicable and irresponsible thing to do. These accounts of the 4th RDF activities during the rising by Killingley and Dickson are in total contradiction to Sheehy's account of a restrained 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Killingley's account was a contemporaneous one. Sheehy's was written in hindsight in 1951 and it may well have suited him to present his regiment as being well behaved to the Irish Volunteers in the Ireland of the 1950s.

The variation of feelings expressed and actions taken by the Irish soldiers during the rising often led to an atmosphere of uncertainty about the loyalty of some Irish troops at political and command level. At political level, Colonel Maurice Moore, senior training officer in the National Volunteers noted in June 1916 that, 'all nationalists are Sinn Feiners in War Office eyes.'⁴⁷ At command level, concerns seemed to vary. High-ranking British officers in Dublin did not express such fears. General Maxwell, in his army order of 1 May 1916 commented favourably on the, 'Irish regiments that have so largely helped to crush this rising.' The CIGS, Robertson, agreed with Lord French, the then Commander-in-Chief Home Forces, that there was no evidence to doubt the dependability of the Irish troops.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ McCann. "The Diary of 2nd Lieut. Arthur V.G. Killingley. 'A' Company. 4th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers Easter Week, 1916."

⁴⁷ Denman. *A Lonely Grave - the Life and Death of William Redmond*. p.97.

Satterthwaite has suggested that there appeared ‘little to suggest that there was a widespread belief that following the Rising there was a concerted effort on behalf of the British military authorities to suppress or undermine the national identity of Irish units.’ The military command still had confidence in Irish units at the Front to fight.⁴⁸

And yet, at a lower level of command perhaps at battalion or brigade level, there were concerns amongst the officer corps of the Irish regiments, as to whether or not their Irish troops could be depended upon on in Dublin during the rising and indeed at the front in France after the rising. Like Michael Wall, Charles Duff had also just missed the rising. He went to England for officer training on Easter Monday from Fermanagh. He noted in his memoirs that he, ‘had joined the British Army as a volunteer in Dublin – to fight Germans’, presumably not to fight his fellow countrymen.⁴⁹ Arthur Killingley noted in his diary on 24 April during the rising. ‘We had a general discussion as to how men will behave if ordered to fire on their fellow countrymen.’⁵⁰ As has been stated, the 4th RDF did indeed fire on their fellow countrymen. Captain Stephen Gwynn noted that the 10th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who fought the Irish Volunteers at the Mendacity Building, included men who, ‘had been active leaders in the Howth gun running. It was not merely a case of Irishmen firing on their fellow countrymen: it was one section of the original Volunteers firing on another.’⁵¹

The Easter Rising was in fact the beginning of the Irish Civil War. Noel Drury, a unionist officer in the 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers experienced some of that similar doubt which had filtered down through the ranks even as far away as Ismalia in Egypt where he was stationed. He and his men liked to look at the aeroplanes but he found the pilots a bit standoff in their conversations. ‘They were very chary of letting us see much of the machines. Suppose they thought the Irish couldn’t be trusted.’⁵² Anthony Brennan’s unit in the 2nd Royal Irish Regiment was held out in the countryside for a few extra weeks, ‘to guard against any possible sympathetic reactions to affairs in Dublin.’⁵³ Even a year after the rising, there was concern at battalion level about the loyalty of Irish troops. In April 1917, the Roman Catholic Chaplain to the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles, Fr. Henry Gill S.J was asked by his commanding officer if he ‘thought it likely that any of the Irish would think of deserting and if it would be advisable to talk to the men.’ Fr. Gill noted in his diary:⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Satterthwaite. p.21.

⁴⁹ Leonard. p.261.

⁵⁰ McCann. "The Diary of 2nd Lieut. Arthur V.G. Killingley. ‘A’ Company. 4th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers Easter Week, 1916." p.247.

⁵¹ Leonard. p.260.

⁵² Dungan. *Irish Voices from the Great War*. p.32.

⁵³ Ibid. p.31.

⁵⁴ "Diary of Fr. Henry Gill S J ", Dublin. CHP 1/27. p.123.

It was, I suppose an aftermath of the trouble in Ireland a year before. I said that nothing could do greater harm than to suggest that any of the men were thought capable of treachery. As a matter of fact, no further step was taken. Later on when the attack (on Wijtschate) was over, it was discovered that a sergeant of an English regiment had given information to the enemy. We were free from anything of this kind.

By raising the question of their loyalty to either their regiment or the aims of the rebellion, Commandant W. J. Brennan-Whitmore exposed the dilemma many Irish men serving in the British Army found themselves in: ⁵⁵

I do not know personally if the statement in the second proclamation of the provisional government to the citizens of Dublin that Irish regiments in the British Army had refused to act against their fellow countrymen was founded on fact or mere rumour. What I do know is this. Many of the NCO's and men of the 18th Regiment were very dissatisfied that we had not given them a chance to join us. Practically all those whom I knew personally, and some I didn't know, came and unhesitatingly voiced that sentiment to me.

When I pointed out that there was nothing to prevent them seizing their barracks and sending us word to that effect, and that we could have given them every welcome, they replied that they had considered that plan several times but lacked any assurance that their help would be accepted. If it were not, then they would have been in the devil's own pickle they would have mutinied to no one's advantage, and would be shot to pieces.

I queried why they had not sought to contact the volunteers privately beforehand and thus find out whether their services would be welcome or not. They replied that they did not take all this volunteering and drilling seriously, that in fact they never once thought it would lead to a rebellion.

Oh, how often had I listened to that excuse all through Monday night and all day on Tuesday! In view of the antics of the Irish Parliamentary Party and their National Volunteers - most of whom had joined the British army - it was a reasonable point of view. But the numbers of nationally minded people in Ireland who did not take the Irish Volunteer movement seriously must have been extraordinary high.

⁵⁵ Brennan-Whitmore. Pp.121-124.

One clear impression left on my mind by these muttered confidences was that the 18th were boiling mad that they had not had a hand in the fighting. As several of them said, they had plenty of arms (of which we were pitifully short) and they would have made a tremendous difference to the quality of the fighting. And possibly to the final result.

Had we made any attempt to invest their barracks, they would have seized the barracks at once and joined us. Such is the unpredictable nature of these adventures in the realm of patriotism.

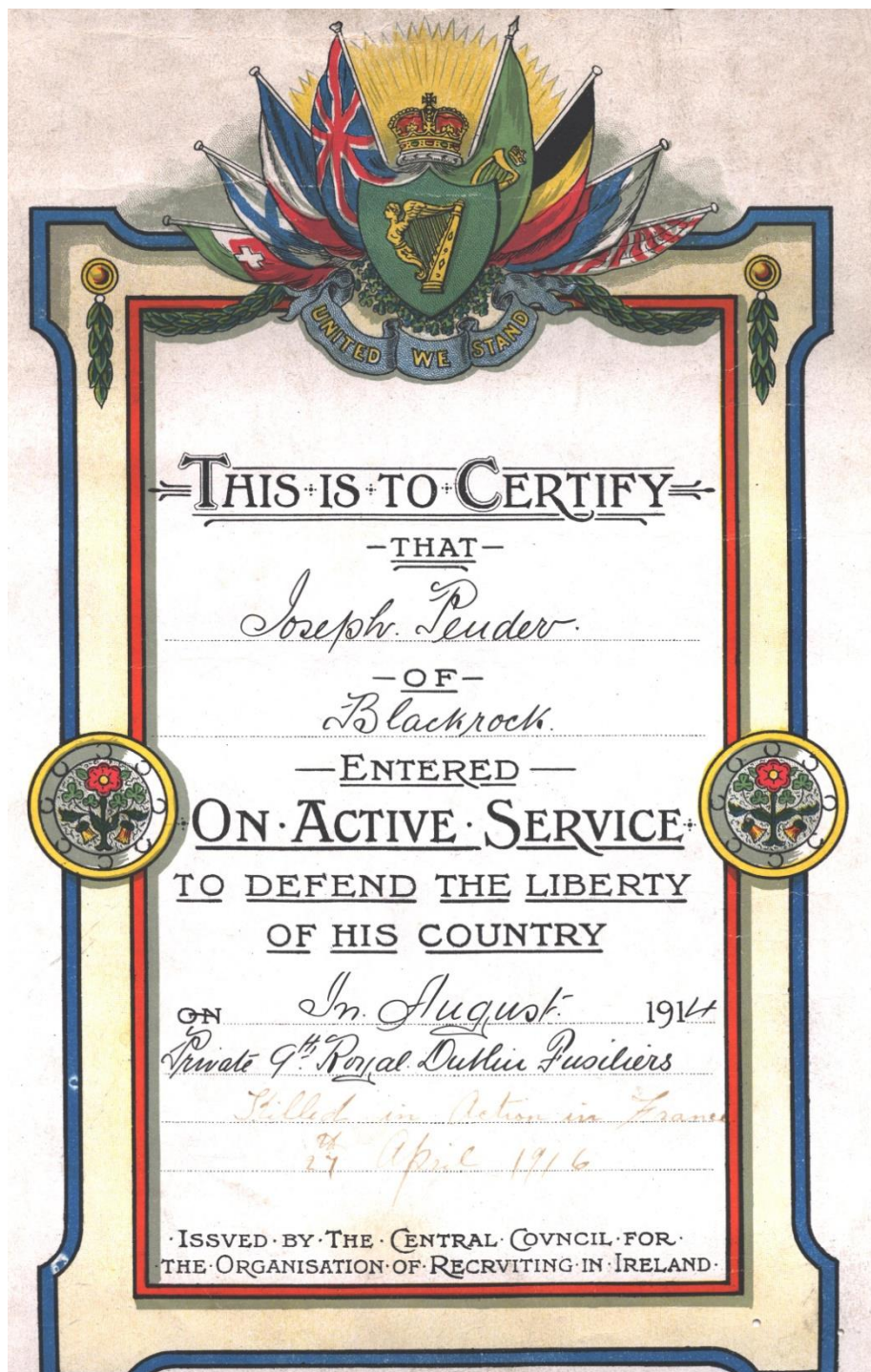
It must be pointed out, too, that all the soldiers in this regiment were not Wexford men, nor indeed Irishmen; there was a sprinkling of English, Scotch and Welsh. Neither were all the officers Wexford men. A number of them were, indeed, members of county families, but other nationalities were represented also. This added to the problem of nationally minded members. At any rate they fed us well and lent us shaving and toilet kits. For the first time in days I enjoyed the luxury of a shave and wash. In fact the troops were over anxious to do us every little kindness they could anticipate...

On the 30th of April, no less than 200 prisoners were evacuated from Richmond Barracks for internment in Knutsford Jail, England. On the 3rd of May, a further 308 prisoners - of whom I was one - were evacuated from Richmond Barracks for internment in Knutsford Jail. As we tramped and hobbled down the quays, under heavy escort, we were pelted by garbage and filthy epithets by the scum of the City. Doubtless, we presented a sorry spectacle to have so impudently challenged the might of the British empire. We had tried and lost and for us it appeared *vae victis* !.

Brennan-Whitmore's reference to the scum of the city, may be a bit unfair. It is true that the volunteers were treated with contempt by a section of women from the back streets of inner city Dublin. J.C Carrothers found it, 'pitiable to see some of the Sinns (sic) that have been captured by women in the back streets. They are all scratched and stabbed with hat pins.' Lieut. John Wilson-Lynch sent a vivid account of escort duty to his family in Galway. He stated the Sinn Fein prisoners, 'were a sad sight.'⁵⁶ I would offer one possible reason why some women from these back streets of Dublin pelted Brennan with rotten vegetables and other less savoury projectiles and stabbed others with their hair pins as described by J.C. Carrothers. On 27 April 1916, the Germans launched a gas attack over the Irish lines facing Hulluch north of Loos occupied at the time Irish battalions of the 16th (Irish) Division. There were 2,128 casualties as a result of the attack; approx. 538 were killed, the remainder were to suffer chronic lung and breathing conditions for the rest of their lives. Almost to the day one year previous on 25 April 1915, the

⁵⁶ Leonard. p.260.

1st RDF in Gallipoli and the 2nd RDF at Mouse Trap Farm and St. Julien north-east of Ypres, suffered appalling casualties and losses, both battalions were almost wiped out. April 1916 was the first anniversary of these losses and coupled with the tragic news of Hulluch, one can reasonably assume that the women of Dublin's inner streets were full of grief. It was perhaps out of a sense of solidarity with their loved ones suffering at the front and grief rather than out of any sense of political disapproval or disrespect to the rising or the volunteers, that the women took their anger out on the volunteers. The women's reaction of anger followed by retribution is similar to the feelings and reactions shown by the men themselves.



Service certificate for Pte. Joseph Pender 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers from Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Pte. Pender was killed in action at Hulluch on 27 April 1916. He was seventeen years of age.

Brennan-Whitmore's account of his cordial treatment by Irish soldiers serving in the 3rd Royal Irish indicates that some of the Royal Irish soldiers did indeed have sympathies with the volunteers and their cause. There were examples of such sentiments at the front too. The Rising may have acted as a kind of catalyst or propellant that quickened their journey from a mild form of Irish nationalism to a more militant form. Tom Barry had started on that road; the rising was his Damascene conversion. He recalled. 'Thus through the blood sacrifices of the men of 1916, had one Irish youth of eighteen been awakened to Irish Nationality.'⁵⁷ Erskine Childers travelled that road too from being a member of the Royal Navy to being an anti-treaty Republican. Emmet Dalton (d'Alton) served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and won the Military Cross at Ginchy. Like Tom Barry, d'Alton stayed in the army until the end of the war. Barry remained in the British army for four years after the rising. He was discharged on 31 March 1920.⁵⁸ In an RTE TV interview in 1966, Emmet Dalton stated that he saw no difference fighting with the British for Ireland's independence in 1916 and against the British for the same cause in the War of Independence.⁵⁹ In November 1917, men of the Royal Munster Fusiliers held an informal meeting in Ireland declaring that they were, 'as good Irishmen and nationalists as any Sinn Feiners. Though they fought for England against the Hun, and would continue to fight till the war was won, their interest in their country was just as SF as anyone else.'⁶⁰ One of Col. Rowland Fielding's Company of 6th Connaught Rangers made an enormous green flag with a yellow Irish harp on it; which they took on marches and flew outside their billets. The flag had no crown, and Fielding noted that it might be regarded as 'Sinn Fein'. Deneys Reitz, an officer of the 7th Royal Irish Rifles found that his men, 'certainly talked a lot of politics' with 'frequent wrangling'. Before the battalion was disbanded in late 1917, Reitz wrote of rumours that the battalion could no longer be trusted politically because 'there were too many Sinn Feiners among us.'⁶¹ And yet to date, there is no evidence of any mass defection or mutiny amongst the Irish regiments in Dublin or at the front as a result of the rising. Pearse's statement of 26 April that, 'Irish regiments in the British Army have refused to act against their fellow countrymen' and, that they were defecting to the rebels was not totally true.⁶²

Despite the evidence that suggests a maintenance of morale in post-rising Irish units, there is no doubt that there was a link between the rising and a drop in morale among some Irish soldiers. Over a year after the event, resentment of the Irish Volunteers had not gone away. Sgt. Heapey of the 8th Royal Dublin Fusiliers wrote to Monica Roberts in August 1917. He was feeling very depressed and seemed to link his depression with the state Ireland was in following the rising.

⁵⁷ Dungan. *They Shall Grow Not Old*. p.31.

⁵⁸ Satterthwaite. p.4.

⁵⁹ Dungan. *Irish Voices from the Great War*. p.33. The interview was with Pdraig O Raghallaigh contained in RTE Archive.

⁶⁰ Satterthwaite. p.38.

⁶¹ Denman. *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War*. p.144.

⁶² Ibid. p.142.

One thing soldiers in any army must feel is that they have the support of the home front. Loss of that support undermines their morale and confidence. Such pessimism can be sensed from Sgt. Heapey's letter:⁶³

We are having awful weather just now, raining day and night and what a pity too just as we were making so much success. No one knows how we are going through it all, we are having a most awful time of it just now and I have lost nearly all of my of platoon. Poor boys, it has upset me very much. I went to see them after our last battle and there are only nine of them left. So you see Ireland is doing her share in the great struggle. I had a very narrow escape last week myself. A piece of a shell just missed me (thank God). I have great faith and I believe I shall pull through this war all right, but still, we have much to go through yet and by the time you get this we will be in the thick of the fray once more..... I am sorry to hear the old country is so much upset. If I had my way with the Sinn Feiners, I would put them where I am just at the present, up to our eyes in muck and wet and then they would know what war really was like. Anyway, they will get what they are looking for when we Boys see this over.

Yet despite the fears of a breakdown of discipline and mass fall off in morale in the ranks of the Irish regiments on account of the rising, there was no large-scale cases of either. Evidence to support this argument may be seen from the fact that courts martial held in Irish regiments serving on the Western Front between October 1915 and September 1916 were not above average. Moreover, there was no significant increase in the courts martial records of the home battalions of the Irish regiments in Dublin after the rising either.⁶⁴ On the same theme of the effect the rising had on morale and fighting effectiveness of Irish battalions, according to Terry Denman, 'from the magnificent achievements of the 16th(Irish) Division on the Somme a few months after the rising, it is clear that whatever disquiet the events in Ireland produced, they did not damage its fighting performance.'⁶⁵ As can be seen from the 9th Munsters and their treatment of Casement's effigy, although the rising dismayed and embittered men in the trenches, it did not weaken their morale. Private George Soper a signaller with the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers serving in France wrote to Miss Roberts on 20 May 1916. He had read about the Rising in the Irish newspapers.

⁶³ "Monica Roberts Collection." Letter from Sgt. Edward Heapey 2nd RDF to Miss Roberts August 1917.

⁶⁴ Bowman, p.127 and p.194.

⁶⁵ Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War*. p.144.

The Rising had no effect on his state of morale. On the contrary the rising made him more determined to fight on.⁶⁶

It took no effect on us chaps out here except to make us more determined to stick. I suppose their idea was that the Irishmen out here would be for them but, they were greatly mistaken and we wished we had a chance to get even with them. I don't know where their bravery was if they call killing wounded soldiers a brave deed.

Using the incidence of reporting sick for duty as a means of measuring morale in an infantry battalion, Lynn Lemisko noted that the average incidences of sick reporting amongst Irish troops in the 16th(Irish) Division after the Easter rising was nothing above the average. She further noted:⁶⁷

While Irish catholic soldiers of the 16th(Irish) Division were not completely divorced from the politics of their homeland, political incidents did not have pronounced or long-term ramifications on the morale of the Irish division. Although their English comrades occasionally labelled Irish soldiers as Sinn Feiners, most Irish troops were clear on their position in spectrum of Irish political opinion. When asked his views about the relative aims of the nationalists and the Sinn Feiners, an Irish corporal told the Catholic commanding officer of the 6th Connaught Rangers, Col. Rowland Fielding, 'the nationalists aim at getting independence by constitutional, the Sinn Feiners by unconstitutional, means.'

In early May 1916, the following notice appeared in *The Irish Independent* newspaper.⁶⁸

Sec. Lieut. Michael Wall, of the Royal Irish Regiment, whose family resides at Malahide, and who is an ex-pupil of O'Connell Schools, North Richmond Street, received bullet wounds on both arms while engaged in a military attack on the South Dublin Union.

By accident or design, the notice was wrong and it came as a complete shock to Michael and his family. It prompted Michael's brother Joseph to write to the Commanding Officer at Ballykinlar Camp stating that he had seen the notice in *The Irish Independent* and if Michael was all right and where he was. Joseph had searched all the hospitals in Dublin for Michael and could not find him. On 10 May, Michael wrote a reassuring home letter to his mother.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ "Monica Roberts Collection." Letter from Pte. George Soper 2nd RDF to Miss Roberts 20 May 1916.

⁶⁷ Lemisko, Lynn. "Morale in the 16th(Irish) Division, 1916-1918," *The Irish Sword* XX, no. 81 (Summer 1997). p.226.

⁶⁸ "Wall, 2nd Lieut Michael 6th Royal Irish Regiment." RDFA Archive. Paper cutting from Irish Independent.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Letter from Michael Wall to his mother 10 May 1916.

Officers Company, Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down. 10 May 1916.

Dear Mother,

Somebody has played you a caddish trick. I was called to the Orderly Room this morning and I was shown Joseph's letter.

Did you get a wire headed O.H.M.S. It has just been sent off this minute. I am sure you must have been in a dreadful state. I have been here ever since Easter Sunday night. You should go to the Independent Office and find out who has put in that announcement. It is certainly a horrible trick to do on anyone. I wrote to you on Friday evening last as soon as I heard that postal communication was restored. Did you not get that letter ? I was positively certain that I would have a reply from you today and then I began to think that something was wrong and this was confirmed when I went to the Orderly Room. How did you fare during the disturbances, was there any trouble near you. We had a bit of excitement here but I will tell you all these things later. Write as soon as you can. Give my love to all and send me on the 'Independent' with the announcement. Your fond son Michael.

Officers Company
Ballykinlar Camp
Co. Down.

May 10th 1916.

Dear Mother.

Somebody has played you a caddish trick. I was called to the Orderly Room this morning and I was shown Joseph's letter. Did you get a wire headed O. H. U. S. It has just been sent off this minute. I am sure you must have been in a dreadful state. I have been here ever since Easter Sunday night. You should go to the "Independent Office" and find out who has put in that announcement. It is certainly a horrible trick to do on anyone. I wrote to you on Friday evening last as soon as I found that postal communication was restored. Did you not get that letter? I was ~~surely~~ positively certain that I should have a reply from you to day and then I began to think that something was wrong and this was confirmed when I went to the Orderly Room. How did you fare during the disturbance was there any trouble near you. We had a bit of excitement here but I will tell you all these things later. Write as soon as you can. Give my love to all and send me on the "Independent" with that announcement.

I remain

Yr fond son
Michael

Letter from Michael at Officer's Company, Ballykinlar Camp, Co. Down, dated 10 May 1916.

By mid-May 1916, things had quietened down at Ballykinlar Army Camp. Nothing much was happening for Michael and his fellow cadets. ‘*This is such a dull place.*’ wrote Michael. He and two other trainee officers spent many of the long summer evenings playing golf at Newcastle, Co. Down. ‘*It is for all the world like the pictures one sees of the Dargle.*’ On 16 May, he wrote home to his mother and asked her to get Joe to send some, ‘*golf balls that is without any cracks and some golf ball paint that is in that room where you had the jam stored.*’ He also enquired about the condition Dublin was in after the rising and whether the well-known Dublin retailers Arnotts, had survived the rebellion ‘*....I hear they have restarted to rebuild Sackville Street. Did Arnotts shop escape.*’

Orders came round the Camp for economies to be made in every way possible. Paper became a bit scarce at the camp with the result that Michael had to write on the back of his letters as well as the front. The summer months drifted away at Ballykinlar and by the end of August 1916, Michael had moved down south to Richmond Barracks at Templemore, Co. Tipperary where were very basic. One of Michael’s friends who trained there noted.⁷⁰

This is an awful dirty barracks, there is no furniture of any kind, no sanitary arrangements, and the walls of our room done with pink coloured distemper. You have only to look at the blessed place, when you are covered with pink from head to foot...The town is very small and mostly pubs.... We have all our meals in Hickie’s Hotel, and up to the present we spend most of our time in going and coming to and from town

⁷⁰ Ibid. Letter from F.G.Smith to Michael Wall 3 September 1916. It is interesting to note that Smith addressed his letter to Michael as *Lieut. M. Wall. 3rd Bat. R.I. Regt, Carrickhill, Malahide, Co. Dublin.* In addressing his letter to Michael as Lieut. Wall of the Royal Irish Regiment, Smith didn’t seem to be too concerned about the possibility of any republican sympathisers or informers that may have been around Portmarnock and Carrickhill.

not sure if this effects your
Aldershot course, so am sending
this to your home address.

Sincerely Yrs.

F.G. Smith.

The Barracks,
Templemore,
Sunday. 3/9/16

Dear Wall.

Many thanks for letter received this morning.
pleased to learn from same that you are having a good
time. This is an awful dirty barracks, there is no
furniture of any kind, no sanitary arrangements, and the
walls of all our rooms done with pink coloured distemper.
You have only to look at the blessed place, when you are
covered with pink from head to foot. I nailed my
valise on the wall so as to hang up my clothes,
otherwise —. The town is very small and mostly
pubs. I was speaking to Kelleher this morning. He is
sharing a room with Hughes. I got your pack and
golf clubs (5 in number) yesterday, and have them safe
and sound in my room. Grant and Murphy have
lost their whole kit, no trace of them so far.
We have all our meals in Hickey's Hotel, and up to the
present we spend most of our time in going and coming
to and from town. I believe you are on the list for
Egypt with. Laracy, Hinkson and McCarthy Filgate. I am

Letter from Michael's friend F.G. Smith at The Barracks, Templemore dated 3 September 1916.

However, the pace of training had quickened at Templemore. Michael's days were so busy that in the evening he felt so tired that he was not in much humour for writing to anyone. He didn't have much time for golf in Thurles either. When it rained, Michael passed the time away in the evening by sleeping and sitting in front of the fire in his billet.⁷¹

Richmond Barracks, Templemore, Co. Tipperary.

Thursday.

Dear Mother,

Many thanks for the parcel. You must forgive me for not writing since Saturday as I am very busy all day and I don't feel in the humour of writing when the day is done. I must try and get up home when the visitors are there. What is all this nonsense about travel in Dublin. I hope there is nothing wrong....The weather is shocking here-always raining. I have a good fire every night so I manage to pass the time. We went for a long route march yesterday and I quite enjoyed it.... Your fond son, Michael.

⁷¹ Ibid. Letter from Michael Wall to his mother not dated. The 'nonsense about travel in Dublin' was due to the travel restrictions imposed by Martial Law following the Easter Rising.

with Templemore before long. Tell
 Joe that I had not been to
 the links in Thurles yet but
 I believe they are not bad.
 I have not heard from Charlie
 Ward yet. He does expect to
 do none of my letters to him
 have been answered yet. The
 weather is shocking here -
 always raining but I have a
 good fire every night so
 I manage to pass the time.
 We went for a fine long route
 march yesterday and I quite
 enjoyed it. However I have
 nothing more to say at present.
 Sincerely love to everybody.
 Your fond son
 Michael.



**RICHMOND BARRACKS,
 TEMPLEMORE.**

Co. Tipperary.

Thursday.

Dear Mother

Many thanks for parcel.
 You must forgive me for not writing
 since Saturday as I am very
 busy all day and I don't
 feel in the humour of writing
 when the day is done. I will
 try and get up home when the
 visitors are there. What is all
 this nonsense about trouble in
 Dublin? I hope there is
 nothing wrong. When do you
 expect Auntie back? I am
 sure Bernard would be fed up

Letter from Michael at Richmond Barracks, Templemore, Co. Tipperary to his mother circa September 1916.

At mid-day on Monday 24 April 1916, a sniper's shot rang out along Westmoreland Street in Dublin. The recipient of the sniper's fatal bullet was an unarmed Dublin Fusilier on furlough named Corporal John William Humphries. He was twenty-nine years of age and died of his wounds at Mercers Hospital. He was buried in Grangegorman Cemetery, Dublin.⁷² The Dublin's officer casualties were the following.⁷³

- Twenty-two year old 2nd Lieut. George Gray from Newcastle-on-Tyne. Before joining the Dublin Fusiliers he was a dental student. He is buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin. His name is on a memorial in the Church of Ireland Church in Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin.
- Lieut. Gerald Aloysius Neilan, a Dubliner, was killed fighting with the 10th Royal Dublin Fusiliers by a rebel sniper at Usher's Island on Easter Monday. (18) His brother, A. Neilan, was sent to Knutsford Detention Barracks in England on 1 May 1916 for his participation in the rising.

The Neilan's were not the only brothers to find themselves on different sides in the rising. There was Michael Wall's school mates, the two St. Joseph's CBS boys named Sauirn from Clontarf. Another set of brothers who found themselves on opposing sides was the Malone brothers from 13 Grantham Street off the South Circular Road in Dublin. On 24 May 1915, Sgt. William Malone suffered the horrific fate of a German gas attack at Mouse Trap Farm near St. Jullien north-east of Ypres in Flanders. He was a married man and lived at Brannixtown near Trim in Co. Meath. During the Easter rising, fighting with the 3rd Battalion Cycling Corps IRA on 26 April at No. 25 Northumberland Road in Dublin, William's brother Lieut. Michael Malone was killed.⁷⁴ His name is on a memorial on the front end of the house on Northumberland Road in which he died. A week or so after the rising had ended, a first anniversary death notice was placed in *The Irish Independent* on 6 May 1916 which read; *'In sad and loving memory of my dear husband Sergt. William Malone, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers who was killed in action at St. Jullien on May 24th 1915. Sweet heart of Jesus have mercy on his soul.... Inserted by his loving wife and children.'*⁷⁵ Company Sergeant Major William Leeman Kent of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers was a brother of Eamon Ceannt, a signatory of the 1916 Proclamation. Sgt. Willie Kent or Ceannt was killed almost a year later on 24 April 1917 during the Battle of Aras.⁷⁶

⁷² "War Office: Army of Ireland: Administrative and Easter Rising Records. Irish Situation, 1914 - 1922. Easter Rising. Described at Item Level.W0 35/69," (London: Public Records Office).

⁷³ Editor. "The Irish Times," *The Irish Times. An Irishman's Diary*. Myers. K. Wednesday 26 August 1998.

⁷⁴ "Http://Www.Militaryarchives.Ie/Home the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection, ". Michael Malone, File Reference 1D315. Nowhere in this file did any of the Malone family acknowledge the existence in name of their brother Sgt. Willie Malone of the 2nd RDF. See p64 in file.

⁷⁵ Editor. "The Irish Independent," *The Irish Independent*. 6 May. 1916. I thank Mr Pat Hogarty, (RIP) RDF Assoc., for bringing this notice to me.

⁷⁶ "Executed Rebel's Brother," *The Belfast Telegraph* April 1917.

Returning to the machine gunners from the 4th RDF who fired over Grangegorman from Altona Terrace on the North Circular Road. Lieut. Dickson and his machine gun crew called to a house at Altona Terrace and rang the front door bell. Next door to the house was the Dublin Abattoir. A tall man with a beard opened the door and Lieut. Dickson asked the bearded man if he could mount the machine gun in his house. Rejecting Dickson's request, the bearded man claimed his wife was ill and asked the soldiers to move on. This they did and approached another house along the Terrace whose owner appeared more sympathetic to their cause and allowed the Dublins to mount their machine gun in his front bedroom from which they gave Grangegorman, 'a good spraying' of machine gun bullets.

It transpired that the bearded man was telling the truth about his wife being ill. Amidst all the noise coming from the Maxim machine gun in the house nearby, the bearded man's wife gave birth to their twelfth child, a healthy baby boy.⁷⁷ This mysterious bearded man was in fact Serjeant Alexander M. Sullivan K.C, a most able Dublin Catholic barrister who lived at Altona House, Altona Terrace on the North Circular Road. The house is in fact No.119 North Circular Road. Sullivan was the last man to bear the distinguished title of Serjeant (spelt with a 'j') - a member of a superior order of barristers, now long abolished. Following the Rebellion, Sullivan unsuccessfully defended Sir Roger Casement who was found guilty of High Treason and hung in Pentonville Prison, London. In 1952, Sullivan wrote his memoirs titled *'The Last Serjeant'*. The coincidence of Lieut. Dickson calling to Sullivan's door on the North Circular Road was made known to Dickson four days after the rebellion was over. Dickson noted:

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Four days later when the rebellion was over, I met my friend and brother officer, 2nd Lieut. Maurice Healy, 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, (he served in another Company) and he at once asked 'what were you doing at my uncle's house last Thursday. I told him that I didn't know his uncle so I couldn't have been at his house. 'Yes' he said, 'I hear you wanted to fire a machine gun from his bedroom window. You'll be interested to know that while you were firing from a nearby house my aunt presented him with their twelfth child and he wants you to be Godfather.

Maurice Healy was a barrister too whose other uncle was the veteran Nationalist MP for Cork Tim Healy who held the office of the King's representative in the Irish Free State. This position was set up as part of the Treaty between Britain and Ireland after the War of Independence. Of those who followed the more extreme form of Irish Nationalism, Healy wrote:⁷⁹

⁷⁷ "Dickson, Lieut 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers Diary."

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Tom Kettle Archive. La34 - 413-4," (Dublin: University College Dublin).

All these apocalyptic Irishmen are the same - I so often think for nowhere out of the apocalypse is to be found the unattainable Ireland for which they propose to wait. They have no politics other than the hatred of England. Liberty? Yes: but let liberty perish, provided England is humiliated. The burning of Drogheda in Cromwell's time weighs more with the great-to-the-nth grandsons of the people who were not burned, than the burning of Louvein which might be avenged. And under the standard of these honest fools, all the cowards take refuge from their duty.

Lieut. Healy survived the war and wrote several books such as 'The Old Munster Circuit' and, being an expert on wines wrote, 'Stay me with Flagons'.⁸⁰ Both Lieut. Healy and the aforementioned Lieut. Eugene Sheehy knew each other from their days at Belvedere College. Healy was active in the recruiting campaign of 1915.⁸¹ According to Eugene Sheehy, Healy 'resembled his famous uncle in that he never failed to raise a row when he considered that he or others were unfairly treated.'⁸² Both men were Nationalists and according to Sheehy, 'The War Office evidently did not approve of Irish Nationalists as officers.' He discovered, 'that as long as my application was sponsored by Mr. Devlin, M.P., or Mr. T.P. O'Connor, M.P., it achieved no success other than a futile journey to Reigate in Surrey to interview a Major of the London Irish Rifles. It was not until I met Mr. Maurice Healy in Dublin in March 1915 that I received the hint that political sponsorship was a hindrance rather than a help.'⁸³

All three Dublins officers, i.e. Healy, Sheehy and Dickson survived the war. After the rising, the three of them were sent to the regiment in France. Following a brief stay at Mullingar, Dickson was sent to the 9th Dublins in France and was badly wounded at Hulluch north of Lens. Sheehy and Healy went to serve with the 1st Battalion of the Dublins in July 1916. They were replacement officers to the battalion following their losses at the Battle of the Somme. In September 1916, Sheehy was transferred from the Dublins as an Intelligence Officer with the Corps of Heavy Artillery. The death of Tom Kettle on 9 September 1916 at Ginchy was a loss to both men. Kettle was Sheehy's brother in law and Healy knew Kettle before they went to France. On 21 October 1917, while serving with the 29th Division H.Q. Staff, Maurice Healy wrote to Tom Kettle's wife expressing his condolence on her loss and on the issue of Tom's missing body. He said of Kettle: ⁸⁴

⁸⁰ "Dickson, Lieut 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers Diary."

⁸¹ Healy, M. *The Old Munster Circuit* (Dublin: Brown and Nolan, 1939). p.263.

⁸² Sheehy, Eugene. *May It Please the Court* (Dublin: Fallon Ltd, 1951). p.87.

⁸³ Ibid.p.86.

⁸⁴ "Tom Kettle Archive. La34 - 413-4."

For his genius I always had the most profound admiration; I never knew him well enough to have him count me amongst his friends, though I would have been very proud to find myself so numbered. But he so nearly expressed all my own unattained ideals, more especially about our poor country, that I always felt the barriers between us were only the hedges of two parallel roads. If we had nothing else in common, we had the desire, foreign to Irish politics, that all honest men should express their views fearlessly and not bare malice because they disagree.

On the rising in general, Sheehy noted: ⁸⁵

The Rising in Easter week was a source of heartbreak to me and to the many tens of thousands of Irish Nationalists who joined the British Army. We had done so at the request of our leaders – who were the elected representatives of the people – and the vast majority of the Nation applauded our action. The rising was not even approved by the leaders of Sinn Fein.... As the tide of Irish public opinion gradually changed and hostility to England grew we did not quite know where we stood, or where our duty lay. The threat of conscription in 1918, and the ultimate betrayal of Redmond by the British Parliament, made those of us who survived feel that the thousands of Irishmen who died in Flanders, France and Gallipoli had made their sacrifice in vain.

After the war, both Sheehy and Healy returned to Ireland and resumed their legal practice. Dickson too returned home to his native town in Northern Ireland where he became a member of the Special Reserve of the Royal Ulster Constabulary otherwise known as the ‘B’ Specials. Not being a Roman Catholic, he could not act as godfather for A. M. Sullivan’s child. ‘ but every year in the 1920’s and 1930’s when we had a Regimental Dinner of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in London, Sergeant Sullivan attended and always told me how ‘my’ boy was getting on.’ ⁸⁶ Dickson wrote his diary in 1962. As an Irish Unionist, his appraisal of the Easter Rising of 1916 is interesting: ⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Sheehy. p.91.

⁸⁶ "Dickson, Lieut 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers Diary."

⁸⁷ Ibid.

It is difficult to say, even after forty-six years which have elapsed after the Rebellion, what the policy of the British Cabinet in London should have been, for Treason in any country has always been punishable by death, and it was the Cabinet who confirmed the sentences. But for twenty years before the Rebellion bitterness against England had been building up and little had been done to counter it. I believe that if Gladstone's policy of Commonwealth Home Rule for Ireland had been carried out in the 1880's and if the British Royal Family had at that time built two Royal residences in Ireland, and if the Irish landlords had then lived on their rents - the Irish Rebellion of 1916 would never have occurred. But the opportunity was lost and passed in the 1880's for after 1890 each party in Ireland was irrevocably committed to a fixed policy. I believe that if Gladstone and T.A.D (*a relative*) could have lived to see the Rebellion and the events of recent years which have sprung from it, they would have said sadly. 'We told you so.'