

# THE BLUE CAP

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## **Sergeant Horace Augustus Curtis VC. 7<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions, Royal Dublin Fusiliers.**

Dan Finnigan

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

Many men seek fame in a great variety of ways, but on one small select band, the mantle settles without them searching for it. I'm referring to men who were awarded the Victoria Cross without doubt the most prestigious award in the world for bravery in the face of the enemy. It is a plain little medal indeed. The cost of the metal from which it is made is actually only a few pence. Bronze from Russian cannons of Chinese origin, captured during the Crimean War 1854-56, is still used in the manufacture of the medal to this day. The decoration is unique among top military awards in that it carries the name and rank of the recipient and the date of the exploit for which it was awarded. The intrinsic value of the medal is therefore about the man and the action that led to the winning of it, and this is reflected in the large sums of money paid for it when one comes on the auction market. From the 'Soldier' magazine October 2004 .... Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities – for every VC winner there were hundreds, thousands even, of men and women who did likewise without recognition.

The VC can only be awarded for most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.

I belong to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association the regiment that my father served in on the western front in the Great War. Three men of the regiment were awarded the Victoria Cross during the hostilities. They were Sergeant James Ockendon of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion from Portsmouth. Sergeant Robert Downie from Glasgow and Sergeant Horace Curtis from St Newlyn East in

Cornwall, both from the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF. Of the three, only Bob Downie could trace his lineage back to the Emerald Isle, his parents hailing from County Donegal. All three VC winners survived the War. Horace Curtis was a Cornishman born and bred and this is his story.

Horace Curtis was born on 7 March 1891 at Cellars House, St Anthony in Roseland, Cornwall, the son of Thomas and Catherine (nee Ball) Curtis. Thomas Curtis, head of the household was employed as the gamekeeper at Cellars Plantation, a wooded area on the west coast tip of the Manor estate. He came from the parish of St. Newlyn East Newquay on the north coast of the county, but his wife Catherine was a local lady from Gerrans just up the road in Roseland. The Place Manor estate had been given to the Spry family in 1540 by King Henry VIII and remains with them still, although the big house now appears to be a hotel. The family maintained their own fishing fleet during the 1800's and owned the pilchard cellar at the mouth of the creek, also building various small boats.



Cellars House with Cellars Plantation in the background. St. Anthony in Roseland, birthplace of Horace Curtis VC.

Farming was the chief industry of Roseland in the late 1800's but fishing ran it a close second and there were settlements of fisherman all round the Roseland coast. The pilchard fishing industry was big business in the area at this time, and many "fish palaces" or "cellars" were set up round the

coast, special brick built buildings, built under the houses by the shore where the huge catches of pilchards were salted down and barrelled, with long and hard graft by the women folk and children, before export to Spain and Italy etc.

In this environment, the Curtis family lived at the remote Cellars House (today a grade II listed building) on Cellars Beach. Horace was the fourth child of the family after Hilda, Barrington (Bar) and Wilfred. Their house was beside a creek about a quarter of a mile along the track from the tiny settlement of St. Anthony with its ancient 12<sup>th</sup> century church. About a mile or more over the steep hill and across the fields, lay the one-roomed school in the hamlet of Bohortha.

Also noted at Cellars House in the 1891 Census returns was Catherine Curtis's sister, Louisa Ball, a dressmaker and no doubt very helpful to have around with the birth of Horace. Along with the birth of Horace came the Great Blizzard of March 1891 when Cornwall and the west country were battered by gales of wind and snow from the east and many vessels were wrecked on the coast. How Catherine with three young children and a newborn baby coped at this time only God knows, but survive they all did, and this was Horace's introduction to the world.

Three years later in 1894, the family moved back to St. Newlyn East. Two of the older children were born there. Young Harry was born here to swell the family. Bar was born in Penzance. Unfortunately Thomas, the head of the family took ill and died the same year at the early age of thirty-four, leaving a young wife and five children ranging in age from ten years to a few months.

The Curtis home was actually at Fiddlers Green, a small village about three quarters of a mile down the lane from Newlyn, the first house on the left upon entering the village. When he was four years of age, young Horace joined his older siblings in the walk up to the school in Newlyn. Newlyn is a small village about nine miles from Newquay on the coast and the heart of it remains much as it was a century ago. During the 1800's it had been a mining village, five pits in the parish producing iron, lead and copper and at one time the biggest

yielder of silver in the country. However, by the turn of the 1900's, they had all been worked out. On a historic note, years ago one of the MP's for this parish (one of the "rotten" Boroughs) had been Sir Walter Raleigh. The Church of England school catered for up to seventy infants, aged from four to seven years and were taught in three classes in one large room, while the rest of the older "mixed" classes aged from seven to fourteen, 150 and more, were in the rest of the school, all presided over by the Head teacher, Mr. Charles Webber. He was quite a progressive man, changing the youngest infants from slates to writing books as they moved through the school and introducing electric lighting in the classrooms.



Old Church of England School  
in St. Newlyn East, Cornwall.

The 1901 census gives some clues about the Curtis family at Fiddlers Green. Hilda was not listed, and aged seventeen had moved on, perhaps in service and Catherine's sister Louise, had gone from the scene. The two eldest boys, Bar and Wilf were employed with equine work, Barrington as a groom, and Wilfred as a teamster with agricultural horses, this area had become predominantly farming. Also listed on the 1901 census was a seven-year-old lad named Charlie Vincent who was a boarder at the Curtis household. I don't know of any connections, but he seems to have come from Truro. He was the same age as young Harry and I do know that the house Fiddlers Green was later called Vincent House.

Another great blizzard came in 1901 that closed the school for a while. At this time the Boer War was raging in South Africa, communications were improving and news of the fighting was reaching the more remote parts of the realm. A few men from the village were serving in the war and important events like the relief of Ladysmith and Mafeking were the cause of celebration and reported in the village. In February 1901, a former pupil at the school, Sergeant Perkins, gave an account of his war on return. So too did a former teacher, Sergeant Fugler. They were warmly welcomed home as war heroes. One must wonder if young Horace saw them.

Newlyn was strongly Methodist as was most of the surrounding countryside. It boasted two fine chapels and there was no Inn or pub in the village between 1905 and 1935, demonstrating the opposition to drinking. Although the village had a Post Office by 1851 and Telegraph (Telegram) by 1897, it was very slow in getting amenities. In many ways, it was a remote and rural spot, and into this environment Horace Curtis was raised. I have no knowledge as to what sort of a pupil he was at school, but from his excellent signature on later documents, it would appear he benefited from Mr Webber's brand of education. On reaching the age of fourteen in 1905, Horace left school and shunning the type of work his brothers had taken to, he opted to work in the China clay quarries in the St. Austell area. This necessitated a ten mile cycle ride each way to the workings on a daily basis, he must have been a fit young man and hopefully his earnings justified the effort. It was the trade he was employed in for the majority of his working life. The clay quarries near St. Austell were renowned for the quality of the China that was produced from them. They covered many square miles throwing up huge mountains of spoil to create a barren moonscape.

Nine years on and the war clouds were gathering over Europe and by August 1914 the conflict had gathered men from all over the country who flooded into the recruiting offices to serve and fight in the services for our very existence. Britain only had a small regular army and needed at least 100,000 volunteers quickly to train and swell the ranks. Kitchener's (Field Marshal Lord Kitchener,

Minister for War) famous poster pointing his finger out and declaring, "Your Country Needs You" was plastered up all over the place so it was no surprise when Horace Curtis at the age of twenty-three years and 158 days was medically examined and passed fit on 12 September 1914 at St Austell. Two days later he was attested at Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry Depot at Bodmin Cornwall as No. 15833 Pte. H A Curtis. His stated religion was Wesleyan. Six days later he found himself transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 18 September 1914 as No. 14107 Pte. H A Curtis. It was the beginning of a distinguished career with this famous regiment. I wonder how Horace's broad Cornish accent fitted in with the lilting Irish tones. Very well I should imagine.

Major W. H. White DL, curator DCLI Regimental Museum in Bodmin kindly furnished me with the reason: - with the huge numbers of volunteers pouring in to the recruiting offices up and down the country, the War Office were desperately attempting to balance the numbers in each regiment. In these early days it was not uncommon for recruits to attest at a regimental depot where they would be documented and medically examined before being immediately transferred to another regiment. The regimental system being so important to the pride and loyalty of the British soldier, it was considered important that any disruption should take place before the man had time to form any close ties, hence the reason for the cross postings taking place so quickly after initial enlistment. It was noted that in Newlyn village, six former pupils of the school had enlisted at Bodmin into the DCLI but several of them were quickly drafted into the Somerset Light Infantry. I assume that in Horace's case he was one of a small number of men who were issued with travel warrants and dispatched as a group to Ireland. Two men who could possibly have been in that party were local Cornishmen who are shown on the casualty rolls. Take note of their Regimental numbers:-

No 14111 Pte. Edwin Bray 7<sup>th</sup> R D Fus. Enlisted St Austell killed in action in Gallipoli. 25 September 1915.

No 14115 L/Cpl. Chas Nicholls 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt on RD Fus formerly 7<sup>th</sup> RDF enlisted Bodmin died of wounds in France and Flanders 19 October 1918. Also note Cpl. Nicholls death the day after Sergeant Curtis's V C award action at Le Cateau.

Horace served with the 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Gallipoli, Salonika, Palestine and Egypt. During his almost two year period in Salonika, Horace had earned steady promotion from Lance Corporal, 7 February 1916 to Full Sergeant on 17 November 1916, obviously just reward for a good soldier. On 21 July 1917, No, 7/14107 Cpl. (act Sgt.) CURTIS H.A. Royal Dublin Fusiliers was listed in the London Gazette as mentioned in dispatches (MID) for distinguished service by the C in C British Salonika Force, General G.F.Milne.

On 23 May 1918, the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers left Alexandria and landed at Marseilles in southern France on 31 May. A few days later on 6 June, they were absorbed into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the R.D.Fus, one of the two original regular battalions of the regiment. His service with the M.E.F totalled two years and 301 days, his transfer to France brought him into the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) France and Belgium. On 20 June 1918, Horace was despatched to the UK where he was directed to attend the Bermondsey Military Hospital at Lewisham London for treatment for malaria he had contracted in the swamps of Salonika. His stay was broken by a furlough home on leave to Fiddlers Green in his home in Cornwall from 24 July 1918 to 3 August 1918, the first time he had done so in nearly four long years of service. He was finally cleared fit to return to his unit on 19 August and was back in France by 2 September perhaps via the notorious Bullring at Etaples. By 21 September he was back in the line with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dubs. By 4 October 1918, the wheel had turned full circle, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dublin were back in action at Le Cateau, the scene of their first engagement of the war in August 1914. At 5.30 am on 18 October 1918, the attack of the 50<sup>th</sup> Division was launched and was most successful from the outset, capturing a ridge 2,000 yards east of the Abre-Guernon to Le Cateau road. A party of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dublin's overrunning their objective even penetrated into Bazuel and captured several German prisoners but

unexpectedly came under intensive machinegun fire and a daring individual exploit by Sergeant Curtis resulted in him putting out of action the teams of two hostile machineguns and the capture of four other machineguns and their crews. This was the action for which Horace was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Very soon after this, the Armistice was signed and hostilities ceased on 11 November 1918. On 18 December the battalion marched to Le Quesnoy and the heartening news that Sgt. Curtis had been awarded the Victoria Cross was announced. December too saw the start of demobilization and the regimental colours which had been retained at home for safe keeping were sent out and handed over with due ceremony to the battalion at Le Quesnoy on 2 January 1919. Two holders of the Victoria Cross from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dublins, Sergeants Horace Curtis and Robert Downie, proudly flanked the colour party.

Horace was gazetted for the V.C. on 6 January 1919 and was back home at Fiddlers Green by 31 January 1919 where he began a twenty-eight day demobilization leave. Before he was demobbed, Horace had an important date to keep which was his investiture with the Victoria Cross on 8 March 1919. This was in the ballroom at Buckingham Palace and King George V pinned the medal on his chest. Another receiver of the award on that day was Lieut. Joseph Maxwell 18<sup>th</sup> Battn A.I.F, the second most decorated Aussie of the Great War and he too like Horace, had served in Gallipoli in August 1915. Horace was transferred to Class "Z" army reserve on 28 March 1919.

It was reported that on 30 October 1919, Horace was presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall with the sum of £150 that had been subscribed by his workmates in the China clay industry. About this time too, Horace was presented with a beautiful large gold cased watch inscribed with the intertwined initials HAC in gothic script on the case back and carried the inscription inside:-

Presented to SERGEANT H.A. CURTIS V.C.  
By the inhabitants of Newlyn East and District as  
a token of their  
Admiration of his gallantry east of Le Cateau in  
the Great War  
On October 18<sup>th</sup> 1918.

Another honour bestowed upon Horace was to have his name and deed remembered by having a small road to the back of the Methodist Chapel in the village named Curtis V.C. Close.

Horace Curtis VC was finally discharged on demobilization from the 7<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 31 March 1920. Horace was one of 150 men from the parish that served in the forces during the war, sixteen of whom gave their lives. Four men were awarded the Military Medal. Unlike some of his comrades who returned to a changed Dublin, Sgt. Horace Curtis VC and the other returning men from their village were given a great reception on their homecoming. After the euphoria of Horace's reception back home in Cornwall, it was back to the nitty-gritty of earning a living, and so he went back to what he knew best, and the China Clay quarries of St Austell.

On the Roll of Honour 1914-1918 War in St Newlina's church in Newlyn village, there are the names of two Curtis's, one Horace VC and the other W. Curtis, likely to be Horace's older brother Wilfred, both survivors, who served in the forces during the conflict, but no mention of Ellard (Barrington) or Harry. Also no mention on the Forces Medal Rolls at the Records Office of these latter two, so it would seem neither saw military service either at home or abroad. In the church are listed seven men as casualties from the war but on the village War Memorial there are eight, the extra one being an E. Curtis, not one of the immediate but perhaps one of the extended family.

Into 1920 after his official discharge from the army, Horace decided to join the Territorial Force and on 20 May he signed on a three-year engagement at St Columb with the 5<sup>th</sup> (Territorial) Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (D.C.L.I.) as Private No 5431368. He was rapidly

promoted to Sergeant and by 27 August 1920 to W.O.II (CSM). Over the years there were several re-unions of the holders of the Victoria Cross and one of the first functions was a grand garden party on the lawns of Buckingham Palace on 26 June 1920, Horace may well have attended. Almost eighteen months later on 20 December 1921, C.S.M. Curtis transferred from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 4/5<sup>th</sup> Battn D.C.L.I. and during this period regularly attended the obligatory parades and annual fortnight's camp. In 1922, he began courting a local girl and on 9 September 1922, he married Miss Rhoda Phillips in the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel at Newlyn East. Rhoda was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Henry Phillips who lived at a large house called Glenburn in the centre of Newlyn. Following the marriage, Horace and his bride set up home a few miles away at Penhale, St Enoder and on 22 January 1924, Kathleen (Kate) Curtis was born at Newlyn and was the only child of Horace and Rhoda.



Sgt. Horace A. Curtis VC.

I was fortunate to talk to Kate and her daughter Margaret and I am indebted to them for giving me so much information about Horace and the family. Bar was still living down at the old family home at Fiddlers Green and for some years ran a bicycle repair business from a large shed in front of the house, which was reputed to be a local meeting place for a spot of gambling etc. Meanwhile up at the village life went on much as before. Eleven years after the fighting ceased, on 9 November 1929, a dinner hosted by the Prince of Wales and Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Jellicoe, President of the British Legion, was held in honour of all holders of the Victoria Cross.. The dinner took place in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords London, dress being lounge suits with medals. As a souvenir of this famous dinner, each winner of the Victoria Cross was presented with a copy of the Legion book signed by the Prince of Wales. At the 1929 Remembrance Day parade London, some 300 Victoria Cross holders paraded.

There was no branch of the British Legion in Newlyn village but nevertheless one of the local branches held a parade to the village War Memorial every Armistice Day. The parade was preceded by a service of Remembrance at alternately the Parish church and the Methodist Chapel. Although no regular attendee of Chapel, Horace always marched on this special day.

As the war clouds gathered again in the late 1930's, preparations to counter any attacks were started with civil units being formed called "Air Raid Precautions" and Horace enrolled as an ARP warden. Gas masks were issued to all the population in case of enemy gas attacks and Horace instructed the local school children in the fitting and use of them. They had to be carried at all times. After the outbreak of war in September 1939, nationwide volunteers of the older and younger men and boys were organised into military style units called the "Local Defence Volunteers" (LDV) which soon came to be called the "Home Guard." Sergeant Horace Curtis initially instructed the young cadets and finally commanded the local platoon (11<sup>th</sup> Bn. Cornwall H G) as a Lieutenant.

Newlyn, like other towns and villages in the West Country, took in their share of evacuees from London that caused obvious problems and disruption with the big increase of children. But none seemed insurmountable and most had gone home after a couple of years. There was no doctor resident in the village and so a clinic was set up in the Curtis home of Glenburn that operated three days of the week. Talking to Kate about her father she said, he used to start his daily bike ride to work at about five in the morning and as far as she can remember, he didn't suffer from the effects of malaria. He was no particular drinker but a regular smoker, Players cigarettes being his choice, more than likely a habit from his army days like so many old soldiers. Horace was not very interested in local football etc. but was a keen angler on local beaches and Kate remembers him bringing back three or four bass on his handlebars many a time. Sometime, she's not sure when, he gave up working in the quarries and took a job with a firm of builders and civil engineers named John Garrett and Sons based at Plymouth. He worked throughout the county. He was a ganger in charge of a team of labourers and they went to the workings in a lorry daily, which was garaged in a lock-up opposite the Pheasant Inn. I believe Horace himself never drove a four-wheeler in his life. Kate remembers that her father had a hot temper at times and when asked about winning his Victoria Cross, he used to say: "I just Lost my B\*\*\*\*\*Y Temper".

Kate herself worked at the Porton Down Research Establishment during the war and married a soldier named Watts. Together they had one child, a daughter Margaret. Horace was not over interested in working in the garden of his house, but had an allotment at the bottom of the hill down the Cargill Road where he grew vegetables for the table. Margaret remembers him cycling down to his allotment and also him biking down to the old house at Fiddlers Green on Sundays to visit his sister Hilda who still resided there.

On 8 June 1946, Horace attended the Victory Parade in London. This was the last V C reunion that he went to. Kate said they had seats on Constitution Hill but they got a drenching as it poured with rain, putting a bit of a damper on the

proceedings. Horace's medals are now in private hands but granddaughter Margaret has his Victoria Cross miniature and also the watch that was presented by the people of Newlyn. Horace said he was as proud of this watch as he was of the Victoria Cross medal itself. Across the crossroads (The Cross) from the Wesleyan Chapel lay a small square and in front of one of the small old cob Cottages that served as a shop was a bench seat. It was here that some of the elders of the village met, mostly pipe and fag smokers for a puff and a chin wag and it was here that Horace suffered the first of several strokes which left him more and more debilitated and which necessitated his removal to the Barncoose Hospital for the elderly at Redruth. They say that "old Soldiers never die they simply fade away" and it was here on Monday 1 July 1968 that old soldier Horace Curtis V C sadly faded away. His funeral took place at Newlyn Methodist Chapel where he had married Rhoda forty-six years earlier; the coffin covered by the Union Flag. Former comrades from the Home Guard and the British Legion amongst the large congregation were in attendance.

Three days later his cremation took place at Penmount Crematorium Truro and his ashes were scattered on the lawns of the Memorial Gardens. The three holders of the Victoria Cross from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers all passed on within a short time of one another.

Sgt. James Ockenden died  
Portsmouth 29 August 1966.

Sgt. Robert Downie died  
Glasgow 18 April 1968.

Sgt. Horace Curtis died  
Redruth 1 July 1968.

We salute them and all old "Dubs"  
Spectamur Agendo

London Gazette Citation of Award.  
6 January 1919.

**CURTIS** No 14107 Sergeant Horace Augustus 2<sup>nd</sup>  
Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers for most  
conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty East of

Le Cateau on the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> October 1918 when in attack his platoon came unexpectedly under intense machine gun fire. Realising that the attack would fail unless the enemy guns were silenced, Sergeant Curtis without hesitation, rushed forward through our own barrage and the enemy fire and killed and wounded the teams of two of the guns, whereupon the remaining four guns surrendered. Then turning his attention to a trainload of reinforcements, he succeeded in capturing over one hundred of the enemy before his comrades joined in. His valour and disregard of danger inspired all.

#### References.

Roseland Notes. My Thanks to the Cornish  
Guardian Newspaper. Mr Tim Hubbard – Radio  
Cornwall and especially Mrs. Kate Watts and Mrs.  
Margaret Samson.

**St Matthews Church of Ireland,  
Irishtown, Dublin.  
Part 1.**

Patrick Lynch

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

War is a nasty business and the Church of Ireland Parish of St. Matthew's Irishtown, Dublin provides a very valuable insight into the welfare of volunteers at the front and at home. Rev Carolin urged parishioners to attend a Special Intercessory Service every Wednesday evening at 8:00 p.m. to:

Ask the Almighty to put an end speedily to this internecine strife and to grant to us again the blessing of peace. Our soldiers are fighting for us at the front and the number of casualties is appalling. August has been a momentous month for Europe, aye, for the world. History is fast being made, and the map altered. The one subject of conversation everywhere and among all classes has been the war. Owing to the number of nations engaged, and the huge armies they command: owing also to the deadliness of the weapons that are now used in battle, this is said to be the greatest war in history; and the most far-reaching issues are expected from it, whoever proves to be the conqueror. It is a life and death struggle — a struggle for existence amongst the nations. Our rulers as well as the Generals and Admiralty must not be forgotten by us; and we must remember our soldiers and sailors, as well as those belonging to our allies, all of whom have gone forth to fight our battles, and to deliver Europe from the curse of militarism. Let us pray that this terrible conflict may not be prolonged, and that God may grant the world a sure and lasting peace

The October 1914 Harvest Thanksgiving Services collections were divided between the Belgian Fund and the Red Cross Society. Carolin wrote, "At this time, when the crisis calls loudly for practical exhibitions of brotherhood, we will try to sink our own immediate interests and do what we can for those on whom the war has brought the loss of all things."

Carolin urged readers to remember that, "these men are our representatives. They are fighting our battles. On our behalf do they fight and suffer and die. And were we to cast our whole wealth at their feet it would not cancel our debt to them". Carolin asked his parishioners to "come together and pray that this conflict may be shortened, that our soldiers and sailors may be strengthened ever to do their duty, and that out of the turmoil there may emerge a lasting peace."

**Prayer Services.**

A Sandymount and Irishtown Christian Association 1915 advertising handbill informed members that Miss Louie Bennett of the Irish Women's Reform League was scheduled to open a discussion on "Women and War." (4) The Church of Ireland Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin informed their members:

That the last day of 1915 and the first day of 1916 were to be set apart for prayer and penitence. The war was said to be caused by the unsatisfied ambition of the German Emperor. . . . The war was seen as a conflict between the forces of Might and Hate, on the one hand and Right and Love on the other. However, God was understood to be using the evil of war to bring people back to Him, to remind them of their dependence not only on Him but on one another, to recall the divine claim on their service and hearts' allegiance, and to expose the intemperance, impurity, neglect of public worship, love of ease and desire of worldly gain that had eaten like a canker into our national life. The conviction was expressed that God alone can enable us to win the victory in our conflict. . . . But it was emphasized that we need to be more earnest and constant in our prayers. Regret was expressed at the poor attendance at Intercession and Communion Services: We are in danger of trusting rather to the valour of our men and the strength of our munitions than to the guidance and blessing of the Lord of Hosts. The letter went on to give thanks that party strife had stilled and that class distinctions have been merged in a

great outpouring of self-sacrifice for the common good. Men (soldiers and sailors) were thanked for their unquenchable heroism and women were praised for their devotion, patience, and service. Thanksgivings were given for all that is best in the manhood and womanhood of our country.

A Special Service was held on Friday 4 August 1916, the second anniversary of the Declaration of War. A Mission of Repentance and Hope was scheduled for 5-12 November 1916. The Archbishop of Dublin, in a document dated 19 December 1916, drew attention to a proposal that, in all churches throughout Ireland, as in England, special prayers be said for the country on the last day of the year. It was recommended that collections be given, as in 1915, to the joint funds of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem. "Never . . . had a nation a more righteous cause," said the Archbishop, "and we may pray for victory with a good heart." He went on to urge the clergy to remember in the days to come that, "it is the plain things of religion that men and women value most. . . ." The letter ended with the hope that Family Prayers would be more widely adopted and that people would learn to pray "more regularly, more definitely and more simply. . ."

In the winter of 1917, parishioners were again urged to attend the Wednesday evening Intercession Services during Advent: "More than three years have passed and the War is not yet over: the horrors of it are accumulating ever more and more."

### **Boys Brigade.**

Rev. Carolin, addressing eligible young men in the parish who had not yet joined up by August 1915, wrote: "Now that Conscription for Ireland has passed into law, it is the duty of every eligible young man to join the colours. Better go at once voluntarily than wait for some kind of compulsion". In August 1915, forty-one past members of the Boys' Brigade had joined the "colours" and three had lost their lives. Carolin described the great offensive on the Western Front in 1916, as "a success that has been dearly bought,

at the cost of multitudes of precious and valuable lives, whose loss has been a very terrible blow to those they have left behind...Our own Parish and district has suffered considerably." Eight Boy's Brigade members were killed and two had been invalidated and discharged by December 1916. "Almost all of our past members are with the colours, and of sixty-eight boys who passed through our ranks in the past ten years, sixty-five have joined up."

The Archbishop and Bishops of the Church of Ireland convened a special Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving in connection with the war for Sunday 31 December 1916. In May 1917, eighty-two past-members were with the services. Six had been given commissions and of the remainder, all but five had obtained a non-commissioned rank. Ten were killed in action, and four, discharged as permanently disabled.

A Memorial Service for those from St. Matthew's parish who had fallen in the war was held on Wednesday 1 January 1919. Two war lists were compiled. The first list consisted of those (fourteen) who, at some stage, had been members of the St. Matthew's Company of the Boys' Brigade. (37) The second contained the names of those former parishioners (fifteen) who had not been in the Boys' Brigade. St. Matthew's Boys' Brigade Company that had been in existence for more than twenty-one years, recorded that 132 old members had joined up during the war. Two of these had obtained commissions in the navy and fourteen got commissions in the army, sixteen had been killed, one had obtained the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and three had won the Military Cross.

Sir Thomas W. Robinson and Edward Dowzard, church wardens, informed the parishioners in a handbill of the decision taken by the Select Vestry to place in the church a brass plate bearing the names of those members of the parish who had fallen in the war. "To these men a debt of inconceivable magnitude is due — words cannot express how great it is."

The memorial to the Boys Brigade is very prominent to the left of the Altar. St Mathews was a great centre for Boys Brigade Activity.

### **War's End.**

Archbishop of Dublin, John Henry Bernard, requested clergy to read a short address from the pulpit at a service of thanksgiving to celebrate the end of the war.

No man can tell what the future of Europe will be, but it is for us all to set ourselves, with hope and courage, to do what we can in our several stations to make the world a better world than it was before, and thus to hasten the day when the Kingdoms of this world shall be the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

In a printed document advertising the subjects of addresses on Wednesday evenings during Lent 1919, parishioners were told that the solemn season of Lent, "fits in well with the present solemn crisis in the world's history." Armistice Day was first observed in November 1921. The opening hymn at the service of remembrance held on Sunday 6 November 1927, was, "The Supreme Sacrifice" and the collection was in aid of Earl Haig's Fund for Ex-Servicemen. The two minutes' silence on Armistice Day on Sunday 11 November 1928 was advertised as being "observed on our knees in Church."

### **Memorial.**

The Archbishop of Dublin, John Henry Bernard, raised the subject of War Memorials in a letter written at Christmas 1918. "The question of War Memorials to preserve the names and the deeds of our brave dead is now becoming urgent.... Every parish ought to have its own parochial memorial, upon which should be inscribed the names of all from the parish, whatever their rank or class, who died in battle in our defence. It would be ungrateful indeed were we to allow these men to be forgotten." The Archbishop expressed the view that the names of those men of the parish who had died on active service in the war should be recorded in some permanent form. The Archbishop in another letter expressed his desire

to erect a Diocesan War Memorial to, "preserve for future generations the memory of our heroes and be a worthy thanks offering." The Select Vestry awarded the contract for the supply of the war memorial to Messrs. G. Harrison & Co., Architectural and Monumental Sculptors of 31-33 Amiens Street, Dublin. The estimated cost would be £98-10s-0d. of which the sum of £ 80-18s-2d was already collected. The cost of the memorial was £107-10s.-0d but there was a list of payments made, together with the note that stated; "Received with thanks the sum of £105.-14s-6d in full discharge of a/c." The main part of the memorial would consist of a cast bronze tablet with the names of the fallen inscribed upon it. The background would be of richly moulded Derbyshire marble. The outside dimensions of the background would be four feet and three inches in height and three feet in width, with a projection from the wall line of three inches.

On Tuesday 19 October 1920, at 8:00 p.m, the war memorial was dedicated by the Dean of Christ Church, Harry Vere White. While paying high tribute to those who had made the ultimate sacrifice and "died as Irishmen and Imperial patriots ... the symbol of ... [whose] patriotism was the Union Jack," the Dean was scathing of "those Irishmen who so unhappily refused to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. . . .How different," the Dean asserted, "the history of Ireland would be now if the majority of Irishmen had followed the advice

### **Lost Friends.**

Irishtown would be no different in its supply of young men. It is important to consider that the full extent of the impact of the "War to End all Wars " will be very difficult to estimate because of the destruction of records in the Custom House fire. What can be safely stated is that the removal of young men seriously affected the birth rate of the parish which would ultimately led to the reduced influence of the non-catholic population. The effect of the war on the Irishtown environment, lead to the demise of the Methodist Church in Irishtown, the relocation of its reduced congregation to the church on Sandymount Green.

Haddington Road and Clarendon Street have the only war memorials in Catholic churches that I know of in Dublin.

The War Memorial in St Mathew’s illustrates the role of the Boys Brigade as a social organization within the Parish. While I have mentioned the role of the social service organizations and the contribution of women to the war effort, it has being impossible to establish the casualty rate amongst women from the area. Analysis of the Scroll confirms the well-established pattern of multiple recruits from the same families. Some 125 men were recruited from the St. Mathew’s congregation, thirty-five were killed.

Note: All quotations and sources for this article were taken from *The Parish Magazine* 1914-1919.



The Boys Brigade Memorial in St. Matthews Church of Ireland, Irishtown, Dublin.

## Rich Man, Poor Man, Broken Man.

Tom Burke

*The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.*

On Thursday night 10 November 1927, a public meeting was held by the 'Anti-Imperialistic Association' in Foster Place, Dublin. A similar anti-imperialist meeting had been held in the same place on the previous Tuesday night. Their Secretary, Mr. Ryan, essentially told the gathering that they, i.e. the anti-imperialists, 'were in the majority now and whether the Imperialists liked it or not they would have to abide by it.' After the meeting, they marched off towards Sackville (O'Connell) Street and a few 'roughs' amongst the marchers resorted to 'poppy snatching'. At Westmoreland Street, the Gardai moved in and broke up the march with 'commendable firmness'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Poppy snatching was a common enough sight in Dublin in the late 1920s. Poppy sellers became a target for Republican anger and so too were poppy depots. The house of Mr. Tom Barry from Carrigtouhill, Co. Cork was raided by three armed and masked men who burnt his store of poppies and stole his typewriter.<sup>(2)</sup> On occasion the poppy snatchers got an unpleasant surprise when they tried to grab the poppy from the collar of those that wore the flower. Miss Jane O'Reilly (RIP) remembers as a child walking with her father along the north quays to the Phoenix Park. Her father, Jimmy O'Reilly, was a Dublin Fusilier who survived the War and worked in the Irish Independent newspaper. He used to put a pin behind the poppy on Jane's little coat so that if anybody tried to grab it from her coat, they would get a pin stuck in their hand.<sup>(3)</sup> The flower, even then, had become divisive and, to some, a symbol of British imperialism. Yet despite the bands of poppy snatchers who roamed the streets of Dublin in 1927, oddly enough, the Flanders flower flourished even in Dail Eireann, the Irish House of Parliament.<sup>(4)</sup>

There were poppies in the Dail yesterday. A godly bunch bloomed on the Government back-benches; they were scattered here and there amongst

the Independents; two or three flowered in the Press gallery and a few were visible up aloft where a dozen or so of the general public watched the proceedings. In all seventeen deputies wore the Remembrance emblem among them being Mr Heffernan (Parliamentary Secretary for Posts and Telegraphs), Messrs Osmond Esmonde, *Cumann na nGaedheal Government TD for Wexford*. Alfred Byrne, *Independent TD for Dublin North*. Mahony Mc Donagh, *Cumann na nGaedheal Government TD for Galway* and P.W Shaw, *Cumann na nGaedheal Government TD for Westmeath* (always active in the interests of the ex-Service-men.) George Wolfe, *Cumann na nGaedheal Government TD for Kildare* ( an ex cavalry officer and has an unmistakable cavalry bearing) Jasper Wolfe, Major Bryan Cooper, *Government TD for Dublin County*. Captain Redmond, *National League Party TD for Waterford*. John Good, *Independent TD for Dublin County*. E.H. Alton, *Independent TD for Dublin University*. W.E Thrift, *Independent TD for Dublin University*, Sir James Craig and Major Myles who wore his military medals including the Military Cross.

Sufficient to say, however, that no members of the opposition parties namely Fianna Fail or Labour were reported wearing a poppy and only four out of sixty-two members of *Cumann na nGaedheal*, who were the party in Government, wore a poppy in the Dail on Friday 11 November 1927.

Anybody who had the time and interest could volunteer to sell the poppies. The following were the distribution figures published by The Irish Times for 1924 and 1925. On the 10 November 1924, the paper noted that '700,000 Poppies were distributed to centres throughout the country. The quota for the Dublin area being about half this number'.<sup>(5)</sup> Two days later 12 November, the paper's initial estimate for the Dublin quota of

350,000 had jumped to an incredible figure of 500,000. 'It was stated last night that nearly 500,000 poppies had been sold in Dublin and district.' (6) The sale of 500,000 poppies in Dublin seems a little optimistic and may have been overstated by The Irish Times in order to portray a high level of support the paper would have liked to assume existed amongst its Dublin readers for Earl Haig's fund and all the trimmings that went with it. Whichever figure one takes, the sale of poppies in the Irish Free State for 1924 amounted to £3,645 12s 5d (7) The total income from the sales of poppies world-wide in the same year amounted to £350,000. (8)

On Wednesday 11 November 1925, The Irish Times headlined. 'Dublin's 250,000 Poppies'. (9) By way of contrast the paper also noted, that in 'Belfast, the British Legion Headquarters had supplied 100,000 poppies for distribution.' (10) It is one of the more interesting ironies of Irish history that in 1925, disloyal Dublin distributed more poppies than loyal Belfast. The paper also quoted a sale of 2,000 poppies in the Co. Meath town of Navan. (11) Income resulting from the sale of poppies in Southern Ireland in 1925 was almost double on the previous year and was quoted as being £7,434 2s 7d. (12) The total income from the sales of poppies worldwide in 1925 amounted to £395,000. (13) Five years later for 1930, the paper quoted a figure of £9,722 as income from the sales of poppies in the Irish Free State. (14) Despite the animosity shown towards the poppy by a minority of people, if we are to believe The Irish Times, poppy distribution and sales in Dublin and throughout the Irish Free State were at one time on a par with if not greater than, Belfast.

### Poor Man.

Income from the sale of poppies in Ireland, both north and south, went towards the welfare of thousands of Irish veterans. Speaking at a dinner and re-union of the Royal Fusiliers Association at the Cannon Street Hotel in London in early November 1927, General Hickie claimed that there were 180,000 ex-Service men in Southern Ireland, and that there were 133 branches of the Royal British Legion in the Irish Free State. (15) Captain W.A Redmond, an ex-Irish Guardsman

and son of the old Irish National Party leader, claimed in a Dail speech on Wednesday 16 November 1927 that, there were in fact between 150,000 and 200,000 ex-Servicemen in the Irish Free State. (16) In November 1927, income from the sale of poppies on Remembrance Day in Cork amounted to approximately £500. The secretary of the local committee of the Legion in Cork stated to The Irish Times that, 'fifty percent of the cases which we have to handle are those of families from three to five in number who are absolutely destitute and how they manage to exist at all is a complete mystery.' (17)

By far the most active charitable organisation to operate in Ireland both north and south was the Society of St. Vincent De Paul. Each year, the various conferences of the Society throughout the island of Ireland compiled a report about the charity work they carried out in their parish. The report was sent to the Society's headquarters in Dublin and compiled into a countrywide report for the particular year. The contents of these parish reports present a disturbing insight into the high levels of poverty, deprivation, malnutrition and even starvation, that existed in the cities, towns and villages in Ireland in the mid 1920's.

The most common cause of poverty listed by the authors of these reports was unemployment. The lack of a steady income resulted in dreadful living conditions such as, for example, one family of eight in one room in a Dublin's tenement, poor diet and in some cases malnutrition and starvation. A simple indication as to how bad things were is that during the year 1925, roughly 35,022 men were admitted to the Society's shelter for homeless men in Back Lane, Dublin and 70,044 free meals were given. (18) Of course, these homeless men were not all ex-Service men. However, the soup kitchen and a bed in the night shelter of the St. Vincent De Paul was where many an ex-Service man ended up in Dublin. Over the next three to four years the homeless figures for Dublin remained roughly the same and, in fact, slightly increased. In Cork city, things were no better. (19)

The number of families visited by the Society during the past year has been larger than in any of the Society's other eighty years in our midst. The figure is 3,163. There were 14,978 people in these families (Average of five per family)...It is probably as true as it is distressing to say that the poverty found amongst the poor is greater and more acute than it has formerly been. It had been the experience of the visitors to find families suffering from hunger, not for one day, but as something approaching a normal state of things of those families. Very many had no clothing. In others, again, coupled with hunger and want, the people had no way of providing oil or candles to light the dark evenings of the winter months. In very numerous instances there was scarcely any furniture, or even a bed in the house..... There was, in addition, the large class of poor afflicted in one way or another by bodily ailment, sickness or infirmity of some kind, which added to the burden of poverty which they were carrying.

Ex-Service men, be they British Army or Irish Free State National Army, did not escape the ravages of unemployment and its social consequences. In their yearly report for 1924, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul stated. (20)

The principal cause of poverty in the Conference district during the year was unemployment, due to slackness of trade and illness. Some widows with young families came under notice also and were assisted. Applications were received from some ex-soldiers of the National Army, who were unable to obtain employment after demobilisation; their families were visited and assistance given by the conference.

The Conference district that this report referred to was the St. Joseph's Conference in Eccles Street,

Dublin. In the early 1920's, the area surrounding Eccles Street would have mainly been tenement houses and therefore considered to be a very poor part of Dublin's inner city.

The main work the Society of St. Vincent De Paul carried out for the ex-Service men who served in either the British Army or Irish Army was assisting them in obtaining their pensions and any other entitlements they were due from their years of soldiering. This particular work mainly consisted of filling out application forms and following their progress through the system until a pension was awarded. Being in the front line fight against the terrible poverty that existed in Dublin and the other cities in the Irish Free State, the Society would be the first people impoverished ex-Service men would come across. The Society volunteers would assist the men in any way they could and pass them on to the British Legion or any other association who looked after the welfare of ex-Service men.

By 1928, the war had been over ten years and judging by the type of work the Vincent De Paul did for the ex-Service men, i.e. pension and other entitlement applications, it would seem that many of the veterans of that war were still unaware of or did not receive their pension entitlements. To illustrate the kind of poverty that existed amongst ex-Service men, the following are some typical examples that the Society encountered between the years 1924 and 1928. Some of the examples make very sad reading indeed and present an army, both British and Irish, which cared little for its men when their services to King or President, and in some cases both, had been dispensed with.

**1924.** The Secretariat for the entire city of Dublin dealt with 240 cases where advice was given to people on matters relating to claims under the National Health Insurance Act and Pension entitlements. Of the 250 cases taken on by the Society, sixty were for ex-British soldiers. More interestingly in view of the alleged hostile attitude some Dubliners had towards their fellow citizens who once served the King, the report concluded. 'Regarding ex-British soldiers - all cases referred by us to the different organisations in Dublin were always given sympathetic consideration.' (21)

The majority of the conferences operated in parishes within the inner city of Dublin. For example, the Society assisted ex-Service men with their pension claims in the Dublin City Parish of St. Nicholas of Myra, a parish in the heart of Dublin known as 'The Liberties'. The three Mc Donnell brothers who were killed near Ypres in April and May of 1915 came from here. On the 6 May 1916, a week or so after the Easter rebellion, their mother and Patrick's wife, put a notice in The Irish Independent stating that a Mass would be offered for the repose of their souls in the Church of St. Nicholas of Myra.

**1925.** In Cork city, the Conference of St Mathew recorded. (22)

Another class weighing heavily upon us are the ex-Service men, some of whom have very little pensions, entirely inadequate to maintain their families, while some of these men have no pensions whatsoever, hence we get in touch with the Associations 'Comrades and Regimental' (Also Red Cross Emergency) attached to the battalions they had served in with fairly good results. It is only quite recently we succeeded in getting grants to the extent of £5-10s from the Army Comrades Association, London, for a family, the husband of whom was away in Waterford, with no means of taking them with him, so that the sum referred to it enabled us to send them there.

In Waterford, the Central Council of the Society received a sum of £260 from the *Southern Irish Loyalist's Association* in London. (23)

For distribution amongst deserving ex-Service men, and after consultation with members of the Legion of ex-Service men and other bodies with social knowledge of suitable families, it was dealt with to the satisfaction of the Association and the majority of applicants. No less than 700 applications were received for help

from the fund, each of which was fully considered and dealt with on its merits.

The Catholic Seamen's Institute at No. 4, Sir John Rogerson's Quay in Dublin noted in their report for 1925 that, 'A well known frequenter of the Institute, an old man, came from a sanatorium, delicate, without proper clothes and simply longing for a bit of tobacco. The pipe was soon supplied and the clothes followed from one of the Societies which cater for ex-Service men. It was simple kindness, but it meant a lot to a poor old friend.' (24)

The Secretariat for the Poor at No. 36 Middle Abbey Street in Dublin stated in their 1925 report. (25)

A few facts in connection with a couple of our cases may be of interest:- This man was a British Army pensioner suffering from neurasthenia. The case was referred to us by the Prisoners Aid Society and we were able to have his pension restored and the poor man placed under proper treatment and supervision and a 'Treatment Allowance' of £3-7s-6d per week granted to his wife, out of which she lodged each week in the Societies Penny Bank working in her district a substantial sum for the credit of her husband whilst he was undergoing treatment. It will thus be seen that there were three branches of our Society co-operating in this particular case.

What is interesting about this report is that it shows that the Society had a branch which specifically looked after ex-Service men.

**1926.** The St. Vincent De Paul Society were not only interested in saving a man's body from destruction, but having a religious philosophy, they wanted to save his soul as well or, in the following case, the soul of his wife and children. The Conference of St. Gabriel, Harold's Cross, Dublin recorded the following case of an ex-British soldier. (26)

A woman who at an early age married a British soldier who was stationed in Dublin before the war. They were married in a non-Catholic Church but the children, two girls, had been baptised Catholics. After the war the family settled down in England and until a year or so ago the husband did not interfere with the religion of the children. Then he expressed a wish to have them brought up as non-Catholics but sooner than sacrifice their faith, the mother went out to work and raised enough money to pay their passage home to Ireland..... Another girl was born after the arrival in Dublin and was duly baptised a Catholic.

The woman went to live with a former friend. She eventually went home to her mother and brother who lived in the country. The Society paid for her train fare.

The Conference of SS. Mary and Peter in Rathmines, Dublin, recorded in their 1926 report. (27)

In the case of an ex-British army man who died leaving a widow and seven children, the Conference had an appeal lodged with the Pensions Board. When the case was listed the papers were passed to the Secretariat, with the result that a substantial pension for the family has been awarded in this case.

The Conference of Our Lady of Dolores, Ozanam House at Mountjoy Square in Dublin reported a case which showed how the wounds inflicted in the war destroyed men and broke up families long after it had ended. This following case occurred in Dublin. It could well have been repeated right across the entire continent of Europe. (28)

A young commercial traveller with service in the British *and* National Armies, wife - a convert - and family of three small boys. Husband unemployed for about two years. Family living in miserable kitchen, full

of rats and draughts, practically no furniture, charged with high rent. Assisted by Conference for considerable period. Husbands brain became affected and the Conference, on the advice of a doctor, sent him to a Convalescent home in the hope that good food and a rest would recuperate him. His conduct in the home was so odd that they sent him away after a few days. His condition became worse and after making an attempt on his wife's life, he was removed to a mental hospital. At the request of the mother, we had the three boys admitted to an Industrial School and then sent her home to her people in the country. The latest report is that she has found employment. The boys are quite at home in the school.

The Conference of Our Lady Help of Christians, who met at the North Circular Road in Dublin, dealt with miscellaneous cases such as husbands going missing. Other cases concerning ex-Service men were of husbands in the National Army not sending allowances to their wives. They also dealt with ex-National Army men in search of employment and defending a family successfully against an eviction action from rooms. Correspondence with Australian Navy Department in endeavour to trace son of a client. The corresponded with British and Irish Army Pensions departments re pensions for ex-Service men and their widows etc. (29) The Secretariat, Myra House, 100 Francis Street, Dublin reported that 'during the period under review (1926) over 600 clients have been interviewed, and, where possible, their cases taken up and dealt with. The summary of cases which came before the brothers is as follows: National Health Insurance, British Pensions, Applications to Military Committees other than the Pensions and British Legion, Compensation for criminal injuries. Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Rent Increase Act cases and Ejection cases.' There was no statistical breakdown of these individual categories, however, the report stated that 'the cases met with were mostly rent and British pension cases.' (30)

**1927.** Sadly the town of Portadown has been associated with sectarian violence for many years. Poverty and deprivation are non-denominational, they show no respect for one's religious convictions. Despite their religious and political differences, the poor Protestants and poor Catholics of Portadown who were ex-Service men shared one thing in common, they were poor. From the reality of that shared misery, members of the St. Vincent De Paul Society and the Royal British Legion worked together in the battle against poverty in Portadown. The **Conference** of St Patrick, Portadown, Co. Armagh in their report for 1927 noted. 'Our President was offered and accepted a position on the local Committee of the British Legion and has since secured help for some of our own poor who are ex-Service men.'

(31)

Back in Dublin, the Secretariat for the Poor, 46 Middle Abbey Street noted in their yearly report.

(32)

During the year (1927) the Secretariat dealt with between five and six hundred cases. As in previous years, the majority of the cases were in connection with claims under the National Health Insurance, Unemployment Insurance and Old Age Pension Act, Military Pensions (British and Irish Free State, Pensions for ex-Service men's widows and children.....Widow of ex-soldier (British), large young family, husband died suddenly. Authorities held that the cause of his death was not attributable to impairment of health owing to war service. A member of the Secretariat appeared before the Appeal Tribunal and eventually secured a pension of nearly £3 per week for the family.

Finally for 1928, the Conference of St Ignatius Loyola, St Stephen's Green, Dublin, reported. 'We were able to help an ex-soldier to get a set of false teeth, with the assistance of the British Legion and the British Red Cross Society.'

(33)

### **Broken Man.**

Not only were some Irish veterans of the Great War poor, sadly to add to their misery, they

became the subject of local ridicule. In his study published in 1994 titled, 'Oral Testimony: The Liberties.', Professor Kevin C Kearns of the University of North Colorado, recorded the memories of people who lived in Dublin's Liberties. Many of the people Professor Kearns interviewed were in their seventies and eighties when they told their stories to him.

Paddy Mooney - Age 72 in 1993. He was born in a tenement house in Whitefriar Street where some shell-shocked war veterans lived and would rave and bellow about the street. Talking about one such war veteran, Paddy recalls. (34)

There was this man in our house on Whitefriar Street and he had a wooden leg and he had a war pension and he used to smoke a pipe. And he'd say to me, 'Get that jam jar and fill that up with butts.' So I'd fill the jam jar with butts I'd find on the street, take the paper off them and put the tobacco in his pipe and earn a ha'penny or a penny. He used to put on his artificial leg in the morning-time when he'd get out of bed. And he had two different legs, you see. He had a Sunday leg and a weekday leg and he used to keep the legs under the bed. And I'd get under the bed for to get this leg for him and he'd say, 'That's the f----- *Sunday* one, get the other one!'

There was a lot of cripples around and men that had come back from the war shell-shocked. They used to go round in maybe threes and fours playing music, playing instruments, through the streets and people would throw them a penny or ha'penny. There was one man used to go around with a stick and he'd roar 'Eeeeow.' And of course his nick-name was 'Eow'. There was another man and Christ almighty, it was terrible looking at him, sometimes he'd go mad and start bashing the metal rails along Whitefriar Street School with his fist and you'd want to see the *blood* gushing out of him .!

That's the way he was effected with the war.

Harry Mushatt - Age 83 in 1993, was known as '*The fellow with all the cures.*' Harry's matchbox-size chemists shop at No.3, Francis Street, became an institution and people from all over Dublin swarmed to his door. The Dublin writer Pete St. John affirmed in his book '*Jaysus Wept!*', that the Mushatt brothers '*had the greatest collection of cures and herbs in Dublin.*' Recalling his childhood memories of life in Francis Street, Harry Mushatt talked to Professor Kearns about the people who came into the shop. (35)

They were poor days and they all lived in one room and the average was between seven and ten children. And in tenement houses sanitation was a bad thing, and dampness. Ah, it wasn't healthy. There was lice and bugs and vermin. And during the war years the scabies was quite prevalent, you know with the soldiers coming back after living in the shelters and all. And you got men coming back after the First World War with malaria and shell-shock and many of them got very fond of the drink. And they'd do anything for drink. They even used to put on a show on the street, two or three of them, and sing and dance and go around with a hat and get a few bob - and into the pub for a drink. There was a fella, *Cal* was his name, and he was a character. He was in the army and shell-shocked and he'd go around mumbling and shouting and sometimes he would go off the deep end and come in with a cut across his forehead and say, 'Mr Mushatt, put some plaster on that for me.' Or even if he hadn't got a cut he'd say, 'Put some plaster on that.'

Stephen Mooney - Age 65 in 1993 lived in Pimlico in the Liberties. As a child, he recalled the laughs and thrills he and his friends got out of a few shell shocked veterans who lived locally. What is interesting about these recollections is the

approximate years Stephen recalled. Let us assume he was ten years of age when he remembers these shell-shocked characters. That would place him roughly in the year 1938. In other words, twenty years after the war ended, there was still men wandering the streets of Dublin displaying symptoms of shell shock and mental illness as a result of their Great War experiences. (36)

There was a few characters around our area that was shell-shocked and would chase us. There was one fella tha'd come down Marrowbone Lane and we'd call him names and he used to run after us and froth at the mouth. He'd chase us and actually beat you if he got hold of you. Then there was *Jembo-no-toes*. Jembo was shell-shocked but a very fine cut of a man. He lost some of his toes in the Great War and his balance wasn't perfect. He was inclined to waddle along. But he used to periodically go off the handle roaring and shouting.

In case we think men like *Eow*, *Cal* and *Jembo-no-toes* were just eccentric old characters seen around Dublin city who went off the bend every so often and who were at the butt end of laughter and occasional sympathy, there lies a hidden, sad and miserable reason as to why these unfortunate lonely men ended up the way they did. In 1919, St Brendan's Psychiatric Hospital in Dublin was called The Richmond Asylum. By kind permission from the Secretary of the Records Dept of St. Brendan's Hospital, I obtained the medical records of ninety-eight ex-Service men who were psychiatric patients at the Hospital in 1919. (37) On each man there is information on his military unit, his age, religion, brief history of his service, physical condition, appearance and finally a brief psychiatric report on him on admission. It makes sad reading indeed and to reproduce these records in their entirety would be too much for this essay. However, rather than showing just statistics, let the medical reports speak for themselves. The following are some of the more tragic cases. For obvious reasons, the names and addresses of these men were kept private by the Hospital's secretary.

Almost all had received wounds to the head and had been sent to the Richmond Asylum for psychiatric assessment and treatment. They were normally sent on to other hospitals around Ireland, mainly Belfast, or, simply discharged to look after themselves.

Case 1. Regiment. Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Age 48. Roman Catholic. Scars on head and back of neck. Dull, depressed, hearing noises, voices, sullen, morose. Tried to hang himself in Belfast.

Case 2. Regiment. 3<sup>rd</sup> Black Watch. Some wounds. Depressed, babbling, refers to King/Queen in obscene way, hearing voices.

Case 3. Regiment. Royal Engineers. Age 27. Roman Catholic. Dull, depressed, sullen, morose, noises in head, hears voices. Joined army at 15. Discharged into care of sister.

Case 4. Regiment. King's Own Scottish Borderers. Age 19 Single. Undergoing detention. Suicidal. Several wounds on limbs. Right foot badly disabled, only two toes. Dull, pain and buzzing noises, he sees things (Germans). Nervous, shaky, buried at Ypres. Court-martialled for striking a Sgt-Major. Got 112 days. Shot himself in foot at Arbourhill Barracks. (Dublin)

Case 5. Regiment, Royal Munster Fusiliers. Age 42. Joined army in 1906. Prisoner. Went to Asylum in Germany. Laughs in silly manner, bad headaches, noises in head.

Case 6. Regiment. Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Age 39. Married. Served at Dardanelles, severely wounded on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 1915. Headaches, noises and nervousness.

Case 7. Regiment. Royal Army Medical Corps. Age 36. Married. Roman Catholic. Suicidal. Scar on right side of neck, self inflicted. Wounded at Guillemont 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1916.

Case 8. Regiment. The Royal Irish Regiment. Age 22. Roman Catholic. Single. Dull, apathetic, noises in his head, poor memory, feeble-minded. After Battle of Messines says he felt 'queer' after

the bombardment, which he claimed was 'one of the worst in the world'.

Case 9. Regiment. The Royal Army Service Corps. Age 26. Roman Catholic. Good education. A student attending college in Ireland (Galway) BA Degree. Had a row with people at home and joined the Army. Sent to France and was sent home with delusions of persecution.

Case 10. Regiment. The Connaught Rangers. Aged 38. Roman Catholic. Tried to kill himself by jumping through the window of a railway carriage. Dull, depressed, unable to give collected account of himself. 'Mesmerised' (His words) by shell fire. Served in Mesopotamia in 1917.

Case 11. Regiment. The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Age 38. Married. Church of Ireland. Self inflicted injuries to right arm and leg. Worried, nervous, agitated, depressed, pain in head, noises, voices, sleeps badly. Served in Gallipoli.

**Rich Man.**

Not all the ex-Service men of the Great War fell on hard. Some returned to where they had left off before they went to war. In December 1927, a warrant was granted by the Grand Lodge of the Freemasons of Ireland in Dublin to set up a new lodge. This new lodge was given number 614 and the members adopted the name 'Spectamur Agendo', the regimental motto of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers that means, *by our deeds are we known*. The reason this name was chosen was that of the fourteen Founder Members, eleven were members of the Dublin Garrison Lodge No. 730, a lodge with a long standing military association which was originally formed to cater for Non-Commissioned Officers and men of the British Army stationed in the Dublin Garrison. It was felt that the name 'Spectamur Agendo' would be appropriate as several of the founder members had served in the First World War in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The Dublins Lodge owes its foundation to Mr Allin C.F. Guest. Born at Cloughjordan, Co. Tipperary. He joined the British Army as a boy soldier and took part in the Anglo-Boer War 1899 - 1902. He transferred to the Dublins and was made CSM (Company Sergeant Major) in September 1914 and RSM (Regimental Sergeant Major) in July 1915 in 'D' Company (The Pals) of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion who fought in Gallipoli in August 1915. (38) He was decorated in 1916 with the Military Medal and also received a commission into the 7<sup>th</sup> Dublins. In the Second World War he rejoined the Colours and was commissioned in 1945 to the rank of Captain. He died on the 31 January 1956 and is buried in Blackhorse Avenue Cemetery in Dublin.

The Lodge was constituted in a Masonic religious ceremony which took place at Molesworth Street Grand Lodge in Dublin at 6:00 p.m. on the 24 January 1928. The ceremony concluded and the lodge was closed in 'Peace, Love and Harmony' and all sang 'God Save the King.' Becoming a member of the 'Spectamur Agendo' Lodge in 1927 / 28 was an expensive business. When the lodge was constituted, the average industrial wage was £3-10-0 per week. When the lodge was founded, each founder member paid £5.00 to join, i.e. a sum which was just under two weeks wages

for the average industrial worker. There were also other fees such as initiation fees and dues. In 1928, the initiation fee was £8-8-0. Assuming the ex-Service man had a job, if he wanted to join the Mason's Lodge Number 614, he would have to be prepared to part with over one weeks wages at a minimum. The number of Great War veterans who could afford to donate one weeks wages to a gentleman's club in 1928 was extremely small. Lodge Number 614 continued on in existence right up to the 31 December 1997, but by that time the rich ex-Serviceman; the poor ex-Serviceman and even the broken ex-Serviceman had long passed away. (39)

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**“Fancy. The Royal Irish  
captured Moore Street.”**

*Tom Burke*

*The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.*

Towards the end of March 1916, nineteen-year-old 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Michael Wall of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Irish Regiment from Carrickhill, Portmarnock north County Dublin, had finished his six weeks training course at the Trinity College Officer Training Corps and was sent to Ballykinlar, Co. Down for further training. Prior to his enlistment, Michael was awarded a Dublin County Council Scholarship to study Science at University College Dublin. He had been to school in St. Joseph's Christian Brothers in Fairview and O'Connell's Christian Brothers School in Richmond Road, both schools in a suburb on the north side of Dublin City. For Michael and his fellow trainees, the wooden billets at Ballykinlar were a far cry from the comforts of a plush hotel in Dublin where they had been billeted while members of Trinity College Officer Training Corps.

On 18 April 1916, Michael began a process of 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 a British soldier mind you, but, as all young boys who make their First Confession are told, a soldier of Christ.

*Officers Company, Ballykinlar Camp,  
Co. Down. April 18<sup>th</sup> 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 in Carrickhill with his mother and the rest of his family. On Easter Sunday morning 1916, Michael left Carrickhill to return to Ballykinlar. He got the Great Northern train from Amiens Street in Dublin and arrived back in Camp at Ballykinlar in the early hours of Easter Monday. Whether by luck or Divine interference, he missed the beginning of the Easter Rising in Dublin by one day. Had he been there, he would have been called up. He wrote to his mother on Tuesday 25 April.

*Officers Company, Ballykinlar Camp,  
Co. Down. April 25<sup>th</sup> 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, the ....son. I heard there was a great racket in Dublin with the Sinn Feiners 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 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.*

It is interesting to note, that Michael's reference to the Easter Rising in Dublin came as item number three, i.e. after the *supper with Frank* and news about *Willie O'Neill obtaining a commission in the R.A.M.C.* Would it be too bold to suggest from the topical order in Michael's letter, that *supper with Frank* or *Willie O'Neill obtaining a commission* was, at that stage, more important to him than the Rising in Dublin. When writing to his Mother, it seems the Rising was a mere item three to talk about to his mother. However, like the rest of Dublin's population, when the full scale of the Rising came home a week or so later, it had jumped to item number one. In his next letter home, Michael's ambivalent attitude had changed.

*Officers Company, Ballykinlar Camp,  
Co. Down. 6<sup>th</sup> April 1916.*

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

*Dear Mother,  
I hope this letter finds you all well and safe at Carrick Hill. 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.*

*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 Carrick Hill and kindest regards*

*to Auntie. I remain, your fond son,  
Michael.*



Second Lieut. Michael Wall,  
3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Regiment.

On Easter Monday 24 April 1916, the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment were stationed at Richmond Barracks in Inchicore, Dublin. Only the former garrison church remains now, which is St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church. The battalion was under the command of Lieut.- Colonel R.L. Owens. The main function of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was to train new recruits and to return recovered wounded or sick soldiers back to the battalions at the front in Flanders, France or the Balkans. The participation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Irish Regiment in putting down the Rebellion of 1916 is recorded by the historian of the Royal Irish (18<sup>th</sup> Foot), Brigadier-General Stannus Geoghegan C.B. The following is his account of the battalion's activities during the Rising.

For some time previous to this date (24<sup>th</sup> April 1916), owing to the disturbed state of the country, an

inlaying piquet of 100 officers and men was kept in readiness to proceed at a moments notice wherever required. About noon on Easter Monday a telephone message from Garrison Headquarters in Dublin Castle was received, ordering all troops in barracks to proceed at once fully armed to Dublin Castle. Though asked for, no further information would be given. The inlaying piquet was at once ordered to proceed and the remainder of the battalion, less barrack guards and a few duty men, were ordered to get ready to follow. Shortly afterwards another telephone message was received from the General Post Office to the effect that 'Sinn Feiners' had seized the Post Office and help was required. Owing to this message the officer commanding of the inlaying piquet (Major Holmes) was directed to take all precautions on his way to the Castle, and luckily so, for the advanced guard had scarcely proceeded three-quarters of a mile when the rebels were discovered lying in ambush near the South Dublin Union, which they were holding in strength. Finding they were discovered, the rebels opened a heavy fire, wounding Lieutenant G. Malone and two men severely. Shortly afterwards, the main body from the barracks joined the piquet and Colonel Owens planned an attack on the Union, two companies making a flank attack by way of the Grand Canal. The rebels were in position in the building and the adjoining fields and opened a heavy fire on any party that showed itself. At about 3:30 p.m., the flanking party rushed the hospital building and captured most of its defenders, who regardless of the patients, fired from the windows on the attackers.

The fire could not be returned by the battalion owing to the danger of hitting the patients. Slowly the rebels were

driven from building to building, until finally about dusk the Union was cleared. The young soldiers of the battalion behaved in a splendid manner despite the trying conditions, although to many it was their first experience of warfare. That the fighting was heavy is shown by the casualties : Two officers (Captains A. E. Warmington and A.L. Ramsey) and five men being killed. One officer (Lieutenant North) and six men wounded.

That night, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Irish Regiment remained in occupation of the South Dublin Union. The next morning they were ordered to evacuate the Union and concentrate at Kingsbridge (Heuston) Railway Station. This new order came as a surprise to the battalion since they had lost so many men in trying to take it, they were now ordered to abandon it. The order to move to Kingsbridge was carried out under protest. The result was the rebels re-occupied the Union and it had to be retaken by another army unit who suffered heavy casualties in doing so a few days later. The battalion spent the next thirty-six hours in relative peace in the vicinity of Kingsbridge. They were then ordered to proceed to Trinity College. From there they occupied Grafton and Kildare Streets along with Merrion Square. Following the securing of these streets they were then ordered, along with other army units, to surround the headquarters of the rebels, which was the General Post Office. (1)

This was done by way of Butt Bridge, Gardiner Street, Great Britain Street (Now Parnell Street) and Moore Street, and the battalion captured the northern end of Sackville (O'Connell) Street, where battalion headquarters was established. Reconnaissance was made by means of an improvised 'Tank' and by small parties taking up positions in buildings near the Post Office. Under very severe fire, a party of the battalion assisted in placing an eighteen pounder field gun in position at the end of Sackville Street, a few rounds from which succeeded in

clearing the rebels from the roof of the Post Office and adjoining buildings. In the evening large fires broke out at the southern end of Sackville Street, which made an attack in force on the Post Office impossible.

On the morning of the 27<sup>th</sup> April a party of picked shots, under Major J.D. Morrogh, succeeded in getting a good position on a rooftop and thence inflicted casualties on the rebels in the Post Office. One shot wounded the rebel commander Connolly. Another party succeeded in getting a position quite close to the Post Office in the Sackville Street Club. Towards evening, the Post Office was set on fire and just at dusk the enemy began to quit the building and take up other positions, chiefly in what was designated the 'White House' at the end of Moore Lane. The battalion caused many casualties to the rebels as they were endeavouring to get away from the Post Office. During the night, various parties of the enemy attempted by rushes, one of which was headed by several maddened horses that they drove in front of them to break through the ring of troops, but the battalion foiled all these attempts. The O' Rahilly, who bravely led one of these attempts, was killed in front of the barricade at Moore Street.

On the morning of the 28<sup>th</sup>, a party under Major Morrogh and Company Sergt. Major Banks, succeeded in capturing the Republican flag from the roof of the Post Office. A field gun was then brought to bear on the 'White House' with effect, for soon after a woman appeared bearing a Red Cross flag. Fire was stopped and she came over and produced a written message from Commandant Pearse, the Officer Commanding now in charge of the rebels in the vicinity of the Post Office, saying he wished to treat for

terms of peace. The message was communicated by telephone to Brigadier-General Lowe, C.B, in command of the troops, who came to the spot and after several messages had passed, Pearse was brought to our lines and arrangements made for the rebels in the vicinity of the Post Office and the Four Courts to march out and lay down their arms in Sackville Street. At 6:00 p.m. about 600 rebels formed up and surrendered to the battalion, which kept them under guard till the following morning, when they were marched to Richmond Barracks. After the surrender General Lowe, complimented the battalion through Colonel Owens, on their excellent behaviour throughout and said it was due to the aggressive manner with which the battalion dealt with the rebels that the surrender was brought about.

The Republican flag that Major Morrogh and Co. Sgt. Maj. Banks captured from the roof of the GPO in Dublin was for many years kept in the Imperial War Museum in London. It was 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 Captain named Richard or 'Dick' Burke from Dingle in Co. Kerry. Dick won a Military Cross at the Battle of Wijtschate – Mesen Ridge on 7 June 1917 and after the war lived in Killester with his wife and two daughters. Sadly Dick's MC was stolen from his house and never recovered. In 1966, the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, in an act of reconciliation, the flag was returned to Ireland by the Imperial War Museum and for many years was on display in the National Museum of Ireland in Kildare Street, Dublin. One of our RDFA members, Professor Peter Simkins was a young historian at the Imperial War Museum at the time and was responsible for the handover of the flag.

One of the rebels who was captured by the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. (2)

In due course we were moved from the Custom House to Richmond Barracks. There were but little demonstrations of hostility directed towards us. Along the route the few people that were congregated looked on rather apathetically as if they had not got over the shock of the week's hectic events. We kept up the best front we could, and frequently broke into patriotic songs of which Crofts was the moving spirit. Our attitude was not one of defiance; we simply wanted the people who watched us go by to know that we were by no means downhearted and that in no way regretted the action we had taken.

At this time, the 18<sup>th</sup> 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 pow-wow 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 18<sup>th</sup>. 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

One clear impression left on my mind by these muttered confidences was that the 18<sup>th</sup> 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.

As we were sitting on the edge of cots chatting with the troops the door opened and a small group of British officers came in. We all came to attention. What brought us up so quickly was the fact that Commandant Joseph Mary Plunkett, our Chief of Staff, was in their midst. How terrible he looked! His throat was still heavily bandaged, with the tunic opened below the second button. He had no hat on and a brown army blanket was draped across his stooped shoulders. He looked weary and on the verge of collapse from exhaustion. As he crossed the threshold he paused, and I crossed the room impulsively to him, saluted and held out my hand. He took it in a gentle clasp and to my query as to how he was; he replied that he was not too bad.

The officers with him were treating him with every courtesy and made no demur against my intrusion. With a slight wave of his hand and a low voiced, 'God bless you all'. This utterly unselfish young patriot passed on with his escort. Just days later he was married to Grace Gifford only a few hours before he was taken out and shot to death.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, no less than 200 prisoners were evacuated from Richmond Barracks for internment in Knutsford Jail, England. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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* !.

Joseph Mary Plunkett and Grace Gifford were married in the prison chapel and a prison warder acted as the witness. Plunkett was sentenced to death by court-martial held in Richmond Barracks. The British officers presiding at Plunkett's trial were Colonel Maconchy, Lieut.-Col. Bent (an Irish born Royal Munster Fusilier) and Major Woodward. Plunkett was executed on 4 May 1916.

Some of the sharpest fighting in Easter Week had been between the Royal Irish Regiment and the Irish Volunteers at the South Dublin Union, and, between the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Volunteers at the barricades on the Cabra Road. (3) Two battalions of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers were involved in putting down the rising in Dublin. They were the 4<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion based in Templemore, Co. Tipperary and the 10<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion based in the Royal (Collins) Barracks, Dublin. The 4<sup>th</sup>(Reserve) Battalion was used a training battalion for both officers and men of

other ranks prior to them being sent to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> regular battalions of the regiment in France and Gallipoli. The 10<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion was one of the new Kitchener battalions that had been set up in late 1915 and had used the Pals concept in their recruiting campaign. See *The Blue Cap* Volume 7. March 200, for a profile of the men who served in the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

In December 1914, the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins were stationed in Sittingbourne in Kent, a town about fifty six kilometres south east of London. From fear of a German invasion of the south of England, they had been brought over from Queenstown (Cobh, Co. Cork) in October and became part of the Thames and Medway Defences under the Eastern Command. There they were employed digging trenches through the Kentish cherry orchards. Right up to the time they returned to Ireland in December 1915, new recruits were sent to Sittingbourne from Dublin almost weekly. Approximately 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. In April 1916, the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins were billeted in the grim barracks at Templemore in Co. Tipperary. By that time they had a battalion strength of 1,600 officers and men divided up into five companies. (4)

In the afternoon of Monday 24 April 1916, news came through from Dublin to Templemore that a rebellion had broken out in the city. Some of the Dublins officers had never heard of Sinn Fein, Irish politics were seldom discussed, the war in France was more important. During the day some of the officers had a general discussion about how their men would behave if ordered to fire on their fellow-countrymen. (5) At 6:00 a.m. on Tuesday 25 April, the entire battalion under the command of Lieut.- Colonel Meldon, entrained at Templemore for Dublin. Many of the men were light hearted about going to Dublin, anything seemed better than Templemore. That day, Martial Law was declared by the Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Wimborne. The train journey to Dublin was slow and when they arrived at Kingsbridge Station, all 1,600 men formed up in companies on the platform, nearly taking over the whole station. 'A batch of prisoners arrived and all doubt about the

men's behaviour was removed when they booted the prisoners with great gusto.' (5) The order was given to load with live ammunition. In the excitement that followed this order, twenty five live rounds went through the roof of the Station, the reason given was that many of the recruits hardly knew one end of a rifle from the other. They marched out of Kingsbridge Station left wheeled over the Liffey and marched in column up Parkgate Street and on to the North Circular Road. (6)

The British Army's plan of campaign to defeat the Volunteers in Dublin was to encircle them and draw their net tighter. To this end, a Northern and Southern cordon was formed around the city. As the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins marched along the North Circular Road, there were very few people on the streets. About 230 meters away from the point where the road acts as a bridge over the Midland Great Western Railway line from the Broadstone Station the column of Dublins stopped. ( Broadstone Railway Station is now out of use as a railway station but is used by Bus Eireann as a Bus depot). Ahead of the Dublins on the bridge was a Volunteers barricade made from country carts and boxes piled high on top of each other. Behind the barricade and in the houses on either side of it were uniformed Irish Volunteers. (7)

From fear of losing a lot of his men in a direct charge on the barricade, Col Meldon sent back a messenger to Army HQ in Parkgate for a Field Gun. Earlier that morning, four of these guns had arrived with their crews from Athlone. The Gun arrived drawn by horses and under the command of a very excited twenty-one year old English Royal Field Artillery officer. This young chap had never seen a live round fired, however he knew all the theory and was desperate to get a shot away before the rebels disappeared. He insisted in setting the gun and fuse in the shell himself and would not permit his sergeant to assist him. He fired the gun completely missing the target. The shell landed in the garden of Mountjoy Prison which was about 550 meters away and to add insult to injury, the shell was a dud. Col. Meldon later found out that the Governor of Mountjoy had the dud shell mounted as a souvenir of the rebellion and placed in his office at the prison. (8)

Because they were very brave or were unaware of the damage the shell from an 18 Pounder could do, many of the Irish Volunteers (IV) who manned the barricade waited for the gun to fire and never moved. However, the fun and games that were afoot with the young English officer soon came to an end when his more experienced sergeant stepped forward, took control of the gun and let fly with a second round which hit the barricade spot on blowing it to smithereens. Luckily for the volunteers, before the sergeant's shot was fired, they had moved away from the barricade into some of the surrounding houses. Following the firing of the artillery piece, a gun battle ensued between the Dublins and IV in the surrounding houses. After the fighting, some of the volunteers surrendered and others escaped northwards towards Glasnevin and Finglas. When members of 'E' Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins followed up the fighting with a house search of the area, one of their officers found an abandoned single barrel rifle the IV left behind in the rush. For many years after the Rising, the same rifle hung in the home of the Dublins officer who found it. (9)

During further operations up the railway line from the bridge over the North Circular Road to the Broadstone Railway Station, men from 'A' Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins came under attack from IV snipers. Before the Dublins took the bridge, the IV fired at the Station from the bridge and had tried to blow it up with the double object of rendering the road impassable for troops and blocking the railway. The bridge commanded the station yard and platforms and served as a private pathway constructed by the railway company for the use of their employees passing to and from their work at the Station. Some of the railway employees lived in a terraced housing estate which is still there to this day and is named Great Western Square. In the afternoon, men from 'A' Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins proceeded down the private pathway from the bridge along the sidings to establish communications with the railway station. This happened at about four o'clock. (10) Somewhere along this short journey between the bridge and the station, a distance of a couple of hundred yards, an officer from 'A' Company was killed by IV snipers shooting from houses overlooking the railway line.

One particular account records that two officers were killed. (11) However, according to the Commonwealth War Graves records, only one officer from the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins was killed during the Easter Rising, he was Lieut. George Gray.

The death of Lieut. Gray is referred to in two primary sources, both differ as to when he was killed. The first source is from the diary of Lieut. Dickson recently acquired into the archive of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association at the Dublin City Archive. Dickson claimed there were two officers from the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins killed in the operation to clear the railway line of Irish Volunteers between the bridge on the North Circular Road and the Broadstone station. In fact, Lieut. Gray was the only officer from that battalion killed during the Rising. Dickson also claimed that Lieut. Gray, a member of 'A' Company, was killed on *Tuesday* afternoon 25 April. Lieut. Dickson's company, i.e. 'B' Company, was ordered late in the afternoon to relieve Lieut. Gray's 'A' Company who were already at Broadstone. (12). So, according to Lieut. Dickson, Gray was killed in the afternoon of *Tuesday* 25 April 1916 somewhere along the railway line and sidings between the bridge on the North Circular Road and the Broadstone railway station.

The second account of the death of Lieut. Gray is given by a fellow officer named 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Eugene Sheehy. He was the son of a Nationalist Member of Parliament, a Catholic and ex-Belvedere College. In 1910, Sheehy was called to the Bar. One of his sisters, Hannah, was married to the Irish pacifist Francis Skeffington. His other sister, Mary, was married to Lieut. Tom Kettle of the 9<sup>th</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Sheehy's account of the death of Lieut. Gray is as follows. (13)

The only death we had to record was that of an officer named Gray. On the *Thursday* he led a small party of men to attack an outhouse in Kelly's Lane from which troops holding the Broadstone were being sniped at. It was a very foolhardy venture as our men offered an open target to the rifles in the outhouse. Through his own field-glasses - which he gave me to

mind for him - I witnessed the attack from the roof of the railway station and, within a few minutes, saw him shot dead in the laneway. He received a bullet through the head and was killed instantaneously.

Sheehy's account states Lieut. Gray was killed on *Thursday* 27 April and Dickson believed he was killed on *Tuesday* 25 April. To add further confusion, the Commonwealth War Graves records state he died on *Friday* 28 April.

In terms of where he was killed, the two accounts somewhat agree. Kelly's Lane in 2006 is in the same spot as it was in April 1916. It is a little laneway sandwiched between the Royal Canal Bank line of houses and the Phibsborough Road. Access to the laneway lies directly facing the Fire Station on the Phibsborough Road. Behind the Fire Station is the disused railway line and sidings between the bridge on the North Circular Road and the Broadstone railway station. Although Sheehy claimed to have seen Lieut. Gray shot through the head in the laneway, i.e. Kelly's Lane, it is literally across the road from where Lieut. Dickson claims Gray was killed which was along the railway sidings. Therefore it seems that the accounts as to *where* Lieut. Gray was killed would agree somewhat. Using field glasses from the top of the Broadstone Station, to spot a man being shot in the head in Kelly's Lane is questionable since the lane was surrounded by houses and is roughly 270 meters away from the station. The probability is that 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Sheehy saw Lieut. Gray being shot in the head in the vicinity of Kelly's Lane rather than as he claimed *in* Kelly's Lane. Both accounts of Lieut. Gray's death were written many years after the event and so dates and specifics may have become a bit hazy in terms of precise locations and times. The first account written by Lieut. Dickson was written in 1962 and Sheehy's account was written in 1951.

Second Lieut. Gray came from Newcastle-on-Tyne. Before joining the Dublins he was a Dental student. He was twenty-two years of age when he died and is buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin. His name is on a memorial in the Church of Ireland Church in Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin.

The other Dublins officer who died was Lieut. Gerald Aloysius Neilan, a Dubliner, who was with the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion. (14) He was killed by a sniper at Usher's Island on Easter Monday. His brother, A. Neilan was sent to Knutsford Detention Barracks in England on 1 May for his participation with the rebels in the Rising. (15) The Neilan's were not the only brothers to take different sides. At St. Joseph's CBS in Fairview, there was two brothers named Saurin from Clontarf. Thomas Saurin, served with the British Army in the Royal Army Medical Corps on the Western Front. Thomas passed the Middle Grade at St. Joseph's in 1910 and was a brother of Charles Saurin who was an Irish Volunteer officer in the Dublin Metropole Hotel garrison that fought against the British Army in the Rising. The Saurin brothers lived in 'The Cottage', Vernon Avenue, Clontarf. Another Joeys Boy named Tom O' Mara from the Howth Road in Clontarf also joined the British Army at the outbreak of the war and was commissioned Lieutenant. (16) There were also the two Malone brothers written about in previous Blue Caps. Irish Volunteer Lieut. Michael Malone was killed during the fighting at 20 Northumberland Row in Dublin. In May 1915 his brother Sgt. William Malone was killed in the German gas attack at Mouse Trap Farm. Indeed a week or so after the Rising had ended, a first anniversary death notice was placed in the Irish Independent Newspaper on 6 May 1916 which read, 'In sad and loving memory of my dear husband Sergt. William Malone, 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers who was killed in action at St. Julien on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1915. Sweet heart of Jesus have mercy on his soul.... Inserted by his loving wife and children.' (17)

Later in the afternoon of 25 April, 'E' Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins were ordered to relieve 'A' Company at Broadstone. (18) This they did without any difficulty and set up their headquarters in the offices of the Broadstone Station. The other companies pushed forward into the Phibsborough area, their ultimate objective being the Amiens Street railway station. That night, the men of 'E' Company settled down with sentries posted. (19)

It was hard to establish just where the enemy were and which houses they occupied, for the station was tightly

ringed around with houses except on that side which carried the railway lines; civilians had gone into their homes, they had shut the doors and seemed to be waiting to see whether or not the rebels had any success, although I am sure the majority did not approve of fighting..... We all had a scratch meal of sorts and waited to see what the night would bring. Gradually the City became quieter and settled down, so that by midnight everyone in the houses around seemed from sheer exhaustion to be going to sleep.

The next morning, Wednesday 26 April, was warm and sunny. The Irish Volunteers were seen withdrawing from the Broadstone area and moving back towards the city centre. 'E' Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins was ordered to leave the Broadstone Station and return to the North Circular Road. There was a feeling that the Volunteers would try to break out of the cordon from the Grangegorman district and escape across the North Circular Road into open country. To prevent this breakout, 'E' Company went back up the railway line and set up a number of small posts with a new Company H.Q near the Richmond Hospital. 'E' Company was responsible for the section of the cordon which ran from Parkgate down the North Circular Road to Phibsborough with the Cattle Market and Grangegorman roughly in the middle. On the south side of the city, fierce fighting had been going on all day between the volunteers and newly arrived battalions from England. Before the arrival of English troops, it was mainly Irish troops in Irish regiments who confronted the Irish Volunteers. Irishmen fighting Irishmen, if that is not civil war, what is?

Apart from the odd bit of sniping, the sector in which 'E' Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins was responsible for was reasonably quiet for the rest of the day. Before it got dark, enquiries were coming into 'E' Company H.Q from the local residents along the North Circular Road who were concerned about getting food through the cordon. The majority of these people at the time were anti-rebel and anxious that law and order should be restored quickly. (20)

Owing to Martial Law, a mere 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant who was a company commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublins, had complete control of matters relating to the public services and police within his area of the cordon. All business and the distribution of food and milk was at a standstill. Many of the locals wanted to do something about the shortage of food so they were advised to go out of Dublin and try to bring their essentials in from the country. That night, being a glorious warm evening, some of the officers and men of 'E' Company slept in their greatcoats on the pavements along the North Circular Road. (21)

On Thursday afternoon 27 April, special orders issued by Lieut.- Col. Meldon were sent from the battalion headquarters at the Broadstone Station to 'E' Company headquarters near the Richmond Hospital. The orders were for an officer and machine gun crew to proceed to high ground on the North Circular Road and 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.' (22) Lieut. Dickson took a Maxim gun, a sergeant and two other men with him to carry out the order. Facing the Cattle Market on the North Circular Road in Dublin is a line of beautiful red bricked three story terraced houses known as Altona Terrace. There are now houses built on the site of the old Cattle Market. At this point on the North Circular, i.e. 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. Meldon's order. Grangegorman was a very poor area of the Dublin's northwest inner city with a myriad of narrow streets. The area was also synonymous with the mental hospital built in its midst. The hospital was then known as the Richmond Asylum, subsequently called St. Brendan's Mental Hospital.

The Dublins machine gun crew called to a house on 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 Dickson asked permission to mount a machine gun in his house. The Dublins had no joy here. The bearded man claimed his wife was ill and

asked the soldiers to move on. This they did and being the good gentlemen they were, approached another house along the Terrace with equal courtesy. The owner of this house 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 about 1,000 rounds which must have broken several hundred slates and windows and kept everyone indoors for a while.' (23) It wasn't the only time the Dublins fired off a machine gun into civilian houses. 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. Arthur Killingley claimed that, 'a machine-gun of ours at the five cross-roads peppered a few suspected houses.' (24)

During the Rising there were, according to the official British list of casualties, 180 civilians and insurgents killed and 614 wounded. One can only wonder, did the action ordered by Col. Meldon and his colleagues contribute in any way to the above statistics. The operation to remove the volunteers from Grangegorman required a fine scalpel, what Col. Meldon used was a blunt hatchet.

It transpired that the bearded man whom the Dublins machine gunners originally visited was telling the truth about his wife being ill after all. 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. (25) This mysterious bearded man was in fact Serjeant Alexander M. Sullivan K.C, a most able Dublin barrister who lived at Altona House, Altona Terrace on the North Circular Road. The house is in fact No.119 North Circular Road. Sullivan, a Catholic, 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 hanged in Pentonville Prison, London. (It seems a bit ironic that the authorities hanged Casement for illegally importing arms into the United Kingdom in 1916 and in 1921 Frederick Crawford, the man responsible for

importing UVF guns into the same United Kingdom, was awarded a CBE.)

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 him four days after the rebellion was over. Dickson noted in his diary. (26)

Four days later when the rebellion was over, I met my friend and brother Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Maurice Healy, 4<sup>th</sup> 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. His Nationalism belonged to the Kettle school of thought. Of those who followed the more extreme form of Irish Nationalism, Healy wrote. (27)

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 Louvain 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'*. (28) Both Lieut. Healy and the aforementioned Lieut. Eugene Sheehy knew each other from their days at Belvedere College. (29) Healy was active in the recruiting campaign of 1915 and according to Eugene Sheehy, 'resembled his famous uncle in that he never failed to raise a row when he considered that he or others were unfairly treated.' (30) Both men were Nationalists and according to Sheehy. (31)

The War Office evidently did not approve of Irish Nationalists as officers..... 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.

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. Sheehy and Healy went to serve with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Dublins in July 1916. They were replacement officers for the battalion following the losses at the Battle of the Somme. Lieut. Dickson was sent to the 9<sup>th</sup> Dublins near Hulluch, north of the French city of Lens. 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 29<sup>th</sup> Division HQ 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. (32)

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.

After the war both Sheehy and Healy returned to Ireland and resumed their legal practice. Dickson too returned home. 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, Serjeant Sullivan attended and always told me how 'my' boy was getting on.' (33) During the War of Independence, Alexander Sullivan K.C. survived two murderous attempts on his life perpetrated by the IRA. He left his beautiful house on the North Circular Road and moved to London where he had a very successful legal career. When things quietened down, he eventually returned to live in Ireland.

Briefly returning to the Rebellion. By Friday 28 April, it was noticeable that bursts of fire became less frequent. Despite their spraying of Grangegorman, 'the British troops were everywhere popular and we were thanked by all for restoring order and dealing so well with, what Dublin's citizens called, hot headed rebels'. (34) The next day, the official announcement that the rebellion had collapsed was announced. During the fighting, 'E' Company of the 4<sup>th</sup> Dublin Fusiliers suffered no casualties, mainly because the sector for which they were responsible for was very quiet. On Sunday, the battalion assembled at

Broadstone and travelled by special train to barracks in Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. (35)

### **Attitudes to the Rising amongst Irish soldiers serving in the British Army – 1916.**

Opinions and sentiments about the Rising amongst Irish soldiers who were serving in the British Army during the time of the Rising has been and still is, an interesting subject of study and debate. In terms of the Irish troops serving in France, the consensus of opinion amongst these men towards the Rebellion seems to be that they thought the Rising was a stab in the back. This was also the opinion of the members of the Irish Parliamentary party who suggested Irishmen should go to France in the first place. (36) In terms of the Irish troops serving at home during the Rising, opinions seemed to be mixed. In his letter to his mother on 26 April 1916, Michael Wall told her with a sense of pride, that his regiment, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Irish, had '*captured Moore Street*'. He also told her that he was '*sharpening*' his bayonet ready for any encounter with '*the beggars*' in Sinn Fein. This young, upper middle class Catholic Irishman, educated by the Christian Brothers in St. Joseph's and O'Connell's schools in Dublin, was totally against the Rising and had he had his way, would have given the '*beggars*', as he called them, a taste of his sharpened bayonet. These sentiments about the rebels and no doubt the Rising itself are in stark contrast to the attitude shown by some other men who served in the same regiment as Michael Wall and who were interviewed by Commandant Brennan during his period of detention at the Richmond Barracks. Brennan recalls that, 'Many of the NCO's and men of the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment (The Royal Irish Regiment) were very dissatisfied that we had not given them a chance to join us.' By further contrast, he also recalls attitudes from the people of Dublin. While being marched off down the Dublin quays to prison in England, he and his fellow Rebels were, 'pelted by garbage and filthy epithets by the scum of the city.' Based on the sentiments expressed by Michael Wall and Commandant Brennan, it would be wrong to draw any general conclusions about attitudes of Irish soldiers serving in the British Army to the rebellion in Dublin. Second Lieut. Eugene Sheehy recalled. (37)

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.

It seems that attitudes amongst the Irish troops was mixed and probably for various reasons which were not all politically motivated, on balance, were against the Rising. However, as Commandant Brennan has told us, there was amongst some of the ranks, a sense of admiration and sympathy towards rebels themselves. The Rising did however leave some resentment amongst these men who joined the British Army at the outbreak of the Great War. Thirty-five years after the Rising, Eugene Sheehy wrote about it. He still maintained that. (38)

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

When he wrote his diary in 1962, Lieut. Dickson wrote an appraisal of the Easter Rising in Dublin. Following a brief stay at Mullingar he was sent to the 9<sup>th</sup> Dublins in France and was badly wounded at Hulluch north of Lens. He survived the war and returned 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. He was an Irish Unionist and his perspective makes interesting reading. (39)

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'

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## The Medals of a Gallipoli Pal Return Home.

Sean Connolly

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

One of my more satisfying projects during 2006 began as a request to trace the owner of a set of three Great War medals. These had been found in a drawer of a desk bought by a relative of Mrs. Deirdre Leeson at an auction over forty years ago. The publicity about The Battle of the Somme prompted Deirdre to contact the Association to see if we could trace any relatives of the Royal Dublin Fusilier who had been awarded the medals.

The name engraved on the medals was **16973 Cpl. A.D.McMurtry R.D.Fus**, a surname that is rather uncommon. This made it possible to quickly find a potential match in the UK National Archives index to the Medal Rolls. I found an "Alexander Dykes McMurtry" who was shown as having gone to the "Balkans" on 9 August 1915. He was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant into the Royal Irish Fusiliers on 14 April 1917.

The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalions of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers landed at Suvla Bay in Gallipoli on 7 August 1915. This led me to check *The Pals at Suvla Bay* which covers the formation and Gallipoli experience of 'D' Company, 7<sup>th</sup> RDF. These soldiers were an elite group some of whom were drawn from sporting groups such as the Irish Rugby Football Union. Most could have applied for commissions but decided to join as privates in order to serve together. There is a picture of them in formation on the pitch at Lansdowne Road in our exhibition at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin. I found the following entry, accompanied by a photograph.

Alfred D. McMurtry. Born in Belfast, son of Ch. Mc Murtry, now of Dublin. Educated at Methodist College, Belfast and St Andrew's College, Dublin. Commercial Traveller. Invalided, suffering from frostbite December 1915. Now Sergeant.

He was listed as one of the seventy-nine survivors of 'D' Company 7<sup>th</sup> RDF who left Suvla Bay on 30

September 1915 as a Corporal in Number 13 Section. I decided that this was the likely recipient of the medals, despite the difference in the first names.



Second Lieut. Alexander McMurtry, Royal Irish Fusiliers seated, with a fellow officer.

Having discussed this with Mrs. Leeson, I began to phone the small number of McMurtrys in the Dublin telephone directory, not knowing how my approach would be received. We have all been annoyed by random phone calls trying to sell something or other. The father of the first man with whom I spoke was an Alfred who had served in the First World War but it quickly became clear that he was not our soldier. He kindly pointed me to another family, not related, that could help. Sure enough, the next person I phoned turned out to be a nephew of an Alexander McMurtry and within fifteen minutes, I had a call from Mrs. Pat Roberts, a daughter of Alexander who confirmed that the name in *The Pals at Suvla Bay* was an error. Mrs. Leeson then made arrangements to return the medals and they were handed over to Mrs. Roberts who said that they had been stolen during a burglary over fifty years ago and were very much missed by her father.

My subsequent visit to Mrs. Roberts helped to fill out the story, while sampling some delicious

homemade cake. Alexander Dykes McMurtry, or Alec as he was called, was born in Belfast on 3 January 1895. He became a commercial traveller in Dublin and enlisted in *The Pals* at the outbreak of the war. He survived the landings at Suvla Bay and the subsequent period of trench warfare that gradually petered out as the campaign ground to a halt. He was promoted to Corporal and Sergeant. He recalled one occasion when a group of his men were filling their helmets with tomatoes on a nearby farm and they discovered a group of Turkish soldiers doing the very same thing. No shots were exchanged.

After Gallipoli, he was transferred to Salonika with his battalion to fight on the Serbian front. The soldiers were not equipped for the harsh winter conditions that were the norm for that region. As a result, Alec got frostbite and was evacuated to a hospital in Malta. There was a risk that he would lose a leg but the intervention of a friendly nurse persuaded the doctors to wait and only one toe was amputated. He spent his twenty-first birthday in the hospital. When he recovered, he was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant with the Royal Irish Fusiliers.



Mrs. Pat Roberts, Alexander's daughter.

He served in Flanders. More research is needed to discover how he fared out there. After the war, he was stationed for some time on Valentia Island, Co. Kerry where he thought it rained every day.

When he was demobilized, he pursued his career with Rowntrees Sweets in Kilmainham, Dublin.

He joined the Local Defence Force during the Second World War and was prepared to repel invaders, even, as he told his wife, the British Army if necessary. He attended the annual dinners of the old Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association until the venue was moved from the city centre to the Green Isle Hotel. He died on 24 January 1978 and his funeral took place on 27 January at Dunganstown Church of Ireland, Co. Wicklow. He had just passed his eighty-third birthday. He is fondly remembered by his children and grandchildren for his humorous anecdotes and the sense of fun that he never lost, despite his wartime experiences.

## The Irish War Memorials Project.

Michael Pegum

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

War memorials were erected for a purpose: to commemorate the men and women who served and died for what they believed in. Some simply commemorate all those from a district, but many have lists of names. Anyone who has visited a family grave, or seen a memorial with the name of a relative, knows that the record of that person, the name written in stone or metal, has great significance. For many families, whose relatives had died and were buried in foreign fields, or who had no known grave, the name on the memorial was all they had. It is not surprising that some memorials have the message: "Let those who come after see to it that their names be not forgotten."

The Inventory of Irish War Memorials began in 2004 as a project to record the memorials and make the names on them available for search and reference to a wide audience. From the beginning the emphasis has been on recording the names and any information about them presented on the memorial. However, as much information about each memorial as possible is collected, memorials without personal names are also recorded. The memorials concerned are those on the island of Ireland, to any conflict involving Irish men and women, including service with the United Nations.

With the help of seventeen contributors, a record has been made so far of over 170 places, over 350 memorials and over 10,700 names. Two types of record are made. Firstly, a form is filled in for each memorial. This allows a record of all possible information, from the exact site and dimensions to the history of its erection, who unveiled it and whether or not it has been moved from its original position. Of course, in the majority of cases little of the history is known. However, local and history societies may research their own memorials, and the information can be stored here. The forms and all other records, such as photographs, will be handed over as an archive to the Military History Department of the National Museum and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Association Archive in Dublin City Archive and Library when the present organiser can no longer continue. It is hoped that the project will then be kept going under the auspices of the Museum.

As well as the paper records, photographs, with transcriptions of the inscriptions and all the names, are posted on a website, [www.irishwarmemorials.ie](http://www.irishwarmemorials.ie). The list of names can be searched by surname and, so far, fourteen names have been found by relatives from all over the world who did not know of the memorials previously. The list can also be searched by county, and memorials from twenty counties have been recorded to date.

It is also possible to search for all casualties of a particular war or conflict, or all members of a particular regiment or service. Thus it is possible to say that there are 770 R.D.F. names on memorials recorded up to the end of February, 2007. An up-to-date searchable C.D. with all these names, and links to the memorials concerned, is sent in to the committee of the R.D.F. Association from time to time.

Only a small proportion of the war memorials in Ireland have yet been recorded, and contributors, especially from outside Dublin, are very welcome. There is more to recording a memorial than taking a photograph, though. The form to be filled in can be downloaded from the website, or requested by post. This is accompanied by a page of notes with advice on how to fill in the form. The photographs need to show general and close-up views of the memorial and the building housing it, if it is in one, with photos of the inscription so clear that it can be read. Digital photographs are preferable, but good-quality prints are acceptable as they can be scanned into the computer. A look at a few of the memorials on the website will show what is required.

All contributions are acknowledged both on the form and on the website. Further information can be obtained from Michael Pegum, Belville House, Stillorgan Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4

## Poetry.

Fr. Willie Doyle SJ

By

Martin Moore

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

He helped his boys – those boys he loved so well  
Amidst the stinging shot and bursting shell,  
Far more than Chaplain was he – more a friend  
He shared their pain and suffering to the end.  
Beloved by all ‘his boys’, he loved them too  
Their troubles eased, their fears and hopes he  
knew.

When danger threatened, ever by their side  
To whisper words of comfort as they died.

The prudent counselled him – they said be wise  
But he shrugged off advice for where ‘his boys’  
Fell dead and dying – there his duty lay  
Until he too like them met death one day.  
He loved ‘his boys’ in life and now he lies  
With them beneath the foreign Belgian skies  
Now gone forever, gone to rest a while  
The Dublin’s friend, God’s Chaplain – Willie  
Doyle.

The Thomases

By

AE (George) Russell.

In December 1917, *The Irish Times* published a poem by AE Russell lamenting two fallen Thomases, Mac Donagh who died in the Easter Rising and Kettle who died in the attack on Guillemont in September of the same year. Both were lecturers at UCD. This poem was presented to The Blue Cap poetry section by Major-General Paddy Nowlan, retired Irish Defence Forces.

I listened to high talk from you,  
Thomas Mc Donagh, and it seemed  
The words were idle, but they grew  
To nobleness by death redeemed  
Life cannot utter words more great  
Than life may meet by sacrifice,  
High words were equalled by high fate,  
You paid the price: You paid the price.  
You who have fought on fields afar  
That other Ireland did you wrong

Who said you shadowed Ireland’s star,  
Nor gave you laurel wreath nor song.  
You proved by death as true as they,  
In mightier conflicts played your part,  
Equal your sacrifice may weigh  
Dear Kettle of the generous heart

(To the Memory of Some I Knew who are Dead  
and who Loved Ireland.)

Flanders ‘Harvest.

By

Dr. John Laffin , Australia.

20 July 1983.

On 23 May 1983, a young Flemish farmer named Jacques Covemaeker was ploughing the land on his farm named Lokerhof on the southern outskirts of Loker when his plough hit an unexploded shell left in the ground from the Great War. He died soon after the explosion with his wife by his side. It was in the village of Loker that General William Hickie, GOC 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division had his headquarters in the months prior to the attack on Wijtschate at dawn on 7 June 1917. After visiting Jacques wife to offer his condolences, an Australian doctor named John Laffin wrote the following poem. We would like to thank Mr. Johan Vandelanotte of the VVV Heuveland Tourist Office in Kemmel for presenting Dr. Laffin’s beautiful poem to our poetry section.

In a last mad fling  
Of men and steel  
That desperate spring  
The Germans broke  
The British Line  
And Messines and Neuve-Eglise  
And Bailleul and Loker  
And a score of other places  
Fell to field grey.  
Shocked British infantry  
Pulled back while  
Gunnery galloped  
On to the hills and  
Through open sights  
Flung frantic fire on the  
Spreading German stain.

‘Quick!’ a sergeant ordered  
 ‘Into action! We’ll have  
 that lot with shrapnel!  
 Aim two degrees right of the farm’  
 And he pointed to a field.  
 ‘Fire!’  
 The British watched,  
 Counted the seconds – and then...  
 ‘Damn! Bloody shells  
 a dud, gone into that mud.  
 Let’s move, boys, before  
 Jerry gets our range  
 And strafes us.  
 The war’s not over yet.’  
 ‘Bloody mud’, a gunner grumbled.

The long winter over,  
 The soft and fertile Flemish fields,  
 Stirring in the springtime warmth,  
 Waited bride-eager for the plough  
 To let in light and air.  
 On soil enriched by concentrated war –  
 The bodies of men and horses,  
 The earth churned and turned –  
 Two generations of farmers  
 Had prospered on this land.  
 Jacques Covemaeker worked it  
 As a boy, learned the value  
 Of each field,  
 Loved the green and yellow flax,  
 The honest-toil potato crop,  
 The rich-harvest sugar beet  
 In the field behind the cemetery  
 Of British soldiers –  
 Lancashire lads who’d died  
 Defending it.

The weather was benign at last,  
 The light was long  
 And there was much to do.  
 Jacques, proud with new tractor,  
 Was drilling the beet field and  
 After a quick meal at the farm  
 Climbed back into his seat.  
 ‘I’ll work till dark’,  
 He told his wife and kids,  
 And smiled. ‘The harvest will  
 Be rich this year.’

From the farm they saw  
 Man and tractor silhouetted  
 As daylight slipped into dusk  
 And dusk to transparent twilight,  
 And they heard the drills  
 Driving into the thick earth.  
 At nine o’clock  
 Precisely  
 A drill found  
 The British shell...  
 As it exploded  
 The shrapnel balls  
 Ripped through man and tractor  
 Jacques lived a little –  
 Long enough for his  
 Wife to reach him.

‘Bloody mud’, the sergeant  
 growled, ‘ the war’s not over yet.’

An the mud was bloody now,  
 And the war was still not over.  
 And the harvest is the same –  
 For these are Flanders Fields.

## Review of 2006.

Sean Connolly

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

The past year will be remembered as a watershed in the campaign to gain recognition for the Irish men and women who took part in the First World War. The main reason for forming our Association was a desire to do something positive to restore a missing chapter of our history and to make more people aware of the events and individuals that had been neglected. The fact that 210,000 plus Irish soldiers served in the British Army during that war did not align easily with the focus on the 1916 Rising as the key event in the 20<sup>th</sup> century Irish history. For many years, the journalist Kevin Myers had tried to prick the conscience of the Republic but with little effect. Despite the poor prospects, we started our programme of activities content in the knowledge that we were doing our best to honour our forgotten countrymen and women. Even in our most optimistic dreams, we did not foresee how relatively quickly progress would be made.

The July ceremony to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme was the clearest proof yet that the long period of amnesia was well and truly over. Following the successful commemoration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1916 Rising, the Irish Government opened a new chapter in our history by the decision to organise a full state ceremony at the National War Memorial to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. The losses of the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division on the first day of that battle had long been a central element in the Unionist tradition. The heavy losses suffered by the 16<sup>th</sup> Irish Division in the battle's later stages were largely ignored on both sides of the border. In a groundbreaking ceremony, President McAleese, Taoiseach Ahern, members of the Government and thousands of guests saw members of the Irish Army honour fellow countrymen and women who served in the British armed forces in the First World War. The televised images on that glorious summer's day and the sentiments expressed removed any doubts about the attitude of the Irish Republic to the volunteers who had chosen a different path to

serve their country. In particular, the appearance of the flags of the three Irish divisions and all of the countries involved in the Battle was proof that our wish to have those who served and died recognised as an integral part of our history had been achieved.

There were other signs of the changed attitudes last year:

- The exhibition "Soldiers and Chiefs", which will run for ten years at the National Museum in Collins Barracks, includes a significant and balanced presentation on the First World War as well as material on the role of the British army in the day to day life in Ireland prior to independence. We would like to think that our Association's submission to the National Museum back in 1997 helped to extend the perspective on what constituted Irish military history.
- The Department of the Taoiseach's website posted an article on the Irish Soldiers in the First World War (translated into Polish and Chinese). See [www.taoiseach.gov.ie](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie) Click on the 1916 button.
- A postage stamp was issued to mark the Battle of Somme anniversary. It featured J P Beadle's famous painting of the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division's attack, which normally hangs in Belfast City Hall.

At this time, it is fitting that we remember our deceased members who helped to create the momentum but who did not live long enough to witness the historic events of last year.

Our main Association activities during the year took place in the Dublin City Library and Archive in Pearse Street. The AGM was held in April.

The Australian and New Zealand Embassies organised a service at 6.30 am in Grangegorman Military Cemetery on Blackhorse Avenue on the anniversary of the Gallipoli landings on 25 April 1915. In a moving ceremony, held in light rain, the soldiers from Australia, New Zealand and their comrades from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales

and France were remembered. The Chief of Staff, Lieut. Gen Jim Shreenan and Junior Minister Tom Parlon TD attended. There was a good representation from the RDFA including Dan O’Driscoll whose father, Michael was Lieutenant in the Dublin Fusiliers and is buried in the cemetery.



The Australian Ambassador to Ireland, Ms Anne Plunkett laying a wreath at the Memorial Wall in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Blackhorse Ave, Dublin – April 2006.



Dan O’Driscoll RDFA standing at the grave of his father Lieut. Michael O’Driscoll in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Blackhorse Ave, Dublin. See *The Blue Cap* Vol. 12, 2005 for story of Lieut. O’Driscoll.

In June, a number of members marched in the commemoration organised by the Combined Irish Regiments Association in London.

July was a busy month. At 7.30 am on the 1<sup>st</sup>, whistles were blown at the start of a Service of Remembrance in St Matthias Church, Ballybrack on a bright sunny summer morning. This was

organised by the Rev Ian Poulton in memory of 10 parishioners who died in the Battle of the Somme, which began at that hour.



Rev Ian Poulton and some RDFA members.

Those who attended the State commemoration of the Battle of the Somme at the National War Memorial later that day were deeply moved by the occasion. The fact that this was organised by our Government and was magnificently enacted by the Irish Army removed any lingering doubts about the place of the First World War volunteers in Irish history and increased the significance of the National Day of Commemoration at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham in the following week.



An Irish Army colour party and Guard of Honour from the Cadet College on parade at the Somme Commemoration ceremony at the National War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge, Dublin, 1 July 2006.

In September, the Association had a memorable tour to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the capture of the villages of Ginchy and Guillemont. The arrangement with the local Mayors worked well.

Statues of St Patrick were presented to the village churches before a final Drumhead service was held at Ginchy telegraph. Our congratulations go to Ms Yvonne McEwen, Dr. Tom Quinn and Major (Retired) Jim Macleod MBE of the Combined Irish Regiments Association for their great work in organising this project.

The ceremonies at Guillemont and Ginchy were followed by a riveting lecture by Professor John Horne in the Great War Historial Museum in Peronne where he had helped to organise the international Somme exhibition. The temporary return of the Ginchy cross to France and the loan of the Beadle painting were fitting contributions from Ireland. Our members went on to visit Verdun to gain an understanding of the French and German losses in the struggle for that town.

**The Irish at Guillemont and Ginchy - 1916.**

The following statement was written by Brigadier-General Ramsey, Commanding Officer, 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division on 15 September 1916. The statement was part of General Ramsey's report on the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division's attack on Ginchy and Guillemont a few days pervious. Our thanks to Jimmy Taylor RDFA for this notice.

In conclusion I wish to express my extreme satisfaction at the spirit, courage, and determination displayed by all ranks during the operations and in particular of the action of Lieut.-Col. E. Bellingham, 8<sup>th</sup> R. Dublin Fusiliers, who at a time when troops were elated with success and without Officers, was able to control the situation and organise the defences. When it is remembered that the troops had been out in the so-called trenches, which were in reality merely shell holes, for five days and nights prior to the attack, during which period they were wet through by rain and did not have the chance of obtaining a hot meal, I submit that the highest credit is reflected on all

ranks that the capture of Ginchy was affected under these adverse conditions, and that the traditions of the Irish race were worthily upheld by these men of the New Armies.



The ceremony at Guillemont.



Kevin Cunningham RDFA reading Lieut. Tom Kettle's poem 'Betty' at Ginchy.



Major-General David The O'Morchoe CB, CBE addressing the gathering at Ginchy Telegraph on 9 September 2006.

**Speech made by Major-General (Retired) David The O' Morchoe CB, CBE. President of the Royal British Legion Republic of Ireland Branch during the Drumhead ceremony at Ginchy Telegraph on Saturday 9 September 2006.**

It is a great privilege for me to address those of you who have come to commemorate the exploits of the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division here at Ginchy and Guillemont. I am a retired Major General who served in the Royal Irish Fusiliers, which regiment had two battalions involved on the first day of the Somme Battle and two battalions in the 16<sup>th</sup> Division involved here at Ginchy and Guillemont. I also have the privilege of being the President of the Royal British Legion in the Irish Republic which honour between 1923 and 1950, for twenty-seven years, also belonged to Major-General

Hickie, the Commander of the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division here.

Not unlike those who fought here in September 1916, we are here for many reasons. But I suggest that there is one abiding motive that has brought us here and that is the desire to remember with gratitude those who gave their lives on the Somme. Many of us will have had family involved and not a few will have had relations who did not return to Ireland and whose names are inscribed on the graves or memorials around us. But we will also remember, ninety years on, all those who were killed in this dreadful war, including the citizens of this part of France.

This Ninetieth Anniversary of the Somme battle is, sadly, the first occasion since 1916 on which the authorities in Ireland felt it appropriate, for all the many historical reasons of which we are aware, for the Government to officially commemorate the event during which so many Irish casualties occurred. But they did so with impressive and moving ceremony at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens at Island Bridge, Dublin, which all of us who were there were immensely proud to be present and grateful that this day of commemoration and remembrance had at last got official favour. The occasion was undoubtedly a major landmark on the road to helping healing the historic divisions and differences within Ireland and between our neighbours and us.

As part of that ceremony, a made by speech by Marshal Foch, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the Great War, was read. It was one made by him on 9 November 1928. In it he gave great praise to the role played by the Irish during the war in France. He began by saying.

The Heroic Dead of Ireland have every right to the homage of the living, for they proved, in some of the heaviest fighting of the world war that the unconquerable spirit of the Irish race – the spirit that has placed them among the world's greatest soldiers - still lives and is stronger than ever it was.

He ended his speech of praise by saying.

Some of the flower of Irish chivalry rests in the cemeteries that have been reserved in France, and the French people will always have these reminders of the debt that France owes to Irish valour. We shall always see that the graves of the heroes from across the sea are lovingly tended, and we shall try to ensure that the generations that come after us shall never forget the heroic dead of Ireland.

We who are present to day can identify, by these impressive and moving ceremonies we have been part of this morning, that his words have not been forgotten, and I want to say on behalf of all of us representatives of Irish Regiments how truly grateful we are to the Mayors and people of Ginchy and Guillemont for hosting this event of gratitude and respect to our comrades of the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division and all Irish serving in other formations who gave their lives here. We are privileged to be here and we are moved and impressed by the great thoroughness and kindness, which has been shown to our dead and to the welcome given to all of us who have come to remember them. Before ending I want to pay particular tribute to Yvonne McEwen whose inspiration and initiative prompted this memorable commemoration. We can surely not end these ceremonies with a more appropriate statement to our dead comrades than by quoting the words that are inscribed on the Ginchy Cross we have just been to which was erected in memory of those of the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division who fell.

Do chum Gloire De agus Onora na hEireann.  
To the Glory of God and Honour of Ireland.

### **A Somme Day in Dublin.**

Tom Burke's idea to have a Tom Kettle commemoration titled *A Somme Day in Dublin* proved to be inspirational. Never was weather so appropriate to an occasion. On the ninetieth anniversary of Kettle's death, the tragedy of his loss and of his comrades was palpable as the large crowd stood in the grey downpour listening to reminders of his many talents and achievements.

The plaintive airs played by Tracey McRory were a perfect complement to the remembrance of a man whose personal and political potential was cruelly destroyed on the Ginchy battlefield. To conclude our Somme Day in Dublin, in the afternoon in the Dublin City Library at Pearse Street, historians Jane Leonard and Philip Orr presented two magnificent lectures. Philip presented a lecture on the Battle of the Somme and Jane presented a lecture on how the Somme has been remembered on the island of Ireland in recent times. She explained why the Somme and its memory remain such a key event in Irish history.

In October, our good friend Martin Steffen from Bielefeld in Germany gave us a German perspective on the First World War and its effect on the subsequent politics in Germany. This was followed by an official reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mr Vincent Jennings to launch the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Archive. Many of those who had made donations of memorabilia attended and were thanked by the Lord Mayor.



The bust of Lieut. Tom Kettle in late December 2006 in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin.

Our Association was well represented at the annual Remembrance ceremonies in November. In that month, Professor Eunan O'Halpin, Professor of Contemporary Irish History, Trinity College, gave a scintillating lecture on *'Intelligence and the Easter Rising'*. The Rev Ian Poulton also held a service on 19 November to mark the close of the Battle of the Somme. This was attended by some of his former parishioners from Belfast who made the journey to remember the men of the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division in particular. The weather on both days mirrored that experienced by the soldiers of 1916. The foul November weather echoed the freezing snow which brought an end to the carnage as the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers finally entered the village of Beaumont Hamel, an objective for 1 July. The hospitality provided in the parish hall afterwards was much appreciated.

Thanks to the organising skills of Brian Moroney, the Association's Annual Dinner brought a memorable year to a most enjoyable conclusion. There were 150 attendees who enjoyed the wide range of entertainment provided by our talented members.

**RDF Website [www.greatwar.ie](http://www.greatwar.ie)**

Our website continues to attract enquiries from around the world. The traffic increased again this year as shown in the attached table.

Month	Average Daily Visits 2006-7	Average Daily Visits 2005-06	Total Monthly Visits 2006-07	Total Monthly Visits 2005-06
February 07	221	172	6201	4280
January	213	159	6619	4957
December	189	140	5875	4349
November	224	184	6728	5334
October	180	140	5606	4349
September	152	115	4564	3473
August	124	113	3867	3527
July	166	105	5159	3278
June	166	118	4996	3549
May	177	138	5495	4284
April	188	181	5669	5454

The website had over 60,000 visits in the year. We had 420+ new email enquiries during 2006 looking for assistance in tracing relatives who served in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and other regiments. The individual stories and photographs that we receive add real-life detail to the long lists of names and numbers on the memorials. An unexpected bonus was the presentation of two officer's uniforms and a number of books and photographs by Mr Rob Lorch to our archive. Another was the restoration of the missing medals of a Gallipoli "Pal" to his daughter as described in this edition. Two American collectors who own revolvers used by the RDF officers in the Boer and First World War have also contacted us. Special thanks to Mr Chris O'Byrne for his work on the website.

Other events throughout the year the RDFA participated in or contributed to.

**Restoration of the Limburg Cross.**



The Limburg Cross circa mid 1920's

During the Great War, Irish prisoners were held in a camp at Limburg, near Koblenz in Germany. In 1917, they erected a fine Celtic Cross in the cemetery containing the names of prisoners who had died in the period 1914-17. The Dominican Chaplain, Father Crotty, is referred to in the Irish inscription. The bodies were transferred to a British cemetery at Niederzwehren near Köln after the war and all traces of the camp vanished. There

was also a French memorial which fell into disrepair and which was removed in the 1950s. The local community started fundraising to restore the cross a few years ago. The Royal Munster Fusiliers Association opened a fund for Irish donations, which raised €5,000. The RDFA contributed €100. The Department of the Taoiseach gave an additional €5,000.



Irish POW soldiers at Limburg with Fr. Crotty during the war.

### **RDF Exhibition at Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin.**

Our exhibition, which was designed and installed by the Office of Public Works, got a very positive response. The exhibition will run until late summer when it will be replaced by a new exhibition



RDF exhibition at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin.

### **RDF Archive at Dublin City Library and Archive.**

Our archive is building up nicely, keep your letters, diaries and other RDF material coming. The Lord Mayor of County Dublin, Councillor Vincent Jackson, hosted a reception after the lecture by Martin Steffen in the Dublin City Library and Archive on 14 October 2006. This was to formally accept the donations made the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Archive during the year. Here is the text of his speech on the occasion.

*I am very pleased to be here today on behalf of the people of Dublin to accept First World War archives which were presented during 2006 to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association. Archives of this kind help us to remember the thousands of young men who left Ireland to fight and to die in far-away places during the First World War. Some were fighting for Irish freedom, believing that they were creating a new society where the rights of small nations would be taken seriously and that Ireland would be given its independence when the war ended. Others were fighting because they needed a soldier's pay to support widowed mothers, anxious wives and hungry children. Other, and these were usually the youngest volunteers, went of in search of adventure, with no idea of the horrors of war that awaited them. The sincerity and courage of these ordinary men is beyond question and after so many years of overlooking their contribution to history, we in Ireland today acknowledge this and remember them with respect. In this regard, the work of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association has made an immense contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the Great War and has helped to forge closer bonds between both traditions on the island, and between Ireland and Britain as a whole. I salute the work of your association and wish you continued success in the future.*

*Without the generosity of the families who have donated their most precious memorabilia, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive could not have come into being and I would like, on your behalf, to thank each one of the donors. Corporal Henry Kavanagh, from Dublin's Merrion Road, was killed on 25 September 1916 and his*

photographs and letters, many written from the Front, have been donated by his nephew Cecil Kavanagh. I am pleased to welcome Mr. Kavanagh here today with other family members, Henry Kavanagh, Joyce McKinley and Herbert McKinley, who have travelled from Northern Ireland especially to be with us. Sapper Jim Burrowes returned from the First World War and was a devoted father to his daughter Marie, now Mrs. Marie Dunne, who has presented his photographs and memorabilia, and she is here with us today. These include an engraved cigarette case, worn in the pocket of her father's jacket, which saved his life when it was hit by a bullet. It can be seen in the display case at the back of this room. Captain Paddy Tobin was killed in action at the Dardanelles 15 August 1915 and his relative, Barbara McDowell, has donated copies of his three final letters, to his father, mother and sister Sheelagh. Dr. James C. McKenna was with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Gallipoli, and his niece Edith has presented the archive with his observations on the campaign, which was entered in diary form between October and December 1915. An invaluable eyewitness account. Christopher O'Sullivan has generously donated important books about the First World War including the series War Graves of the British Commonwealth, and the Guinness Roll of Employees who served in the armed forces between 1914 and 1918. William M Robinson was a major with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and his memorabilia and books have been given by his grandson Rob Lorch. This includes his compass dating from 1915, still in its original leather case and uniforms which will go on display in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Last year, Mary Shackleton, who is here today, presented letters received by her mother, Monica Roberts, from soldiers at the front during the Great War. This year, she has given a copy of Monica Roberts' eyewitness account of the Easter Rising 1916, which will be included with her mother's papers held by the RDFA. David Pounder, who has come all the way from Germany to be with us today, has contributed a copy of his research paper about the involvement of his great-uncle in the First World War. This is entitled "The Collier and the Cruiser: the story of Tom Edwards, R.N., the Great War and H.M.S. Dublin". I would also like to welcome

Geraldine Tucker and Marie Clifford who have come from England to be with us, and are interested in promoting closer links between archives in England and in Ireland, especially regarding the Great War. I salute the generosity of all our depositors who have selflessly made their precious family papers available to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive. As you know, this archive is retained here at Dublin City Library and Archive, where it is kept in air-conditioned storage and produced for research in our Reading Room. Dublin City Council has provided this facility for the public, and it is very important that everyone, and especially young people, realise the truth of history and have the opportunity to encounter its reality through archives such as these. It is most encouraging to see that growing numbers of people are coming to consult these important First World War archives and this is possible because of the public-spirited generosity of you, our wonderful donors. Once more, on behalf of the people of Dublin, I offer my most sincere thanks.

#### **Pat Cummins RDFA reflects on 2006.**

On a beautiful Easter Sunday morning, under a cloudless sky, there took place a spectacular parade through the streets of Dublin. It was to commemorate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Easter Rising. I had the privilege of sitting in a review stand directly opposite the General Post Office in O'Connell Street where the Rising was centred so many years ago. There were huge crowds on the refurbished main street to watch the parade.

The proceedings commenced with a reading of the Proclamation by an army officer at the GPO. On the left of the GPO were seated the President, Government and members of parliament (Dail and Seanad), the judiciary and heads of the Defence Forces. On the right hand side were seated members of the Diplomatic Corps including the British Ambassador British Mr. David Reddaway and Defence Attaché, Col. John Steed. The President laid a wreath in front of the GPO and there followed a minute's silence and then the last post was sounded.

The parade started with the Chief-of-Staff of the Army and a colour party at its head. Contingents from the Naval Service and Air Corps followed and there was a fly-over by aircraft from the Air Corps. Also in the parade were members of the Garda Síochána (police) with their band. A notable thing in the parade was the number of young women now in the Defence Forces.

Then the massed bands with pipe bands marched at the rear of the parade and off O'Connell Street playing old marching tunes such as Garryowen and St. Patrick's Day. I am sure that the street had never heard the number of brass bands before.

Later in the year, on 1 July, there was a spectacular commemoration of the Battle of the Somme in the Irish War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge in Dublin. I had an uncle, Corporal John Nicholl of the Glasgow Regiment of the Highland Light Infantry who lost his life on the Somme in August 1916 aged nineteen years. I wore his medals along with my father's RDF medals and uncles Easter 1916 medals with pride. The event was very well attended and was broadcast live on the national television. The day was beautifully sunny and the gardens were blooming and obviously very well cared for. Large video screens had been erected so that the crowd would have no difficulty in seeing the ceremonies. The Irish Army band, in their new uniforms, played music similar to that played at the Cenotaph in London on Remembrance Sunday. Among the pieces played were "The Minstrel Boy" and "Nimrod" from Elgar's Enigma variations. It was a very moving ceremony. The President laid a wreath and representatives of the countries that took part in the Battle of the Somme also laid wreaths. Soldiers of the Irish Army carried the flags of those same countries. One Irish Army officer read the poem "In Flanders Fields" and the Head Chaplain of the Defence Forces, Fr. Eoin Thyne CF led the prayers. A magnificent reception at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham was held immediately afterwards.

These two events in my capital city, Dublin, were events never to be forgotten. May all those soldiers who lost the greatest gift that God could give them—their lives—rest in peace.

## Tom Kettle Remembered.

Sean Connolly and Tony Quinn  
Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

On a wet and dull Saturday morning 30 September 2006, a unique event was held in Dublin's St. Stephen's Green. The RDFA presented a ceremony to remember Tom Kettle. Our committee decided to reflect the life of Tom Kettle by inviting Irish people from the professions and institutions that Tom had been a member of or associated with throughout his short life. The ceremony was originally set to take place at the bust of Tom Kettle in the Green, however, due to the large crowd that turned out and indeed the falling sheets of rain, with military style and quick inspirational thinking on the spot, we decided to move our ceremony to the covered old band stand in the centre of the Green. To represent his early schooling days at Clongowes Wood College SJ, Fr. Michael Sheil SJ spoke of Tom's life as a student at the college. Professor Brendan Walsh, Professor of National Economics at the College of Business and Law in University College Dublin, spoke on the life of Tom Kettle during Kettles' time as a Professor of National Economics at UCD. Brendan told us that Tom gave some of his lectures quite near to where we were standing. A great friend and member of the RDFA, Kevin Myers, spoke with emotion and eloquence on Kettles' life as a journalist and politician. Mr Tony Quinn, being a barrister and member of the RDFA, spoke of Tom's life as a barrister. Tom Kettle died as an Irish soldier and to reflect that part of his life, Captain Fergal Purcell of the Irish Army gave a magnificent account of the Battle of Ginchy (Somme 9 September 1916) at which Tom was killed. Fergal's presence was indeed a proud moment for all of us. Finally, Mr. Declan Kettle read aloud Tom's famous poem to his daughter titled 'Betty', written in the field before the battle. Our ceremony concluded with Tom's descendants reading allowed the names of ten Dublin Fusiliers who died that late evening during the attack on Ginchy. This was a very emotional part of our ceremony. Tracey Mc Rory then played a most beautiful lamenting tune on her violin that concluded the ceremonies at the bandstand.

Our group, which numbered about 150, then paraded behind the RDFA Standard carried by Capt (retired) Seamus Greene RDFA and a piper named Cpl. Kevin Duncan from the Irish Army's No. 1 Band to the bust of Tom Kettle. The sound of Irish pipes wafting through the air and amongst the trees on that quiet morning in the centre of Dublin, played to remember and honour this man, was simply beautiful. At the foot of Tom's bust, wreaths were laid by Clongowes Wood College in the colours of the college, the Kettle family and the RDFA. To conclude the ceremony, Cpl. Duncan, played a lament, saluted and turned away. We would sincerely like to thank Ms. Caoimhe Allman from the Office of Public Works in Dublin for arranging our ceremony and indeed the staff of the OPW and Park Wardens for their assistance. Note. A member of Tom Kettle's family laid a poppy wreath at the foot of the Tom's bust that morning. In late December 2006, almost three months after the ceremony to remember this brave Irish man, despite the winter wind, rain and cold, the poppy wreath was still at the foot of the bust. How times have changed.

The following is the speech made by Tony Quinn at the Kettle remembrance ceremony in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin on 30 September 2006.

A chairde, Thanks to Philip Lecane, Tom Burke, Seamus Greene and the RDFA. *Is cuis onora dhom cainnt mar dheall ar Tom Kettle, abhcoide agus polaiteoir.* I'm privileged to speak about his role as barrister and politician. Kettle entered the King's Inns in 1903 to read for the Bar. His widow Mary recalled (in her memoir in his book *The Ways of War*, London & New York, 1917): With his rich humour and conversational power, he was cordially welcomed to dinners with other students. When one of them, a middle-aged rich man, spoke about property rights and using violence against burglars, Tom asked: Have you ever considered this from the burglar's viewpoint? Although mainly associated with UCD, he attended law lectures at Trinity College. As a law student in 1905, he used his legal skills to answer the Royal University authorities on his role in protests about playing "God save the King" at conferring ceremonies. That controversy arose again during the East Tyrone by-election of 1906,

in a court case: *In re Kettle*, 40 ILTR 234, when political opponents claimed that he was in a gang of university protesters. A Victoria prize winner, he was called to the Bar, Easter Term, 1906. His widow Mary wrote: "with his oratorical gifts and passionate delivery, a brilliant career was foretold." The *Irish Law Times* praised his fresh and vigorous style and eloquent language. He would be an instant success if he were going to make the law his profession. But as explained in my book, *Wigs & Guns, Irish Barristers in the Great War*, Kettle's promise was not fulfilled due to his sensitivity and political interests. He gained political experience in the Young Ireland Branch (YIBs) of the United Irish League. On his own reputation and pedigree "as the worthy son of a distinguished father," the Parnellite, Andy Kettle, he was selected as Parliamentary Party candidate in East Tyrone in 1906 and was narrowly elected against the odds. *The Freeman's Journal* praised his energy and ability. He spoke eloquently at Westminster on many topics, including votes for women and British misrule in Ireland and Egypt. A barrister and MP at twenty-six, like a meteor, his light burnt too brightly and quickly. Mrs Sheehy, his mother-in-law, saw Tom as a potential Home Rule prime minister but his wife Mary was conscious of his faults and sensitive nature. She thought that her husband would never have been happy as a lawyer. When a criminal he had defended was sentenced to penal servitude, he took it to heart.

In his mind, he was judge, jury, prisoner as well as barrister. He intensely saw all view points. That made him a lovable personality but counsel should focus on the client's case. In *The Enigma of Tom Kettle*, his biographer, JB Lyons described Kettle's court defence of nationalists charged with agrarian crime as extensions of his political career. He was an idealist who saw politics not as a squabble of selfish interests, but as the State in action for the public good. His political philosophy remains relevant and inspired others, including James Dillon, Fine Gael leader. Academic responsibilities preoccupied him. After his re-election, he resigned as an MP. But he remained interested in law and politics. In November, 1909, when his brother in law, Eugene Sheehy, was auditor of the Law Students Debating

Society, Tom spoke about justice, progress and public attitudes to law. Dining with barrister colleagues, after standing for the obligatory royal toast, he wrote:

“The four of us dined at the Inns, and we nearly emptied the (wine) bins,  
We drank the King’s health, we did it by stealth,  
May Ireland forgive us our sins”

Kettle’s legal training influenced his attitudes to politics and the Irish role in the Great War. He was outraged by German aggression in Belgium and the destruction of European and Flemish cultural heritage in Louvain, now called Leuven. He dived with death to protect civilisation. He served and “died not for flag, nor King nor Emperor,” but rather to defend the rule of law and democracy. Tom Kettle is named on the Four Courts memorial to twenty-five Irish Barristers killed in the Great War. Thanks to his Bar colleague, WG Fallon, who organised the Albert Power memorial, belatedly erected in St Stephen’s Green. Milton’s lines are apt for the tragic hero: (Young) Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime. AE’s inclusive poem, *Salutations*, published in the *Irish Times*, 1917, remembered the dead of Easter Rising and the Great War. Such sentiments are now relevant as the nation officially honours the Irish casualties of the Rising, the Somme and Messines (Mesen.) We especially remember, to quote AE “Dear Kettle of the generous heart.”  
Buiochas, a lucht eisteachta, thank you for your attention.

### Books Notice.

*Nick Broughall,  
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.*

**Field of Bones, an Irish Division at Gallipoli.**  
Author Philip Orr, tells the story of the volunteer soldiers from Ireland who went off to fight in the 10th (Irish) Division on the Gallipoli peninsula in 1915.

Philip Orr details his methodology and research which drives his quest to tell the story of the 17,000 strong 10<sup>th</sup> Division, one of the largest bodies of soldiers ever to leave the shores of

Ireland, and in the vanguard of Lord Kitcheners Army.

The eight chapters of the books encompass the principal actions of the campaign and the regiments which took part – not all of them Irish. There are pen pictures of many of the soldiers and the privations they suffered. Accounts are given of bravery on the battlefield; how some died and some survived in the terrible conditions prevailing on the peninsula. Poignant details of the tending of the wounded and dying. The work of the “Soldiers of Christ” – the chaplains, R.C. and C of I, who provided the spiritual needs.

The author brings us to the lives of the people at home in Ireland, friends, relatives and supporters, of those serving with the 10th Division. There are references to newspaper articles, including the *Down Recorder*, *Northern Whig*, *Irish Independent* and *Irish Times*, and the happenings of the day. There is poetry, including Tennyson and Ledwidge.

Late in 1915 the 10<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division was withdrawn from the peninsula and sent to assist in fighting the Bulgarian Army in Serbia and Macedonia where they fought in the malarial Struma valley and at the battle of Kosturino. Eventually what was left of the 10<sup>th</sup> Division was sent off to Palestine. Meantime back at home the 1916 Rebellion had taken place and Phillip Orr gives a detailed account of the aftermath and a changed Ireland. Altogether, an excellent read. Published by Lilliput Press, Dublin. By the same author *The Road to the Somme* published in Belfast 1987.

**A History of the Pearse Battalion 1946-1959.**  
Writer. Dr. Louis O’Brien, Pearse Battalion Association and Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association. Louis O’Brien enlisted in ‘B’ Company, Pearse Battalion FCA (Irish Reserve Defence Forces) while in school in 1948. He saw service until 1959 with the unit passing from Recruit, through Corporal, Sergeant and C/S until commissioned in 1953. He was promoted to Commandant in 1978 and retired on age grounds from the Reserve Defence Forces in 1998. Along with his soldiering, Louis worked as Biochemist

until he retired in 1994. The following is a review of Louis fine book written in The Irish Times on 22 July 2006 by Richard Roche, author, journalist and historian.

As a former volunteer in the 42 Rifle Battalion of the Local Defence Forces (LDF) in Dublin, this reviewer hopes he will be forgiven the inclusion here of Dr. Louis O'Brien's History of the Pearse Battalion 1946-1959. The battalion was the reserve army unit that sprang from the Regiment of Pearse (1935-1939). The book is a detailed and nostalgic record of the division, which was drawn from the universities and colleges in the Dublin area from 1946 to 1959 to form part of the newly established FCA. There is local history galore here, from the names to the photographs of officers and men of the battalion on parade, in guards of honour, in training camp and on the firing range. There are many colourful stories also such as the one about Nick Corish (still with us) and the late Andy Minihan (of New Ross fame). They were the only two officers in the FCA in 1947 to sport beards (regulations said that men 'must come clean' on parade). In a test case, Captain Minihan said his beard was clean while Lieut. Corish said he grew his 'in his own time.' Both won their cases. The thousands of volunteers who served in the battalion will, no doubt, treasure this book, a valuable record of a valued unit. The book is available from Louis at 36 Crannagh Park, Dublin 14. Cost E20.00.

**A Wheen of Medals. The History of the 9<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion. The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (The Tyrones) in World War One.** Author W.J. Canning. This book was published to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. The 9<sup>th</sup> Inniskillings served in the 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster) Division in the battle. By the end of the War, two VCs had been awarded to the battalion, one to Captain Eric Bell and the other to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut Emerson. The book contains a comprehensive listing and details of more than 700 men from County Tyrone and elsewhere who died in the Great War 1914-1918. The book is available from Mr W.J. Canning, Dunsilly Lodge, Antrim, BT41 2JHG, N. Ireland Telephone from The Republic of Ireland 0044 28 94462029. Cost £15.00 plus £2.70 P and P.

**Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance.** Cambridge University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-521-82626-0. Nuala Johnson's book unites two of the hottest current topics in Irish studies and cultural studies: Ireland's involvement in the 1914-18 war, and the wider topics of memory and commemoration. Ireland and the Great War has been the subject of popular and scholarly books, and numerous television and radio programs. The national memorial on the outskirts of Dublin has been repaired, and in 1998 the Irish President, Mary McAleese, and Queen Elizabeth II unveiled a memorial in Messines to Irish troops who died in the war. The memorial was constructed by young people drawn from both parts of Ireland. This renewed interest is partly a reflection of the 1998 Belfast Agreement and the search for common ground between different traditions. Johnson approaches the topic from the perspective of a historical geographer and has uncovered some interesting material that she should be congratulated for. The complex and contested issues associated with the Great War are only intelligible when we take account of how the war interacted with Irish nationalism and Irish unionism. See review at <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/search.cgi>

**Mayo Comrades of the Great War.** Author. P.J. Clarke assisted by Michael Feeney. This book lists all of Mayo's fallen soldiers plus those who served in the Canadian, Australian, New Zealand and South African Forces who came from Co. Mayo. The book also presents letters from Mayo soldiers who were prisoners of war and records of those who survived and became members of the Local British Legion. The author went as far as listing all the soldiers who were mentioned in the four Mayo newspapers during the years 1914-1919 – a truly monumental work. The book can be purchased from P.J. Clarke, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Telephone from Republic of Ireland 00353 96 22195 or Email at [pjmclarkw2004@yahoo.com](mailto:pjmclarkw2004@yahoo.com)

### Some Useful Websites for Great War enthusiasts.

The Gallipoli Association. (New site)  
[www.gallipoli-association.org/](http://www.gallipoli-association.org/)

The Leinster Regiment Association (New site)  
[www.leinster-regiment-association.org.uk/](http://www.leinster-regiment-association.org.uk/)

The Centre for First World War Studies at the  
University of Birmingham.  
[www.firstworldwar.bham.ac.uk/](http://www.firstworldwar.bham.ac.uk/)

Dublin Fusiliers website (New site)  
[www.royaldublinfofusilier.com](http://www.royaldublinfofusilier.com)

### In Memoriam.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

**Mrs Kathleen Murphy** was the mother of our member Dr. David Murphy. Kathleen passed away in hospital after a long illness on 10 September 2006. To David and his family, we offer our sincere condolences.

**Helena 'Betty' Smith** was the daughter of John and Helena Smith. John served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers and was one of the hundreds of 2<sup>nd</sup> Dublins gassed at Mouse Trap Farm on 25 May 1915. He survived the war but his weakened lungs finally caused his death in June 1925 at the young age of thirty-five. Betty was born in April 1920 and as a child helped her mother to nurse her father. For many years Betty worked as a volunteer for the British Legion in Ireland. Betty was a member of the RDFA. In 2005, she kindly donated photographs of her father in uniform with her mother to the archive of the association in Dublin City Archive and Library. Betty died in Dublin on 6 September 2006 and may she rest in peace.

**Mrs. Mary Yourell.** During the year, we were sorry to hear of the death Mary Yourell the wife of our member, Larry. To Larry and his family we express our sincere condolences.

**Edward 'Ned' Brierley.** On 29 May 2005, Ned Brierley peacefully passed away in St. Vincent's

Hospital, Dublin. His father, also named Ned, was a member of the 8<sup>th</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers and fought at some of the most famous battles the regiment ever fought at on the Western Front. In places such as Guillemont (1916), Wijtschate and Frezenberg Ridge (1917) and Malassise Farm (German March offensive of 1918), the name of Private Ned Brierley MM was well known. On Thursday 21 March 1918, Ned wrote in his diary. *'Offensive started, hold Brown Line until 11:00 pm from 5:30am.'* The *Offensive* Ned referred to was the famous German offensive in March 1918 which effectively caused the annihilation of the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division. Ned survived the war and played football for that great old Dublin club – Shelbourne FC. On 17 September 1924, Ned (Senior) married Miss Mary Hayden from Glasthule in the Church of St Joseph's, Glasthule, Co Dublin. Together they went on to rear seven children, one of whom was named after his father, Ned. For many years Ned (Junior) worked as a Technician in the Physics Department in University College Dublin. When he retired, he and his wife Kathleen, went to live in Spain for a few years. Both he and his brother Noel, were members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and were very proud of their father and the work of the RDFA in keeping his memory alive. A great Ringsend family, following his cremation at Mount Jerome, Ned's ashes were scattered at the Shellybanks in Ringsend. To the Brierley family, may we in the RDFA offer our condolences and bid farewell to Ned Brierley. No doubt the two Neds have a lot to talk about where they are now.

**David Ervine MLA.** There are times in Irish history when the death of some person leaves a great vacuum and an awareness of lost potential. I think of the death of Gordon Wilson, an absolute saint of a man whose contribution to our understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation was a lesson and example for us all. David Ervine was another one of those people whose untimely death on 8 January 2007 at the age of fifty-three also left a terrible gap. I first met David in Dublin Airport in 1997 when a group of Irish folk led by Paddy Hart and Glen Barr visited the battlefields of the Western Front.

It was from this group that the Journey of Reconciliation Group was formed and the Round Tower at Messines was opened in November 1998. It was over the weekend that he told me he had an uncle who once served in the Dubs and from that moment on we were good buddies. In the years that followed, I met David at many of the Great War exhibitions and lectures undertaken throughout the island. He was a tireless worker for reconciliation and understanding. One of our members Tony Quinn, met David in Flanders in 2004, Tony had been on a tour with the RDEA and not long after David died, he wrote the following letter to the Irish Independent in memory of David.

I participated in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association's journey of remembrance and reconciliation to Flanders in 2004, as described in my book, *Wigs and Guns, Irish Barristers in the Great War*. After touring the battle sites and cemeteries, we changed from our outdoor gear into formal dress to attend the ceremonies in the Irish Peace Park and also President McAleese's reception in Mesen (Messines). Our tour bus was an improvised dressing room but it was difficult to perfect our dressing. As I walked to the formal event at the International School of Peace Studies, a man from a northern group tidied the crumpled collar of my jacket. Turning around, I recognised from media pictures the smiling face of David Ervine. His kind gesture left a deep impression. May the good that he did live after him.

*The Irish Independent* 13 January 2007.

**Sam Starrett** was a beautiful, kind and gifted man who was taken from us on 7 March 2007. A man whose death took from us a builder of bridges between the people he lived and worked with on the island of Ireland. Sam was a musician, songwriter, playwright, community activist and historian. A large part of Sam's work was through the YMCA. After leaving the YMCA, Sam worked with the Waterside Community Development Trust in Londonderry bringing his unique energy and qualities to many community

development projects. In recent years he became deeply involved with the International School for Peace studies in Mesen (Messines) With his partner and champion violinist Tracey McRory and musician Richard Lair, he wrote the beautiful song *John Condon*. Sam was also involved in the *Shot at Dawn* campaign and to highlight the issue he wrote a very moving play titled *The Worthless Soldier*. It was at this play presented in Liberty Hall Theatre in Dublin that I met with Sam and Tracey. We had a great night and talked endlessly about the play, the campaign, the times we had in Flanders and our plans for the future. I recall meeting Sam and Tracey in a bar in Zonnebeke a few years ago. There were English men dressed up in old British army khaki uniforms in the small bar on a corner. I think they were Dorsets, we told them we were The Dubs and Inniskillings, the Paddies were back in Flanders and don't forget it Tommy! As the night went on, we began a sing-song and sang all the old war songs of 1914-1918, it was sheer magic. There was cigarette smoke, candlelight and beer. Tracey played her violin and 'Tipperary' along with the 'Dublin Fusiliers' got a hammering into the early hours. The next time I met Sam was at Tyne Cot Cemetery. Quite by chance we met up and among his group was an Uilleann Piper. I asked Sam would the piper play a lament at the Cross of Sacrifice for us. The piper played a beautiful Irish tune and hundreds, from all over the world, gathered round to listen. Before we left Tyne Cot, I threw my arms around Sam Starrett, we nearly hugged the life out of each other, both of us said nothing, our eyes had said it all. Sam and the love of his life Tracey, were the guests of honour at our annual dinner in December 2006. We were honoured to have them so. His death came as a terrible shock to us all. Farewell dear Sam Starrett. In your name we will carry on the work of reconciliation you did while you were with us. Say hello to young Condon for me.

### More data on an RDF casualty of the 1916 Easter Rising.

In Vol. 12 of *The Blue Cap*, December 2005, Dr. Daithi O'Corrain from the Centre for Contemporary Irish History at Trinity College Dublin wrote a very interesting article in which he listed RDF men killed during the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. Daithi listed sixteen members of the regiment killed, one of whom was Pte. J.A. Thompson. Daithi has forwarded us some more data on Pte. Thomson. He was the son of Andrew Thompson of Derrylin, Co. Fermanagh. He had been a student at Trinity College Dublin before joining the 10<sup>th</sup> (Pals) Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The CWGC lists him as been a member of the 5<sup>th</sup> RDF. When the rebellion broke out on Easter Monday, he and his comrades were sent on duty to Dublin Castle. During the fighting, Thompson was shot in the chest and killed outright. His remains were conveyed from Amiens Street Station to Enniskillen. The funeral took place on 2 May to Callowhill, Derrylin and according to the Fermanagh Times dated 11 May 1916, a large number of people from the district attended. The Rev. J. Mc Knight and Rev. Mr Ingham officiated at the graveside. Pte Thomson is not listed in the 1916 Rebellion Handbook.

### Another RDFA member wins the MBE.

Congratulations to our Welsh member John Cave who was awarded the MBE for his voluntary work in helping to restore a Maritime museum in his native Holyhead.

### Romantic Ireland is not dead and gone....

According to a report in the Irish Examiner on 27 December 2006, our staunch member, Mr. David Buckley, went on his bended knee to make a proposal of marriage to Ms. Beenie Byrne as they watched a Christmas Day charity swim from a beach in Donegal. As far as we know, Beenie does not own a collection of Victoria Crosses so David's intentions are honourable. Best wishes to the happy couple.

### Articles for *The Blue Cap*.

All members are encouraged to submit articles to *The Blue Cap*. Articles for publication may vary in length -- from a few lines to several pages. In the latter case, if necessary, the editor may decide to publish the article in two or more parts. There are a few *Guidelines for Contributors* that reflect *The Blue Cap* style and format of publication and we would like contributors to adhere as close as possible to these guidelines. If you have an article that you would like to have published in *The Blue Cap*, please send us notice about the article by Email or in writing to the Secretary. We will in turn send you our *Guidelines for Contributors*. Thank you for your continued support.

*The Blue Cap* is a permanent record of information, research and events related to participation of Irish men and women in the Great War and their commemoration. Articles are published as received. The RDF Association does not verify the accuracy of the contents.

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### Spectamur Agendo.