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'We Will Remember Them… But why?'

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Anzac Day, 25 April 2007.

April the 25th, the date ninety-two years ago when the British (who then included the Irish), the Australians, the New Zealanders, and the French landed at various points on the Gallipoli peninsula in a bold, if fatally ill-planned, bid to seize Constantinople and bring the First World War to a more merciful conclusion than that allowed by the grinding battles of attrition on the Western front.

That's the event that we commemorate here on Anzac Day. And as with Remembrance Day on the 11th of November in Britain, so Anzac Day is proving, I believe, increasingly popular at just the time when many feared that it would die—along with the last of the veterans.

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Many of us—many more of us—feel the need to remember. That much is clear. What is not so clear is *what* it is that we remember, and *how* we remember it. The truth is that on this occasion we do a variety of things. What's more, different people do different, sometimes even contradictory things. Indeed, sometimes it feels as if the contradiction runs not only between us, but through us. For Remembrance ceremonies like this conjure up a gaggle of emotions, some of which can embarrass and confuse us.

So let's see if we can throw some light on the confusion.

Some people feel that Remembrance ceremonies are by their very nature militaristic, and are therefore unchristian, and should be avoided. This seems most plausible when church services—like this one—involve military personnel in uniform and carrying flags. My own view is that not everything military is militaristic. One can carry a flag without waving it. And if you've ever watched the Remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph in Westminster, then, notwithstanding its be-medalled veterans, and its military bands, and its regimental flags, I think you'll agree that the prevailing mood is not jingoistic, but sombre. Even the uniforms are dull, tending toward the black, and not just on account of the season. And, if I'm not confusing my ceremonies, are not the flags made to bow their heads to the very earth?

Remembrance ceremonies need not be militaristic, and I don't think that we need feel embarrassed by them on that count. We needn't feel contradiction or tension running right through us at this point.

This is all the more so, when we observe that one of the main things that we remember on these occasions are the evils of war. We remember the dead. We remember young lives cut short. We remember *very* young lives cut short. If you visit military cemeteries of the two world wars the most striking, even shocking thing is the age of those who were killed—many of them much younger than the actors who play them in the war movies—18, 19, 20, 21.

War causes great damage, great loss, great evil. And it's important for us to remember that, so that we don't take for granted the peace that we now enjoy. My grandparents suffered two world wars; my parents suffered one. I have suffered none. For me, peace is normal. Wars, if they happen, happen elsewhere. But that hasn't always been the case. And we ought not to assume that it *will* always be the case. Peace is fragile. It needs our active care and attention. It needs our work. And remembering the evils of war reminds us of that. So this kind of remembrance is salutary. It is pacific. It makes for peace.

So far, I think I can presume that we are agreed. So far I doubt that there is difference between us. But when it comes to the issue of war as *an instrument of justice*, I imagine that we will find ourselves disagreeing.

I am in the habit of visiting military cemeteries—as I will be doing when I make a pilgrimage to Gallipoli next month. One cemetery that I've visited in recent years is the *Deutscher Soldatenfriedhof*—the German military cemetery—at Maleme in Crete. Maleme is where the decisive battle was fought in May 1941 between, on the one hand, British, Australian, New Zealand and Greek troops (led, as it happens, by a Gallipoli veteran), and German paratroops on the other. At the cemetery, there is a very well presented exhibition, and part of this exhibition tells the story of three brothers. All three were in the same German parachute regiment. The two younger brothers hero-worshipped the older one, and followed him into his elite regiment. All three of them were killed on the same day at Maleme. The youngest one was still in his teens. A heart-breaking story. A very tragic story. And from this story, and others like it, the exhibition at Maleme draws the conclusion: War is evil, War is the great plague, War it is that we must resolve to avoid absolutely and everywhere.

At this point in the exhibition, however, I found myself reacting in a stereotypically Anglo-Saxon, and rather un-European, way. Because I thought to myself, 'Well, yes … but no.' For one thing that the exhibition didn't touch on—one thing it was disingenuously silent about—was the awkward question of what young Germans were doing dropping out of the skies onto Crete in May 1941. And that then raises the sharp question of how those on the ground were supposed to respond to them. The only way to have avoided war absolutely and everywhere would have been to allow Hitler's armies to do as they wished. And if in Crete, then also throughout Europe. But with what consequences—for the Jews, for the Slavs, for the communists, for the gays, for the gypsies, and indeed, for any decent humanist and for any committed Christian?

It's true that some people think that non-violent resistance, such as was effective against the British in India, could have been used successfully against the Nazis in Europe. Some of *you* may think that. I, for one, remain sceptical.

But if you don't think that, and if you share my scepticism, then you will entertain the possibility that war, with all its undoubted and great evils, might still be the only effective way of stopping even greater evils. War as an instrument, a terrible instrument, of justice. War as an instrument so terrible that we should seek to avoid it at great cost—but not at all costs.

'Fine,' you might say, 'perhaps the war against Hitler and imperial Japan was justified; and so we can remember those Britons and Irishmen and Australians and New Zealanders who served and suffered in the Allied cause then with pride and gratitude. But what about the First World War? Surely that was a futile war, an imperialist war whose motives and aims have no moral justification? How can we remember that with anything but embarrassment and shame?'

Well, embarrassment and shame have their place on an occasion like this. Even justified wars have their shameful moments: the war against Hitler had its bombing of Dresden. So perhaps we should mingle pride with shame. But to mingle is not to eclipse. Maybe loyalty to the truth of the matter requires that we learn to live with the tension of *both* pride *and* shame

But before we buy into the common and popular view of the First World War, let me make three points on behalf of the justice of the Allied cause then. First of all, to observe that the Allied cause in the Great War involved imperial interests is, to my mind, not to say anything very illuminating. (And that, by the way, is exactly how L.A. Carlyon, the author of the recent, popular, and very gripping account of the Gallipoli campaign, dismisses what the Anzac troops were fighting for: 'Gallipoli', he writes breezily, 'was all about the British empire, which is as dead as Rudyard Kipling and just as quaint'.

Well, there are empires and there are empires. And some empires, like nations, churches, and individuals, have mixed moral records. The British empire, for example, occasioned the brutal rampages of the Black and Tans in 1920s Ireland; and yet eighteen years later that same empire offered the only effective opposition to the Fascist domination of Europe for two long years from 1939-1941. And if the British empire did give rise at times to disgusting racial arrogance, it was also the first body to abolish the slave trade and to enforce the ban internationally — as we are

commemorating in this bicentennial year. Whatever Britain's imperial interests in the first war against Germany, British, Irish, and Anzac troops would not have found themselves landing at Gallipoli, had not the Kaiser's Germany, unprovoked, invaded Belgium and France in 1914. My second point in favour of the Allied cause in the Great War is this. It is common nowadays to refer to the First World War as 'futile'—meaning that it achieved nothing worthwhile. Well, that's not how most of those involved at the time saw it. At the time most people believed that it was necessary to fend off aggressive, Prussian militarism. Even the famous War Poets wrote of the piteousness of war, but not of its futility. True, Siegfried Sassoon protested that it should be stopped; but not because it should never have been started, rather because it was being prolonged, in his view, unnecessarily. And that was a view that he later recanted. To most of those at the time the Great War was terrible, tragic, piteous, heart-breaking—but necessary. And that, as far as I can judge, is also the view that now prevails among contemporary historians.

But surely, you say, *nothing* could have been worth all that slaughter? Well, that raises an important and difficult question: how much is justice worth? When are its costs too high? But think on this third point: the rate of lethal casualties suffered by the British and Irish at the Somme in 1916 was *less* than that suffered by the British and Canadians in Normandy in 1944. Famous Normandy was more costly—proportionately—than the infamous Somme. The reason that the First World War *looks by comparison* so excessively expensive of British, Irish, and Anzac lives is because in the Second World War the Irish Free State was neutral, Britain and its empire never fought in the main theatre of action, and it was the Russians on the Eastern Front who paid most of the enormous costs. So if we reckon that the War against Hitler was somehow 'worth it', despite its enormous overall cost—some 62 million people are reckoned to have died in it—then the fact that the Great War involved terrible slaughter does not, alone, prove it unjustified.

All of this excursus into the Great War by way of saying that it is not clear to me that those Australians and New Zealanders and Irishmen and Britons who lost their lives for the Allied cause at Gallipoli and elsewhere, wasted them. It's not clear that either the cause or its instrument were unjust. So maybe pride and gratitude can raise their heads even as we remember *them*.

Together we remember and lament the terrible evils of war. Together we remember and lament the tragedy that envelopes ordinary people in wartime, be they antipodean or Turkish or British or German. Together we remember and lament the fragility of peace. And out of our remembering and lamenting, together we resolve to *work* for the peace that is only ever an achievement, never a natural, default state.

Beyond this, however, we divide. Some, having drawn pacifist conclusions, will resolve to oppose all war everywhere. Others of us, believing that war can sometimes be an instrument of justice, will be proud of those who have served and suffered justly, and grateful to them. But, remembering that war is only ever a *terrible* instrument of justice, which brings great evils in its wake, we will resolve to use it very sparingly indeed, and only as a very last resort.

Nevertheless, those of us who believe in the possibility of justified war will recognize that there are *two* temptations, not just one. Certainly, there is the temptation for nations that possess military hammers to presume that all problems are nails. Such nations would be, pre-eminently the USA and, to a much lesser extent the UK. But there is another temptation facing nations that have no military hammer: namely, the inclination to pretend that nails don't exist.

It is possible to go to war too late, as well as too soon. For example, in 1999 during a debate on Nato's military intervention in Kosovo at the General Synod of the Church of England, the Bishop of Oxford, Richard Harries, said this: 'Terrible things happened earlier, especially (the massacre of 7,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica) in Bosnia. Should we have intervened earlier at that point? If we did not intervene at that point and should have done, how much responsibility do [we] bear for failing to face up to evil and (to) support the necessary stern measures?'

And, of course, in Rwanda we didn't go to war at all. Which was good for us. But not so good for the Tutsis.

So, *in addition* to remembering and lamenting, and resolving to work for peace and resolving to resist going to war too soon, *some* of us will *also* pray for the courage not to go to war too late, and for the wisdom to discern when the moment for dreadful action has come.

Here, then, on Anzac Day, we're doing a variety of things. Some of them we do together; some we do apart. But all of us, I think, have good reason why, at the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we *should* remember them.

The Battle of Wijtschate – Messines Ridge, June 1917. Brotherhood among Irishmen ?

Tom Burke
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At 3:10 a.m on 7 June 1917, ninety years ago this year, Irish men from the island of Ireland re-took the German occupied Flemish village of Wijtschate, or, as the men called it Whitesheet. From an Irish perspective, the battle to capture Wijtschate was a battle that some believed presented an opportunity for reconciliation between the two political traditions in Ireland, namely British Unionism and Irish Nationalism. The thinking was, that if Irishmen could fight and die together, surely they could live together. The symbolism of these Irish men fighting side by side was not lost on politicians, particularly Nationalist politicians. In December 1916, Willie Redmond MP wrote to his friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. (1)

> There are a great many Irishmen today who feel that out of this war we should try to build up a new Ireland. The trouble is, men are so timid about meeting each other half way. It would be a fine memorial to the men who have died so splendidly, if we could, over their graves build a bridge between north and south.

It was a battle in which loyal Ulstermen and Irish nationalists fought side by side for the last time in any great numbers against a common enemy. The battle became known as the Battle of the Wijtschate – Mesen (Messines) Ridge. This essay will present the origins of the battle and examine the relationship that existed, if there was one at all, between the men from the 16th(Irish) and 36th(Ulster) divisions during the months leading up to the dawn attack on Wijtschate.

The road to Wijtschate.

At the beginning of 1917, the Flanders front line ran roughly from the Belgian north sea town of Nieuport down in a south-east series of curves, firstly around the Ieper salient, then on south around the villages of Wijtschate and Mesen, cutting back eastwards around Ploegsteert, Armentieres and on down into northern France. To the north of the Ieper salient lay the strategically important Belgian ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge. Ostend was in German hands by mid October 1914. When the front line ran around Ieper, it crossed a ridge of land that roughly ran from Hazebrouck in northern France, eastwards through Wijtschate and Mesen, then northeast through the villages of Gheluvelt, Broodseinde, Passchendaele and Roulers. To the north and east of Ieper lay the Staden-Passchendaele-Gheluvelt section of the ridge. To the south of Ieper lay the Wijtschate - Mesen section of the ridge. The average elevation of this ridge was forty-five meters. The highest peak of the ridge was a hill in the village of Kemmel, known as the Kemmelberg, that is approximately 150 meters above sea level. Travelling across the ridge, a motorist scarcely notices that he or she has crossed it, even a cyclist is only intermittently conscious of the gradients. Yet from Passchendaele, roughly ten kilometres northeast of Ieper, this mild slope rendered complete observation to the ramparts of Ieper.

On 6 December 1915, the Allies held a conference at General Joffre's headquarters at Chantilly, the great horse-raising centre north of Paris. Representatives of the Allied high command from Britain, France Russia, Serbia and Italy agreed to aim for synchronised offensives on the Western,

Eastern and Italian fronts at some date after March 1916. The philosophy behind this 'Triple Offensive' was to prevent the Germans from using their central strategic position to switch their reserves in turn from front to front. Two days later, General Sir John French resigned as head of the British Expeditionary Force in France. The fifty-four year old Scot, General Sir Douglas Haig, replaced him. On 14 February 1916, Haig met Joffre at Chantilly and in accordance with the combined offensive policy agreed at the conference of 6 December, both Commanders-in-Chief agreed on a joint offensive astride the river Somme where both armies stood beside each other. They set a target date for their joint offensive for the end of June 1916.

Joffre considered the Somme offensive as a predominantly French operation. Haig viewed the joint Somme offensive as a preliminary attack that would take place prior to his preferred offensive option, which was a breakout from the trap of the Ieper salient. Haig believed that once Germans reserves had been drawn off at the Somme, he could launch his part of the offensive. (2) Given the choice of offensives in 1916, Haig's preferred option, which was based on sound strategic reasons, was the Flanders breakout project. (3)

Haig's Flanders breakout project was founded upon sound strategic reasoning. German U-Boats operating out of Ostend and Zeebrugge were reeking havoc on British supplies crossing the Channel. Although at the time of planning the capture of the Belgian ports, the British Admiralty would never have known how much the loss of shipping would increase, by 1917, German U-boats operating out of Ostend and Zeebrugge contributed to one third of the total sinking of British and Allied shipping. The remaining two thirds were attributed to the fleets at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven. (4) Regardless of this anomaly, the British Admiralty simply wanted the Germans out of Zeebrugge and Ostend. Merchant shipping losses shot up from around 300 to 350,000 tons a month in the Winter of 1916-1917 and on up to 520,000 tons in March 1917, further increasing to 860,000 in April. (5) Therefore removing the Germans from Ostend and Zeebrugge would protect British supply lines from Britain and indeed Ireland to the continent.

There were further sound strategic reasons as to why Haig preferred the Flanders option. During January 1915, French operations staff at Chantilly began to analyse how to break the German defences and their lines of supply to their armies along the Western Front. They identified the rail communication lines that supported the German armies in the field. There were three rail systems that led from the Western Front back across the Rhine into Germany. If any of these lines were cut, with supplies curtailed, perhaps the Germans might fall back and thus create conditions for 'open warfare', which it was believed, offered the best chance of a decisive allied victory. Of the three railway links, there were two that supplied the German armies in Flanders and Verdun. The former was of specific interest to the BEF stuck in Flanders. The German railway line to their Flanders front came along the Roulers - Thourout line. Breaking out from Ieper in a northwest swoop from the city and taking Roulers (now Roeselare) which lay five miles (eight kilometres) beyond the Passchendaele Ridge, would be a huge strategic success.

In contrast to the Somme offensive, behind the German line north of the Somme facing the British, there were no major communication lines or industrial complexes when if taken, would help the BEF and French war effort. All the British would face at the Somme would be an uphill battle against fortified villages and some of the strongest positions on the Western Front. Because the British were the junior partners in the relationship with the French, Haig's Flanders project would have to wait and come second to Joffre's plans to attack astride the Somme.

Haig instructed his army commanders on the ground to prepare some plans and consider how the joint 1916 offensive with the French might be handled. He instructed General Sir Henry Rawlinson to prepare a plan for the Somme offensive, BUT, he also instructed the commander of the 2nd Army in Flanders, General Sir Herbert Plumer, to prepare plans for operations there too. (6) General Haig's plan of assisting the French first on the Somme and then turning his efforts on Flanders had Joffre's approval. (7)

He also had the approval of the War Committee of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith who indicated that there was no operation of war they regarded as of greater importance than the expulsion of the Germans from the Belgian coast. (8)

Planning for the Flanders breakout went through several stages and personalities. On 12 November 1915, a plan to have a surprise amphibious landing at Ostend with a British force that embarked from Dover, Calais and Dunkirk was proposed by the Admiralty. Haig believed this plan would be too difficult to effect and support and it was cancelled. Rather than a surprise landing at Ostend, he proposed to operate from the Ieper front with two armies and not attempt a coastal advance and landings until the main offensive northeast out of the Ieper salient had made good progress. There was already one army on the ground in Flanders under General Plumer.

To complete his two army attack formation, following a meeting with his commanders, on 7 January 1916, Haig proposed that the new British Fourth Army under the command of General Rawlinson, should move from their current position north of the Somme into the southern sector of the Ieper salient.

There is a wise and true saying. 'God disposes what man proposes' and in the summer of 1916, it was General Erich von Falkenhayn (1861-1922) who disposed of what Haig and the Allies at Chantilly had proposed. The German offensive at Verdun that began on 21 February 1916 had developed into a long drawn out battle that wore the French and indeed German armies down and totally upset the Allied plans for the 1916 Flanders breakout. On 27 March 1916, General Joffre informed Sir Douglas Haig that the British might have to deploy the whole of their available resources alongside the French in a combined operation astride the Somme in order to relive and prevent the destruction of the French at Verdun. General Rawlinson's Fourth Army was beside the French north of the river Somme. By 4 June 1916, it was evident that whatever shape the Flanders part of the British / French summer offensive might take, General Rawlinson's Army would now be too far committed on the Somme to participate in a Flanders offensive and Sir Douglas Haig ordered General Plumer to be prepared to direct the Flanders operation with restricted resources. (9).

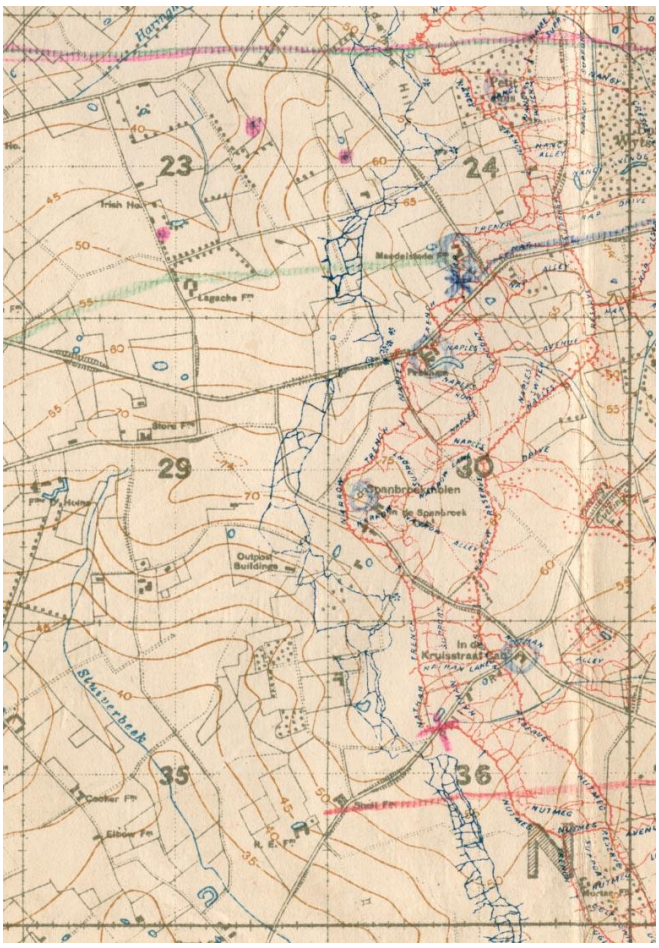
As the Somme campaign raged down south, General Plumer continued to work on his battle plan with considerably reduced manpower. The Somme was sucking supplies and manpower down south away from his army in Flanders. By June 1916, as part of his original plan, twenty-four mines along the Wijtschate-Mesen Ridge had been dug to various depths of between twenty and thirty meters and packed with almost 453,515 Kilos of ammonal (roughly a million pounds). The end point of these tunnels in which the explosives were placed, were located under German strong points such as machine gun positions. Removing these strong points would be vital in order to give Plumer's attacking infantry a clear run into the German lines. His men, mineshafts and tunnels dug under the Wijtschate-Mesen Ridge, would have to wait and withstand the winter of 1916. The explosives were to sit in their tunnels for almost a year after they had been completed and would be regularly maintained by members of the Royal Engineers. Meanwhile the battle down south along the Somme raged on through the summer and autumn of 1916.

On 15 November 1916, with the Somme petering out, Haig's breakout at Flanders was back on the agenda when he attended an Allied conference held at Chantilly in France in which the Allied plans for 1917 were discussed. On 12 December 1916, General Plumer submitted a breakout plan to GHQ. The plan fell short of General Haig's more ambitious plans to route the Germans out of Belgium entirely. Plumer's plan was a bite and hold project, where Haig wanted something more rapid on a grander scale. Consequently on 6 January 1917, Haig again asked Plumer to recast his scheme. He sought a second opinion from General Rawlinson, the man who had borne the brunt of the Somme offensive with the intention of giving him responsibility for the northern sector of the attack. Moreover, by way of an alternative, Haig put together a special sub-section of the Operations Branch of his own GHQ Staff under Lieut.-Colonel C.N. Mac Mullen who was assisted by Major Viscount Gort to produce another proposal for the breakout project.

On 30 January 1917, General Plumer presented his second plan. This particular plan that Plumer submitted to Haig was a little more ambitious than his first. He now proposed an initial operation intended to capture Pilckem in the north and Mesen in the south, with a small advance across the plateau, followed by the capture of Passchendaele and ultimately a push towards the Belgian coast. He proposed that the attack was to be made by two armies, one to attack the north of the salient i.e. Pilckem, and the other to attack the south, i.e. Mesen. He initially proposed the attack carried out by both armies should occur on the same day. However, his later plan proposed a staggering of the attacks. He concluded that an attack north of the Ieper salient on Pilckem would not succeed unless the ridge, i.e. the Wijtschate – Mesen Ridge to the south was taken first. Plumer did not specify the interval between the end of the attack on Mesen and the beginning of the attack on Pilckem. In his analysis of Plumer's plan, Rawlinson believed that maximum advantage should be taken with the fall of the Mesen Ridge and no great interval should follow before the launch of the attack on Pilckem. He recommended a gap of between forty-eight and seventy-two hours, which was the minimum time he believed was needed to re-orient the artillery. (Note. The eventual gap between the attacks was approximately forty-seven days, i.e. between 14 June and 31 July 1917 and it proved to have dire consequences for Haig's dream of routing the Germans out of Belgium.)

The plans for the Flanders offensive were interrupted yet again, this time by political and military developments on both sides of the English Channel. Firstly, General Joseph Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief since the outbreak of the war, was dismissed. On 12 December 1916, the French government chose their hero of Verdun, General Robert Nivelle, who brought his own ideas for breaking the stalemate at the end of 1916 and keep up the pressure on the Germans along the Western Front. Secondly in the same month in Britain, Asquith's government fell. His position as Prime Minister was taken over by David Lloyd George.

Instead of being nursed back to strength after the previous two years of fighting, particularly at the Somme, the French under their new man General Nivelle, planned yet another offensive in the Soissons-Reims area. He believed that if he was successful in this major offensive, the Germans would probably abandon the Belgian coastline and that Haig's proposed operation in Flanders would be unnecessary. If however Nivelle's offensive failed, the British would, as quickly as possible, turn their attentions to the Flanders breakout. Haig's project was yet again put on hold for another French led offensive. Many of the main battles the British took part in up to the end of May 1917 were in conjunction with the French army to draw away German reserves from the French who led the main offensive. The British and Commonwealth forces would again play a subsidiary part in Nivelle's offensive by attacking a few days before the French. The British and Canadians would attack the Arras / Vimy sector in order yet again attempt to draw German reserves from the French main attack.



Map section of Irish / German front line at Wijtschate.
Map Ref. 28.S.W.2 Edition 5A1 - April 1917.
Courtesy of Mrs. M. Quarton RDFA whose father, Capt. Standish Smithwick, served with 2nd RDF at Wijtschate.

On Easter Monday, 9 April 1917, in accordance with the Haig's agreement with Nivelle, under the command of Generals Edmund 'Bull' Allenby and Sir Julian Byng, the British attacked Arras and made one of the most outstanding advances in the war to date. Canadian and Moroccan troops captured the strong German defences at Vimy Ridge. However, despite the gains, the overall state of the British attack ended in stalemate. Nivelle went ahead with his attack on 16 April 1917 in icy rain and it failed catastrophically petering out in early May. The Germans had captured a document that revealed Nivelle's plans of attack. The French army had had enough and parts of it began to mutiny. Some 30,000 French soldiers left their trenches along the Chemin des Dames. Nivelle was sacked and was replaced by another hero of Verdun, General Henri Petain.

With the ending and failure of the Nivelle offensive at the end of May 1917, General Sir Douglas Haig turned his attention to his plans for the Flanders breakout. There would be no more obstacles or playing second fiddle to the French. His time had come and this time he would be in charge. On Monday 7 May 1917, following an Inter-Allied Conference that took place in Paris, Haig brought his army commanders together for a conference at Doullens. He announced that Nivelle's offensive had achieved only a limited advance and that the attack was halted.

The Arras campaign would continue in the hope of misleading the Germans of Haig's real intentions. However the troops and material in it would be gradually reduced and moved north to Flanders. To bridge the gap between the end of the attack on the Wijtschate – Mesen Ridge and the Gheluvelt / Pilckem Ridge, the French, Italians and Russians agreed to undertake operations to hold the attention of the Germans elsewhere. Haig's ambition of over two years previous had come at last. He asked General Plumer when he would be ready to carry out the attack, to which Plumer famously replied. 'In one month from now'. Three days later on 10 May 1917, Generals Plumer and Haig had lunch together. Afterward Plumer explained to Haig his plan of attack on the Mesen – Wijtschate Ridge and Haig approved. If what would became known as the Third Battle of Ieper, or, as some later called it, Passchendaele, could be considered to be a Shakespearean tragedy, the Battle of Wijtschate - Mesen Ridge might, in the context of the Third Battle of Ieper, be considered as Act One, Scene One.

Thus, after all the set backs, planning, proposals and counter-proposals that had gone into this grand breakout plan, along with thousands of soldiers from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and even the West Indies, would come Irishmen from the four corners of the Island of Ireland. Their objective would be to remove the Germans off the Wijtschate - Mesen Ridge on 7 June 1917.

Brotherhood among Irish men ?

Thiepval in July 1916, Guillemont and Ginchy in September of the same year, were the graveyards of the original Irish Brigades from the 36th(Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions who left Ireland between July and September 1915. Thousands of those idealistic Irish men who joined up in the first few months of the war died near these French villages during the Somme campaign. Following that terrible ordeal, the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions left the Somme sector in late July and September respectively and moved north to the relative peaceful part of the Flanders line facing the German occupied Wijtschate. There they relieved Canadian troops who had held this sector of the front prior to their arrival. It was a quiet part of the front, so quiet, that when they arrived, the Germans over the wire welcomed some of the Irish troops. Richard Newman was a gunner in 'C' Battery of the 177th Brigade Royal Field Artillery attached to the 16th (Irish) Division's artillery group. He noted in his diary about the German welcome he and his team received when they got to Kemmel. (10)

> When we took over, our infantry were not with us, but the Bavarians were in the opposite trenches with a notice put up. WELCOME 16th IRISH. This was supposed to demoralise us. However, we knew that the Bavarians were never aggressive troops and it was not long before both sides were sitting on the top, swapping bully beef for cigars, as they had no time for the black sausage or black bread, the Bavarians would give anything for

> a piece of white bread and would not believe that it was still a standard issue. The authorities soon put a stop to all that by bringing the artillery into action. Then they took the Bavarians out and brought the Prussians in and that was the end of our quiet interlude.

In their move north, both the 16th Irish and 36th Ulster Divisions became part of the IX Corps of General Sir Herbert Charles Onslow Plumer's Second Army. There may have been sound reasons why these two divisions were put alongside each other in the late summer of 1916. One possible motive behind the move was recruitment in Ireland, or more precisely, the lack of recruitment in Ireland. For obvious reasons, recruitment in Ireland after the Somme was a big problem. By October 1916, it was clear to senior officers in the Irish divisions and leading politicians back in Ireland, that Irish recruiting was declining. In late September 1916, the Adjutant General, Sir Nevil Macready, stated that the Irish infantry units were 17,194 men below strength. (11) In fact, recruiting had dropped off drastically all over the British Isles and Ireland was no different in that regard. In Ireland, from 4 August 1914 to August 1916, recruitment dropped from 50,107 to 9,323. By February 1917, it had fallen further to 8,178. (12) By way of a solution, General Macready presented five possibilities: (1) The introduction of conscription. (2) Amalgamation of the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions. (3) Reinforcing Irish units with English conscripts. (4) Allowing the divisions to waste away. (5) Transferring Irish units from non-Irish to Irish formations. The Army Council opted for the second proposal, which was the amalgamation of the 16th and 36th Divisions. In fact, by the end of the war, all five solutions were in one way or another tried out. During the debate on the second solution, politics raised its head again. John Redmond came to the conclusion that amalgamation was un-necessary and Edward Carson proposed that the 36th (Ulster) Division should be amalgamated with the Scottish 51st (Highland) Division. General Nugent, the commander of the Ulster Division, thought the amalgamation of the two Irish divisions would work. In the end no amalgamation took place and a compromise solution was reached which was that men recruited in Ireland would go to regular Irish battalions, while English drafts would be used to maintain Irish service battalions. (13)

Irish men were no longer coming forward to enlist and the Irish nature of both divisions was declining early into 1917. Something had to be done to stem the tide of men turning away from the recruiting offices in Ireland. Perhaps therefore, those that made the decision to place the two Irish divisions side-by-side in the same Corps facing the Germans in Wijtschate, believed that in placing the divisions beside each other in Flanders, they would create a sense of Irish and Ulster pride back home which hopefully would have a positive impact on recruiting. The move to place the two Irish divisions beside each other facing the common enemy in Wijtschate, kept some politicians happy, particularly those in the Irish Parliamentary Party.

On this particular theme, Willie Redmond MP wrote to a friend in Ireland just after his final return to the front. 'I wish I had time to write you all I have seen out here. My men are splendid and are pulling famously with the Ulster men. Would to God we could bring this spirit back with us to Ireland. I shall never regret I have been out here.' (14) One must wonder how General Plumer felt about taking on the problems of Ireland into his 2nd Army.

Regardless of what was going on back in Ireland, in Flanders the reality of war brought these Irish divisions together into the countryside around the Heuvelland villages of Loker, Kemmel and Dranouter. The winter of 1916/1917 around the Heuvelland where the Irish soldiers took up their billets was appalling. Initially, many of the soldiers had to live in tents simply because there were not enough billets for all the troops. When they first arrived, the 36th (Ulster) Division were billeted in St. Jans Cappel and later in Dranouter. The 16th (Irish) were billeted nearby in Loker.

During the months March, April and May both divisions underwent an intense period of training in preparation for the attack on Wijtschate. The days of marching men towards well-defended German machine gun positions, as happened at the Somme, were over. After the Somme, the British Army travelled along a steep learning curve, each

point and lesson along the curve often learned at a terrible cost in human life. When the men were not training, they assisted in the massive preparation work that took place prior to the attack on Wijtschate. New roads were built; light gauge railway lines were laid from the reserve areas up near the front line to bring supplies up and wounded back. They also conducted the dreaded raids on the German lines to gain intelligence. The one feature of this battle that stands out head and shoulders above any battle on the western front prior to June 1917 was the amount of training, planning and preparation that General Plumer and his staff had insisted on.

As we have seen, Willie Redmond MP, wrote in a letter to his friend about how his men were, 'pulling famously with the Ulster men.' Was this in fact true? What in fact was the relationship like between the men from the 16th(Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions during their time at Loker and Dranouter. There were many occasions when men from both divisions came in contact with each other around the villages of Loker, Dranouter, Kemmel and Bailleul. The villages of Loker and Dranouter are very close to each other and occasionally men from both divisions met and mingled with each other. For example, on Saturday 26 May 1917, the Band of the 16th (Irish) Division put a concert on in Loker for all to attend and many of the 14th Royal Irish Rifles, the YCVs from the Ulster Division, who at the time were in Divisional Reserve in Doncaster Huts in Loker, attended the show. There they met and mixed with men from the 16th (Irish) Division at the concert. (15) Another meeting place was in the town of Bailleul just over the border in France. Most of the Irish troops serving around the Heuvelland went to Bailleul for a bit of entertainment. Known to the Irish soldiers as 'Ballyhooly' after the town in Cork where some of them done their training, it was the railhead town that linked the town with St. Omer and Boulogne. It had shops and an ordnance store, a few hotels, restaurants and a club for the officers. (16) Bailleul had its own special attraction for the Irish soldiers. Lieut. May of the 49th Machine Gun Company noted one special attraction. (17)

> The special attraction of the town was a girl called Tina. Everyone in the area had heard of her…she was the best known girl outside Paris…..she was a fine good looking girl and I think a decent girl. She spoke good English and was a barmaid at a café in the town. She had innumerable proposals from English officers 'including two Generals'. Before the attack on Wijtschate, Tina was removed from Bailleul, for it was thought that she had too much knowledge of our troop movements.

Pte. Thomas Mc Clure of the 15th Royal Irish Rifles in the Ulster Division also had a few kind words to say about Bailleul. (18)

> I always liked Bailleul and was content to roam about there and spend any money I had, while some others went to Armentieres to drink. There was a big brewery in Armentieres and while part of this town suffered from shellfire, it was in very good order and not at that period too much destroyed. Shops of every description were open in Bailleul, including the jewellers; the town had a homely appearance. The square in Bailleul always reminded me of Shaftsbury Square, entering from the Bedford Street (Belfast) end, our favourite beer houses were 'Marie's', the 'Mont des Cats' and 'Rue-de-Falong.' At Neuve Eglise, you were held to be in support and it was here that we built the huts that we named Shankill Huts after the Shankill Road.

The Shankill Camp at Neuve Eglise (Nieukerke) was a little under six and a half kilometres to the east of Bailleul. Despite all the training and preparation work the men from the Irish Divisions carried out in the months leading up to the attack on Wijtschate, there was still time for a spot of football that was a great past time around Loker. Men played football matches against each other's battalions, and, more interestingly from an Irish perspective, between divisions.

Royal Dublin Fusiliers celebrating their victory at Wijtschate, June 1917. IWM Q5629

On Saturday afternoon 21 April, the 9th Royal Irish Fusiliers, a battalion of the Ulster Division's 108th Brigade, played a football match against the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Loker. The Faughs, i.e. Royal Irish Fusiliers, must have been a decent side because they beat the Dubs by seven goals to nil. Four days later they beat the 6th Connaught Rangers by two goals to nil. (19) A couple of days before their time in Divisional Reserve was up and they went back into the line on 5 May, the 47th Brigade of the 16th (Irish) Division held a sports day. These sports days were always good for morale. On 29 April, the 6th Connaught Rangers played a football match against what Roland Fielding described as a battalion 'of the Carson (36th) Division.' (20) The team they played was in fact the 9th Royal Irish Fusiliers. (21) Both matches were played in Loker. The 9th Royal Irish Fusiliers were billeted in Wakefield Huts which were located about 850 meters on the right hand side from the Chapel in Loker out the road that leads to Dranouter, today that road is named Dikebusstraat. The Faughs had returned from their period of training at St.Omer.

At the second match, which for the Ulstermen was unusual insofar as it was played on the Sabbath, i.e. Sunday, a crowd of up to 3,000 was reported to have turned up to watch this match. The large attendance at the match gave concern to Col. Rowland Fielding. Such a concentration of troops offered a prime target to German shellfire if they got wind of the match. However, knowing something about the politics of Ireland and the interest this match had developed, Col. Fielding's heart ruled his head on this occasion and he allowed the match to take place. It would have been a brave man to cancel it, German artillery or not, this match was going to take place. Someone once said that football was more important than life or death. Anyway, during the match, a wag on the Ulster side was heard to say: 'I wonder if we shall get into trouble for fraternising with the enemy!' (22) Just for the record, the Faughs beat the Rangers on both occasions by two goals to nil. (23)

Ulster wit is known all over the word and there was plenty of it around Loker in the spring of 1917. The remark about fraternising with the enemy was a fine example of such wit. Another example of Ulster wit was when 2nd Lieut. Mc Elwaine went round the fire step one morning. Second Lieutenant Percy Mc Elwaine was commissioned into 'B' Company of the 14th Royal Irish Rifles in mid-October 1916. He noted an amusing incident one morning in the Spring of 1917 when he was assigned to bring round the rum ration to men in the front line. A return was required from GHQ of all officers, NCOs and men who spoke Chinese in the battalion, as they were required for the Chinese Labour Corps. One morning as the men of the 14th Rifles were Stood To, Mc Elwaine went round with the rum and as he passed along the trench he asked? (24)

> Do any of you men speak Chinese? … As my men came from the factories and shipyards of Belfast where linguistic attainments are rare, my enquiry was received with a silence which I knew was highly charged with contempt and I would fain have hidden my diminished head in a rat hole. As I passed from one fire bay to the next, I heard a voice behind me say, 'Holy Jesus, what more will they want for a bob a day.'

The comment by an Ulster 'wag' about 'fraternising with the enemy' is interesting in the context of this essay. I have no doubt that politics did raise its ugly head at times. From published sources there were examples of good relationships

between the divisions and equally there were examples of bad relationships.
Taking the good relationships first. Walter Collins was a Londoner who served in the 9th Royal Irish Rifles. Interestingly he referred to his battalion being with the, 'Irish (Ulster) Division (36th)'. A fine bit of political correctness. He noted in his diary on the very point I make about men sticking together to fight a common enemy despite their religious differences etc. (25)

> For identity in the field we wore a shoulder flash, an orange shaped symbol or tab to denote our association as Orangemen…I was very much the odd man out with my comrades at that time being a lone Londoner among so many Irishmen but I was very much taken on my face value and I had a very happy association with them. Being practically politically unconscious at that time I found it very difficult to understand their antagonisms of religious belief etc. which at times boiled up, but if they fought each other on occasion there was never any doubt whose side they were on in relation to the common enemy or of their courage in action whatever part of Ireland they came from.

In his book *As From Kemmel Hill* published in London in 1963, Andrew Behrend wrote on this relationship. (26)

> I should like to put on record one further memory of the Battle of Messiness. However little it interested me then, it fascinates me today; that during the battle and for the weeks before, the 16th (Irish) and the 36th (Ulster) Divisions lived and fought side-by-side, got on with each other splendidly and at time even pulled each other's chestnuts out of the fire.

It is not directly related to the Irish at Wijtschate, but in the North / South context of these few sentences, one Dublin Fusilier's experience in working alongside men from the Ulster Division is worthy of note. On Friday 20 November 1915, Pte. Joseph Elley of the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers wrote home to Monica Roberts thanking her for the latest food parcel she sent him. The weather then was freezing hard. (27)

> Well, we are having a time, its simply heartbreaking to see such strong and good boys getting frost bitten …..We have the Ulster Division with us at present and fine good lads they are, good old Ireland again. The Dublins get on with all the Regiments, especially the Jocks and on the whole its great to be out here knowing you are defending your own at home.

Royal Irish Rifles and Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers celebrating their victory at Wijtschate in June 1917. Note the YCV flag. IWM Q 5496

Later on in early December Elley wrote to Miss Roberts again. ' I suppose you saw in the papers about Redmond's visit to the front. I might say he spoke to the Ulster men and there is no bad feeling amongst us fellows out here and I think it will end such feelings forever.' (28)

Rev. John Redmond CF was a Church of Ireland Chaplin attached to the 9th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers during their time facing Wijtschate. On the relationship between men from both divisions he wrote. (29)

> It was impressive to see what a feeling of security before the battle

> the Ulster Division had in having the 16th Irish on our left flank and that the 16th Division had in having our Ulster Division on their right flank. This feeling of goodwill and confidence between the two divisions had been growing for some time. I wish the entire north and south that they represent, could participate in the same spirit.

Captain Stephen Gwynn, a nationalist officer in the 6th Connaught Rangers, wrote to his cousin Amelia on St. Stephen's Day 26 December 1916. ' We are alongside the Ulster Division and making great friends with them – which is well.' (30) Many months after the attack on Wijtschate, *The Galway Observer* newspaper on 21 September 1918 recorded the following. (31)

> In a letter to the Mayor of Derry (Mr. R.N. Johnston) on Irish achievements in the war, Capt. Gwynn recalls that he saw Derrymen at a place where, 'there was no thought of anything but our common credit' on the ridge in front of Messines, where the 16th and 36th Divisions lay side by side. 'Once it happened,' he says, 'that our right flank was moved up a little and I was the officer sent up to take over the section of the line from the Ulster troops who were holding it. They were the Inniskillings, and the commanding officer, Colonel Mc Rory, showed me round the line. All the trenches had names that were very familiar to me, but at last we came to a very strong point at the head of a mineshaft, where there was a great accumulation of sandbags. Col Mc Rory said to me rather sadly: 'We call this place Derry Walls, but I suppose that when your fellows come in here they will be changing all the names.' I said to him: 'we won't change a name of them, and we will hold Derry Walls for you. We did hold Derry Walls for four months and gave it back to the Ulster people and it was from there they went over the on that day, when the two divisions, side by side, captured Messines and Wytschate…'

A similar incident was written about by 2nd Lieut. Percy Mc Elwaine of the 14th Royal Irish Rifles when they were in the line at Wulverghem in the winter of 1916. It was no more than a bit of what one might call, harmless banter. (32)

> On one occasion there was a slight adjustment of our front near Wulverghem. A battalion of the Dublin 16th (Irish) Division took over from one of our battalions. I think indeed from the YCVs. As the Dublins came in, one of them remarked, 'Glory be to God will you look at the Carson's Boys.' From whom there was a reply. ''Get the Hell out of that you bloody Fenians.''

In contrast to these good relationship examples, the Irish military historian Dr. Tim Bowman suggests that, 'relationships between men of the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions were not all that satisfactory.' (33) There were times however, as we know from Rifleman Walter Collins, the mood was not so convivial between men from both divisions. The following examples portray the bad side of the relationship.

Lieut. -Col. Denys Reitz, the Commanding officer of the 7th Royal Irish Rifle of the 48th Brigade, 16th (Irish) Division, in his book, *Trekking On*, recalls how he and a few of his men prevented a fight between some of his men and 'the bloody Orangemen' from the Ulster Division. (34)

> In the course of the evening I sent a fatigue party to fetch supplies for our canteen from the Ulster depot. Soon after their return I heard a violent commotion in the marquee where we kept our stores. There was the sound of breaking crockery, mingled with oaths and shouts, and, rushing up to enquire, I found that the men were busy

> wrecking the place. When I demanded the reason, several of them angrily flourished bottles in my face, to the accompaniment of threats and curses against the bloody Orangemen. To me the bottles seemed harmless, for they contained only soda water, but, when I asked for enlightenment, it appeared that the root of the rouble was the labels, which bore the title 'Boyne Water.' The men started off in a body for the Ulster Division to avenge what they considered a mortal insult. I had heard of The Battle of the Boyne, but it conveyed no political implications and I thought the men had gone crazy. Fortunately I was able to telephone through to the Ulster headquarters, who hastily turned out several hundred men to surround the malcontents; and with tactful assistance of our Adjutant, young Hartery, who understood Irish politics, we managed to get our men back to camp without bloodshed.

It seemed that it took little to offend some members of the 7th Rifles if all they wanted to fight the Ulstermen about was the words Boyne Water on the label. One would like to know was there more than Soda Water in the bottles. In the end, had the row happened, it would probably have turned out to be 'handbags' at close quarters.

Fr. Henry Gill SJ was a Chaplain with the 2nd Royal Irish Rifles who were transferred in to the 36th (Ulster) Division after the Battle of Wijtschate. This particular battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles were a regular battalion with a large component of Roman Catholics soldiers from Cork and Dublin. The move he noted 'came as a surprise and a disagreeable shock almost to everyone.' (35)

Regarding the battle the battle of the Wijtschate – Mesen (Messines) Ridge that began at 3:10 a.m on 7 June 1917, the objectives set out prior to the battle were achieved within hours and on schedule as per the plan. The combination of the mines, a massive and very detailed combination of creeping and standing artillery barrages followed by consolidation and reinforcement removed the Germans from Wijtschate and off the Wijtschate-Mesen Ridge by mid-morning. During the late evening of 7 June, like many of the unit commanding officers, Major Boyle of the 150th Field Company took a walk up front to inspect the consolidation work his men were doing. He found some of his men working beside and in co-operation with men from the Royal Munster Fusiliers. Major J.C Boyle didn't miss the political significance of men from the Munsters working together with men from a Field Co. of Engineers attached to the Ulster Division. It is a very rare statement to be seen in a battalion war diary. Its presence must be seen as very significant. It is doubtful that Major Boyle would not have written it unless meant it. (36)

> Number 1 Section I found had not been able to start work owing to hostile shelling. Lieut. Thorne was just starting them in conjunction with 16th Division Royal Munster Fusiliers. So Ulster and the South of Ireland consolidate a position. The Orange and Green working together and blended well.

In conclusion it would seem that the relationship between the men from the 16th and 36th Divisions was neither good nor bad, it simply reflected in Flanders what was happening back home in Ireland at the time. There were UVF men in the 36th(Ulster) Division and there were National Volunteer men in the 16th (Irish) Division. These were two diametrically opposed armed political militias who would have killed each other had it not been for the outbreak of the war. However, when faced with a common enemy, despite their ethnic or religious differences, it would seem they did indeed pull each other's chestnuts out of the fire. The common enemy that faced Carson's men in Wijtschate was the Saxons and East Prussians, not the Dubliners or Corkonians beside them. The same could be said for the Redmondites in the 16th Division. At 3:10 a.m on Thursday 7 June 1917, two infantry divisions of the British Army raised in Ireland fought side by side and captured the village of Wijtschate Their casualties, along with the German casualties are listed on page 16.

For a while at least, old quarrels were set aside. Would it not be a lasting tribute to those men, that in recognition of their sacrifice, we are beginning to live with each other in peace. Willie Redmond dreamed of building a new Ireland, a nation at peace with itself and its neighbours. The wonderful events at Stormont Castle in May 2007 show that sometimes, dreams do come true.

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16th (Irish) - 36th (Ulster) Division and German Casualties Suffered between midnight 6/7 June and mid-day 9 June 1917.

16th (Irish) Division exclusive of 33rd Infantry Brigade.
(Source - War Diary 16th (Irish) Division WO95 / 1956.)

Total. 1,183

Rank	Killed	Wounded	Missing
Officers	9	56	
Other Ranks	125	844	
Total	134	900	149

36th (Ulster) Division.
(Source - War Diary 36th (Ulster) Division WO95 / 2491.)

Total. 1,119

Rank	Killed	Wounded	Missing
Officers	8	53	
Other Ranks	156	857	45
Total	164	910	45

The strength of the German order of battle on the IX Corps front at Zero Hour of 7 June 1917 was estimated by IX Corps intelligence to be approximately 5,500. This included units in reserve and at rest. The number of Germans prisoners who had passed through the IX Corps Divisional Cages by 9 June was, 63 officers and 2,840 other ranks, a total of 2,903. (Source - War Diary 47th Brigade Intelligence Report 8 June 1917 WO95/ 1969.)

Estimation of casualties suffered by the German units who faced the Irish Regiments on 7 June 1917

German Division	Unit	Taken Prisoner. Officers	Taken Prisoner Other Ranks	Losses Officers	Losses Other Ranks
2nd (East Prussian)	44th Infantry Regiment	17	574	32 (15)	992 (418)
	33rd Fusilier Regiment	8	705		
	4th Grenadier Regiment	14	760	46 (32)	1370 (610)
	10th Jaeger zu Pferde	1	8		
40th (Saxon)	104th Infantry Regiment	10	137	13 (3)	320 (183)
3rd (Bavarian)	23rd Bavarian Regiment	5	240		
	17th Bavarian Regiment		2	34 (34)	1151 (1149)
	18th Bavarian		1		
Totals		55	2,427	155 (84)	3,833 (2,360)

The IX Corps Intelligence report written after the battle stated. 'It would appear therefore that the 2nd Division as a fighting formation has practically ceased to exist. The same fate has befallen the 3rd Bavarian Division.' (.Source - War Diary 47th Brigade Intelligence Report 8 June 1917 WO95/ 1969.) There were several other units attached to each of these German divisions from which prisoners were taken and because of their small numbers are not listed above. Moreover, the Losses columns list the number of officers and

other ranks recorded in the regimental histories. The difference between the reported total loss in the regimental histories and the number taken prisoner according to the IX Corps intelligence report would give an approximation as to the number who were killed. These figures are listed in Red. It would seem that the unfortunate 17th (Bavarian) Regiment suffered an almost wipeout against the New Zealanders facing Mesen. It is interesting to note that the total estimated German dead of 2,444 plus the number taken prisoner 2,903 approximately equals the IX Corps estimated strength of the German units that defended Wijtschate on 7 June 1917.

Rank	Irish killed	German killed
Officers	17	84
Other Ranks	281	2360
Total	298	2444

Sources of information on German units at Wijtschate, June 1917, regimental histories.

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3.The Fusilier Regiment Count Roon (East Prussian) No. 33 in the World War 1914-1918. Compiled and edited by Professor Liedtke, Major (ret'd, reserves) in the Regiment, Berlin 1935. In Flanders-Wytschaete (extracts).

4.History of the Grenadier Regiment King Frederick the Great (3rd East Prussian) No. 4, edited by Lieut.-Gen (ret'd) Alfred Dieterich. The Regiment in Flanders from 27 March to 13 June, 1917 (extracts)

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6. Pflugbeil Hanns. Das Kgl. Sächs. 15. Infanterie-Regiment Nr. 181. Nach den amtlichen Kriegstagebüchern bearbeitet im Auftrage des ehemaligen 15. Kgl. Sächs. Infanterie-Regiments Nr. 181 von Hanns Pflugbeil, Hauptmann im Stabe der 4. Division, im Felde Kommandeur III./181 - The Royal Saxon 15th Infantry Regiment No. 181. Compiled from Official War Diaries on behalf of the former regiment by Hanns Pflugbeil, Staff Captain in the 4th Division and Battalion Commander of 3rd Bn 181st Rgt in the field.

I would like to thank Mr. Martin Steffen MA for his efforts in supplying me with translations from the regimental histories of the German units that faced the Irish at Wijtschate. Martin is a German military historian and member of the RDFA.

The very model of a modern Major-General.

Major-General H. W. Higginson CB, DSO and Bar Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Professor Peter Simkins, Centre for First World Studies, University of Birmingham.
Member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

If asked to pick a figure who represented the more meritocratic nature of the BEF's senior echelons of command by the final stages of the Great war, then one could scarcely do better than to nominate Harold Higginson. Though by no means a household name, he was, in most respects, a model battlefield commander on the Western Front and arguably one of the more gifted – and underrated – tacticians in the BEF. He was endowed with great common sense, was highly perceptive and was always ready to learn as well as being careful with the lives of his men. He was a loyal and reliable subordinate but, at the same time, he was never a 'yes man' and was prepared to question orders or to suggest alternative ways of approaching tactical problems when he felt that the situation demanded such a course. He was, in short, a solid professional who - not having attended Staff College – reached high rank by dint of adaptability, hard work and long regimental service.

Harold Whitla Higginson was born in India on 10 November 1873, the son of Colonel Theophilus Higginson CB and the grandson of H T Higginson of Carnalea House, Co. Down. He was educated at St Lawrence College, Ramsgate, and the Royal Military College at Sandhurst before being gazetted as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in 1894. So far as I can trace, he remained with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers for the whole of his period of *regimental* service. Higginson rose steadily through the ranks, becoming a Lieutenant in 1896 and a Captain three years later. In 1897-1898 he was in the expedition to Lapai in West Africa and then served throughout the South African War, being mentioned in despatches. In 1903 he took part in operations in Aden and from 1904 to 1907 was adjutant of the 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

In 1908 he was involved in more operations overseas, this time in the Blue Nile province of the Sudan, for which he received the Khedive's Medal. (1)

His active service notwithstanding, Higginson's career appears to have stalled somewhat in the first decade of the twentieth century, as he remained a Captain for some fourteen years until promoted to Major in 1913. By this time he was with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers - 'The Old Toughs' – at Milton Barracks in Gravesend, Kent, having been the battalion's adjutant when it arrived there from Aldershot in September 1911. He is known to have still been with the battalion on St Patrick's Day in 1914 but soon afterwards he became Brigade Major to the Warwickshire Brigade in the South Midland Division of the Territorial Force, taking up his appointment on 1 May. (2) This formation was re-designated as the 143rd Brigade of the 48th (South Midland) Division on 12 May 1915, following its departure for the Western Front. (3) Higginson, however, left the staff of this brigade to return to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 8 June 1915 as a Temporary Lieutenant-Colonel and commanding officer of the 2nd Battalion, part of the 10th Brigade in the Regular 4th Division. After being heavily involved in the Second Battle of Ypres in April and May 1915, the battalion was fortunate to spend several months free from major operations while under Higginson's command. The award of a DSO to Higginson was gazetted on 14 January 1916 and he remained with the battalion until 2 May that year, when he was promoted to Temporary Brigadier-General and given command of the 53rd Brigade in the 18th (Eastern) Division under Major-General Ivor Maxse (4) From the moment he took up his new post on 3 May 1916 – less than two months before the start of the Somme offensive – his true talents as a battlefield commander and tactician at last began to flourish.

The historians of the 10th Essex – one of the four battalions now under his command – revealed that Higginson worked, '*harder than any Brigadier we had experienced in the past (or any that we ever*

met for that matter), [and] *he got no end of work out of us. At this time breakfast at Brigade H.Q. was at 6 a.m. each day. General Higginson was another regular soldier we grew both to respect and love, but it took a week or two to get used to his methods*' (5)

His new brigade certainly performed well on 1 July, the first day of the Somme. Taking advantage of mines fired at Casino Point at 7:27 a.m, and of a flame projector under the direction of Major W H Livens RE, which cleared resistance off the western edge of the Carnoy craters, battalions of the 53rd Brigade occupied the first objective, Pommiers Trench, by 7:50 a.m. The advance to the division's second objective – Montauban Alley, from Montauban itself to the Pommiers Redoubt – began at 8:30 a.m and was to be covered by a form of creeping barrage which lifted by increments of 50 yards every ninety seconds. A fierce, hour-long struggle for the Pommiers Redoubt ensued and progress slowed as the day wore on, but by 6:00 p.m. the whole of the second objective was in the 18th Division's hands. By nightfall, 53rd Brigade was on the third objective, overlooking Caterpillar Wood. On this first day of the offensive, the 18th Division, including Higginson's brigade, seized and held ground to a greater depth than any other British division, except, perhaps, elements of the 30th Division on its immediate right. (6)

Higginson had indeed made a notable start to his career as a brigade commander. He was less fortunate in his next attack, at Delville Wood on 19 July, when it became all too apparent that in the battlefield conditions, in the tactical circumstances and in the command and control system which existed in the BEF in the summer of 1916, there was still limits to the extent to which a brigade commander could *directly* influence the conduct of operations. For this assault, Higginson's brigade was attached to the 9th (Scottish) Division under Major-General W T Furse. The attack was made, at the insistence of XIII Corps, at about 7:15 a.m on 19 July, although the order had only been given at midnight. Higginson's subsequent report bitterly criticised the whole operation, comparing it unfavourably with the attack on 1 July. The planning for the earlier attack, he observed, had been characterised by careful attention to detail, particularly with regard to the artillery's role in wire-cutting and co-operation with the infantry. The Delville Wood attack, on the other hand, was marred by the fact that insufficient time had been allowed for artillery preparation and co-operation ; by the difficulties experienced in communicating with battalions and obtaining accurate information about the situation ; by the intensity of German artillery fire ; by the lack of co-operation with neighbouring units ; and, not least, by the attack being launched some forty-five minutes *after* the artillery bombardment had finished. The evidence suggests that, on receiving the order for the attack, Higginson had asked Furse : '*Is it absolutely necessary to carry out the attack tomorrow morning?*', to which Furse replied : '*Corps has ordered it*'. Higginson recognised that Furse too disliked the idea and blamed XIII Corps for the resulting failure. (7) In the 1930s, when commenting on the relevant draft chapters of the British Official History, Higginson and other officers of the 53rd Brigade, plainly still felt very bitter at the way their troops had been misused in the attack at Delville Wood. Higginson himself wrote:

'*The account…does not bring out a very important point, namely that the attack was carried out at such short notice that no previous reconnaissance or adequate preparations were possible and there was no time to arrange any effective fire plan. When it received orders to move the Bde was in bivouac at Talus Bois*[é] *and was not expecting to be engaged immediately. In my opinion the attack demonstrated the futility of such hastily considered and ill-prepared attacks. At the time I thought that XIII Corps made a grave mistake in not allowing sufficient time for preparation and I am even more firmly of that opinion today….The failure of these attacks was not due to lack of determination on the part of the troops : the units of the 53rd Bde were in great form after their successes of the 1st July and their moral*[e] *was high….if you can bring to light the hasty nature of the attack I will feel that the official account does justice to my old Brigade*'. (8)

In the event, Higginson's pleas were largely in vain, just as they had been on 19 July 1916, for the Official History – while acknowledging the haste of the attack and the consequent lack of time

for reconnaissance – did little to highlight or emphasise the muddled nature of the preparations for the operation. (9)

It is the mark of a good commander that he is able to show resilience after a depressing failure over which he has had virtually no control. In his next important operation – the attack on Thiepval on 26 September 1916 – Higginson enjoyed the benefits of being in II Corps, under the methodical Claud Jacob, and of being back with his old division, the 18th. Here Higginson avoided potentially crippling losses among the support battalions of 53rd Brigade by the simple expedient of keeping them out of the assembly trenches vacated by the assault waves when the attack began, thereby enabling the follow-up waves to escape the inevitable German counter-barrage on those very assembly trenches. Ivor Maxse later wrote :'*I have no doubt in my own mind that General Higginson's fore-thought and instructions saved many casualties in his brigade*'. (10) 53rd Brigade captured two of its three objectives that day, taking ground which the Germans had held for two years. This was not the end of Higginson's successes on the Somme, for on 21 October the 53rd Brigade, with the 10th Essex and the 8th Norfolks leading the assault, seized a key stretch of Regina Trench, north-west of Courcelette.

1917 followed a similar sequence for Higginson, with outstanding operations being sandwiched between frustrating attacks. On 17 February, in the assault at Boom Ravine, near Grandcourt, his brigade managed, in tricky conditions, to take Grandcourt Trench and Coffee Trench, though the important height of Hill 130 stayed in German possession. (11) However, the 53rd Brigade's part in the capture of Irles, north-east of Miraumont, on 10 March displayed exemplary planning and execution, the village being captured after a converging, rather than a frontal, assault. An oblique, instead of an overhead, barrage was employed in this enveloping attack and, to ensure that the troops kept as close as possible to it, Higginson even issued diagrams illustrating the bursting patterns of shrapnel. The divisional historian called this a '*pretty little victory*' and it once again demonstrated Higginson's tactical flair and attention to detail. (12) On 17 March, nevertheless, Higginson found time to send a message to his old battalion : '*Best wishes to the Old Toughs for St Patrick's Day*'. (13)
During the Third Battle of Ypres, the 18th Division and the 53rd Brigade experienced difficulties in the Sanctuary Wood-Glencorse Wood sector near the Menin Road on 31 July and 10 August, yet, on 22 October, Higginson once again 'bounced back', becoming one of the few divisional or brigade commanders to emerge with any credit from the messy operations at Poelcappelle. On this occasion the brigade took Poelcappelle Brewery, Meunier House and Tracas Farm in another fine assault in which Higginson bluffed the Germans with a dummy attack south of the village and then outmanoeuvred them with a thrust to its north. (14)

Higginson, like many other brigade commanders in the BEF, kept a cool head under tremendous pressure in the crises of March-April 1918, especially at Villers Bretonneux in the defence of Amiens where, by my calculations, the 18th Division was in the line longer than any other single British or Australian division. On 4 April, for instance, at the height of the first German assault at Villers Bretonneux, 53rd Brigade launched a telling counter-attack at Hangard Wood. (15) Higginson's successes as a brigade commander were rewarded later that month by his appointment to the command of the 12th (Eastern) Division, with the rank of Major-General, a big farewell dinner being held for him at 53rd Brigade headquarters on the evening of 23 April – only hours before the Germans delivered their *second* major attack at Villers Bretonneux. Higginson had risen from being a largely unknown Major in the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers to the comparatively lofty heights of divisional command in just under four years.

He clearly adjusted to his new post as easily as he had taken to brigade command, and a Bar to his DSO was gazetted on 16 September 1918. His 12th Division had five prolonged spells in the line or in actual battle during the 'Hundred Days' and was involved in some of the heaviest fighting of the final offensive, such as the Battles of Amiens, Albert and the Scarpe in August, the advance to the Hindenburg Line, the Battle of Epéhy and the Battle of the St Quentin Canal in September, and the Battle of the Selle in October.

On 28 August 1918, operating on the right flank of Higginson's old division, the 18th , the 35th and 36th Brigades of the 12th Division – supported by overhead fire from the 12th Machine Gun Battalion – stormed the Hardecourt aux Bois-Maltz Horn Farm ridge. The action of the 9th Royal Fusiliers in clearing Favière Wood and occupying Hardecourt was particularly noteworthy in that the battalion contained some 350 recruits of eighteen to nineteen years of age, who had been in France barely a week.

Colonel (Temp. Major-General) H.W. Higginson, C.B,D.S.O., A.D.C.

The 6th Buffs, in the 37th Brigade, employed infiltration tactics at Favière Wood on 27 August and then at Maurepas on 29 August. On the second occasion they penetrated to the rear of a German company without being spotted, cutting off and capturing two officers and 60 men. Three weeks later the 12th Division attacked the Ronssoy-Epéhy position and five of its battalions ejected twelve *Jager* battalions of the famed Alpine Corps from a stronghold which the latter had been ordered to hold at all costs. On 24 October, the 6th Buffs moved along the banks of the Traitoire – a tributary of the Scarpe – to reach Coubray and Haute Rive before seizing Buridon under covering fire from skilfully-sited Lewis guns. Next day the same battalion launched a swift attack on Bruille, situated on the banks of the Canal de l'Escaut. Dispensing with artillery preparation, the battalion took the Germans by surprise, secured the village at relatively light cost and thus turned the enemy position between two rivers, causing German units on the left to be withdrawn. Despite suffering some 6,940 casualties during this period, Higginson's troops achieved a success rate of 69.5 per cent in opposed attacks in the 'Hundred Days' and their divisional commander's sure tactical grip was manifest throughout. (16)

After the war, having been awarded a CB in 1919, Higginson was GOC of 17th Infantry Brigade in Cork between 1919 and 1922 and of the 2nd Infantry Brigade at Aldershot in 1922-1923, before succeeding Clifford Coffin VC as OC Troops in Ceylon from 1924 to 1927. He was also an ADC to the King from 1923 to 1927. He then commanded the 55th (West Lancashire) Division (TA) until he finally retired in 1932, by which time he had been in the Army for 38 years. He died on 30 October 1954, aged 80. Remarkably – in view of his long, distinguished and often brilliant service – this outstanding former officer of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers was never awarded a knighthood; surely something of an injustice given that other divisional commanders in 1918, such as V A Couper and David Campbell, *did* receive such an honour. Moreover, in my judgement, Higginson was a much more effective battlefield commander, 'at the sharp end', than Alex Godley – another Royal Dublin Fusiliers officer who rose to even higher rank and command positions during the war. It is therefore fitting, perhaps, that Harold Higginson is at last beginning to receive, from scholars and students of the Great War, at least some of the attention that his distinguished career undoubtedly merits.

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1. Much of the information about Higginson's early life and military career has been gleaned from the relevant entry in *Who Was Who* and from his obituary in *The Times*, 1 November 1954.

I am also most grateful to Tom Burke, and to my colleague Dr John Bourne, the Director of the Centre for First World War Studies at the University of Birmingham, for their help in connection with this article.

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13. I am indebted to Tom Burke RDFA for this information.

14. Nichols, op.cit., pp.194-230, 232-246 ; 18th Division, General Staff, War Diary, January-December 1917, TNA WO 95/2016 ; 53rd Brigade, Headquarters, War Diary, January-December 1917, TNA WO 95/2035 ; Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1917, Vol.II*, HMSO, London, 1948, pp. 153-155, 186-188, 343-344.

15. Nichols, op.cit., p.312.

16. Major-General Sir Arthur Scott and P Middleton Brumwell, *History of the 12th (Eastern) Division in the Great War, 1914-1918*, Nisbet, London, 1923, pp.190-230 ; Edmonds, *Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1918, Vol.IV*, HMSO, London, 1947, pp.487-488 ; 12th Division, General Staff, War Diary, August 1918-June 1919, TNA WO 95/1827.

Father and son in The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Article in *The Kildare Observer* 4 September 1915.

The death of Drummer Rodney Ahearn of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, from wounds received at the Dardanelles, has been heard with much regret in Newbridge and Naas districts. Drummer Ahearn was a native of Naas, where his Father, Private Richard Ahearn, was an officer's servant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers barracks for many years. He had just arrived at the age of twenty years, and having been wounded in action, he was removed to Port Said hospital on 24 June, but, recovering quickly, he rejoined his regiment, and getting back to the firing line he was killed in action at the Dardanelles. Mrs. Ahearn, mother, has received information from the war office of the sad death of the gallant lad, the cause of death being stated as 'died of wounds'. Mr. Richard Ahearn, father of the deceased was a popular member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who fought right through the Boer War, and who for some years past was on the staff of the Newbridge Post Office. When the present war started, Mr. Ahearn immediately volunteered for active service, and was soon at the front with his old corps, the 1st Dublins. He was very anxious to meet his son, who was in the fighting line, and although both were in Alexandria for some hours at the same time, in their different companies, they did not meet, neither did they while in the fighting line afterwards. In a letter to his mother from the convalescent hospital, Port Said, on the 25 June, Drummer Ahearn said he had been wounded in the foot on the 18 June, but was going on splendidly,

So I think I have escaped very lucky, as I think I am one of the last of the old 1st Battalion to leave the trenches. It is terrible the cutting up that battalion has got - in fact, the whole division. Each time there has been anything on the mat we have been there, so I think it is very near time that they gave us a rest, but there is no such thing. There is no rest or playing football, as there is on the other side. It is a break to get away for a few days after being two months 'on the go' day and night. I have been expecting one every day as I should like to know if my father is on his way out, as I have not heard of him. I suppose 'Titch' is getting on tiptop. Is he gone to Belfast yet? I wrote him a postcard to the Curragh , but I suppose it will be forwarded to him, - Your Loving Son, Rodney.

In a War Officer communication, dated 20 July, Mrs. Ahearn, mother, who resides at Newbridge, received a document from the Infantry Record Office, Island Bridge, to the effect that Drummer Rodney Ahearn, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was wounded in action and admitted to the Government Hospital at Port Said. Further communications were received of the death of Drummer Ahearn from the War Office, expressing regret, the cause of death being stated as, 'died from wounds'. It afterwards transpired that the information was only too correct. Drummer Rodney Ahearn was a great favourite with all who knew him, and much sympathy goes out to his mother at Newbridge, as well as to his father, who is at fighting in the trenches, both of whom are very well known in Naas.

Which Irish family lost most sons / daughters in the Great War?

Philip Lecane
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

'*I have lost what I treasured most on earth, but I can only fold my hands and bow my head. When I look round and see what others have suffered I am silent.*'

(Rudyard Kipling in reply to a letter of sympathy on the death of his only son John. Second Lieutenant John Kipling, 2nd Battalion Irish Guards was killed in action on 27 September 1915 at the Battle of Loos. He was commemorated on the Loos Memorial but is now confirmed as the officer buried in St. Mary's ADS Cemetery, Haisnes which is between the towns of Lens and La Bassee in the Pas-de-Calais.)

The question posed in the title of this article will never be answered with one hundred per cent certainty. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission – keeper of the official records of British, Irish and Commonwealth war dead of the First World War – strives to keep its records as accurate as possible. It does, however, need to regularly update its records as new information comes to light. (It is important to stress that record changes are probably regular, as distinct from frequent.) Due to a shortage of information, even accurate records often conceal more information than they reveal. For instance who was Private J. O'Brien, Reg. No. 7972, 2nd Bn. Royal Dublin Fusiliers? An early casualty of the war, he died on 6 September 1914 and is buried in Grave 11.A.34 in Porte-De-Paris Cemetery – Nord in France. Might he have been related to another member of the same battalion who was killed late in the war? Private P. O'Brien, Reg. No. 26740, 2nd Bn. Royal Dublin Fusiliers died on 22 April 1918. He is buried in Grave 1.B.66 in Le Cateau Military Cemetery-Nord in France. If these men were not related to each other, were either related to any of the many other O'Briens who perished in the war? Might incomplete official records be concealing the fact that there was an O'Brien family that lost several members in the conflict?

If left to academic historians, the chances of uncovering individual family tragedies would surely be slim. The task thus falls on the shoulders of amateurs such members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association. (Just as the men of the Territorials/Militia were referred to as 'Saturday night soldiers' or 'Weekend Warriors,' perhaps we amateurs might be termed 'Holiday Historians' or 'Rest-day Researchers.') In the dogged part-time research undertaken by men and women who often hold full-time non-academic jobs lies the hope of uncovering the social history contained in the lives of individual soldiers, sailors, airmen, nurses and civilian war workers. Thus it was that our Chairperson Tom Burke MBE uncovered the fact that Anne and Edward McDonald of 46 Bride Street, Dublin lost three sons serving with 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Private Peter McDonald (42), Reg. No. 9443 was killed on 26 April 1915. His brothers Private Patrick McDonald (32), Reg. No. 8848 and Private John McDonald (22), Reg. No. 8982 were both killed on 24 May 1915. None of them have an identified grave and all three are commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. Patrick was married and Commonwealth War Graves Commission records give the address of his wife Elizabeth as 44 Bride Street. (In what must be a clerical error, the records give the address of his parents Anne and Edward as 36 Bride Street.)

My own research has established that the Cruess Callaghan family from Blackrock, County Dublin lost three sons who served as pilots. Lieutenant Eugene Cruess Callaghan, 19 Squadron Royal Flying Corps, was killed in action on 26 August 1916. He is commemorated on the Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Captain Stanislaus Cruess Callaghan, 44th Wing Royal Flying Corps, was killed in a plane crash in Canada on 27 June 1917. He is buried in Barrie (St. Mary's) Roman Catholic Cemetery, Ontario, Canada. Major Joseph Cruess Callaghan M.C. Commanding officer of 87 Squadron, Royal Air Force was killed in action on 2 July 1918. He is buried in Grave 1X. A. 14 Contay British Cemetery, Contay, Somme, France. The Cruess Callaghans were the sons of Joseph Patrick & Croasdella Cruess Callaghan, 'Ferndene,' Stradbrook, Blackrock, County Dublin.

Research in local newspapers by Limerick Historian Pat McNamara discovered the seven

sons of Johanna McKnight of Upper Henry Street, Limerick who served in the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the Leinster Regiment. Twenty-four year old Drummer Edward McKnight of the 1st Bn. Royal Munster Fusiliers was killed during the landing at 'V' Beach/Sedd-el-Bahr, Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. He is commemorated on the Helles Memorial. Also in 1915 Patrick and David McKnight were wounded in Flanders while serving with the Munsters. Their brother – described in a local newspaper as 'Private J. McKnight, also of the Munsters' – had his left arm amputated as a result of wounds sustained at Armentiers and Ypres. William McKnight of the Leinster Regiment was hospitalised in Fulham as a result of shrapnel wounds. The item in the 1915 Limerick newspaper went on to say that two further McKnight brothers were in training with the Munsters at Fermoy, County Cork. Thankfully, Edward appears to have been the only member of the family to die in the war.

In *'Turn Right at Istanbul: A Walk on the Gallipoli Peninsula'* Australian Journalist Tony Wright tells how he met fellow Australian Angus Hall during a visit to Gallipoli. Hall had vaguely known that three of his relatives had fought in the First World War. When he told his mother he planned to visit Gallipoli.

'She pulled an old box from underneath a bed and opened it, and inside were all those letters, diaries, postcards and photos of three boys all brothers, in their Army uniforms……But what really hit me were three pieces of white silk, each with a red cross on it. When a boy was killed in the war, a piece of white cloth with a red cross was sent to his mother, so she could put it in the window and everyone would know she had lost a son. And here were three of them, one for each son. It meant that in some small place in South Australia, this poor woman, my great-grandmother, had lost three sons.'

(The pieces of silk with the red crosses must have been a practice adopted by the Australian Army. I have never heard of this practice in connection with the British Army. If any reader has information on the practice I would be grateful if they would let me know, care of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.)

In the epilogue to his book *'Brothers in War'* Michael Walsh tells of his discovery of the *'Five lost Souls'* – Frederick George Souls, Albert Souls, Walter Davis Souls, Arthur William Souls and Albert Ernest Souls, five sons of a British family who were lost in the First World War. According to Michael Walsh.

'Saving Private Ryan had recently been winning Oscars and stunning cinema audiences everywhere. That was a story about three American brothers being lost and the mission to pluck a fourth from the Second World War battlefields of Europe. The world also knew of the fighting Sullivans, five brothers who all went down with the U.S.S. Juneau when she was torpedoed at Guadalcanal in 1942. They, too, inspired a Hollywood movie. A battleship and a convention centre were named in their honour. The fighting Souls brothers, in contrast, were barely remembered even in their home village, except when their names were read out on 11 November each year.'

Michael Walsh traced a nephew of the Souls brothers.

'For years he had been firing off letters to Prime Ministers and Buckingham Palace asking for some kind of formal recognition for the family's sacrifice. The replies were always polite. Although there appeared to be an honour for every sporting personality and contributor to party funds, there wasn't one that could be suitably bestowed on a long deceased mother who had given five sons for King and Country.'

Unfortunately, due to a scarcity of surviving records, Michael Walsh was unable research the story of the Souls brothers in any detail. He said.

'I thought nobody could have given more than Annie Souls. The Imperial War Museum and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission knew of no greater sacrifice. But another mother had given as much. Her name was Amy Beechey and her five lost sons have been similarly lost by history.'

Michael Walsh was fortunate to be provided with enough Beechey family records to write his excellent book *'Brothers in War.'* The book tells

the story of eight brothers who went to war. Five of them never returned. The brothers were Barnard, Charles, Frank, Harold and Leonard (all of whom were killed) and Christopher, Eric and Samuel (who survived).

The 1911 Census of Ireland was taken on the night of Sunday 2 April 1911. It recorded two families living at 55 Bridgefoot Street, Dublin. Bridgefoot Street, Ushers Quay is shown as being in St Catherine's Parish and in Dublin Metropolitan Police, 'A' Division. The two families living at 55 Bridgefoot Street, comprised of eight males and three females. The McGanns are recorded in this article merely for the fact that they shared the house with the Gallagher family, our focus of interest. The McGann family was comprised of John (54), Head of Family, Widower, Labourer. Patrick (28) Son, Single, Labourer. John (24), Son, Single, Labourer. Daniel (20), Son, Single, Labourer. Mary Anne (26), Daughter, Single, Labourer. All were born in Co. Dublin, could read and write and were Roman Catholic. The McGanns occupied 4 rooms.

The Gallagher family was comprised of Bridget Gallagher, Head of Family, Roman Catholic. Able to read and write, she was aged 50. The 'Occupation' column was left blank. She was born in Dublin City. As Head of Family, Bridget completed the census form. For some unknown reason she completed and then crossed out the following columns. Under the column 'Married/Widower/Widow/Single. ' She put 'Widower'(sic). Number of years marriage lasted 35. Total children born alive: 12. Children still alive: 10. Next on the form was Bernard Gallagher, Son, Roman Catholic, Cannot read or write, Age 26, Labourer, Single, Born Dublin City. Ann Gallagher, Daughter, Roman Catholic, Can read and write, Age 19, Occupation column was left blank, Single, Born Dublin City. Christopher Gallagher, Son, Roman Catholic, Cannot read or write, Age 12, Scholar, Single, Born Dublin City. Patrick Gallagher, Son, Roman Catholic, Can read and write, Age 24, Labourer, Single, Born Dublin City. The final family member present on the night of the census was Terence Gallagher, Son, Roman Catholic, Can read and write, Age 14, Labourer, Single, Born Dublin City. At the time of the 1911 census, Bridget Gallagher was widowed and whereas the five McGanns lived in four rooms, the six Gallaghers lived in two rooms.

On 8 October 1915 Sergeant Thomas Gallagher, Reg. No. 6772, 6th Bn. Royal Dublin Fusiliers died and was buried in Alexandria (Chatby) Military and War Memorial Cemetery. His battalion had been fighting in Gallipoli as part of the 10th (Irish) Division during August and September 1915, following which the division was sent to Salonika. Presumably Sergeant Gallagher died as a result of wounds or illness incurred during the Gallipoli campaign. Newspaper accounts record that he was married and that his wife lived in Naas, County Kildare, site of the *'Dubs'* regimental depot. While relatives of the Gallagher family of Bridgefoot Street, Dublin say that he was a member of the family no documentary evidence has yet been found to support this. It is, however, known that Sergeant Gallagher was born and enlisted in Dublin.

Private John Gallagher, Reg. No. 8980, 5th Bn. Connaught Rangers was thirty-three years old when he died on 7 December 1915. The battalion had fought in Gallipoli during August and September 1915 as part of the 10th (Irish) Division, following which the division was sent to Salonika. Private J. Gallagher does not have an identified grave and he is commemorated on the Doiran Memorial. Commonwealth War Graves Commission records show him as being the son of Bernard and Bridget Gallagher, 63 Bridgefoot Street, Dublin. It appears that the widowed Bridget had moved to another house on Bridgefoot Street since the 1911 census had been taken.

Twenty-three year old Private James Gallagher, Reg. No. 1002, 1st Bn. Connaught Rangers died on 21 January 1916. Having no identified grave, he is commemorated on the Basra Memorial in modern day Iraq. He would appear have been the only regular soldier in the Gallagher family, as he served in the 1st Battalion of his regiments. All the other brothers served in the 5th, 6th, 8th or 9th Battalions which were raised after the outbreak of war. Commonwealth War Graves Commission records show him as being the son of Bridget and the late Bernard Gallagher, 63 Bridgefoot Street,

Dublin. This is the only Gallagher entry that refers to the fact that Bernard was deceased.

Private Christopher Gallagher Reg. No. 19705, 8th Bn. Royal Dublin Fusiliers had been recorded on the 1911 census as being twelve years old. When he died on 29 April 1916 the records gave his age as nineteen, suggesting perhaps that he had given a false age upon enlistment. The son of Bernard and Bridget Gallagher, 63 Bridgefoot Street, Dublin, he is buried in grave 111.J.11 in Vermelles British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France.

The next – and hopefully final – wartime tragedy to befall the Gallagher family occurred just over two weeks later when twenty year old Lance-Corporal Terence Gallagher, Reg. No. 8622, 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers died on 14 May 1916. Recorded in the 1911 census as being a fourteen year old labourer, he is buried in Grave F.13, Bois-Carre Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. He is recorded as being the son of Bernard and Bridget Gallagher, 63 Bridgefoot Street, Dublin.

The reason for commenting that Terence's death was, hopefully, the final wartime tragedy to befall the Gallaghers arises from a story among present day relatives (who are not Gallaghers) that seven Gallagher brothers were killed in the war. At this time no documentary evidence has been found to support this story. It is known, however, that the widowed Bridget Gallagher lost four sons in the war and it seems likely that she lost five.

So which Irish family lost most sons/daughters in the First World War? At the start of the article I said that it probably will never be possible to answer the question with one hundred per cent certainty. I stand by this statement, as there is always the possibility that further research may uncover the story of an Irish family that suffered more losses than those already discovered. Having said that my own research has identified an Irish family that lost six members in the war. Amazingly, they were all lost on the same day and five of them were female. Even if further research establishes that an Irish family lost more members in the war, it is unlikely than any Irish – or indeed British – civilian family lost more members in the war than the Gould family of Limerick.

On Thursday 10 October 1918 forty-year-old Catherine Gould boarded the mail-boat *'R.M.S. Leinster'* at Dún Laoghaire (then Kingstown), County Dublin with her six children. They were on their way to Holyhead, Wales and then to England to meet Catherine's husband. Described in newspapers as P. Gould, he was a munitions worker. About an hour after leaving Dún Laoghaire the *'R.M.S. Leinster'* was struck by two torpedoes fired by German submarine UB-123. The *'Leinster'* was sunk with a loss of over 500 lives. It was the greatest ever single loss of liver in the Irish Sea and the greatest ever loss of life on an Irish owned ship. Among those lost in the sinking were Catherine Gould and her children Alice, Angela, Mary, Michael and Olive. The children ranged in age from twenty years to twelve months. The sole family survivor was Essie, the second eldest of Catherine's children.

On Wednesday 16 October 1918, the train carrying Catherine's body arrived at Limerick station at 8.55 p.m. Her daughter Essie and her husband P. Gould, munitions worker and *'retired army man,'* met the train. Following a service at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Catherine was buried in Mount Laurence Cemetery, Limerick . She was the only member of the family whose body was recovered. The *'Limerick Chronicle'* of 12 October 1918 described the Gould family of 3 Creagh Lane, Limerick as *'humble decent people.'* Outside the pages of the *'Limerick Chronicle'* I couldn't find any contemporary memory of the Gould family.

Catherine, Alice, Angela, May, Michael and Olive Gould died ninety years ago this year. Current research suggests that the Goulds are the family that lost the highest number of members during the First World War. Military casualties aside, it is unlikely that any other Irish family lost more civilian members in the war. While the death of all soldiers, sailors and airmen was tragic, they at least knew the risk attached to their service. The Gould family were civilians going about their daily life when they met their deaths at the hand of an unseen enemy. Surely it is time that Ireland restored these *'humble decent people'* to history by making some public recognition of the tragedy that befell them.

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The article is also based on individual research by Liam Dodd, Oliver Fallon and myself. My thanks to Liam and Oliver for sharing their research with me. Following Tom Burke's participation in the RTE TV programme, *Capital D* in November 2007, a member of the public Mrs. Mary Adams, contacted RTE and the RDFA. Mary gave us the story about the Gallagher family of Bridgefoot Street who were related to her. Our thanks go to Mrs. Adams for sharing her story with us.

Letters to Stillorgan from The Western Front.

Bryan Mac Mahon
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

During World War I, many women at home sought ways of supporting the war effort and one way was to form an organisation to send supplies to soldiers at the front. Monica Roberts of Kelston, on Stillorgan Road near White Cross, set up such a society in the autumn of 1914. Kelston still stands, now surrounded by houses, and today's entrance is from Leopardstown Road. Monica's father was Rev. W. R. Roberts, a mathematician who was a Senior Fellow and Vice Provost of Trinity College, chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant and treasurer of the Royal Irish Academy.

Some 326 letters sent to Monica Roberts from the front were kept by her daughter and are now deposited in box-files in the archives of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers' Association in Dublin City Library, Pearse Street. They were addressed to 'Kelston, Stillorgan,' and sometimes forwarded to other addresses when Monica was away from home. The letters form a remarkably vivid and moving source of information about conditions at the front and about the attitudes of the men. I strongly recommend a visit to the library to anyone with an interest in the war. It is a privilege to have a glimpse into the hearts and minds of these young men and to witness the courage, endurance and patriotism shown in their letters. Reading the men's handwriting with their underlining, alterations and marginalia gives a sense of the uniqueness of each one. Even the envelopes and postmarks are telling, as is the kind of paper they had available. In some cases only parts of pages have survived, the rest having decayed.

The Band of Helpers

Miss Roberts called her group the Band of Helpers, and she set out its constitution in a typed page headed 'Rules for Band of Helpers to the soldiers.'

1. This Society will last during the war and shall be called 'Band of Helpers to the Soldiers.'
2. Members pay 3d on being enrolled, which sum will go towards buying comforts, also for postage of goods to the front.
3. Members to send monthly addressed to Miss Monica Roberts, Kelston, Stillorgan, some contribution, however small, either in money or any of the following articles, all of which are said to be useful by the War Office. Handkerchiefs, bootlaces, chocolate, peppermint, dried fruits, briar pipes and tobacco pouches, tobacco, cigarettes, cigarette tobacco and cigarette papers, small tins of boracic ointment or borated vaseline

for sore feet, antiseptic powder, post cards, pocket knives, lead pencils etc.
4. These articles will be forwarded monthly to the Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Flying Corps.
5. If the Society grows, and receives good support, more regiments could be included. But at present, the above mentioned will be all to whom this Society will contribute.
6. Members are required to kindly tell their friends about this Society, for as many members as possible are required.

The *Irish Times* archive has recently been made available on-line, and a search reveals that the work of the Band of Helpers featured from time to time in its pages. Monica kept meticulous accounts, and on 14 December 1914, she listed the items which had been sent to the front: 4,836 cigarettes, 14 pipes, 17 packets of tobacco, 83 pairs of socks, 53 mufflers, 22 pairs of mittens, 12 pairs of cuffs, 7 pairs of gloves, 19 body belts, 16 helmets, 2 vests, 127 handkerchiefs, 138 pairs of laces, 140 tins of boric ointment and vaseline, 161 tins of foot powder, 142 cakes of soap, 10 shirts, 505 postcards, 48 letter cards, 6 packets of letter cases, 7 packs of playing cards. Other items sent were: chocolate, cake, peppermint, brandy-balls, pencils and knives. In other letters to the paper, Monica also listed the amounts of money donated, and the names of the donors.

Private Edward Mordaunt.

There is little information in the Collection specifically on the society's work or the people involved, but the wealth of experiences recounted in the soldiers' letters is quite breathtaking. What I have chosen to do in this article is to present the stories of just two of the soldiers, retaining original spelling and punctuation. In Volume 1 of the Collection, there are thirty-six letters from Private Edward Mordaunt, 8723, No. 6 Platoon, B Co. 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and they date from July 1915 to December 1917. The first letter is headed BEF (i.e. British Expeditionary Force), France, and it gives some information on his background.

You ask me if I live in Dublin, Well, I should think I do I was born in 19 Upper Rutland on May 26th 1894 and lived in Dublin up to February 1911 when I then enlisted and is still a soldier I left England on April 6th 1912 and went abroad to India which I liked very much I was there untill June 18th 1914 when we left India for the front ……..

I landed in France on 25 september 1914 and I am here yet I need not tell you I have suffered cruel since then but thank God I am still alive, the worst of it was the winter out here we were both frosed and up to our chests in water.

Dear Miss Roberts I think if I was made of iron I would not stick it as well as I am doing but for all that I am far from home but happy.

<u>Bravo the Dublin Fusiliers</u>

From your faithfull and unknown friend

Edward Mordaunt

ps Please excuse the paper and writing as I cannot get any better between food and writing we are nearly starved for the want of them.

Goodbye if you do not hear from me again as we are in a very dangerious position. with best of good luck and wishes

The next letter shows his appreciation of a parcel received, which included 'my faviouret cigarettes Woodbines,' and gives a clear picture of his state of mind on the eve of battle:

I need not tell you Dear Friend your socks are very usefull also especially when I come out of the trenches when we have to keep our boots on without even unlacing them for 7 days and also after a rout march when our feet do be very sore there is nothing like a change of socks for a relieve along with a cigarette.

Dear Miss Roberts I am very sorry to tell you there has been bad news told us I am afraid this is the last letter I shall be able to send you so I will make it as long as I can for our commanding Officer gave us a lecture about it and it is about a big attack which he said we are to be engaged in a very short time he told us that us that our boys and the French are making great progress in both North and South and he said that he hopes we do like wise in the centre which he said we will be in

very shortly but I need not tell you that when I say I am afraid we will be soon in action I don't mean that we are afraid of the Huns ah know far from been afraid of them because our irish blood is boiling (looking?) to get in close quarters with them and show them once more what an irish man is made of.

My faithfull friend I am sorry to say that I don't think I have any heart at all after what I seen what the Huns done in certain places in France which I am not allowed to tell. I seen them slay innocent women and children and also young girls it was something shamefull it brought the tears to most of our eyes who seen what they did and I think it is our turn now to revenge the death of those poor innocent people and also our poor comrades who died on the field of battle for those we love I am not afraid to die tomorrow for I know I am doing it for a good cause ……..

I shall never forget your kindness to me and a great many of my chums also I must say your name is very much appreciated amongst the boys of No 6 Platoon B Coy RDF out here.

Private Mordaunt survived this engagement, and in December 1915 wrote about his second winter in the trenches:

We are having a very hard time of it in the trenches between rain frost snow and sleet it has us near dead and that is not bad enough but when we lie down to get an hours sleep the rats start to annoy us so that between them all including the Hun I need not tell you that we have a fine time of it (I DON'T THINK) but still 'Are We Downhearted? No.'

The slogans 'Are We Downhearted? No!' and 'Will We Win? Yes!' appear frequently in the letters and are the kind of mantra that men might have chanted to keep their morale up. One of the early war songs had the refrain:

Are we downhearted? No! No! No!
We are ready to go, go go.
Goodbye sweetheart, for a little while,
Goodbye mother, let me see you smile
Soon the bugle will blow, blow, blow.
Duty calls, we know
And we'll hang the Kaiser to a sour apple tree,
Are we downhearted? No! No! No!

The men passed the time by playing a guessing game about when the war would end and Edward's guess was 5 May 1916. One of his letters ended on a sombre and affectionate note: 'Goodbye if you don't hear from me again. With best wishes xxxxxxxxxxx.' Cigarettes were vitally important to morale – 'the cigaretts is the most welcomest gift we can receive out here and it is the only thing that helps to cheer us up.' Other items which were appreciated by Edward were a lamp for use in the trenches at night, a pocket knife, a razor, and as Christmas 1915 approached, he thanked Miss Roberts for the cake, crackers, cards and snakes-and-ladders. Around this time, he was sent on a two week course in bomb-throwing, which gave him a break from the trenches, and in January 1916 he declared that he was 'a 1st class bomb thrower.' He wrote that 'leather gloves would be usefull when I go on patrol at night with a few bombs to share among the Huns.' (In a letter to the *Irish Times* in the same month, Monica appealed for funds and goods, and specifically mentions that old gloves would be very useful to bomb-throwers. It is quite amazing to be able to track this handwritten request from the trenches in 1916 to the digital archive of the *Irish Times* in 2007. Such is modern research.)

Edward Mordaunt was back in Dublin on leave in May-June 1916. He visited Kelston, and was disappointed not to meet Monica, who was not at home. His only reference to the Rising was: 'I had a look around the city and I must say it is a very sorrowfull sight.' He was in a defiant mood again in late June 1916, back at the front and anticipating close contact with the enemy, but also revealing his frustration with 'this sort of work':

We expect to beat the Germans out of their trenches very shortly and if we once get them on the run we wont stop until we go straight through Berlin and put Kazior Bill out of his thrown and drown him in the Liffey and rain victorious in Germany and get finished with this sort of work forever.

Edward did finish with this work soon after, as the next letter (dated 16 November 1916) was from

Grayling War Hospital, Chichester, Sussex. He was wounded in the right arm and was writing with his left hand. His requests to Miss Roberts now are different: he asks for a wristwatch and a wallet. He requested a transfer to Dublin and wrote from the Red Cross Hospital, Picture Gallery, Dublin Castle in June 1917, where he was having a series of operations on his arm. He visited Kelston several times and thanked Monica for the two days he spent there in July 1917. On another occasion he apologised for not arriving – he had no money for the train fare and went to borrow from his pal, 'but it turned out that he was stoney as well.' Clearly, the generosity of Monica and her family extended beyond the distant support of letters and parcels, and if Edward was welcomed at Kelston it seems likely that other soldiers on leave visited also.

A major change occurred in Edward's life at his time as shown in the next letter, from 18 Windsor Terrace, South Circular Road, Portobello. He was no longer in the army, and this letter is signed 'Mr. and Mrs. E. Mordaunt.' There was a subtle change of tone also, as befitted his new station in life:

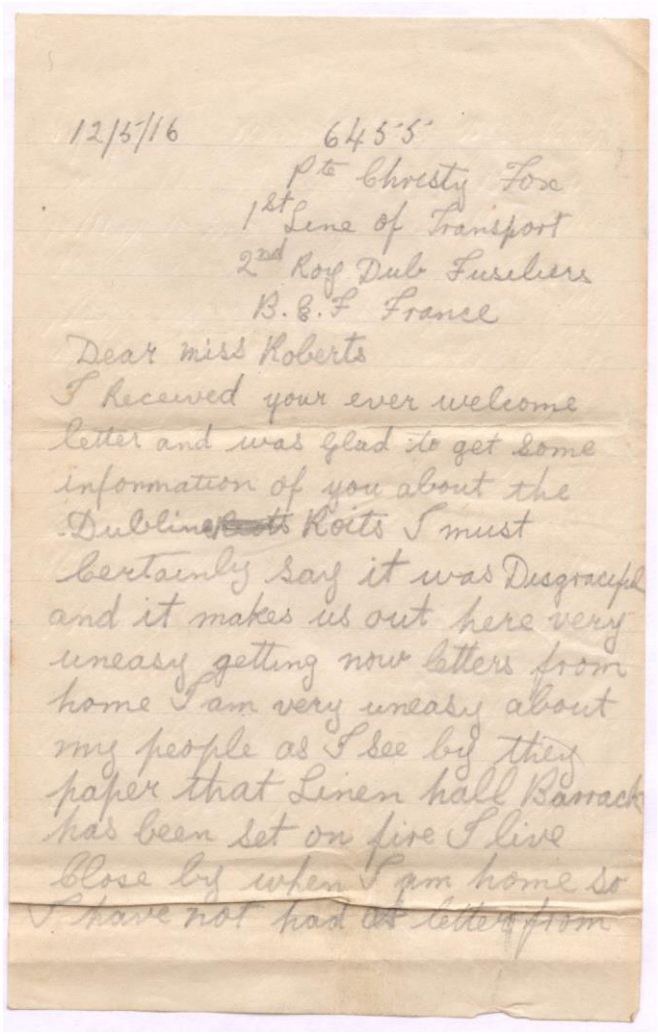
Just a few lines to let you know I am still alive, also to let you see I have not quiet forgotten your kindness to me.

My arm is still about the same I cannot use it very much I have not got any employment yet, but still living in hope.

The final letter in the archive shows that his new life presented another set of problems for Edward Mordaunt:

In regards to me being plucky in looking for employment so soon, I need not tell you it is a case of having to as I have got no place of my own just yet and am staying in furnished apartments and have to pay 6/- a week for it and now that my pension is down to 16/6 a week I can assure you we are mearly existing on that money.

Theres no mistake about it I have an excellent good character, only it must be light employment such as caretaker or overseer that I have been recommended for, and I would be very thankfull to you if you should let me know anyone with such posts vacant for I can assure you I will do my best to please them in every respect.


12/5/16 6455
Pte Christy Fox
1st Line of Transport
2nd Roy Dub Fusiliers
B.E.F France
Dear miss Roberts
I Received your ever welcome
letter and was Glad to get some
information of you about the
Dublin ~~Scots~~ Koits I must
certainly say it was Disgraceful
and it makes us out here very
uneasy getting now letters from
home I am very uneasy about
my people as I see by the
paper that Linen hall Barrack
has been set on fire I live
Close by when I am home so
I have not had no letters from

Sample of letter in Monica Roberts collection at RDFA Archive in Pearse Street. This letter is from Pte. Christy Fox 2nd RDF dated 12 May 1916.
He dissaproved of the Easter Rising.

This is the last information available on Edward Mordaunt, and it is not known how he fared in later times. In the Dublin telephone directory there are seven listings under the surname, and I have made contact with them. None appears to be related to Edward.

Private Patrick Byrne.

By way of contrast, the story of Private Patrick Byrne is a tragic one. There is only one letter from him (in Volume 2 of the Collection) and it is dated 4 April 1916. He was aged 28, was born in 9 John's Street West in Dublin, and was also in 'B' Coy, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers. His parents were Edward and Kate.

Dear Miss Roberts

I have received your most kind letter which I always long to get from Ireland, it reminds me of the Happy times I spent there. I came out to France with the 1st Expeditionary Force & I have been twice down the line. Once gased at Ypres on 9th May, wounded 22nd January this year & could not get home but I am still in the land of the living, so I have a chance yet of seeing Dear Old Dublin. We had very bad weather all winter what with Snow, Rain, Frost and all, the worst kind of times you could expect in Winter, I did not spend a very good St Patrick's day (two lines crossed out) *outside but not inside. But still you would never hear us Chaps grumble. We just* (words crossed out) *got our own back by way of throwing Bombs, Rifles, Grenades and Sniping at the Huns so I had amusement after all. Of course I am well used to the game by now, as well as my Comrades, so you can expect we give the Germans a lively time.*

I would like you to send me a parcel of Eatables as we are rather short of Grub sometimes. I would be very thankful to you for same. I expect to get my leave in a few months time and then I will relate to you some of my experiences here if it pleases you.

Yours truly

Patrick Byrne

Patrick did not see Dublin again. On the back of the envelope, there is a note, probably written by Monica: 'Killed in action. Recommended for the VC.' He was killed 17 days after he wrote the letter. Company Sergeant Major J. Connor wrote on 26 April, giving an account of Private Byrne's death:

In the Field, 26-4-16

Dear Miss Roberts

In looking through the effects of the late Private Byrne, I came across a letter of yours. I am therefore writing you this letter to let you know of his sad but glorious end. On the 21st inst. a dug-out was blown in by the enemy. Some men being buried, Pte. Byrne went in to get them out but while engaged in this brave work another shell came through the roof killing Pte. Byrne.

I also take this opportunity of thanking you on behalf of the men of B Co. 2nd RDF for your kindness to us, to the whole battalion in fact.

I have just returned for the third time and I remember your very welcome Parcels when conditions were much worse than at present. I refer to October and November 1914.
Again thanking you for your interest and extreme kindness.

PS The shell which killed Pte. Byrne was what we call a dud, i.e. a shell which did not burst.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers' Association has added the information that Patrick Byrne is buried in Bienvillers Military Cemetery, plot XIV.A.10. There is no further reference to the Victoria Cross.

The Monica Roberts collection is a unique one, and will prove even more significant in years to come, as the Great War becomes a more distant memory. The gratitude of the men at the front and their appreciation that somebody remembered them and cared about their welfare pervades the letters, and we too should be grateful to Monica Roberts' daughter, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association for discovering the letters and Dublin City Library for ensuring that these poignant letters from the men of the Great War are made available to readers today and in the future. Perhaps somewhere, maybe in a long-forgotten bundle in an attic, letters from Monica to one of her soldiers have survived, and may yet come to light.

Note on author:

Bryan Mac Mahon is author of The Story of Ballyheigue *and* Eccentric Archbishop: Richard Whately of Redesdale, *published in 2005. He is a regular contributor to* The Kerry Magazine, History Ireland *and* The Irish Sword.

Major Willie Redmond MP and Private John Meeke- two heroes of Wijtschate.

Tony Quinn
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

North of Ballymoney in Co Antrim, I visited the old churchyard at Derrykeighan. A tombstone at Private John Meeke's grave recalls the Battle of Messines in Belgium, June 1917. During the First World War, Meeke was a stretcher-bearer with the 36th (Ulster) Division. Like many young Irish men he joined that British Army unit, the 36th (Ulster) Division which served on the Allied side alongside the 16th (Irish) Division. As John Meeke's tombstone records, Major William (Willie) Redmond led an attack on the German lines. Private Meeke of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers was already in No Man's Land attending the wounded among his fellow Ulstermen. When he saw the middle-aged Redmond fall, Meeke ran across battle debris to help him. Despite his own injuries, Meeke returned to the battlefield to search for further casualties. He survived and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery

Redmond had often argued for reconciliation between Orange and Green. When the House of Commons debated Home Rule in March 1917, the white-haired gaunt-faced Major Redmond spoke to a hushed audience. Dressed in a trench-stained khaki tunic, he referred to bitter past mistakes and challenged the British parliament to resolve the Irish dilemma. Pleading for an end to the old struggle between diverse traditions, he asked: 'Why must it be that, when British and Irish soldiers are dying side by side, our eternal quarrel should continue.'

Willie Redmond had suffered serious injuries as German shells badly wounded his leg and wrist. Shrapnel entered his left forearm below the elbow and reached his wrist. When Meeke had tended the wounds, stretcher-bearers from the Ulster Division carried Redmond back to the dressing station near Locre, called Loker in Flemish. Father Barrett an Ulster Catholic chaplain administered the last rites before Willie Redmond died aged fifty-six on the Feast of Corpus Christi, 7 June 1917.

His wife Eleanor and brother John received many sympathy letters and people of diverse views paid tribute. Sir Edward Carson MP, the unionist leader and fellow barrister, praised the courage of Willie Redmond who had joined the army in his mid-fifties. The soldier-poet, Francis Ledwidge who was killed in action soon afterwards hoped that the victory, for which Redmond had laboured so earnestly, a reconcilled Irish people, would soon be achieved.

The gallant Major Redmond was laid to rest in the convent garden outside the official cemetery in Loker. Troops from both the nationalist and unionist divisions mounted a guard of honour at his burial A few months' later, mourners from his native Wexford planted on the grave a sod of shamrock from Vinegar Hill.

Redmond is named in the Four Courts, Dublin on the barristers war memorial, designed by the sculptor, Oliver Sheppard, RHA. He also created the bust to Willie Redmond erected in 1931 at Redmond Park, Wexford. Nicolas Byrne, who as Mayor of Wexford had visited Flanders to lay a wreath at Redmond's grave in 1917, arranged for Sheppard to create the bust. At the unveiling ceremony on 31 May 1931 in Wexford, Capt.William Archer Redmond, John Redmond's son, represented the Irish parliamentary tradition. The Mayor and corporation of Wexford were also present. The all-Ireland dimension was expressed through the gift of a seat from Ulster veterans who had served with Willie Redmond. On a recent remembrance visit to his grave, I was emotionally moved when speaking to an Irish group about his significant life and heroic death. The hope expressed by the author Hilaire Belloc that Ireland would give due status in its annals to Redmond's memory is now being realised.

We should also remember the other hero of Messines Ridge, Private John Meeke.After the war he worked as a gardener near Ballymoney but survived for a few years only. An impressive headstone in Co Antrim now honours John Meeke, thanks to Antrim historian Robert Thompson. The Irish Peace Park at Messines is a symbol of reconciliation.

Fr Willie Doyle SJ, chaplain of the Dubs. Killed August 1917.

Tony Quinn
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

Father Willie Doyle's name was renowned and revered a generation ago. My granny brought me to his shrine at St. Francis Xaviers, Gardiner Street, Dublin. In that Jesuit church we lit candles and prayed that the Pope would canonise Willie Doyle a saint. He was remembered as a holy man killed in Belgium in 1917 while ministering to wounded soldiers in the Great War. Some people said that he could work miracles.

My interest in Willie Doyle was revived decades later when I moved to Dalkey. Willie was born there in 1873, the youngest of five children. His father was a High Court official while his mother influenced his charitable and religious side. As a boy, Willie arranged his toy soldiers and played at fighting for Ireland. Educated in England, he was ordained a Jesuit priest and taught at Belvedere in Dublin and Clongowes Colleges in Kildare.

Father Willie Doyle SJ, a chaplain with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, experienced real and terrible war at the Somme and on Flanders fields. His diary reveals that when ministering to his men he wished, 'If God wills it to die a martyr of charity'. In a letter home, he described German and Allied soldiers praying together during a truce. During July 1917 in the French cathedral of St Omer, the Guard of Honour marched up the long nave and took its place near the pulpit. Every uniform button and every badge shone as bayonets were fixed. Nearly 3,000 soldiers greeted Father Doyle who wore a clerical collar and was dressed in a captain's uniform embellished with shamrock emblems of the 16th (Irish) Division.

Eloquent but diplomatic because his fellow countrymen were serving in the British army, his final sermon traced the history of the old Irish Brigade in previous European battles. The popular chaplain spoke about Irishmen fighting indirectly for their own country. As an orator, he impressed the young men of the Dublin Fusiliers who compared him with Jim Larkin, the trade union leader.

Little Father Doyle, as the soldiers called him although he was tall, returned to Ieper. The town was the base for a great Allied push against the Germans in the Third Battle of Ypres, known as the hell of Passchendaele. Bullets whined about him but he bravely went around the trenches comforting injured soldiers. On 16 August, 1917, Willie Doyle aged forty-four, was killed near the Frenzenberg crossroads in Belgium but the exact circumstances of his death are not clear.

War reporters praised his courage and devotion to duty as he brought spiritual solace and material help to troops from the diverse traditions of Orange and Green. Captain Doyle was awarded the Military Cross. The Victoria Cross and Distinguished Service Order were withheld although he had been recommended for those honours. There may have been a double prejudice against him as a Roman Catholic and Jesuit. He did not strive for material rewards as he served a higher cause. Despite his spiritual virtues he was never canonised as a saint.

On recent remembrance journeys to Flanders, I searched for his last resting place. The exact location of his body was not recorded. In Tyne Cot military cemetery, his grave is not in the area allocated to the fallen from his regiment, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The renowned priest from Dalkey is named on the cemetery's back wall with other casualties whose graves are known only to God. Panel 160 of the back wall lists Class Four chaplains including Father Doyle and the Reverend John W Eyre–Powell, a Trinity College graduate who was attached to the 27th Labour Corps. A shell killed him in June 1918 when he was aged thirty-seven. The name Eyre-Powell rang a bell for me. By coincidence, he was also from Dalkey and is named there on the war memorial in St. Patrick's Church of Ireland. I wondered: Did the near neighbours know one another in Dalkey, their hometown? Did the two men meet and pray together on the Western Front? Placing a floral wreath at Tyne Cot cemetery, I said a silent prayer in memory of two chaplains from Dalkey who served and died on Flanders Fields.

Poetry.

On Saturday 8 March 2008, *The Telegraph Review* published a poem titled, *The Five Acts of Harry Patch – The last Fighting Tommy*. The distinguished Poet Laureate, Andrew Motion wrote the poem and noted in the *Review*. 'Like most poets, I'm ambivalent about commissioned work…The invitation to write about Harry Patch was the most appealing I've ever received.' At the age of 109, Harry Patch, was a Lewis Gunner in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry and is the last surviving British soldier who served in the Great War. He fought at Passchendaele; he was wounded by a shell that killed three of his five-man team; he was invalided back to England; by the time he recovered, the war was over. The poem reflects the life of Harry Patch. 'Whatever I wrote,' noted Motion, 'shouldn't just be a war poem. It should be a whole-life poem. And that's what I tried to write – in a form (unrhymed sonnets each of a single sentence) which would be circuitously slowed-down, like the mechanics of ancient memory.' It is a poem that reflects the life of one veteran of the Great War named Harry Patch, it could reflect the lives of many more. When Andrew had finished reading his poem to Harry, in appreciation Harry handed Andrew a box of chocolates. The brand name of the chocolates was – Heroes.

The Five Acts of Harry Patch – The lsat Fighting Tommy.

I

A curve is a straight line caught bending
and this one runs under the kitchen window
where the bright eyes of your mum and dad
might flash any minute and find you down
on all fours, stomach hard to the ground,
slinking along a furrow between the potatoes
and dead set on a prospect of rich pickings
the good apple trees and plum trees and pears,
anything sweet and juicy you might now be
able to nibble around the back and leave
hanging as though nothing were amiss,
if only it were possible to stand upright
in so much clear light and with those eyes
beady in the window and not catch a packet.

II

Patch, Harry Patch, that's a good name,
Shakespearean, it might be one of Hal's men
at Agincourt or not far off, although in fact
it starts life and belongings in Combe Down
with your dad's trade in the canary limestone
which turns to grey and hardens when it meets
the light, perfect of Regency Bath and you too
since no one these days thinks about the danger
of playing in quarries when the workmen go,
not even of prodding and pelting with stones
the wasps' nests perched on rough ledges
or dropped on the ceiling on curious stalks
although god knows it means having to shift
tout suit and still get stung on arms and faces.

III

First the hard facts of not wanting to fight,
and the kindness of deciding to shoot men
in the legs but no higher unless needs must,
and the liking among comrades which is truly
deep and wide as love without that particular name,
then Pilckem Ridge and Langemarck and across
the Steenbeek since none of the above can change
what comes next, which is a lad from A Company
shrapnel has ripped open from shoulder to waist
who tells you 'Shoot me', but is good as dead
already, and whose final word is 'Mother'
which you hear because you kneel to hold
one finger of his hand, and then remember orders
to keep pressing on, support the infantry ahead.

IV

After the big crowds to unveil the memorial
and no puff left in the lungs to sing O valiant hearts
or say aloud the names of friends and one cousin,
the butcher and chimney sweep, a farmer, a carpenter,
work comes up the Wills Tower in Bristol and there
thunderstorms are a danger, so bad that lightning
one day hammers Great George and knocks down
the foreman who can't use his hand three weeks
later as you recall, along with the way that strike
burned all trace of oxygen from the air, it must have,

given the definite stink of sulphur and a second
or two later the gusty flap of a breeze returning
along with rooftops below, and moss, and rain
fading over the green Mendip Hills and blue
Severn.

V

You grow a moustache, check the mirror, notice
you're forty years old, then next day shave it off,
check the mirror again-and see you're seventy,
but life is like that now, suddenly and gradually
everyone you know dies and still comes to visit
or you head back to them, it's not clear which
only where it happens: a safe bedroom upstairs
by the look of things, although when you sit late
whispering with the other boys in the Lewis team,
smoking your pipe upside-down to hid the fire,
and the nurses on night duty bring folded sheets
to store in the linen cupboard opposite, all it takes
is someone switching on the light - there is that
flash,
or was until you said, and the staff blacked the
window.

Review of 2007.

Sean Connolly
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

As the ninetieth anniversaries of the big events of the Great War continue to occur, the major event in 2007 was the commemoration of the Battle of Wijtschate - Messines on 7 June. The Association was honoured by the invitation to our Chairman, Tom Burke, to give a private tour and briefing to President Mac Aleese during her visit to the area. As Tom has pointed out, the Irish Divisions captured Wijtschate during the battle rather than Messines where the Irish Peace Park was erected. The President laid a wreath at the 16th (Irish) Division Memorial Cross at Wijtschate in a moving ceremony. This was the first time that President Mac Aleese paid an official visit to Wijtschate and laid a wreath at this memorial. She later attended a reception in the school at Wijtschate hosted by the people of the village.

Two Irish Generals proudly stand in the field at Wijtschate in June 2007 ninety years after Irish soldiers took the village from Prussian and Bavarian troops in June 1917.
Major- General (retd.) David The O'Morchoe (left) and Lieut.-General (retd.) Gerry Mc Mahon.

On the home front, the general public awareness of the Irish soldiers of the Great War was given a major boost by the selection of Sebastian Barry's book titled *The Long Long Way* for the month-long *One City one Book* promotion during the month of April. The Dublin City Library and Archive decorated O'Connell Street with large posters and arranged a series of readings and discussions with the author. Hearing Sebastian speaking the thoughts of Private Willie Doyle added new insights for the reader. The Association worked with the Archive to present exhibitions about the German gas attack on the 16th(Irish) Division at Hulluch near Loos in April 1916 and letters, from our archive, written by Dublin Fusiliers from the front during the Easter Rising in Dublin.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 24 April in the Dublin City Library and Archive. At 6:30 on the following morning, some members attended the Gallipoli dawn service of remembrance in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Blackhorse Avenue. That evening, the Association laid a wreath during the commemoration service in St. Ann's Church, Dawson Street.

The Australian Ambassador, Ms. Ann Plunkett giving her oration at the dawn service.

On 17 June, the RDF Association Standard was carried by Captain (retd) Seamus Greene during the wreath laying service at the Cenotaph in London. This event was organised by the Combined Irish Regiments Association. The late Jim McLeod MBE was one of the prime movers of this event. He will be sadly missed but his efforts to keep the memory of the disbanded Irish Regiments alive will be remembered.

Captain (retd) Seamus Greene RDFA leading the parade of Standards at Islandbridge.

In July, there was a large attendance at the Royal British Legion wreath-laying ceremony at the National War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge, and at the ceremony to mark the National Day of Commemoration at The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham.

RDFA members enjoying the sun at Islandbridge. Mick Synnott, Kevin Cunningham,Charlie and Patricia Goodwin.

On 19 August, we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Memorial Arch at the entrance to St. Stephen's Green. This was erected in honour of the men from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who served in the Boer War 1899-1901. Our Secretary, Sean Connolly gave a talk, the text of which is in this edition. We provided the material for the Office of Public Works (OPW) to install two displays about the Fusiliers Arch. These have been well received.

On 15 September, there was a full house for Mr. Tony Quinn's lecture, on *Wigs and Guns, Irish Barristers in the Great War*. This was based on his successful book of the same title.

On 23 October, Mr. Pat Lynch presented a histographic study on The Irish National War Memorial, 1919 – 1939.

The Lord Mayor of Dublin Councillor Paddy Bourke, Tom Burke RDFA, Col. Arthur Reid, The Royal Irish Fusiliers Regimental Museum, Armagh and his wife Eileen at Dublin City Archive and Library.

In the summer of 2007, to mark the ninetieth anniversary of the Third Battle of Ypres, the folks at the Royal Irish Fusiliers Regimental Museum in Armagh presented an exhibition titled. 'We called it Hell, they called it Paschendaele.' Congratulation to Amanda and all the crew in Armagh. for presenting this marvellous exhibition

In August 2007, RDFA member Mr. Erwin Ureel from Flanders saw the fruits of his labours come true with the unveiling of a memorial to the 15th (Scottish) Division who fought in Flanders in August 1917. Interestingly from an Irish perspective, the 15th (Scottish) Division relieved the battered 16th (Irish) Division in the same battle to take the Frezenberg Ridge, a patch of high ground in front of the village of Zonnebeke The memorial is a High Celtic Cross made of Scottish granite (Corennie Pink) stone and is set on a plinth of original bunker stones. The cross itself is roughly four meters tall. Erwin's next project is to erect two Irish stones along the Frezengberg Ridge to mark the spots where the 16th (Irish) and 36th(Ulster) Divisions fought in that terrible month of August 1917. Well done Erwin, the RDFA will be with you on this project all the way.

In November, members participated in the annual commemorations in City Quay Church and St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. On 10 November, our Chairman, Tom Burke presented an excellent lecture on The Battle of Wijtschate-Messines Ridge which took place on 7 June 1917. Tom has studied the Irish involvement in this battle in great depth and has produced a very informative guide to the area for visitors interested in the Irish aspects: *The 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions at the Battle of Wijtschate - Messines Ridge, 7th June 1917*. the book is available through the RDFA Website at www.greatwar.ie Following Tom, Mr Andrew O'Brien of the Dublin City Library and Archive gave a presentation on the Moriarty Collection. This is a fascinating collection of letters that give a detailed insight into life in India in the mid- 1800s. They were discovered in Cork by Tom Burke who arranged for their donation to the Archive. This was followed by a reception hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Paddy Burke, and the City Archivists, Dr. Mary Clark to mark the latest donations to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Archive. During the reception, the Lord Mayor formally launched Tom's book.

Presentation of RDFA Tie and RDF Officer print to the Lord Mayor of Dublin Councillor Paddy Bourke by Capt. (retd) Seamus Greene RDFA.

In December over 150 attended the Association Annual Dinner in the Masonic Hall, Molesworth Street, Dublin. Once again, Mr. Brian Moroney, with the expert assistance of his wife, Therese, ensured that all enjoyed the night. Our thanks also go to Seamus and his wife Anne, Nick, and Philip for their staunch work on the night and indeed throughout the year gone. The Irish Army Piper was a new and welcome feature that added a touch of regimental ceremony to the night. Among the guests were Mr. Erwin Ureel and his wife Mia from Flanders. Erwin has acquired expert local knowledge on the Irish actions in the area which has shared with us on may occasions. Mr Eric Goosens, a Belgian, who owns a Guesthouse in the Gallipoli peninsula also attended and presented a spot prize of two nights accommodation to one of our members should they ever wish to visit Gallipoli. Many thanks Eric for your generosity.

Tom Burke welcomes Erwin to the annual dinner.

Closet Irish Tenor wows the guests.
Pat Cummins in fine voice at the annual dinner of the RDFA in Dublin, December 2007.

Two tall men. Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley and RDFA member Niall Leinster at Thiepval in July 2007.
Note Dr. Paisley sporting his Dubs tie.

Talk given by Sean Connolly to mark the centenary of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Memorial Arch on 19 August 2007.

The Memorial Arch at the main entrance to St Stephen's Green has been a familiar Dublin landmark for 100 years. Yet the majority of the thousands who pass under and by it every day have no idea as to its purpose. Older citizens may have heard it called 'Traitors' Gate' but even that name is fading as the city grows and changes. This afternoon, we are commemorating its official opening on 19 August 1907. Enough time has passed for us to take a fresh look at the Arch and examine its origins and relevance to our complex history. I will begin with an outline of the 2nd Anglo-Boer War that is the reason for Arch's existence. I will then summarise the role played by the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in South Africa, refer to the battles listed on the Arch and tell you what happened to some of those named on the memorial. I will touch on the reaction to the war in Ireland. I will then give you some information on the Arch itself and the opening ceremony.

Background to the Second Anglo Boer War 1899 –1902.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the African continent provided the major European powers with possibilities for extending their colonial empires. Earlier in 1814, the British had taken control of the Cape Colony that the Dutch had settled in 1652. A large number of Dutch descendants refused to live under British rule and 'trekked' north to found the South African Republic of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. These two new countries were recognised by Britain in 1854 but were annexed in 1877. The Afrikaners / Boers/ Vortrekkers (pioneers) had developed a strong national identity based on race, religion and language. In 1881, they rebelled and defeated the British forces at the Battle of Majuba and became independent again.

The discovery of huge reserves of gold, diamonds and coal near the Boer towns of Johannesburg and

Kimberly, transformed a rural backwater into the economic powerhouse of the continent.
The dominant figure in the mining industry was Cecil Rhodes who became Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in 1890. He had ambitions to extend the British Empire to the north and he prepared plans for a coup by the non-Boer whites in Johannesburg in 1895. This was to be supported by an invasion force of 500 mining company policemen under the leadership of Dr. Leander Jameson, a close associate of Rhodes. The Conservative Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, was supportive. The attempt failed and President Paul Kruger of the Transvaal treated those captured leniently and tried to resume normal relations with the British. At the same time, he began to import large stocks of arms to resist any further incursions.

The mines and the associated industry attracted large numbers of white immigrants, known as Uitlanders. The Boers were in danger of being outnumbered and refused to grant the vote to everyone. In September 1899, Britain issued an ultimatum to Kruger to allow all newcomers who had been resident for five years to vote. The despatch of military reinforcements from England convinced Kruger that Britain intended to annex the Republic. The 1st Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers was mobilised at the Curragh on 7 October as part of the 5th (Irish) Brigade. Two days later, all army reserves were mobilised. On the same day, the Presidents of the two Boer states decided to strike first. They issued a forty-eight hour ultimatum to Great Britain that the British refused to discuss. The British military establishment underestimated the fighting capacity of the Boers despite their victory at Majuba less than twenty years before and their accumulated arsenal of 100 pieces of modern artillery weapons.

On 12 October, the Boers sent 21,000 citizen soldiers of the 35,000 then mobilised into Natal to seize the towns of Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith. As there were only about 11,000 British troops close to the frontier, there was an expectation of a quick victory before reinforcements arrived from Europe. In the first phase of the war, the Boers who defeated the British forces in a number of battles besieged both Ladysmith and Mafeking and prevented the relief columns breaking through. From February to September 1900, the increasing British forces gradually regained control of the towns that forced the Boers to resort to guerrilla warfare until their position became hopeless in May 1902.

By the end of the war, the British had over 450,000 soldiers in the field, drawn from Britain and the Commonwealth countries, to deal with a Boer army that reached its maximum at 88,000. Given that the British Navy also controlled the sea routes to Africa, the early Boer victories could not prevent the inevitable outcome. The Boers surrendered and the hostilities ended with the Peace of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902. The native African inhabitants had no role in the War other than as suffering bystanders as the two armies fought for possession of the land.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the Boer War.

There were two battalions of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on the strength of the British regular army when the war began. The regimental depot was at Naas, Co. Kildare with a recruiting area of the counties Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow and Carlow.

The 2nd Battalion of the Dublins had been sent to South Africa in 1897 and was based in Pietermaritzburg, in the Natal Province. General White divided his forces protecting Ladysmith by sending a 4,000 strong brigade to the town of Dundee that was in the path of the invading force. On 20 October, the battalion and the 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers were in an encampment four miles away at Glencoe which was overlooked by Talana Hill. When the morning mist began to clear, figures could be seen on the crest of the hill. The Boers began to fire long-range shells into the camp. An attack was launched to capture the hill with the Dublins in the first line. None of them had ever been under fire before. The Boer marksmen had easy targets as the soldiers went forward in close formation. When they got to the crest, the Boers had slipped away. The outcome was hailed as a victory for the British but they had to immediately retreat. Some fifty-one were killed (including General Penn Symons and Colonel Gunning), 203 wounded and 246 taken prisoner. The Dublins' losses were eight killed, fifty-six wounded and ninety-four missing. Two of the

officers killed are named on the Arch, namely Captain Weldon and Lieut. Gence.

When the size of the Boer force was realised, the brigade was ordered to retreat the forty miles to Ladysmith. The wounded were left behind along with supplies and the band instruments of the regiment. By the end of the first week, the British had suffered 700 casualties, lost over 200 prisoners and were forced take a defensive position until the reinforcements arrived.

The 1st RDF was at the Curragh and was already preparing to depart for South Africa when war was declared. On 10 November, twenty-nine officers and 921 other ranks sailed from Queenstown (Cobh) together with 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and 1st Connaught Rangers as part of the 5th (Irish Brigade). They arrived in Cape Town on 28 November and three companies, totalling 284 men, were assigned to the 2nd RDF to replace losses and the 100 soldiers now in the besieged garrison at Ladysmith.

The 2nd RDF, now with a eleven companies, took the lead in the unsuccessful attempt by the 5th (Irish) Brigade to cross the Tugela River at the village of Colenso on 15 December on the way to relieve Ladysmith. A force of 21,000 was stopped by 8,000 Boers. The massed formations of soldiers, advancing over open ground were once again easy targets for the expert Boer marksmen. The Boers captured ten of the twelve British field guns. The Dublins had 219 casualties, of whom fifty-two were killed, including Captain Bacon and Lieutenant Henry. The exploits of the boy Bugler Dunne on this occasion were widely publicised.

On 23 February, the 2nd Dublins were part of the General Buller's column trying to breakthrough to Ladysmith at Tugela Heights**,** a series of hills overlooking the Tugela River near Colenso.

It was sent to capture Hart's Hill along with the Connaught Rangers and the Inniskilling Fusiliers. The Boers were in trenches along the crest and were able to pick off the advancing soldiers. Hart's (Irish) Brigade had 500 casualties. Lieut.-Col. Sitwell and the Colonel of the Inniskillings were killed. The Dublins losses were thirteen killed and fifty-nine wounded. On the night of 24 February, a truce was called to recover the wounded and the dead. The opponents met in between the two lines.
The siege of Ladysmith ended on the 28 February. The 2nd Dublins were given the honour of leading the victory parade into Ladysmith.

> *My earnest congratulations on the honour of the Dublin Fusiliers more than any other Regiment have won for the land of their birth. We are all wearing the Shamrock here*. - Winston Churchill, journalist with the *London Evening Post*

From Balmoral, Queen Victoria wrote to General Buller about the heavy casualties sustained by the Irish Brigade and expressed her admiration of the splendid fighting qualities exhibited. In March, she decreed that shamrock be worn by all ranks on St Patrick's Day in recognition of the gallantry displayed by the Irish Regiments in the Natal Campaign. She again expressed her appreciation of the Irish regiments in Army Order No 77, dated 1 April, 1900 which read thus: 'Her Majesty the Queen having deemed it desirable to commemorate the bravery shown by the Irish Regiments during the operations in South Africa in the years 1899-1900 has been graciously pleased that an Irish Regiment of Foot Guards be formed to be designated the Irish Guards.' On 11 June, the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers attacked and captured Alleman's Nek that forced the Boers to retreat from Laing's Nek a pass which led from Natal into the Transvaal. The British had been defeated here in the 1881 war. Three were killed and fourteen wounded.

During the guerrilla phase of the war, the British burned farms and moved the Boer women and children into concentration camps where about 26,000 died.

The 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers left from Krugersdorp for Aden on 21 January 1902. They took some of the younger soldiers from the 1st RDF in exchange for reservists and those whose service period was coming to an end. The 1st RDF left Durban for Dublin on 3 November 1902.

Reaction in Ireland.

The British threat to the two independent Boer republics provoked a strong reaction by those who supported the campaign for Home Rule in Ireland. On 1 October 1899, 20,000 people attended a rally at Beresford Place, Dublin, to protest against, 'the attack of England upon the liberties of the Transvaal.' The Irish Transvaal Committee was founded on 7 October 1899, with Arthur Griffith as secretary. Michael Davitt, James Connolly, Maude Gonne and Willie Redmond, MP, were members. They arranged the distribution of 25,000 leaflets and 1,000 posters in support of the Boers. Michael Davitt resigned his seat at Westminster in protest and visited the Boer Republics from March to May 1900. Willie Redmond was expelled from the House for supporting the Boers. A number of riots took place in Dublin, including one to protest against the award of an honorary degree by Trinity College to Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary. Many County Councils passed resolutions in favour of the Boers. In return. the Transvaal Government made payments totalling £4,500 to the Irish Republican Brotherhood in 1900 hoping to promote rebellion in Ireland.

Limerick Corporation Resolution.

That we consider it a great sign of National weakness and decay that the various organisations in Ireland have not in a more determined manner expressed their sympathy with the plucky Boer farmers in their fight against the English, and this especially when the Englishmen themselves are protesting against the contemplated slaughter at the instance of Chamberlain and the other English Capitalists and we express a hope that if a war takes place it may end in another Majuba Hill.

The Irish Transvaal Brigade.

There were many Irish and Irish Americans working in the Boer republics. On 1 October 1899, over 500 of them enlisted as volunteers in the Boer Army to form an Irish Brigade. John McBride was appointed a major and was second in command to Colonel John Blake, a veteran of the US Cavalry. Other Irishmen served in various Boer units. One estimate put their total at 1,200. Some members of the Brigade were in action against the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers in their first battle at Talana Hill that was also called the Battle of Dundee. The following is a verse from anonymous ballad about the Irish involvement.

On the mountain side the battle raged, there was no stop or stay;
Mackin captured Private Burke and Ensign Michael Shea,
Fitzgerald got Fitzpatrick, Brannigan found O'Rourke;
Finnigan took a man named Fay – and a couple of lads from Cork.
Sudden they heard McManus shout, 'Hands up or I'll run you through'.
He thought it was a Yorkshire 'Tyke'- 'twas Corporal Donoghue!
McGarry took O'Leary, O'Brien got McNamee,
That's how the 'English fought the Dutch' at the Battle of Dundee.

The Brigade fought at the Battle of Modderspruit on 28 October 1899 when the Boers were victorious, capturing 950 prisoners. Some 500 were from the Royal Irish Fusiliers. Two members of the Irish Brigade were killed. The Brigade was in action against the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and other Irish Regiments on 15 December, at Colenso, the last great battle of the nineteenth century. Some of the Brigade fought the Dublins again at Spion Kop on 24 January and were victorious. They fought at Hart's Hill on 23 February but the British army took Pieter's Hill on 27 February, the day on which the Boer General Cronje surrendered. The Boer offensive was now at an end. During the advance on Ladysmith, Michael Flynn, from Newtown Forbes, Co Longford, fought opposite his brother James who was in the Inniskilling Fusiliers. James was killed in the battle. On 11 September 1900, President Kruger left for Europe. Less than two weeks later, Major John McBride and the remnants of his Brigade, about twenty men and six horses, crossed into Portuguese East Africa.


Le Petit Journal

SUPPLÉMENT ILLUSTRÉ

DIMANCHE 31 DECEMBRE 1899

EN IRLANDE

Manifestation contre M. Chamberlain

French journal *Le Petit Journal*, 31 December 1899 reporting on riots that took place in Dublin in protest against the award of an honorary degree by Trinity College Dublin to Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary.

The Memorial Arch in St. Stephen's Green.

The 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers arrived in Ireland in November 1903 and moved to Buttevant, County Cork. There was a public reception for the Dublins in the Main Hall of the RDS at which the names of the various battles were displayed. The main speaker was the King's brother, the Duke of Connaught, the Colonel – in- Chief of the Regiment. In addition to 'liberal supplies of ale, stout and mineral waters, 300 bottles of champagne were placed before the honoured guests.' The soldiers marched to Kingsbridge, now Heuston, Station accompanied by four bands passing along St. Stephens Green and down the fashionable Grafton Street.

Given the huge public interest in the Boer War, it was understandable that a permanent memorial to the fallen would be erected. The Arch was officially opened by the Duke of Connaught at 4:00 pm on 19 August 1907 in a great ceremonial occasion. The troops of the Dublin Garrison and representative detachments of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers provided the guard of honour and the massed bands of the 13th Infantry Brigade played the music that included 'Oft in the Stilly Night.' There was a representative gathering of ex-soldiers who had served in the war. The Lord Lieutenant and the leading dignitaries of Dublin were there.

To quote one of the veterans:

'To the large majority of those present, the ceremony was probably merely a spectacular entertainment, but its real significance was borne fully home to us, even without the sight of more than one poor woman silently weeping from the reopening of the never-healed wound in the heart. For there is nothing truer that a victory is only less terrible than a defeat…'

The cost of the Memorial was £1,800 that was raised by public subscription and concerts organised by the Memorial Committee, led by the Earl of Meath. Sir Thomas Drew, a member of the Committee, suggested the Arch design and Mr. Howard Pentland of the Board of Works (now the OPW) prepared the plan. It was based on the Arch of Titus in Rome and, though smaller, it has the same proportions. It was constructed from granite from Ballyknockan Quarry, Co. Wicklow by Laverty and Sons of Belfast. It is thirty-two feet and six inches high and twenty-seven feet and three inches wide. The ornamental gates were cast from captured guns.
The text on the front (north-west face) is in Latin:

FORTISSIMIS SVIS MILITIBVS
HOC MONVMENTVM
EBLANA DEDICAVIT MCMVII

This is translated as: To her most brave soldiers, Dublin dedicated this monument 1907

On the front of the Arch there is a bronze reproduction of the crest of the regiment showing the elephant and the tiger. The text on the rear of the Arch is:

IN MEMORY OF THE OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE ROYAL DVBLIN FVSILIERS WHO FELL IN THE SOVTH AFRICAN WAR 1899 – 1900

The names of the following battles that I have referred to earlier are engraved on the Arch:

TALANA, COLENSO, HARTSHILL,
LADYSMITH, TUGELA HEIGHTS,
LAINGS NEK

There are bullet marks on the left side (north-east face) from fighting in 1916 Rising. Under the Arch, the names of 223 members of the regiment who died in the war are listed. Many died from disease. One was killed by lightening. One was killed by lightening.

	1st RDF	2nd RDF	5th RDF
Killed in Action or Died of Wounds.	70	86	20
Died of Disease.	63	37	
Wounded.	275	264	
Missing.	73	18	

Thanks to RDFA member Mrs. Margaret Stewart, there are descriptions of the circumstances of the deaths of two of those on the Arch. These descriptions come from the diary of Private Henry (Harry) Stewart who served in the 1st RDF during the Boer War. Margaret Stewart is Pte. Stewart's granddaughter and she kindly gave this information to me Pte. Stewart was at the opening ceremony for the Arch in August 1907.

Private A. Byrne, 1st RDF, first Private listed on the Arch April 1900.

' Next time I was for duty into night, after not much rest, was at Wagon Bridge. This place I may mention, the River Tugela runs under it. But such a horrid smell, my God, where cattle and men and goats, dead ones I mean, were buried. It was here that I took sick on the morning of the 10th April, (1900), it being Sunday too. I went sick and made my complaint. The doctor gave me some pills and to go back in the evening. But I got better, thanks to the Almighty, seeing so many getting buried every other day. I may here mention it was in this cursed hole that poor Gus Byrne lost his life with that fearful malady, dysentery and fever. A young man, twenty-four years of age, and a nice young man. I was at his funeral, for everyone liked him.'

Private P. Brennan, 1st RDF June 1900, Alleman's Nek

' The enemy opened fire with their terrible Pom-Pom and some other guns, while the remainder of them kept up a murderous fire upon our infantry. The bullets were flying all round us in every direction as our Maxim was brought into action on a part of the enemy. But could only see their slouched hats on a slight dip of the hill in front … the Dubs advanced firing to the face of the hill with the big guns turned on it. Here a good few of our fellows fell wounded. It was here that young Brennan that was alongside me commenced saying 'We are in a warmer place now nor ever we were, Harry. Come down to the pond where the well is. I think it is safer than this.' 'No,' says I, 'I'd stay where you are. If you move the Boers shall see you.' Brennan would not stop. He scarcely got ten yards when the poor fellow was shot right through the heart – never in my life did I see a man fall the way he did. I then seen another and another, then our Commanding Officer got shot through the palm of the hand as he was in the act of calling someone. The guns kept firing, taking lumps off the top of the hill, along with killing some of the enemy. Eventually we gained the position with the point of the bayonet, an article Johnny Boer doesn't relish. Then came evening after a heavy day's fighting. We all got together, and then when the roll was called many a poor fellow that chatted away not four hours before, fell dead fighting for his Queen and country. We marched back to where the wagons were, got our coats and blankets, and got some coffee. My company was for outpost that night but as there were some of our wounded left behind they wanted volunteers to go and bring them in. [….] This was nine o'clock at night. We got a stretcher but to find the place was a mystery. In any case we went and did not know when we would get a Mauser into us. However the moon came out and gave us a fair way of getting to the place. We found poor Brennan, as you must know everyone had to look for their own Company's men. He was lying on the broad of his back and one would swear that he was only asleep. But what ever he had was taken off him before we arrived, and on our way (back) met some our own

Company on outpost. We laid him down at the doctor's tent along with the remainder. Got a peg of rum from the doctor that was a welcome guest. Next day we marched over to bury our dead, which was a sorry sight to look at. We all said a few prayers, and helped to fill in the graves of our departed comrades.'

Mother Ireland with a dying Royal Dublin Fusilier. One of the figures from the Queen Victoria monument that once stood in front of Leinster House in Dublin. The larger than life figures are now in at the rear of the Dublin Castle Conference Centre.

The British and the Afrikaners vied with each other for control of the Union of South Africa. Both ignored the rights of the other races already living there. The Boer descendants, the Afrikaners, eventually got political control in 1948. Their new government removed all native African participation in central government and applied the Apartheid policy generally until they had to concede equality in 1994. The country is still coming to terms with the legacy of the past. On the one hundred anniversary of the end of the Boer War, the South African Minister for Arts, Culture Science and Technology, Dr. Ben Ngubane, spoke about the Boer War and said.

> The war took place in the larger context of the colonisation of our land. The specific war was an expression of the courageous challenge of a small band of patriots to defend their identity against outside political, cultural and economic domination…That drawn-out resistance which ended in 1994, must be associated with the wider South African struggle to achieve an inclusive, non-racial, united albeit diverse nation

Sean Connolly RDFA addressing the gathering under the RDF Arch in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin on 19 August 2007.

The Arch is a reminder of the rich and complex heritage that helped to make the Ireland of today. At the end of the opening ceremony, the assembled troops and bands marched through the Arch with fixed bayonets. If you listen closely, you will just about hear them echoing down the years.

I will conclude by thanking Margaret Gormley RDFA, Caoimhe Allman and Edel Cunningham of the Office of Public Works in Dublin for their cooperation in arranging today's event and for erecting the display panels for the Arch. There is a small exhibition in the Dublin City Archive in Pearse Street arranged by Andrew O'Brien.

ENLISTING IN THE ENGLISH ARMY IS TREASON TO IRELAND.

Go—to find, 'mid crime and toil,
The doom to which such guilt is hurried!
Go—to leave on Afric's soil
Your bones to bleach, accursed, unburied!

Go—to crush the just and brave,
Whose wrongs with wrath the world are filling!
Go—to slay each brother slave—
Or spurn the blood-stained *Saxon Shilling!*

FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN—

The Irishmen in England's Service who are sent to South Africa will have to fight against Irish Nationalists, who have raised Ireland's Flag in the Transvaal, and have formed an Irish Brigade to fight for the Boers against the oppressor of Ireland.

REMEMBER NINETY-EIGHT.

REMEMBER THE PENAL LAWS.

REMEMBER THE FAMINE.

Think of the ruined homes and of the Emigrant Ships. Within sixty years our population has been reduced by one-half as the direct result of English rule. The Boers are making a brave fight against this rule. Let no Irishman dare to raise a hand against them, or for our enemy and their enemy, England!

England's Army is small, Englishmen are not good soldiers. England has to get others to do her fighting for her. In the past Irishmen have too often won battles for England, and saved her from defeat, and thus have riveted the chains upon their motherland Let them do so no more.

In all our towns and villages we see the recruiting-sergeants trying to entrap thoughtless Irish boys into joining the British army. The recruiting-sergeant is an enemy, and it is a disgrace to any decent Irishman to be seen in his company. But he should be watched and followed, and the boys whom he seeks to entrap should be warned and reasoned with.

In preventing recruiting for the English army you are working for Ireland's honour, and you are doing something to help the Boers in their Struggle for Liberty.

By order,

IRISH TRANSVAAL COMMITTEE.

Dublin, 12th October, 1899.

DOYLE, Trade Union Printer, 9 Upper Ormond Quay, Dublin.

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RDF Website Report.

Our website continues to attract enquiries from around the world. The traffic increased again this year as shown in the attached table. The website had over 67,000 visits in the year. There was a decline in the volume of visits in recent months.

Month	Average Daily Visits 2007-8	Average Daily Visits 2006-7	Total Monthly Visits 2007-8	Total Monthly Visits 2006-07
Feb 2008		221		6201
Jan	167	213	5201	6619
Dec	157	189	4882	5875
Nov	209	224	6283	6728
Oct	182	180	5661	5606
Sept	168	152	5041	4564
Aug	176	124	5484	3867
July	224	166	6948	5159
June	246	166	7404	4996
May	197	177	6127	5495
April	203	188	6100	5669

The number of accesses remained remarkably high in view of the fact that the contents have not been altered or added to since we launched it. Based on our experience, it would be possible to have a major redesign to make it more attractive and to provide new facilities. The current offering has fulfilled its initial purpose of providing basic information. Since our launch, there have been many new books, articles in magazines, newspapers and TV programmes which have helped to fill the information gap. There are now many other relevant sites such as Royaldublinfusiliers.com, which offer complementary help and information. A decision to Invest time and money in a new website offering would need justification. Meanwhile, we are grateful to Mr. Chris O'Byrne for making the necessary annual changes to the contents.

The volume of emails has also declined over the year. We had just over 200 new email enquiries during 2007 looking for assistance in tracing relatives and for other related information. These often generate further exchanges that add missing information about individuals to our archive. We received over 400 other emails.

RDF Website : www.greatwar.ie

President Mary Mc Aleese, Dr. Martin Mc Aleese and Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley wearing his Dubs tie at the Somme Heritage Centre in Newtownards 10 September 2007. Photograph courtesy of *The Irish Times.*

Books Notice.

Nick Broughall,
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

The Irish Brigades 1685 – 2006. Author Dr David Murphy. This book, commissioned by The Military Heritage of Ireland Trust, is a gazetteer of Irish military service, past and present. Dr. Murphy, a member of the Association, dedicates the book to the memory of all those who served, fought and died, regardless of which army they served in. It is also dedicated to the memory of their wives and families who, until the 1900s, often shared in the hardships of campaign life, but have since disappeared from the pages of history books. Prof. Keith Jeffery in his foreword writes: 'The book is an extremely useful reference work which also celebrates the wide range and diversity of Irish military service over the past 350 years or so, from the 'Wild Geese' regiments in the French and Spanish service, to the Irish regiment in Brazil in the 1820s, the 1st garrison battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Veneto of north-east Italy in 1917-18 and the 55,000 tours of duty which soldiers from the contemporary Irish Defence Forces have completed on United Nations missions in Congo, Cyprus, Lebanon and other places.' This is a splendid story of the Irish at war and an invaluable source of reference to anyone interested in Irish military history. It is published by Four Courts Press Limited. ISBN 978-1-84682-080-9. By the same author *Ireland the Crimean War*.

The Irish Militia 1793-1802. *Ireland's Forgotten Army*. Author Ivan F. Nelson.

Dr Nelson's book deals with the Militia during the period 1793 to 1802 and was the subject of his doctoral thesis. His stated aim in the introduction is to discuss, examine and have an understanding of the militia itself, as an institution. He has accomplished this and has also given information on militia in earlier times. He points out that only one history of the force has been written: *The Irish Militia 1973-1816* by Sir Henry McAnally based on researches carried out in the 1930s and that his objective in this new history is to deal with training, discipline, loyalty and fighting the 1798 rebellion.

Dr. Nelson has approached the subject from a military point of view, that this was an Irish army, composed of Irishmen and deserving of study on these grounds alone. It was the force that was primarily responsible for the defeat of the 1798 rebellion in which Irishman opposed Irishman. Although the author has said that he set out to provide a military history there is much else in this book that gives an insight into the people and the politics of the time. Of interest to *Blue Cap* readers will be Dr. Nelson's final paragraph in the Preface. '*My daughter's great-grandfather once commanded the 3rd(Militia) Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, originally the Kildare Battalion of Militia, and I think their motto appropriate – Spectamur Agendo*.' This book is a 'must' for anyone interested in the period. It is published by Four Court Press Limited ISBN 978-1-84682-037-3.

In Memoriam.

Mrs. Lillie Redmond passed away on 31 October 2007. Lillie's father served in the Old Toughs, the 2nd RDF. Her brother, Bill Fay, was one of the first members of the newly formed RDFA and first of the Fay family to join the association. When Bill died in August 1997, Lillie took on the mantle of representing her brother and keeping the memory of her young uncle alive. In November 1998, Lillie and her sister Hanna travelled with the RDFA to visit her uncle's grave at Prowse Point Military Cemetery near Messines. It was a very emotional day for Lillie and Hanna. They had travelled a long way to visit their uncle's grave. It was a family ambition to do so. Their uncle was Pte. James Joseph Moore from Talbot Street in Dublin, killed in action on 2 March 1915 aged twenty-one. Lillie was interviewed for RTE Radio near James grave on the day of her visit. Accommodation was scarce around Messiness that weekend and thanks to the kindness of Dr. Gerald Morgan of Trinity College Dublin, who ferried Lillie and Hanna between Messines in Flanders and Lille in France, both ladies found accommodation and were able to attend the opening of the Peace Park in Messines as well as visit their young uncle's grave. In true spirit and tradition, Lillie's son, Barry Redmond has joined the RDFA to keep the memory of his mother

Lillie, his uncle Bill, grandfather and granduncle alive in proud association with the Dubs and RDFA. May you rest in peace Lillie.

Robert Noel (Bob) Stanton died at his home on 15 February 2008 aged eighty after a long illness borne bravely. Bob was a dear and friendly man and was one of the earliest members of the RDFA when it was founded in 1996. He was named after his uncle, Lieut. Bob Stanton, 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, killed in action at Suvla Bay in Gallipoli on 9 August 1915. The account of Lieut. Stanton's death was one of the first articles written *The Blue Cap* journal. One of Bob's many projects was to regularly clean and polish the name of Lieut. Bob Stanton on the war memorial in St. Mary's Catholic Church in Haddington Road, Dublin. It is one of the very few Great War memorials in Catholic churches on the island of Ireland His uncle's name, along with that of Tom Kettle, is on the brass memorial. Bob's wishes hopefully will be fulfilled with the restoration of the memorial in St. Mary's Church. Bob is survived by his wife Mona and his children John, Marie, Alice, Robbie and Helen. His ashes were interred in Partry Cemetery, Co. Mayo. Rest in peace Bob.

Mrs. Lillie Redmond (right hand side) and her sister Hanna (left hand side) with an Irish Guardsman from Dublin at Messines in November 1998.

Tony Quinn. On 28 April 2008, Tony Quinn peacefully passed away in Donegal. This was sad and shocking news to us all in the RDFA who knew Tony. He was a prominent member of the RDFA. Over the years, Tony wrote several articles for *The Blue Cap* and as a mark of respect we have published Tony's final two articles in this edition. Tony accompanied the Dubs on many of our trips to the battlefields of France and Flanders, he also travelled to Gallipoli with some members of the RDFA. Close to Tony's heart on all these trips was the Irish poet Francis Ledwidge. Tony always made it a personal point to visit Ledwidge's grave when we went to Flanders where he would recite a poem written by the poet to all. His regular attendance and often entertaining contributions at all our events and lectures will be sadly missed. His book on Irish barristers of the Great War is a lasting contribution to his profession and to keeping the memory of the Irish in the Great War alive. In the forward to this book, *Wigs and Guns – Irish Barristers in the Great War*, Dublin 2006, the Irish broadcaster and historian Dr. John Bowman noted that thanks to Tony, 'no longer is the memorial in Dublin's Four Courts simply another list of names of the fallen.' May you rest in peace Tony.

Tony speaking at the memorial in Flanders to the Irish poet Francis Ledwidge.

Major Jim MacLeod MBE. Another sad loss to the RDFA and indeed to the memory and cause of the disbanded Irish regiments was the death of Major Jim MacLeod MBE who died suddenly at his home on 21 October 2007 aged seventy-two. Jim was a Scot, born on the Isle of Lewis and saw National Service with the Seaforth Highlanders.

Following his time in the army he became a member of the Glamorgan Constabulary with lodging in Neath where he met his future wife Betty, the daughter of his landlady. Jim joined the Territorials and was commissioned into the London Irish Rifles, a challenge for any Scotsman. Jim and his committee of the Combined Irish Regiments Old Comrades Association were responsible for the annual parade of the disbanded Irish regiments to the Cenotaph in London. His presence will be sadly missed. He was a regular visitor to Dublin and attended the National Day of Commemoration at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham on several occasions. In 2005, Jim was our guest of honour at the RDFA annual dinner. His work for the disbanded Irish regiments was recognised by being awarded the MBE. Jim is survived by his wife Betty, his son Gary and daughter Cath, his brothers James, Donnie and Hadie. We will be thinking of you in London Jim, Faugh a Ballagh dear friend.

Major Jim MacLeod MBE on right hand end of row at Windsor Castle with members of RDFA Committee in June 2002.

Burma Siam Railway 1942-45.
Death of a brave Irish survivor.

Sgt. Eric.H. White, Royal Corps of Signals 1936-1946, peacefully passed away on 6 January 2008 at the great age of eighty-nine in his home at Portrush in the loving care of all his family. Eric was the eldest son of Captain Herbert White DSO MC of the 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers and 7th (South Irish Horse) The Royal Irish Regiment (18th Foot). Eric joined the Royal Corps of Signals in 1936 at the age of eighteen shortly before his father died in 1937. Eric's mother had died in 1929. It was a very lonely start to adult life for Eric. He was posted to a garrison in Penang and remained there until the Japanese invaded Southeast Asia and quickly reached Singapore. On 15 February 1942, Singapore fell to the Japanese and Eric was one of the thousands of British, Australian, New Zealand and Indian forces that became prisoners of war.

Eric spent a short time in the infamous Changi jail in Singapore with thousands of his comrades before being transported with them in overcrowded cattle trucks in sweltering heat without adequate food and water and no toilet facilities. It was a long and cruel journey before starting work on the notorious Burma Siam Railway. Many did not survive the journey. Those that did were destined to be Japanese slaves working under the most cruel and barbaric Japanese supervision.

Eric's father Herbert survived the Great War and Eric too resolved to survive his captivity as a POW. Thousands died of starvation, disease and over-work not to mention torture. But he did survive like his father before him – a chip off the auld block - and maybe some fighting genes inherited from a Dublin Fusilier.

Eric was released from captivity in 1945 when the Japanese surrendered and he arrived in England on a Hospital ship weighing only six stone. After a period of rest and recuperation, he came back home to Ireland and arrived in Dun Laoghaire just before Christmas 1945. He headed home to Portarlington. Sadly there was no home to go to except the home of Mr. And Mrs, Cahill, life-long friends of Eric's family. Their eldest son, Tony, became a well known Doctor in the Irish Army

and was a life-long friend of Eric's. In 1947, Eric married Miss Rosemary Jessop from Portlaoise. They lived in Ballina for a few years where Eric worked in the motor business. Later they moved to Coleraine to manage and subsequently own a thriving mushroom farm business. Eric and Rosemary had five children. They both lived in fine health and saw their Golden Wedding Anniversary. Sadly at the age of seventeen, one of their daughters was killed in a car crash. Rosemary died suddenly in April 2006 and Eric never really got over her loss. A little over a year and a half after Rosemary passed away, so too did Eric. Both he and Rosemary are laid to rest in Ballywillan Cemetery in Coleraine.

Sgt. Eric White.
The Royal Corps of Signals.

On several occasions, Eric and his family attended the annual dinner of the RDFA in Dublin. It was at one of these dinners that Eric, reluctantly and with great emotion, told the gathering of his experiences in Changi and Burma. He was possibly the last surviving Irishman of the Changi Jail in Singapore and the building of the Burma – Siam Railway. May you rest in peace Eric.

Death of D-Day Veteran,
son of Royal Dublin Fusilier.

For many years, a kindly looking bearded man in a plain Franciscan habit was an unusual but regular attendee at military commemorations. When he was invited to address the attendees at annual British Legion ceremony at the National War Memorial last July, nobody could have foreseen that his words of peace and respect for all who died in wars were the last ones that we would hear from him. Less than two weeks later, Brother Columbanus Deegan, who had landed on the D-Day beaches and had ridden his motorbike through war-ravaged France, died peacefully in the Franciscan Friary, Waterford, on 18 July 2007. He was eighty-two years old.

The son of Royal Dublin Fusilier, he spent his childhood in Inchicore and remembered seeing the construction work on the site of the National War Memorial. He joined the RAF at the start of the war and served as a navigator. He was sent to France with a motorbike to scour for crashed aircraft and to assess the possibility of salvage.

Brother Columbanus speaking during the Royal British Legion Commemoration Ceremony at the National War Memorial Gardens in Dublin on 7 July 2007.

He was one of the first to see the horrors of Belsen concentration camp. Many years later he said, '''I couldn't shake off the smell of death I experienced that day and even now, all these years later, I sometimes get flashbacks and the smell returns as if it was yesterday' 'He had a special interest in the forgotten Irish soldiers of the both World Wars. He encouraged the work of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and was a close friend of General Emmet Dalton who served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Mayor O'Halloran of Waterford where Brother Columbanus was noted for his charitable work, was quoted in the Munster Express:

Brother Columbanus Deegan

'Having himself joined the Armed Forces at the age of just 17 when he went in search of adventure, Bro Columbanus was also a keen campaigner for the legacy of the thousands of Irish men and women who fought overseas and whose stories were too often written out of our history. We can truly say of Columbanus that we will not see his likes again.'

Leo Doyle died on 24 August 2007. Leo was a keen military historian and was one of the early members of the RDFA. He was also a member of the Military History Society of Ireland. Leo is survived by his wife Teresa and daughter Marina. He is buried in Kilmashogue Cemetery.

Eric Cowell from Clitheroe in Lancashire passed away in August 2007. Eric's father was in the Dubs and according to his wife Jacqueline; Eric loved getting his copy of *The Blue Cap* in the post. Eric served in the Royal Navy during WW2. Jacqueline wrote to the committee stating. 'On his (Eric's) behalf, may I thank you for your correspondence over the past years. You will all, especially the deceased members, be in my thoughts and prayers.'

New addition to the RDFA Archive.
The Moriarty Collection.

Andrew O'Brien
Dublin City Library and Archive.

The Moriarty Collection is part of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association archives at Dublin City Library & Archive, Pearse Street, Dublin 2.

The Collection, formerly in the custody of the Moriarty family and their descendants, was donated to the RDFA in July 2007, for retention with the Dublin City Archives.

The Moriarty Collection consists of over 180 letters, medical reports and notes along with miscellaneous military records. As most of the letters are written in India, the collection forms a link to the Indian origins of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Before it was given this title in 1881, the regiment was known as the Royal Madras Fusiliers and wore the Indian tiger and elephant in its regimental symbols.

The Moriarty family of Cork and The Grange, Bruff, Co. Limerick were members of the professional class in the mid-19th century, a time when higher education and foreign travel was for the few. Jeremiah Moriarty of Cork was a travelling magistrate who worked in India during the 1850s and 1860s. His letters to his brother Rev. Michael Moriarty, reveal his concerns about the family, chiefly his brother John, nephew David and his own father, while telling us something of his own character.

Jeremiah Moriarty studied at the East India College, Haileybury, Herts, a public school formed by the East India Company in 1806 to supply young men to the colonial administrative service. Entry was by way of nomination from the directors of the Company, and Haileybury was noted for its Sanskrit scholars. The East India Company had been transformed from a commercial trading venture to one that virtually ruled India as it acquired auxiliary governmental and military functions, until its dissolution in 1858 following the events of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 Haileybury closed in 1857 – three former students had won the Victoria Cross during the Mutiny. A new Haileybury College opened in 1862 and students here included Robert Erskine Childers (1870-1922) and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936).

The first seven volumes of letters cover the period July 1852 to November 1864 and contain some 182 letters of which all but three are written by Jeremiah Moriarty to Rev. Michael Moriarty. Michael studied at All Hallows, Dublin, and was a

Roman Catholic curate at Rochdale, at the time of Jeremiah's letters to him.

Although family matters increasingly become the chief concern over the years of the correspondence, Jeremiah also hints at his Catholic nationalist politics from time to time – Emancipation had arrived in 1829, followed within a few years by that other formative event, the Great Famine. One senses in his letters a rising Catholic and nationalist awareness and confidence. Yet Jeremiah is also an Anglophile – a conservative, he enjoys reading Macaulay and Dickens, along with cricket, English history and people in general.

Though well-read (often quoting Latin or French) Jeremiah does not remark upon the irony of an Irishman under the service of the Crown in a colony.The first volume, ten letters in 1852, are those of a student and are concerned with college debates, Homer, Macaulay, history, in addition to family matters.

The second volume (1853, comprising 36 letters) are written by Jeremiah as he settles into his two-year term at Haileybury College, pursues his studies, then leaves for a career in the colonial administration. Jeremiah then embarks on a career in the East India Company service dispensing Crown justice at local level in north-west India.

The third volume (1854, 26 letters) sees Jeremiah in Ireland until his departure for London at the end of February and his arrival in Bombay in April. Over the course of the next eight months he writes to Michael about people, events, customs and places he encounters as he begins his colonial career, including his first witnessing of a flogging (see Letter, 21 May 1854).

The fourth volume includes 12 letters written by Jeremiah Moriarty to Rev. Michael Moriarty in 1855. He mentions the imminent arrival of Charles Canning as the, ill-fated, Governor-General of India, genteel society and (by contrast) crime, an increasing work-load, and his nostalgia for Ireland.

The fifth volume of letters covers the period May 1856 to December 1859 (13 letters) and from May to December 1860 (16 letters). Jeremiah was in India during the 1857 Mutiny but only two letters survive for 1857. Throughout this period Jeremiah is chiefly concerned with family and domestic matters.

Jeremiah Moriarty travelled in Europe in the autumn of 1861 and records his observations of the cityscapes (Paris, Turin, Florence, Rome) and landscapes he traverses – though he prefers the Cork landscape. He returns to India in late 1861 where he resumes his career until spring 1864, when he goes to England for the remainder of the year, until eventually the frequency of the letters becomes more sporadic as Jeremiah suffers the onset of ill health and decline.

The letters, which are in good physical condition, have been treated for long-term preservation at Dublin City Archives, and each one has been placed in archival-quality Mylar, and filed into archival storage albums. The collection may be inspected in the Reading Room at Dublin City Library & Archive during the usual opening hours.

A full Descriptive List is at:

http://www.dublincity.ie/Images/Moriarty_Collection_tcm35-57793.pdf

Andrew O'Brien,
Dublin City Archives,
138 – 144 Pearse Street,
Dublin 2.

An Post Stamp.
To commemorate 90th anniversary
of the sinking of the *'R.M.S. Leinster'*

RDFA committee member Philip Lecane has successfully campaigned for An Post (the Irish Post Office) to issue a stamp to commemorate those who were lost on the *'R.M.S Leinster'* in 1918. Philip contacted all Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown T.Ds (members of parliament) and County Councillors and asked them to write to An Post in support of his campaign. Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council passed a motion calling on An Post to issue the stamp.

As a result, *An Post* issued an *R.M.S. Leinster* commemorative stamp on 30 May 2008. The fifty-five cent stamp shows a starboard view of the *'R.M.S. Leinster'* in dazzle paint camouflage, with an inset view of the recovered anchor that is on display facing the Carlisle Pier at Dún Laoghaire Harbour. The first day cover envelope depicts the crest of the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company, owners of the *'R.M.S. Leinster.'*

The ninetieth anniversary of the *'R.M.S. Leinster'* sinking will be marked by an inter-denominational commemorative prayer service in St. Michael's (Roman Catholic) Church, Marine Road, Dún Laoghaire at noon on Friday 10 October 2008. A service will be held in St. Cybi's Church in Holyhead on Sunday 12 October 2008.

Information on South County Dublin Casualties of the Great War.

I am researching for a book, which will contain photographs, family and military information on the officers and men from South County Dublin who fell in the Great War. Any information or photographs, especially relating to enlisted men, from the parishes of Dundrum, Sandyford, Cabinteely, Shankill, Foxrock and Stillorgan would be gratefully received.

Please contact: Ken Kinsella,
Email kkinsella@iol.ie
Telephone, 056 7722767 or 086 4039523.

Lieutenant-Colonel
R. G. B. Jeffreys,
2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Conor Dodd

Richard Griffith Bassett Jeffreys was born on the 10th of January 1876 at Dunmore County Galway. His father was an army officer and he went to England for his education at Bedford School, after which, he joined the army and underwent his officers training. He was commissioned into the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and was soon sent to South Africa where during the Boer War he was mentioned in Lord Robert's dispatches whilst attached to the Mounted Infantry. It was 1916 before Jeffreys was first sent to France during the First World War, arriving in Bolougne less than a month before the first day of the Somme offensive, in which he was to personally play little part. However later in the war Jeffreys and his battalion played major roles in battles at Messines and Passchaendaele, which resulted in him being mentioned in dispatches three times, (including once by Sir Douglas Haig). He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in the new year of 1918 and stayed with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers until their disbandment along with all of the other southern Irish regiments in 1922. With the disbandment of the regiment he had served with for over 20 years, he was sent to the 2nd Battalion North Stafford Regiment where he was appointed second in command. His time with this regiment however was short lived. While on two months leave, on the 10th of January 1923, Jeffreys and his wife Grace, whom he had married in 1909, were killed when the plane in which they were flying crashed near Ajaccio, Corsica.

Between 1916 and 1918 Richard Jeffreys wrote a series of letters from the Western Front to his wife Grace. The letters of Lieutenant Colonel Jeffreys are a rare and important primary source. Few similar accounts were written by men of the regiment and even fewer have survived. Although the letters must be looked at objectively and with an understanding that they are from the point of view of an upper class officer, they do give an excellent insight not only into the major battles of the Great War, which tends to be the focus of most publications, but also everyday life in the trenches and billets of the Western Front. The letters contain much information and give a better understanding not only the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the Great War but also of most other regiments which were involved in the conflict. With the passing of Great War veterans, it is important that accounts such as this are preserved, as these are the only way in which the history of the war can be told properly through the words of the men who were there and experienced the futility of war.

It is for these reasons that the letters are being published, not only for aiding historians and family researchers of the Great War but also for those who simply wish to gain a better understanding and insight into this important period.

'Lieutenant-Colonel R.G.B. Jeffreys, 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers: Collection of Letters 1916-1918.' Edited by Conor and Liam Dodd.

Available from Liam Dodd, 5 Meadow Vale, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, Ireland. Price €10.
€5 postage to anywhere in the world.

The Leinster Regiment Association.

The Leinster Regiment Association is up and running and have produced their first journal titled *The 40/10.* Any members of the RDFA who wish to join The Leinsters Association, please contact Mr. Don Dickson, Fir Trees, 12 Fryer Close, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1RD England. Email: don@the-discksons.org

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Fingal Council to honour Tom Kettle.

On 16 January 2008, *The Irish Times* carried the following notice.

Council to honour poet who fell at Somme in 1916.

Fingal County Council decision (to erect a memorial) came in response to a motion from Cllr. Tom Kelleher (Lab) calling on the council to recognise the achievements of the poet by commissioning a work of art display in or near Fingal County Hall. Council officials said it is appropriate that Kettle be specifically honoured in his native place, and the expressed intention of the council to so commemorate him.

Remembrance Service in Galway Cathedral.

Niall Leinster
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

On 3 November 2007, an Ecumenical Service of Remembrance was held in Galway Cathedral. The service was instigated by the Connaught Rangers Association. The Mayors of Galway City and County were in attendance. The Bishop of Galway led the service; the Irish Army supplied a guard of honour. The Cathedral organist supplied music. Tom kettle's poem *Betty* was read as one of the tributes. The unveiling of a memorial plaque at the Galway County Offices was an equally solemn affair. The Irish Army again supplied the guard of honour. The Government was represented by Minister of State, Mr. Eamon O'Cuiv TD.

One City One Book Project – April 2006.

The RDFA participated in the Dublin City Archive and Libraries One City One Book project in April 2006. Our contribution took the form of an exhibition and presentation of lectures on the Dublin Fusiliers and the tragic events in Dublin and France in April 1916. The book chosen for the project was Sebastian Barry's *Long Long Way*, the story of a Dublin Fusilier. Ms. Jane Alger, Divisional Librarian of Dublin City Library recently informed the committee of the RDFA that the project received won an overall Ogilvy Worldwide PR Professional Achievement Award in the Community Relations category. These awards acknowledge the best work of the entire worldwide Oglivy PR network. Well done to all who participated.

Post Cards from National Museum of Ireland.

The bookshop in the National Museum of Ireland at Collins Barracks have on sale a series of post cards which show men from the 7th Dublin Fusiliers circa April 1915 prior to their departure for Gallipoli. The pictures below are just some samples of the postcards on sale at the Museum.

Officers of the 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers at the Royal (Collins) Barracks in April 1915. Recognise any ! Note the Jacobs biscuit box at bottom left corner.

A Dublin Fusilier in the Royal Barracks in April 1915 with the dog the men named Jack. There were several dogs the Dubs adopted during the war that they named Jack.

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.