

THE BLUE CAP

JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL DUBLIN FUSILIERS ASSOCIATION

VOL. 17. DECEMBER 2010 and 2011



Neath's forgotten Irish heroes.

Richard Bonney



Neath War Memorial Gates.

One weekend in the summer, my wife and I travelled back home to visit my home town of Neath from our home in Dublin, Ireland. My wife Olivia is Irish and we always love to walk up through the town to the Gnoll Gardens on a Sunday morning. We always pass through the grand Neath War Memorial Gates usually without a second thought, but this time as a moments break we stopped and gazed at the hundreds of names on the bronzed plaques. My wife's eyes were drawn for some reason to the corner and to two solitary names under the heading Royal Dublin Fusiliers, she asked me why Irish men were being commemorated in Neath. I replied that I didn't think that they were Irish being a Morgan and a Thomas maybe they were just in an Irish Regiment, I wrote the names down:-

2nd Lieutenant John Walter Rees Morgan

2nd Lieutenant D. Gwyn Thomas



On arriving home I thought how strange it was, two officers in an Irish Regiment killed from a small town in Wales.

It inspired me to see if I could find out more about these two names commemorating two young men who give their lives almost a century ago. For my research I used local newspapers, the Neath Antiquarian Society, The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Society and visited the National Archive in Kew, London.

Killed during the German assault at Mouse Trap Farm, Ypres, May 1915.

John W.R. Morgan was the son of the late Rees Powell Morgan and Mary of Brynhyfryd, Neath, born in 1891 at Dan y Parc, Eastlands Road, Neath. His father was a solicitor. In the 1901 census, the Morgans are recorded as living at a large house "Brynhyfryd" at the Cimla Hill in Neath (1)



2nd Lieut. John Walter Rees Morgan, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, taken in 1915 (From the Rugby College Memorial Book, 1918)

Rees and Mary had three children, Llewellyn Rees Morgan born 1884, Jennet Mary Morgan born 1888 and John Walter Rees Morgan born 1891. The family would have been part of the burgeoning Victorian middle class families and are recorded as being wealthy enough as to afford having two domestic servants. Indeed Mr. Rees Powell Morgan, the son of a Neath draper, was a respected solicitor and under his company R.P Morgan and Co, they acted as legal advisers for the many large estates and coal mines in the Neath Valley, an area whose industry had boomed during the mid 1800's. Mr. Morgan had also been given the title of Under High Sheriff of Glamorgan and was a highly respected member of the upper echelon of South Wales Society. Starting from modest beginnings, he had attained wealth and status through hard work and study. He attended boarding school at one of England's most renowned Public Schools, Rugby College in Warwickshire between 1858-61 (2). Evidently, he felt that both of his sons, Llewellyn and John, should board the train to Birmingham and attend Rugby College. It is clear that from early ages both boys were strongly influenced by their father and aspired to the legal profession in the family tradition.

At the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, the twenty-three year old John W.R. Morgan was working as a solicitor's articled clerk in the City of London but no doubt spurred on by the swell of National Pride and ferment, he decided to join up before the War was over. He made the journey into work on the 12th October via the Hotel Cecil on the Strand, London and on entering the foyer; he queued up to get to the recruiting table with other city workers. On swearing allegiance to the King, he joined the 23rd Royal Fusiliers or the First Sportsman's, as they were known. Public Schools battalions, the Chums, the Footballers, and other battalions were formed during the Great War. In the Sportsman's, practically every grade of life was represented, class distinctions were practically swept away. This New Army Battalion would contain men from the City of London regardless of creed or class from poultry farmers to clerks and solicitors. Indeed by the act of joining the Sportsman's Battalion John W.R. Morgan's war had begun. He became No 281 Private J W R Morgan of the Royal Fusiliers and he would never return home to his beloved Neath again.

John's new 800 men strong battalion now began the task of training to turn themselves from civilians into soldiers for deployment to the front line. The battalion proceeded to Hornchurch Essex where they started training; they would eventually proceed to France in November 1915. Although Private John Morgan did not join them, sometime in early 1915 he was selected for a commission and was posted in April 1915 to the 4th (Reserve) Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, an Irish Regiment containing men primarily from the Dublin Area. Given his public school education and occupation, he was the ideal candidate for an Officer yet he had no Irish connections. It seems likely that if positions within Welsh Regiments were filled, a Welshman would have considered a vacancy within an Irish Regiment to be the next best thing.

In 1915, the 4th (Reserve) Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers was a training battalion of 800 men and were stationed in Sittingbourne, Kent. They would provide much needed drafts and reinforcements for the Regular 1st and 2nd Battalions stationed on the Western Front who were steadily being drained of officers and men due to the attrition of trench warfare. In July 1915, John would proceed overseas to join the 2nd Battalion to replace the horrendous losses suffered during the Second Ypres Offensive in Flanders, Belgium and actions at Mouse Trap Farm. Here, following a poison gas attack, 645 men were lost out of 666. As fate would have it, he replaced in the line another officer himself a Neath boy, Lieutenant Dan Thomas who had been killed on the 24 May 1915.

Killed on the First Day of the Somme, July 1916.

The 1 July 1916 is infamous in British Military History. The British launched the Somme offensive and the 2nd Dublins took part in the First Day of the Somme. The attack was masterminded by General Haig and intended as a big push to break the German lines and thereby end the war. Eleven British divisions walked slowly towards the German lines thinking that the earlier enormous artillery bombardment had destroyed all of the German defenders. This was far from the reality.

The Germans were well prepared and emerged from their deep underground bunkers and took to their machine guns...the slaughter began. Although a few units managed to reach German trenches, they could not exploit their gains and were driven back. By the end of the day, the British had suffered 60,000 casualties, of whom 20,000 were dead: their largest single loss in a day. Sixty per cent of all officers involved on the first day were killed.

The morning of the 1 July started quietly in the British trench near Serre where the 2nd Dublins, part of the 10th Brigade, 4th Division were waiting until at 7.20am a huge earth-shattering explosion was heard. Under the German front line at the Hawthorn Redoubt, a huge mine was exploded. A tunnel had been dug under no-mans land months earlier and filled with thousands of tons of explosives. At 7.40am, Lieut. John Morgan would have blown his trench whistle and led his men, stiff from hours huddled together in the confined trench, and climbed over the top of the parapet and led the first wave in a steady line over no mans land towards the German trenches. What is clear from the war diary of the Dublin Fusiliers is that the enemy was not wiped out. Following the explosion, they did not run or retire to new positions but returned quickly to repel the imminent allied attack. It is recorded that "leading elements of the battalion came under heavy and continuous machinegun and sniper fire after leaving the trenches and only a few of our men reached the enemy wire...Casualties 325". The fate of John Walter Rees Morgan is recorded in his officer's file in the National Archive where there is a letter from a Sgt Dyer of the Warwickshire Regiment:

On the morning of the 1st July my Regiment went into action with the 2nd Dublin's at Serre. The next morning my platoon was holding a section of the front line when I looked over the parapet into No Man's Land to see if I could see any wounded lying out there. At a distance of almost thirty yards, I could see an officer. Unable to see whether he was alive or dead, I decided to fetch him in. When I got to him I could straightaway see that he was dead with a bullet wound straight through the front of his forehead. I carried him back to the front line where my officer Lt Gordon searched his belongings to

see if he could find some form of identification.

It is clear that John Morgan must have been one of the first of his battalion killed that morning, cut down by a sniper no doubt looking for officers at the front of the assault. In his return from no man's land, his body was one of the very few to be recovered from the battlefield that day. He would be buried with full military honours in Sucrerie Military Cemetery, Colincamps France. In late 1916, John's family, including his brother Llewellyn working as a solicitor in Orchard Street, Neath, would write for months in vain, asking for the return of his bible and other personal effects recovered on the 2 July. Unfortunately, these had all disappeared into the fog of war.



2nd Lieutenant Daniel Gwyn Thomas, Royal Dublin Fusiliers taken 1915. (From the Lloyds Bank Memorial Book, 1918)

Born in 1883, Daniel Gwyn Thomas was the son of Henry Thomas, an insurance superintendent for the Prudential Insurance Company in Neath, and Margaret Thomas. They lived at "Plas Gwyn," 18 Gnoll Avenue, Neath. This today remains as a modest terrace of houses leading up to the Gnoll Estate Grounds, past the Memorial Gates where Daniel's name is commemorated. He was born at 6 Victoria Terrace Aberdare but moved to Neath when his father Henry was made the agent for the Prudential Insurance Company in the town.

The family including his brothers and sisters, Richard, Will, May and Maude, originally rented No. 35 Alfred Street, Neath, and then moved into the newly built Gnoll Avenue when it was finished in 1902. Dan Thomas attended Neath County Grammar School until the age of seventeen whereupon he began his career as a railway bookkeeping clerk, moving to Handsworth in Birmingham. A clerk was seen as a respected occupation especially for bright individuals from modest backgrounds, unable to afford the costs of a University Education. It opened doors for him and he moved to Cardiff to work for Lloyds Bank. He worked for various branches of the bank in the City and in 1908 whilst working in the Cardiff Docks branch, he passed his preliminary examination for the prestigious Institute of Bankers. The status attained him the position of an assistant Bank Manager and he would move around the county via a number of branches before the onset of the Great War. In 1914, he is recorded as working for the Headquarters of Lloyd's Bank in the City of London. He records himself as living at No.42 Cannonbury Square in Islington. On the morning of Wednesday, the 9th September 1914, four weeks after the declaration of war with Germany, whilst visiting a branch in Maidstone, he decided to join up. He entered the local barracks and signed up for the West Kent Yeomanry, a territorial unit.

Private 1364 Dan Thomas began his training as a soldier with the West Kent Yeomanry. He was based in Hounslow, Essex. The Battalion was mounted and as part of the South East Mounted Brigade, it manned the coastal defences in the Canterbury Area in case of a German Invasion. Dan rose up the ranks quickly and was appointed Corporal after only 2 month's service. It seems that the tedium of his unit's home reserve status and the anxiety of not getting to the front in time, led to Dan applying for a commission. In his service file is a letter from his commanding officer dated 21 November 1914 which states that, "Cpl Dan Thomas wishes for a commission in the Welsh Horse Regiment and I do not wish to stand in the way of a fine soldier and good potential officer". Dan submitted his final application for an Emergency Reserve Commission at the end of November stating his desired units to be either the Mounted Engineers or Cardiff Royal Welsh Fusiliers! In the New Year, a vacancy was found, not in a Welsh Unit as he desired but his application was passed to a Colonel Lindsey of the

Royal Dublin Fusiliers who offered a commission in the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion of the regiment. This unit had been formed in August 1914 at Naas, Dublin. A depot/training unit, it moved on mobilisation to Queenstown, now Cobh, County Cork. On 19 January 1915, Dan Thomas was gazetted as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and, after purchasing his new uniform, he left Kent to begin training with his new regiment in the South of Ireland. His time in Cork was short as he was sent to the front with a number of other officers and men to replace the losses sustained by the regular battalions on the Western Front. In the spring of 1915, the Germans had launched a large attack to regain Ieper in Flanders. In their opening attack on 25 April, they had used Chlorine a poison gas for the first time on the Western Front. The first troops hit were the 45th Algerian Division and the French Territorial Division. When Chlorine gas is mixed with water, it produces hydrochloric acid and men's' lungs literally melted under the effects of the poison gas. The unfortunate French and Algerian troops came pouring out from the front line, coughing blood and the French artillery began to pound their abandoned trenches in an effort to stop the advancing Germans. In 1917, the Young Wilfred Owen wrote of the horrors in his poem, '*Dulce et Decorum est*':

*If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted
lungs.*

The German advance achieved a four-mile gap in the front line and the gas cloud rolled onto the 1st Canadian Division. Two Canadian Officers became aware of the onset of the poison gas cloud and told their men to urinate in a handkerchief and hold it to their mouths. Uric Acid crystallizes chlorine gas...a solution had been found in the first "sort of gas mask".

Unable to gain the full potential of their advance due to not having enough troops to break through the gap, the German continued to shell the lines at St. Julien down to Fortuin, an area held by the 10th Brigade and the 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers. In the ten days from 25 April to 5 May 1915, the battalion had lost 137 men, including seven officers killed, and were in badly in need of reinforcements.

On 17 May 1915, 2nd Lieutenant Dan Thomas and a draft of fresh officers and men arrived from Cork and joined the battalion who were in a bivouac in the grounds of the Vlamertinghe Château. (On his way to the front, Dan would visit Neath for the last time) (3) A repeat German attack on the scale of the first was expected and it was anticipated that this time the Germans would be more prepared. On 23 May, the Dubs moved into position in trenches near Ieper called Mouse Trap Farm and prepared for the imminent attack. They did not need to wait long as at 2.30am a red light was seen being fired over their positions from the German lines by their Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Col Loveband. A loud crash was then heard and he began to shout to his men. "Get your masks on, boys, here comes the gas!!!" The masks were no more than largely ineffectual chemically soaked cloth mouth pads tied up at the back of the head....this was called the black veil respirator. The battalion strength was seventeen officers and 651 men and everyone was awake when the cloud of gas came over. The gray-clad German storm troopers of the 51st Reserve Regiment, wearing gas masks, quickly advanced from their lines and began their attack, bombing and bayoneting the men they found in the trenches, many in fear and agony writhing at the bottom, some fighting like lions, seeming unaffected by the gas. One cannot imagine the agony of their final moments. Many decided to save themselves and run but most succumbed to the effects of the poisonous gas after a short distance. It is known that the commanding officer Lt Col Loveband was quickly killed by a gunshot to the heart at the back of his dugout. The final moments of Dan Thomas, the new officer is unknown as only 20 men and 1 officer survived, their bodies, including that of Dan Thomas, being lost or never identified.

On 28 May, Dan's parents received the dreaded telegram stating that 2nd Lieut. D.G. Thomas had been reported killed in action. A letter in his file was written to the army by the local minister which reads.

Mr Thomas of Plas Gwyn, Neath has asked me to write to you regarding the particulars of the death of their son D.G. Thomas, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, killed on the 25th May. The parents are prostrate with grief, having lost another grown-up son only twelve months ago. Please write to me direct and I will convey the news....

Dan Thomas has no known grave and his name is commemorated on the Menin Gate memorial in Ieper along with those of 54,000 Officers and men. It is not known if John Morgan or Dan Thomas knew each other but for two Neath boys to join the same Irish Regiment, one being killed only to be replaced by the other is a very strange coincidence. Both men are today commemorated in Ireland's Memorial Records at the 1914 – 1918 National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge, Dublin.



The National War Memorial Gardens at Islandbridge, Dublin.

Notes.

1. The house still stands and is the Busman's Social Club, Neath.
2. Information from Rugby College Archive.
3. The Western Mail, 30 April 1915.
'Neath Hero Home a fortnight ago..!'

The file references in the National Archives at Kew Gardens are.

2nd Lieut. John Walter Rees Morgan
WO 339/43637
2nd Lieutenant Daniel Gwyn Thomas
WO 339/16455

A Subaltern's life in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Ireland 1886 to 1893.

Gerard Watchorn

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

The book *"Life of an Irish soldier: reminiscences of General Sir Alexander Godley"* gives an excellent insight to the life of a Subaltern in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers at the turn of the 19th Century. (1) Godley was born in Chatham, Kent, England in 1867, his father Lt Colonel William Alexander Godley of the 56th Pompadours (Essex Regiment) his Grandfather was a landowner John Godley of Killegar Co Leitrim. An uncle was John Robert Godley, the founder of Canterbury, New Zealand. His maternal uncle was Major Spencer Godfrey Bird who served in the South African War,(Second Boer War) with the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 1899 to 1902. Educated at Haileybury College Hertford (2) until his father died in 1880 Godley was switched to the less expensive United Services College, (3) Westward Ho! North Devon. Here he shared a dormitory with Rudyard Kipling. In 1885 he became a Sandhurst cadet. He applied to join the Royal Dublin Fusiliers regiment and was gazetted to it, and ordered to join the 1st Battalion at Mullingar (Wellington Barracks now Columb Barracks) (4) in Ireland in 1886 where on arrival he discovered the initiation for new subalterns was to be paraded on their first morning in Busby and Nightshirt. He was impressed with the regiment's list of battles on the colours which he observed were longer than that of any other battalion in the Army. It included the Relief of Lucknow under command of Brigadier-General James Neill, killed in action at Lucknow where the nickname Neill's "Blue Caps" was earned. In 1886, the officers still always wore a light blue forage cap. The commanding Officer in Mullingar was Colonel William Cleland, who was one of the last of the East India Company's officers. He had been in action during the Mutiny in Bengal in 1857-58, in the actions of Futtehpore, Aoung, Pandoo, Nuddee, Cawnpore, Bithoor, Mungarwar, Alumbagh and he was also in action at the relief of Lucknow when Neill was killed. Cleland was appointed to the command of the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, on 7 June 1884, and became Colonel on 1 July 1885. He relinquished command of the Battalion on 1 July 1887.

The routine in Mullingar was determined by the moods of Cleland who was given to violent outbursts. If he emerged from breakfast dressed for riding, the Subalterns rushed to meet him in the hope of being invited to accompany him. If however he was to emerge dressed "breeched, booted and spurred" this usually meant the day took the form of a marching-order parade. This meant full-dress, "gold lace scarlet tunic, Busby, tightly-strapped overalls, Wellington boots, and worst of all, white pipe-clayed gloves, probably not quite dry". (At that time the Busby was made of racoon skin and it was not until later that Fusilier regiments were allowed to wear bearskins). (5)



Lieut.-General Sir A. J. Godley, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. at a Royal Dublin Fusiliers reunion, 25.9.1921

Once, in the snow, Cleland, having ordered marching-order parade, inspected each man's knapsack while they all stood to attention. Finding the results unsatisfactory, Cleland had the men fall in again after lunch "and how great was the agony caused by the pipe-clayed gloves and tight Wellington boots!" Adjutant's drills run by the adjutant and the Regimental Sergeant-Major were frequent. This drill entailed physical drill to music with the emphasis on keeping time to the band. Field-days were held periodically. "The battalion, formed up in line in full rig, red tunics, busbies, etc., with scouts out, would advance in a steady "thin red line" upon some hill about a thousand yards away". On nearing the hill they would "fix bayonets and charge, and so home in good time for dinner".

It was only about this time that the high command decided it would be a good idea for the officers to take part in the training of their commands. After morning parade, the Subalterns were free to ride with the local hunts or when they were in Mullingar they went shooting on the bogs.

Cleland being a bachelor always dined in the mess where each officer was expected to take turns carving. Dinner was served on the magnificent regimental mess silver. On the disbandment of the regiment, the centre pieces of the mess silver were presented to King George V, Field-Marshal the Duke of Connaught, who was then Colonel-in-Chief, and to the Royal United Services Institution.

Life in the army could prove expensive for an officer. The mess was run by a contractor whose daily charge was seven-and-six-pence and the Subaltern was paid only five shillings and three pence a day. Officers were expected to drink a glass of port every evening and once a week on "guest-night" drink champagne which all had to be paid for. Cake or fruit was extra and at afternoon tea, brandy and soda was the drink that was served. A regimental dinner would be an occasion for champagne, followed by a couple of glasses of port, and old brandy on the top of it all. The result was a mess bill of at least fourteen or fifteen pounds a month, with pay of eight pounds with which to meet it.

Officers also had the expense of their uniform and furniture. The furniture which travelled everywhere with them, even when they went abroad, consisted of camp-bed, chest of drawers, wash-stand, table, bath, and other necessities of life. Godley apportioned thanks to Cox & Co (6) and local tailors for their leniency during these impecunious days. Promotion to adjutant and the buying, training and selling of polo ponies also kept Godley solvent.

Hunting polo and cricket were the sports played by the regimental officers and by Godley's account, the local gentry throughout the country would accommodate the officers. From Mullingar, Godley was transferred to Sligo (Forthill Barracks) for a year where he was the only Subaltern. The detachment mess consisted of a Captain Nigel Maxwell, R.A., adjutant of the Sligo artillery militia, a doctor named Bate, and Godley. It was probably inevitable that Godley would visit

Lissadell and he did spend a weekend there "where the most charming and attractive eldest daughter of the house, Constance with whom all the young men of that time in Ireland, myself included, were madly in love, made us throw our caps in the air for her to shoot at with a revolver. (7) A strange forecast of her future activities!"

After one year in Sligo, he was then ordered to the Curragh, and the orders for the move ended with a paragraph which read: "Dogs will make their own arrangements"! In the Curragh, attendance at the Viceregal balls in St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle, was all part of an officer's life. Godley was impressed with the beauty of the Irish ladies. "Of the Irish girls, Constance Gore-Booth, Miss Maud Gonne, and many others held their own well among the many good-looking visitors from England" In the Curragh, Godley was appointed adjutant and in 1890 he moved with his command to Newry.

In Newry, his new Commanding Officer wished to choose his own adjutant so Godley resigned and was made assistant adjutant, which meant "virtually, musketry instructor". However, as there was no rifle range at Newry, Godley moved to Dundalk and Newtownards where he lived in the 9th Lancers' mess.

Godley was then ordered to Kildare for a tour of duty at the depot of the regiment at Naas. Lord Wolseley, who had succeeded General Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, (known as Bally-Sax) as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, came down to inspect the depot and Godley was deputed to meet him at Sallins station and drive him to barracks in the Colonel's dog-cart while his staff followed in a hack-car. The "seven delightful years of soldiering in Ireland" ended when he was ordered to join the regimental depot in Sheffield where most of the battalion was then on coal-strike duty.

During the siege of Mafeking in the second Boer War, where he served under Baden Powell, Godley distinguished himself and was known as "hero of Mafeking" particularly for his rout of the Boer invasion towards the end of the siege. When The Irish Guards were raised as a Regiment in the year 1900 by order of Queen Victoria it was in honour of the bravery of the Irish who fought in the Boer War. The then Brevet Major Godley and Major Fitzclarence, VC both heroes of Mafeking were transferred to form the new regiment.

He served in World War I as Commander of the First ANZAC Corps in Egypt and in Gallipoli from 1915 to 1916. This tour included responsibility for the disastrous bayonet charges at The Nek on 7 August 1915 for which he is still criticised (8). Godley then commanded the Second ANZAC Corps in France from 1916 to 1918. After the War, Godley became Commander of the British Army of the Rhine. He served as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Southern Command from 1924 to 1928 when he became Governor of Gibraltar. He was an Aide de Camp General to the King from 1925 to 1929 retiring in 1933. In 1939 he wrote his memoirs. He died in Oxford in 1957

References and Notes.

1. *Life of an Irish soldier: reminiscences of General Sir Alexander Godley*. Foreword by Lieutenant-General Lord Baden-Powell. Author; Godley, Alexander John, Sir Published: New York, E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc. 1939.

2. In 1806, the East India Company commissioned a new training college in Hertford for civil servants destined to govern British India. In 1858, Haileybury opened as a public school. In 1942, Haileybury and the ISC combined to become "Haileybury and Imperial Service College", now known as Haileybury.

3. United Services College Westward Ho! in North Devon was founded by a group of serving and ex-Army officers to provide an inexpensive education for the sons of military personnel. It later moved to Windsor and became the Imperial Services College ISC

4. The site for the barracks at Mullingar was purchased by the War Department in 1807. The barracks was built in 1814 and first occupied in 1819. The original barracks was built to accommodate 1000 men. It was originally named Wellington Barracks. The barracks was renamed Columb Barracks in 1922 after Patrick Columb, a member of the National Army who was killed on Mary Street, Mullingar in 1922. [The Government decided to close this barracks in November 2011.]

5. The Busby headdress is the English name for the Hungarian military head-dress made of fur, worn by Hungarian hussars. In 1865 a distinctive head-dress was authorised for British Army

fusilier regiments. This was a raccoon skin Busby. The badge for each regiment was to be placed at the front of the Busby and consisted of the flaming grenade with the different emblems placed on the ball of the grenade.

6. Cox & Co were the Army Agents who handled the financial transactions for officers like any normal bank. The majority of officers had their accounts with them and were encouraged to do so.

7. Countess Markievicz

8. On 7 August 1915 two regiments of the Australian 3rd Light Horse Brigade mounted an attack on the Turkish trenches. The battle became known as "Godley's abattoir" as there was absolutely no chance of victory and Godley ordered the attack to go ahead. When the burial parties arrived in 1919 after the war four years later, the bones of the dead light horsemen were still lying on the ground. Only five of the 316 bodies could be identified

The author's granduncle, Hugh Bergin from Carlow, served in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers from 1914 to 1918 and survived.

Book notice - RDFA member Christopher Power has published a booklet about 2nd Lieut. William Greene and two other members of his extended family who served in the Great War. All had joined as privates. One was from Bray and was killed while serving with the 10th RDF at the Battle of Ancre in November 1916. The other two were commissioned and survived. William was captured while serving as an RDF Officer in the German offensive of March 1918. He kept a diary while a prisoner of war in Karlsruhe. He was one of the actors in a performance of *The Rising of the Moon* in the camp which he recalled from memory. He lived in the ex-servicemen's cottages in Ballinteer where a cache of diaries, photographs and memorabilia were discovered by a relative. His sister, Aine Heron, was a prominent member of Cumann na mBan who took part in the 1916 Rising. *A Family goes to War* is a fifty-five page full colour illustrated booklet available for **7 Euro** which includes posting to anywhere in Ireland. Enquiries to Christopher Power, Tinnashrule, Ferns. Co Wexford. Tel 0866089198 E:Mail: tinnashrule1@gmail.com

A young Irishman who was prepared to give a good account of himself.

Tony Behan and Philip Lecane
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

On the outbreak of the First World War thousands of British and Irish young men rushed to the recruiting offices to enlist. One young Irish male decided to take a more direct route. He wrote to Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener as follows:

*21 Park Avenue
Sandymount
Dublin.*

Dear Lord Kitchener

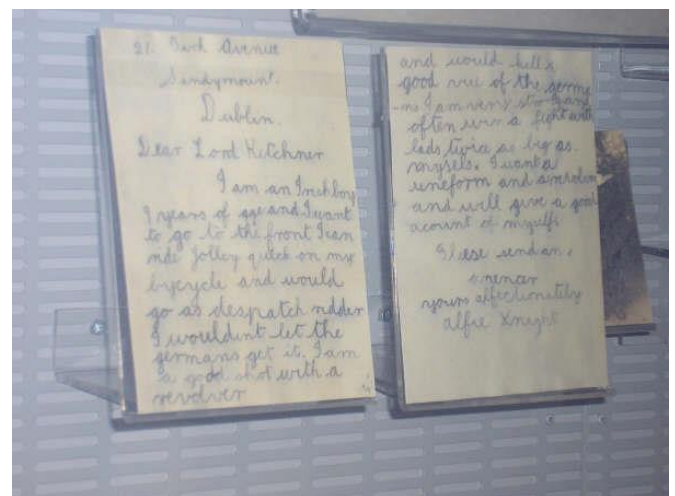
I am an Irish boy 9 years of age and I want to go the front I can ride jolley quick on my bycycle and would go as despatch ridder I wouldn't let the germans get it. I am a good shot with a revolver and would kill a good vue of the germans I am very strong and often win a fight with lads twice as big as mysels. I want a uniform and a revolver and will give a good account of myself

Pleese send an anencer

*Yours affectionately
Alfie Knight*

The 1901 census for Ireland shows an Alfred Knight (27) living at 45 Booterstown Avenue, Blackrock, County Dublin. If he is the father of the yet to be born Alfie, it would not be the only time that people aged more or less than the ten year period between the census of 1901 and that of 1911. The Alfred living in Booterstown was, single, a solicitors general clerk, born in County Dublin and Church of Ireland. Also in the house were his father George (62), an unemployed coachman, born in Dorsetshire, mother Margaret (60), born in the City of Dublin, sister Jane (28), dressmaker, born in the City of Dublin and boarder Charles Evans (29), land agents managing clerk, born County Wicklow and Church of Ireland.

Alfie Knight's letter is on display in Imperial War Museum North in Manchester. The authors saw it during a visit to the museum in October 2008.



Copy of Alfie Knight's letter in IWM Manchester.

The 1911 census for Ireland shows Alfred Knight as a member of a family living at 38 Park Avenue, Sandymount, Dublin. The family consisted of Alfred Knight (35), Managing Clerk, born in County Dublin, his wife Elizabeth (29), born London, Alfred (6), Ursula (5), Charles Edward (2) and James Francis (1). Alfred and Elizabeth had been married seven years. Four children had been born to the marriage and all were still alive. All had been born in County Dublin. The family were Church of Ireland. Also living in the house was Mary Healy (19), Servant, Roman Catholic, Single and born in County Dublin. At the time of the census, 21 Park Avenue, from where Alfie would write to Lord Kitchen three years later, was occupied by Percival and Florence Blissett, an English couple aged 37 and 34 respectively, and their Dublin born female servant.

Wicklow and the Great War.

Andrew O'Brien
The Dublin City Archive and Library.

By the beginning of January 1915 it was clear that the conflict in Europe was no short campaign. The effects of savage events in faraway places were painfully brought home to local communities with cursed alacrity. But as the flowers of European youth were swathed down in battle, human kindness came forward on the home front. Some fifty Belgian refugees were now under the care of the Bray Relief Committee, eight more having arrived just after Christmas, while eleven Belgian refugees had been sent to Rathdrum.

Dependents of soldiers and sailors in Wicklow town were given up to two stone of flour and a one pound weight of cheese by the local Distress Committee, under Canon Staples, P.P., while the editor of *The Wicklow News-Letter* called on local men to make enlistment their new year's resolution. Charity at home but the charnel house away was 1915. Meanwhile, a morale-boosting visit of the government patrol yacht, *Wintoria*, in Wicklow, allowed members of the crew to mix with locals. The war that would be over by Christmas has missed its putative and sham deadline and the early weeks of 1915 saw a drip-drip of reports in the local press concerning Wicklow boys at the front. In a tight-knit community, locals anxiously awaited weekly news about their next-door neighbours, friends, relations, sons, fathers, husbands, and brothers.

A flavour of life at the Western Front was published in *The Wicklow News-Letter* on 9 January 1915 – Driver James Gernon, aged eighteen, of 2, Abbey Street, Wicklow and son of the late James Gernon, T.C. Wicklow, wrote to Mrs. E.U. Grimshaw, Friar's Hill, Wicklow, Hon. Secretary of the local branch of the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association.

The KOSB [King's Own Scottish Borderers] came out of the trenches on 23 December. Your heart would ache for the poor fellows. They were in a terrible state, covered from head to foot in mud, some in bare feet. I go up to the trenches every night with rations for the horses – all they get is five handfuls per horse three times a day, and a bit of hay. I have the same pair of horses that I left

Dublin with on 13 August, one of which was wounded at Mons. – I owe my life to my horses as they saved my life five or six times. I look after them like a father and hope to return with them after the war.

Gernon was in The Royal Army Service Corps and by the beginning of February was wounded in battle and in hospital in France. Mrs. Grimshaw's nephew, Major Cecil Thomas Grimshaw, 1st Battalion R.D.F., D.S.O., was killed age forty, at Gallipoli on 26 April 1915. Driver William Ost, 57th Battery, Royal Artillery, in mid-February, wrote to a friend in Wicklow of the yearning for a past in a foreign country and that he was.

Longing for a visit to Ireland again, to look the old folks up and enjoy a romp over the old Silver Sands – not quite the silver sands we have out here, up to your eyebrows in mud. It's no use saying 'keep your eyes open for Black Jacks (Germans) because you can't see them coming – the only way to avoid them is to get under cover and bang! Bang! We're at it again. We are the bhoys for them – The Royal Artillery!

His mother Elizabeth died in December 1915. The family lived at 30 High Street, Wicklow. Age nineteen, Private Michael (Mick) McEvoy, 2nd Battalion R.D.F., also wrote home, to his mother in Wicklow in mid-February that he had been in hospital at Le Havre for two weeks recovering from shrapnel wound, but was looking forward to rejoining his comrades at the front. However, he was reported as missing since an engagement on 25 April. He had joined the R.D.F. in 1912.

There was hardly a street that had no link with the hostilities – and in a small community in 1915 everyone knew everyone. Wicklow man Sergeant J.J. Molloy, Royal Irish Regiment, was captured and began a long internment in a German prison camp. Private George Thompson also wrote home to Rathnew to say he was a P.O.W. in Germany. His brother John, 2nd Battalion R.D.F., was mortally wounded on the western front on 26 April 1915. Private Edward McEvoy, 6619, 'F' Company, 3rd Battalion R.D.F., arrived in Dublin to the County Wicklow Ward of Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital – he had been wounded in France, suffering gunshot to his right leg. He was a brother of Mrs. Anne Moody of 25 Monkton Row.

In April 1915 the Germans had introduced chlorine gas at the Second Battle of Ypres. One of the first to suffer was Private John Doyle of Rathnew, removed to hospital in France at the beginning of May. The civilian population discharged a community kindness - benefit concerts were held locally in the Assembly Hall and in Dunganstown schoolhouse for the Red Cross, for example, as local technical school students made artificial limbs and other medical aids, the political leaders pressed on with their duties. A meeting was held on 12 April 1915 in Wicklow Town Hall under the auspices of Wicklow U.D.C.

For the purpose of making arrangements for forwarding recruiting for His Majesty's Forces in this district, by the formation of local recruiting committees - the attendance of every true Irish man and woman is earnestly requested. Francis McPhail, Town Clerk.

On 2 May 1915, Private James Winders, 10960, 1st Battalion RDF, Rathnew, was killed in the Dardenelles - he is buried at Helles. Private John Plunkett, R.D.F., Rathnew was also reported killed.

The sinking on 7 May of the Cunard liner *RMS Lusitania* off the Old Head of Kinsale led to a surge in recruiting. Throughout the month recruiting meetings were held at Baltinglass, Bray, Avoca, Rathdrum, Arklow and in the Market Square Wicklow, presided by chairman of Wicklow U.D.C. Hugh McCarroll where twelve local men enlisted. By late July another fifteen men from Rathnew had enlisted leaving very few able men in the village. Local newspapers throughout Ireland carried recruitment advertisements. The grim charnel house list continued its relentless accumulation. On 22 May 1915, Mrs. Ernest Evans of 16 Monkton Row received official notice that her son Samuel died of gunshot wounds on 4 May. He had been caddie at Wicklow Golf Club for some years, although he had come from India to enlist. In June, Private James Doyle, Rathnew, R.D.F., in the Ulster Volunteer Hospital Belfast for some time had his right hand amputated, leaving him, like so many other amputees, with virtually no chance of employment.

Private Patrick Culbert of Wicklow, Service Number 17959, 1st Battalion R.D.F., who enlisted about four months previous in the R.D.F., was killed at the Dardenelles. Along with other Allies troops, Private Culbert landed on the Peninsula on 26 April. He fell on 15 June and was buried at Twelve Tree Copse Cemetery at Krithia, near Helles.

At the Wicklow Regatta on 2 August the bands of the 12th Lancers and the 3rd R.D.F. entertained the locals. An evening recruitment meeting chaired by Hugh McCarroll, chairman of Wicklow U.D.C., was held in the Market Square. The meeting was told that out of a total of 150 males in Rathnew some 130 had enlisted, while in Wicklow some 150 men had joined up. Lieutenant Willie Redmond M.P. also addressed the meeting, while at the Regatta gates on the Promenade some £11 was collected for families of Wicklow prisoners held in Germany. As Town Clerk Francis McPhail, secretary of the Wicklow Recruiting Committee, called on local men to supply field glasses for use at the Front for the duration, it was reported that Lieut. N.H. Haskins, Royal Army Medical Corps and son of N.H. Haskins, Wicklow, was wounded at the Dardenelles, as was Private R. Doyle, 1st Battalion R.D.F. of Rathnew, who was removed to hospital in Malta, even as seventy-three men of the Co. Wicklow Platoon left their camp at Bray Head in early September to join their R.D.F. Regiment at Cork before sailing. Their comrade Private George Fife, 12909, 6th Battalion R.D.F., of Newtown who enlisted last November at the age of eighteen meanwhile was killed in the Dardenelles on 28 August. He is listed at Cairo War Memorial Cemetery.

In October, McPhail proposed to the Urban District Council that its condolences should be conveyed to Mrs. E. Moutray-Read, widow of Col. John Moutray-Read, 4th Cheshire Regiment, of 3, Wentworth Place, Wicklow, and to Miss Grace Acton of Kilmacurragh on the loss they had sustained by the deaths of Captain Anketell Moutray-Read, age thirty-one, and Major Charles A. Acton, aged thirty-nine, 9th Battalion. Royal Welsh Fusiliers, of Kilmacurragh House, Dunganstown, Wicklow, in France. No. 3, Wentworth Place was a field supplies depot leased to the Army from some years earlier by Earl Fitzwilliam.

The motion was passed nem. con. Major Acton was buried at Loos. He had served in Crete (1898) and China (1900) and was High Sheriff. Co. Wicklow in 1913.

Mrs. Moutray-Read was informed by her son's O.C. Major G.A. Royston-Pigott, 1st Northants. Regiment, that his name had been submitted for the Victoria Cross. The Official Record as follows.

Captain Anketell Moutray-Read, 1st. Battalion Northants Regiment, for the most conspicuous bravery during the first attack near Hulluch on the morning of 25 September, 1915. Although partially gassed, Captain Read went out several times in order to rally parties of different units which were disorganised and retiring. He led them back into the firing line, and, utterly regardless of danger, moved freely about encouraging them under a withering fire. He was mortally wounded while carrying out this gallant work. Captain Read had previously shown conspicuous bravery during digging operations on 29, 30 and 31 August, 1915, and on the night of the 29-30 July he carried out of action an officer, who was mortally wounded, under a hot fire from rifles and grenades.

He had also been a member of the Royal Flying Corps (1912) and went with the R.F.C. on the first Expeditionary Force in 1914 to France and fought at Mons in August of that year. He had been educated at Sandhurst and first served in India. Aged just thirty, he was buried at Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos. Captain Read was well known as an athlete and won the heavyweight championship (boxing) of India eight times, and the middleweight twice. He also won the Army and Navy heavyweight championship at Aldershot and Portsmouth three times, an unequalled record.

As the year concluded, morale-boosting Certificates of Honour were given to Rathnew and to Rathdrum women; although local men were keener than before to sign on as recruitment meetings were held in Wicklow Town Hall where thirty local men enlisted; there were also recruitment meetings in Rathdrum and Ashford and Glenealy. In Wicklow itself, Robin Kent, son of Robert Kent, of Abbey Street, Wicklow, enlisted in the 5th Battalion R.D.F., to join his two brothers.

The Wicklow News-Letter of 4 December 1915 stated that out of a total population of 751 persons some 121 men from Rathnew (all listed) had joined up. Included were, for example, men with well-established surnames locally: Pte. Joseph Newsome, R.D.F.; Pte. Robert Newsome, Irish Guards; Pte. George Newsome, South African Forces; Pte. Patrick Merrigan, Irish Guards; Ptes. John, Patrick and William Ellis, all R.D.F.; Pte. Patrick Franey, R.D.F., Driver John Franey, R.F.A.; Ptes. Thomas and Robert Marah, R.D.F.; Gunner Laurence Courtney, age 46, Royal Garrison Artillery; Pte. Edward Boyce, R.D.F., of Ballinabarney aged 29; Pte. John Smullen, Highland Infantry, and Lance Corporal Henry Webster, aged 26 of Ballyknockan Beg, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

On the last Saturday of the year, 25 December, 1915, a Roll of Honour at Wicklow Parish Church was published in *The Wicklow News-Letter*, fifty-eight names were listed including Corporal John James Walker, died of wounds; Pte. Cedric Hopkins, 10th Battalion R.D.F.; Signalman William Brown, Royal Navy; Sergeant Joseph Hannan, 30 Coy, R.G.A.; the four brothers Frederick Kent, eighteen, Royal Navy; Pte. Robin Kent, twenty, 10th Battalion R.D.F.; Pte. George Kent, R.A.M.C.; Pte. John Kent, twenty-two, Canadian Exp. Force, all of Abbey Street, Wicklow.

As parishioners returned to their homes across County Wicklow to spend Christmas without loved ones they can only have prayed that by Easter the worst was over – but the Christmas Truce of 1914 had long disappeared and both sides displayed a deep bitterness with the advent of gas poisoning, the introduction of the tank and aerial combat – events which would leave their ugly mark at local level far away from the field of battle.

Sources

With thanks to John Goodman, Marie Louise Kent, Vincent Pippet, the Gilletlie family.
The Wicklow News-Letter, various dates, 1915.
1911 Census, Ireland, Co. Wicklow.

The London Gazette, No. 29371, 16 November, 1915.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Website
- www.cwgc.org - accessed 28 March 2010.

Wicklow Town and District - The Fallen

Patrick Ellis, 20318, Private, 2nd Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, France, 7 November 1917. Born Rathnew, age 28. Croisilles Cemetery.

Samuel Evans, 9724, Private, 1st Batt., Leinster Regiment. Killed in action, France, 4 May 1915, age 24. Son of Ernest and Margaret Evans, Monkton Row, Wicklow. Came from India to enlist. Ypres Menin Gate Memorial.

Michael Foley, Able-Bodied Seaman; died July 1918. Born Wicklow, age 30.

Thomas Gilligan, 13757, Private, 6th Royal Irish Fusiliers; killed in action, Gallipoli, 15 August 1915. Born Wicklow. Helles Memorial.

Henry Goodman, S/9675, Private, 7th Batt., Seaforth Highlanders; killed in action, France, 9 April 1917. Born Nun's Cross, Co. Wicklow, age 20. Arras Memorial.

John Goodman, 5962, Private, 8th Batt., Royal Munster Fusiliers; killed in action, France, 3 September 1916. Born Wicklow, age 34, son of John and Ellen Goodman, Castle Street, Wicklow, and husband of Ellen Goodman. Brother of Sarah, Edward, James and Bert Goodman. Thiepval Memorial.

William Grey, 16166, Private, 1st Batt., Royal Irish Fusiliers, killed in action, 9 April, 1918. Son of Emily Grey, and the late Thomas Grey, Colley Street, Wicklow. Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke, Belgium.

Peter Grimes, 9931, Rifleman, 1st Batt., Royal Irish Rifles, killed in action, Somme, 28 March 1918, age 22. Brother of Mrs. Rose McCarthy, Trinity, Ashford. Pozieres Memorial, Somme.

David Hall, 9209, Private, 1st Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, France, 1 July 1916. Born at 13 Strand Street Lower, Wicklow, age 18. Son of Edward and Jane Hall, Castle Street, Wicklow. Thiepval Memorial.

Edward Hall, 9011, Private, 2nd Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, France, 24 May 1915. Born 13 Strand Street Lower, Wicklow, age 20. Son of

Edward and Jane Hall, Castle Street, Wicklow. Ypres, Menin Gate Memorial.

George Hunter, 2281, Private, 3rd Regiment, South African Infantry. Killed in action, between 15 to 20 July, 1916, age 37. Son of Robert and Elizabeth Hunter, Newrath Bridge Hotel, Rathnew. Thiepval Memorial.

Edward Jordan, B/200715. Corporal, 7th Batt., Rifle Brigade formerly King Edward's Horse; died France, 22 February 1917, age 27. Born Wicklow. Mont Huon Military Cemetery.



Great War Memorial, Wicklow Parish Church

Thomas Jordan, 24597, Private, 9th Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, France, 9 September 1916. Born Glenealy, age 22. Thiepval Memorial.

John Judd, Mate, Mercantile Marine, 'Walter Ulric', died 29 March 1917, age 24. Husband of Annie Judd (nee McCarthy) of Strand Street, Wicklow.

Patrick Kavanagh, 14715, Gunner, Royal Garrison Artillery. Died India, 28 June 1915, Born Wicklow. Delhi Memorial, India Gate.

Peter Kavanagh, 57493, Driver, Royal Field Artillery; killed in action, France, August 1916. Born Wicklow, age 26.

George Keegan, T/26151, Driver, Royal Army Service Corps; died at home 20 November 1914. Born Wicklow. Grangegorman Military Cemetery.

William Patrick Kehoe, 1390, Private, 4th Batt., Australian Infantry. Died of wounds, 5 November 1916, France, age 25, Son of John and Anne Kehoe, Dunbur, Wicklow. St. Sever Cemetery extension, Rouen.

Patrick Kelly, 11056, Private, 1st Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, Gallipoli, 30 April 1915. Born Barndarrig, age 22, son of Peter and Bridget Kelly of Kilmurry. Helles Memorial.

Timothy Kelly, 4581, Lance-Corporal, 6th Leinsters; died at Salonica, 13 July 1916. Born Wicklow, age 40. Husband of Elizabeth Kelly, Upper Monkton Row, Wicklow. Father of infant Julia Anne Kelly. Salonica Military Cemetery.
Charles Kennedy, 7382, Private, 1st Batt., Irish Guards; killed in action, France, 28 June 1916. Born Wicklow. Essex Farm Cemetery.

Michael Kennedy, 20251, Private, 2nd Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, France, 23 October 1916. Born Rathnew, age 19, son of Mary Kennedy. Thiepval Memorial.

Simon Kenny, 8070, Lance-Corporal, 2nd Regiment, South African Infantry; killed in action, France, July 1917. Born Wicklow, age 32.

Peter Lawless, 25013, Private, 9th Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, France, 9 September 1916. Born Wicklow, age 20. Thiepval Memorial.

Robert Lee, 9111, Sergeant, 2nd Batt., Royal Irish Rifles; killed in action, France, 27 October 1914. Born Wicklow. Le Touret Memorial.

William Lemathy, 8640, Private, 2nd Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, France, 23 October 1916. Born Ashford, age 23, son of John and Jane Lemathy (nee Faulkner). Thiepval.

George Lewis, 8313, Private, 2nd Batt., Irish Guards; killed in action, France, 15 September 1916. Born Wicklow, age 22. Thiepval Cemetery.

Michael McEvoy, 11428, Private, 2nd Batt., R.D.F.; killed in action, near Ypres, 26 April 1915, age 20. Son of Peter and Elizabeth McEvoy, 3

Castle Street, Wicklow. Ypres Menin Gate Memorial.

John Maguire, s/4182, Private, 8th Service Batt., The Black Watch; killed in action, France, 12 May 1916. Born Wicklow..

Patrick Mahon, 8754, Private, 2nd Batt., R.D.F.; died, France, 31 July 1915. Born Wicklow.

Patrick Malone, 350, Private, 2nd Leinsters; killed in action, France, 29 March 1916. Born Wicklow, age 41. Son of Mary Byrne (formerly Malone) and the late Thomas Malone of Pound Street, Wicklow. Berks Cemetery Extension, Armentieres.

Edward Marah, 119034, Private, Labour Corps (formerly R.D.F.); died, France, 2 March 1918. Born Rathnew. Rathnew Cemetery.

Christopher Martin, 11782, Private, 1st Batt., Irish Guards; killed in action, France, 27 August 1918. Born Ashford. Son of Arthur and Margaret Martin of Ballyvolan, Newcastle. Cemetery: Mory Abbey Military Cemetery, Berkshire.

Patrick Mates, 25218, Private, 8th Batt., Royal Iniskilling Fusiliers; killed in action, France, 15 July, 1916. Born Barndarrig, age 24. Son of John and Annie Mates of Barndarrig. Cemetery: Cabaret-rouge, British Cemetery, Souchez near Doau, north-western France.

This article first appeared in *The Wicklow Historical Society Journal* 2010.



From Irish War Memorials
www.irishwarmemorials.ie

Recorded by Michael Pegum & Vincent Pippet members of
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

Commissions from the ranks of the RDF during the First World War, a point on the learning curve.

Tom Burke

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

One feature that indicates a process of learning from experience within an infantry battalion is the promotion of men from the ranks to commissions. During the First World War, particularly in 1917, men from the ranks received temporary commissions that lasted until the end of the war. The Medal Rolls of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers record the name, rank and battalion from which a man was offered a chance of a commission, and, the length of time he spent in the ranks prior to his appointment to a cadet course. An analysis of these rolls presented some interesting findings. The total number of men commissioned from within the ranks of the RDF between the year 1914 and 1918 was 311. (1) The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 indicates that more men, both Privates and Sergeants, were commissioned from the ranks of the 7th and 10th RDF Service Battalions than any other battalions in the regiment, particularly the 1st and 2nd Regular Battalions. Moreover the analysis suggests there was a specific period of time a man spent in the ranks before being offered a cadetship. This paper will attempt to explain why men were favoured with promotions from these two particular Service Battalions and what implications these promotions had on the learning process the regiment as a whole underwent during the war.

According to the British War and Victory Medal Rolls, the total number of men of Other Ranks who served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the First World War was 13,406 (2) The total number of officers who served with the regiment and were entitled to the British War and Victory Medals was 827. Based on a figure of 311 other ranks commissioned, this would imply that 38% of the RDF officers were commissioned from the ranks during the war. (3) Table 1 presents the breakdown of Other Ranks who received commissions in the RDF between the years 1914 and 1918. Table 2 lists the RDF battalions from which these Other Ranks were commissioned for the same period. As can be seen from Table 1, the highest number of Other Ranks commissioned came from the rank of Private, which was 162 out of 311.

The second highest number to be commissioned came from the ranks of the Sergeants, being 97 out of 311.

In terms of Privates commissioned, refer to Table 2. Out of the total number of 162, some 102 Privates came from within the ranks of the 7th RDF out of their total of 149 men commissioned. The second highest battalion from which Privates were commissioned was from the 10th RDF, being a total 37 out of their total of 72 men commissioned. Despite the fact that the men from the two regular RDF battalions, namely the 1st and 2nd RDF, were considered to be professional soldiers and supposedly with far more training and experience of soldiering than their Service Battalion comrades, only seven Privates from the 1st RDF and five Privates from the 2nd RDF received commissions from their ranks. The brother battalion of the 7th RDF was the 6th RDF. This battalion had only three of its Privates commissioned from their ranks.

Table 3 presents the breakdown of Sergeants who received commissions between the years 1914 and 1918. The promotion of Sergeants from the 7th and 10th RDF Battalions seems to repeat the trend of the promotion of Privates to commissions from these two battalions. Overall, the data presented in Tables 2 and 3 would suggest that the qualifications to receive a commission or those who possessed officer material, was abundant in the 7th RDF and 10th RDF Battalions, both of which were Service Battalions of the RDF, and perhaps conversely true about the 1st and 2nd Regular Battalions and indeed the 6th, 8th and 9th Service Battalions. The data seems to concur with Lieut. O.L Beater's assessment of the standard of NCOs he experienced in his 9th RDF in November 1916. 'Our great want now as always is the lack of NCOs. Those we have are a fairly hopeless lot and let one down on every possible occasion.' (4)

There are several possible related reasons as to why the 1st and 2nd RDF showed a poor record of promotions from the Private ranks to commissions. The first reason I would suggest paradoxically might lie in the explanation as to why there was so high a number of Privates commissioned from the 7th and 10th RDF Battalions. The answer might simply be found in the social class contrast between the pre-war recruits of the 1st and 2nd RDF, and, recruits of the 7th and 10th RDF.

The exclusion of Privates from commissions was nothing new in the pre-war British army. Only 2% of all regular officers commissioned in 1913 were directly from the ranks. (5) Commandant De Thomasson was a French military observer at the Army exercise of 1913. He commented on the fact that there were so few men commissioned from the ranks in his report written in *The Army Review* in January 1914. In a class related reality, he essentially believed that N.C.O's could not afford the financial demands on becoming an officer. (6)

The number of commissions reserved in the British Army for officers prompted from the ranks has been, up to the present (January 1914), very small, and the principal reason is the impossibility of an officer living on his pay. Parliament has taken notice of this situation, and the Under-Secretary of State for War has taken up the question of increasing the allowances of N.C.O's promoted to officers' rank, and, at the same time, of reducing the expenses of officers.

Apart from showing bravery and a notion of leadership skills, the fundamental qualification for officer cadetship from the ranks was that a man must be able to read, write and perform basic mathematical calculations, a gift that many of the pre-war recruits lacked. In their social study of the British Army of the First World War, Beckett and Simpson refer to the relationship between class and rank in the army and the implicit barriers that prevented Privates from becoming commissioned officers. (7)

Before the First World War the officer class was characterised by its social and financial exclusiveness. By 1914 the overwhelming majority of candidates for a commission in the regular army were products of the public schools. Attendance at and passage through a recognised public school met the army's requirements in educational and social terms for a potential officer. Neither Sandhurst nor Woolwich 'taught' leadership. It was assumed that by the time a candidate reached either of these two institutions, or alternatively went directly to his regiment, he had already acquired the necessary social and oral qualities thought necessary for an officer and a gentleman and thus a military leader...As far as the officer class was concerned it was almost impossible for

someone who had not been through this system to become an officer and a gentleman. An exclusive social and educational background, the gentlemanly ethos, a commitment to country pursuits, loyalty to institutions, self confidence and physical courage were the qualities required, and they were almost totally associated with select areas of the middle class and definitely the upper class. Regular soldiers were almost entirely recruited from the working and lower middle classes and thus regarded by the officers as demonstrably lacking in the most important qualities of an officer and a gentleman. Furthermore, it was the belief of most officers that soldiers preferred to be officered by gentlemen rather than by those of their own class whatever their narrow technical and educational abilities. Thus it was not simply a question of social snobbery or financial exclusiveness which restricted the number of officers commissioned from the ranks to insignificance, but a widely held view on the part of the officer class about the qualities required in an officer.

The Inns of Court Officer Training Corps whose depot was at Lincoln's Inn, London, trained young upper-class gentlemen at Berkhamsted to become officers during the war. Their Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Col. Francis H. L. Errington, noted in his history of the Corps for the period between January and September 1916: 'That we all, officers, N.C.O's and men, were of the same class was in itself an enormous asset; once placed men with lower standards in authority, and corruption and various other evils are simply bound to ensue.' (8) By 1917, to some extent that attitude had still prevailed in the army. Captain W.T. Coyer originally of the 2nd RDF had been sent as an instructor to the IX Corps School at Berthen in France just south of Poperinghe in Flanders. He had come across men who had been commissioned from the ranks that he referred to as ranker officers. He still experienced some class, or as he termed it caste prejudice against the ranker officers, but he was very positive on the concept and expressed great respect for their ability and experience. He believed they were a source of tremendous strength of the army. (9)

There has been many dubious head shaking as to the wisdom of making ranker officers. Conservatives say non-commissioned rank is one thing and commissioned rank is another and the two should be kept severely apart: and they go on to murmur something vaguely about 'caste'. It may have been a dangerous policy, employed under stress of necessity, but as far as I could see it proved remarkably successful. I came into contact with many ranker officers, and never once did I think a failure. Ranker-officers with their steady discipline and respect for seniority, plus their competency which gained them their promotion to commissioned rank, were a source of tremendous strength of the army. To a large extent they made up for the deficiencies of those of the younger brand of officers, who jumped straight from shop clothes into Sam Brownes without either competency or caste.

Naturally an ability to lead and have battle experience would be a bonus when applying for a cadetship but in pre-war Other Ranks such experience would have been limited for most men. However by 1917 that experience factor would change and it would be reflected in the number of commissions from the ranks despite the prejudice of 'caste' expressed by 'conservatives' noted by Captain Coyer in his papers. Both the 7th and 10th RDF Battalions were recruited exclusively as Pals Battalions. In his book titled *The Pals at Suvla Bay*, Henry Hanna described the 'class' of men who enlisted into the 7th RDF, more specifically into 'D' Company. His description of the Dublin Pals certainly fitted into Beckett and Simpson's stereotypical model of a pre-war potential officer let alone a Dublin Pals Private. (10)

Barristers, doctors, solicitors, stockbrokers, bankers, medical students, engineering students, art students, business men who had responsible positions, civil servants, insurance agents and many others of a similar class – the best that Dublin city could give, and nearly all of them well known in its public and social life.

Table 7 is a list of five men who enlisted soon after the outbreak of war in 1914 at the rank of Privates into the 7th RDF and were commissioned in 1917. Their pre-war occupation fits into Hanna's depiction of 7th RDF recruits.

Robert Kee from Welshtown Co. Donegal was a Divinity Student at Trinity College Dublin. (11) James McCarthy gave his occupation on enlistment as a Bank Clerk. (12) Sydney Darling from Clonmellon, Co. Meath was a schoolteacher. (13) Frank Howden from Carriglas, Co. Longford also enlisted as a Clerk. (14) David Karney from Rathmines in Dublin enlisted as a Banker who worked in the Bank of Ireland in Dublin. (15) Finally there was Lance Corporal William Percy Butler from York Road in Kingstown, Co. Dublin. He too was a Clerk with the Bank of Ireland.

Butler enlisted into the 10th RDF in February 1916 and served with the battalion during the Easter Rising in Dublin. (16) By the time they were eventually commissioned, some of these men had come up through the ranks and were promoted to various ranks of the non-commissioned officer. By the time he applied for a commission, William Kee had been promoted to a Company Sergeant Major in the 7th RDF and had come through the tough fighting at Suvla Bay and the climatic harshness of Salonica. On 14 September 1915, the day Kee was put forward for a commission, seventeen of his comrades from the 7th RDF had also been put forward for commissions on the same sheet. (17) Sergeant Kee was well known in the ranks of the 7th RDF. He was the Sergeant in charge of No. 13 Platoon in 'D' Company and according to a comrade of his named Cecil Gunning, Kee was 'physically very tough.' Kee was commissioned and became a Captain in the 1st RDF. Gunning believed that despite his toughness, Key was 'impetuous... I am told that he was killed in France from that very failing.' (18) Captain William Kee MC was killed on 23 March 1918 during the German offensive. (19)

To counter the reluctance of the Irish middle class to enlist, authority was given in 1915 to raise two 'Commercial' battalions of the RDF, the 10th and 11th. The recruiting leaflet for the 10th RDF declared. 'For many months the press and public have been saying that shop assistants, clerks etc. have been 'slack' and that very few of their vast numbers have joined the colours.' The recruiting enticement into the 10th RDF was similar to that used to recruit young men into the 7th RDF, exclusivity, a cut above the rest. The battalion, appealing to the supposed snobbery of such men, just like the 7th RDF recruits, would be 'exclusively reserved for bank clerks, solicitors, clerks, civil servants, shop assistants, engineers,

mechanics and others of similar position.’ The 10th RDF ‘Pals’ would have their own gentleman’s club in the fashionable Grafton Street, and ‘friends joining together will be allowed to remain together.’ The 11th RDF never saw service overseas. (20) A recruitment notice that appeared in *The Irish Times* of 30 October 1915 encouraged men to join any Irish regiment. For those wishing to join the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, they could join the battalions numbered from one to nine. However, the 10th RDF was exclusively singled out as being the ‘10th or Scholars Battalion’ for ‘professional men and clerical workers.’ (21) Not only were their recruits educated, they were also young. The average age of the recruit to the 10th RDF was between nineteen and twenty-one. (22) Thomas Fitzgerald Ryan from 11 St. Vincent Street, Berkley Road, Dublin was a typical recruit to the 10th RDF who fulfilled all the recruitment criteria. Thomas was a Bank Official at the Hibernian Bank and in January 1916 at the age of nineteen he joined the 10th RDF. (23)

The depletion of pre-war Privates in the ranks may also have contributed to the low numbers who received commissions from the 1st and 2nd RDF Battalions. It must be remembered that both these battalions suffered appalling casualties in all ranks in some of the most famous battles that took place between 1914 and 1916. The original 2nd RDF (10th Brigade, 4th Division, BEF) was practically lost from battle and POWs at Le Cateau in August 1914 and later at Mouse Trap Farm (Ypres) in April and May of 1915. During the same months, the 1st RDF also suffered heavy casualties at Gallipoli. Casualties to both battalions on the Somme in July 1916 were less than what they had suffered in 1915. Table 5 presents the death casualties of both the 1st and 2nd RDF Battalions incurred between the years 1914 and 1916. These were the minimum losses because they do not take into account those men who were taken prisoner or who were wounded in action at consequently lost to the battalions. The average strength of a battalion during those years was approximately 1,000 officers and men of other ranks. The 2nd RDF went to war in August 1914 with twenty-two Officers, six Warrant Officers, fifty-seven Sergeants and Lance-Sergeants, seventy Lance Corporals, nine Drummers and 881 Privates, making a total of 1,045 men. (24) It would seem that in 1914 and 1915 both 1st and 2nd RDF Battalions lost over half their strength in combat.

Although the Privates from the 1st and 2nd RDF Battalions might have been as brave and displayed as much leadership as their comrades in the 7th and 10th RDF Battalions, and although their losses were high, I would suggest that ultimately the barrier of class and education as presented by Beckett and Simpson was the reason why so many of the 7th and 10th RDF Privates received commissions and so few of the 1st and 2nd RDF Privates did not.

As stated, the promotion of sergeants from the 7th and 10th RDF Battalions seems to repeat the trend of the promotion of Privates to commissions from these same two battalions. Why were so many sergeants from the 7th and 10th RDF Battalions commissioned when compared with the 1st and 2nd RDF Battalions? (See Tables 3 and 3a.) I would suggest only one reason for this occurrence and that is the loss of sergeants in battle from the 1st and 2nd RDF Battalions. In August 1914, the 2nd RDF entered the war with fifty-seven sergeants. (25) In April 1915, the 1st RDF entered the war with fifty-three sergeants. (26) The combined sergeant count between 1st and 2nd RDF at their entry into the war was 110. The loss of sergeants from 1st and 2nd RDF between 1914 and 1916, excluding those who were injured, was seventy-five which amounted to a loss of 68%. (27) If one included the sergeants who were taken out of the battalions due to injury incurred during that period, the loss would be well over 70%. A direct consequence of these losses was the diminishing of the pool of potential officer material from amongst the rank of sergeants.

The loss of these sergeants was a particular loss of the battalion’s middle management and their most experienced men. These men had to be replaced from within or without the RDF battalions, normally from ranks below sergeant, thus further reducing the chances of a man receiving a commission to the officer corps.

There was another consequence of the losses of these experienced men. At a crucial stage in the war, that is the period up to 1916 during the training of the volunteer armies, their loss removed from the RDF battalions and army in general a pool of potential instructors whose experience and knowledge of battle would have been invaluable in the training of new recruits. Their loss consequently slowed down the learning process of the army’s infantry battalions.

However despite the slow down, the process of learning and reward for initiative did progress through the war as can be seen from the trend of promotions from the ranks shown in Table 4 and Figure 1. The later shows that commissions from the Other Ranks of the RDF grew with time and peaked in 1917. It was the year in which the majority of Other Rankers had come of age in terms of being commissioned. These men had gained hard earned experience between the years 1914 and 1917 and the battalions were therefore ripe with men who were officer material and ready for the job. As learning and experience grew, so too did the number of men commissioned from the ranks. Each of the men listed in Table 7 had come up through the ranks gaining experience and learned their skills over a period of two years before they were commissioned. By the end of the war, 38% of the RDF officers had come up through the ranks of the regiment and had passed on that learning and experience to whatever units they were posted.

Regarding the falloff in commissions between 1917 and 1918, there are several possible reasons for this occurrence. The pool from which these potential officers was drawn was diminishing with the disbandment of some of the RDF Service Battalions; the casualty rate among NCOs also reduced the pool; the influx of new recruits with little or no experience who would not be officer material for between 500 or 600 days from the day they enlisted. It is possible that the curve in Figure 1 was, in fact, cyclical and that the new recruits coming into the ranks of the 1st and 2nd RDF in 1918 would, after 500-600 days, be sufficiently experienced for commissions had the war lasted into 1919. This, in turn, would cause the curve to rise again and resume the cycle. However, in November 1918, the Armistice brought an end to that cycle. For all the men who obtained a commission from the ranks, there was a time period in which they served in the ranks before they were offered a cadetship to a commission. This apprenticeship varied and because it was mainly dependent on the individual soldier's ability to become an officer, one cannot put a fixed time on this learning period and as can be seen from Figure 2, it did vary. Refer to Table 6 and Fig 2. However, there does seem to be a trend. It would seem that the majority of commissions were awarded to men who had served between 600 and 700, and, between 700 and 800, or collectively between 600 and 800 days in the ranks, the latter

being a little over two years. Indeed with the exception of William Kee, the examples of the Other Ranks listed in Table 5 all fall within this learning period. The data would suggest that on average the time period for a man to serve in the ranks before being offered the chance of a commission was a little over two years. The data represented in Fig. 2 would indicate that there was no specific statutory time a man had to spend in the ranks before being offered a commission. It would seem that the promotion system had engineered its own internal time scale of two years before the offer of a commission, which was obviously based on a man's experience and ability to lead and not perhaps as was before the war, on whom he knew in the army or what level of class he came from. Moreover, the figures would lend weight to this argument since the percentage of Other Ranks commissioned grew from a pre-war level of only 2% to an end of war figure of 38%, the later figure being that of a single infantry battalion, the RDF. This feature of the promotions system evolved during the war and was perhaps another indicator of a learning process that the army underwent.



RDF soldiers in Gravesend in 1914.

In conclusion.

Using the Medal Rolls of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers as a primary source, and based on a numerical analysis of the men promoted from the ranks to a commission, it is clear that the majority of men commissioned from the ranks of the RDF during the First World War came from the rank of Private in the 7th and 10th Service Battalions and not, as might be expected, from the ranks of the 1st and 2nd Regular Battalions.

Although the losses in battle of the Private ranks were high, such losses would not have been a major cause for the low numbers of Privates commissioned from the 1st and 2nd RDF. Losses were replaced. Since the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic obtained through education were fundamental requirements for an officer cadetship, and since education was directly linked to class level in pre-war society, the data would indicate that these qualifications were more abundant in the recruits of 7th and 10th RDF Pals type battalions than they were in the recruits of the 1st and 2nd Regular Battalions. Initially anyway it was the class divide in society that was the main barrier which prevented Privates of the 1st and 2nd RDF from becoming officers.

Indirectly, these promotion statistics might well be an indicator of the class and social divide from which these sets of battalions came. The 7th and 10th RDF Pals battalions coming from the educated class of society as the recruiting posters wanted compared with the pre-war less educated poorer class from where the Privates of the 1st and 2nd RDF Battalions came. And yet despite the hindrance of class, some 38% of the RDF's officer corps had come from the ranks by the end of the war and to some extent experience overcame class and privilege in the selection of potential officers from the ranks.

The loss of approximately 70% of the pre-war regular sergeants from the 1st and 2nd RDF had a huge influence on the number of sergeants promoted to commissions. Simply put, post-Somme 1916 there were few pre-war regular battalion sergeants available for commissions.

There were further implications with the loss of these regular sergeants. Their loss diminished the day-to-day middle management operation of the battalions and removed a cadre of valuable

potential instructors who could have passed on their experience of battle to the recruits coming into the volunteer battalions of Kitchener's new divisions. Their loss was a setback to the learning process. Perhaps as evidence of that learning process, the number of RDF Other Ranks promoted throughout the war increased and peaked in 1917. Moreover, there was an apprenticeship of about two years before most RDF Other Ranks received the offer of a cadetship. It was the experience and leadership of these men promoted from the ranks men, who following a period of learning, eventually contributed to the winning of the war.

Table 1.**Ranks from which RDF Other Ranks were commissioned.**

Rank	Number of Other Ranks
Privates	162
Lance Corporals	18
Corporals	34
Lance Sergeants	4
Sergeants	93
Total	311

Table 2.**RDF battalions from which Other Ranks were commissioned.**

RDF Battalion	Number of all Other Ranks	Number of all Privates
1 st	35	7
2 nd	18	6
3 rd	1	0
6 th	10	2
7 th	149	102
8 th	13	1
9 th	6	2
10 th	72	37
Unknown	7	5
Total	311	162

Table 3.**RDF Sergeants commissioned.**

Battalion	L/Sgt	Sgt	CQMS	QMS	RQMS	CSM	RSM	Totals
1st	1	9	1	1	0	7	2	21
2nd	0	1	0	2	0	8	1	12
3rd	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
6th	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	5
7th	2	18	2	0	0	1	1	24
8th	1	7	0	0	0	0	0	8
9th	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	4
10th	0	21	0	0	0	0	0	21
No data	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	4	61	5	5	1	16	5	97

Table 3 a.
Sergeants.

RDF Battalion	Sub rank of Sergeant
Lance Sergeants	4
Sergeants	61
Quartermaster Sergeant	5
Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant	1
Company Quartermaster Sergeant	5
Company Sergeant Major	16
Regimental Sergeant Major	3
Sergeant Major	2
Total	97

Table 4.
Year in which RDF Other Ranks were commissioned.

Year discharged to commission	Number of all Other Ranks
1914	1
1915	28
1916	37
1917	61
1918	23
1919	2
Total	153

Note. Out of a total number of 311 Other Ranks commissioned, at the moment there are 153 men whose year of discharge to commission is known to author. Further research is being carried out on the balance of 158.

Figure 1.
Relationship between the number of RDF Other Ranks commissioned and the year of their commission

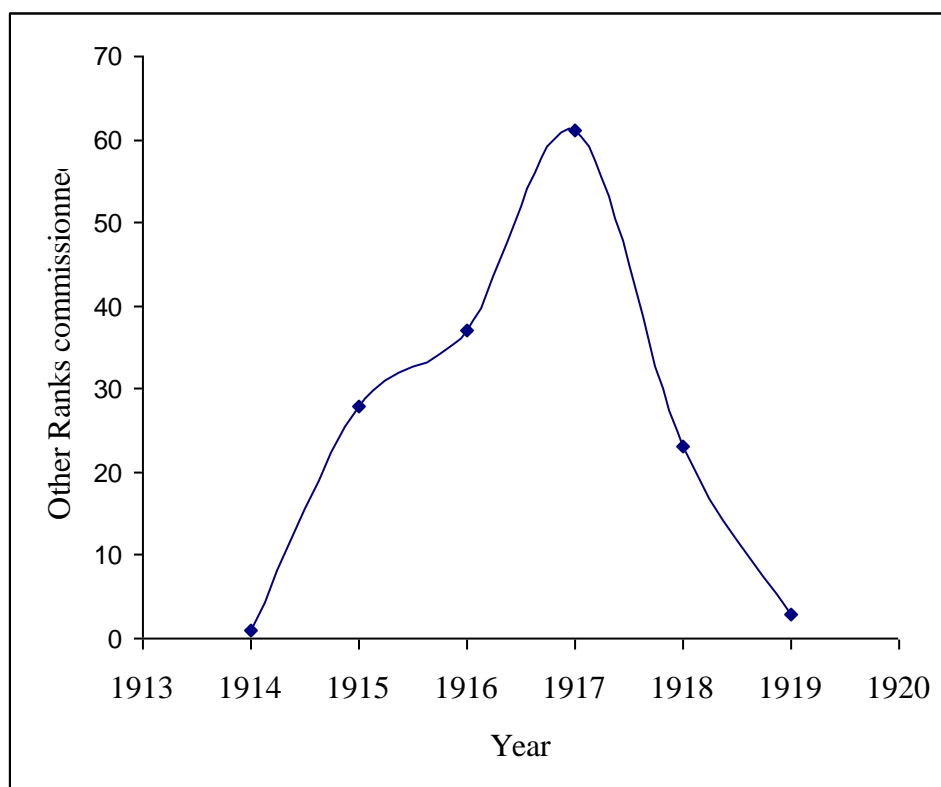


Table 5.
**1st and 2nd RDF Battalion's casualties both KIA and DOW
between years 1914 and 1916 inclusive.**

Battalion	1914	1915	1916
1 st	4	588	148
2 nd	462	551	214
Totals	466	1139	362

Table 6.
Time spent as Other Rank

Time spent as Other Rank before being commissioned (Days)	Number of Other Ranks
Between 0 and 100	20
100 and 200	16
200 and 300	4
300 and 400	13
400 and 500	13
500 and 600	14
600 and 700	21
700 and 800	20
800 and 900	8
900 and 1000	14
1000 and 1100	7
1100 and 1200	0
1200 and 1300	0
1300 and 1400	0
1400 and 1500	0
1500 and 1600	2
1600 and 1700	1
Total	153

Figure 2
Time spent as Other Rank in days before being commissioned.

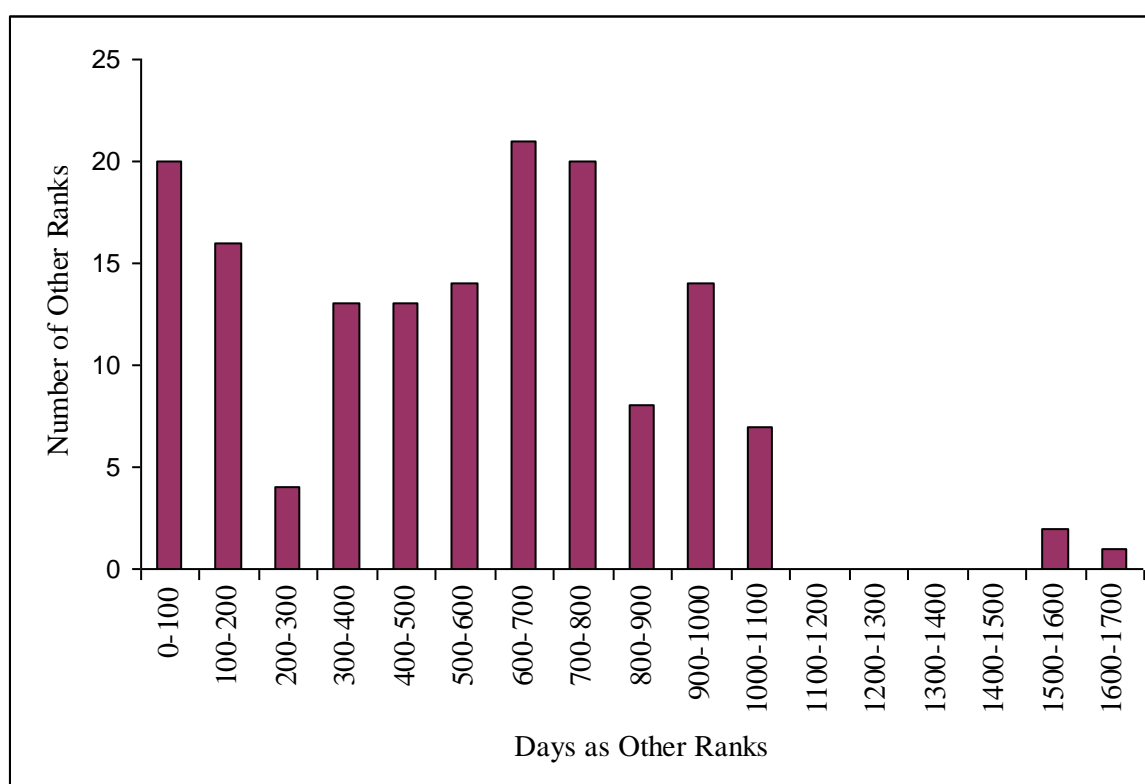


Table 7 Sample of RDF men commissioned from the Other Ranks.

Name	William Kee	James P McCarthy	Sydney Darling	Frank Howden	David Karney
Battalion of RDF enlisted into	7 th RDF	7 th RDF	7 th RDF	7 th RDF attached to 1 st RDF	7 th RDF attached to 2 nd RDF
Date of enlistment	14 September 1914	14 September 1914	3 October 1914	27 October 1914	16 December 1914
Place of enlistment	No details (Curragh)	Curragh	Curragh	Curragh	Ballinasloe
Age on enlistment	23	19	25	20	27
Previous Military Training	Trinity College Dublin O.T.C	None	None	None	None
Rank before application	Co. Sgt. Major	Private	Sergeant	Pte	L/Cpl
Date of application to Cadet	30 August 1915	7 October 1916	6 March 1916	19 January 1917	4 January 1917
Date of appointment to Cadet School	14 September 1915	9 March 1917	29 December 1916	30 May 1917	5 May 1917
Time as Other Rank	365	543	780	947	872
Cadet School	Not stated	No. 21 Crookham	No.7 Fermoy	No.5 Cambridge	No.7 Fermoy
Date completed training	Not stated	26 June 1917	24 April 1917	25 September 1917	28 August 1917
Time in training	Unknown	110	117	118	116
Date arrived at battalion as officer	Before 10 November 1916	1 st RDF			2 nd RDF
Survived or KIA/DOW	KIA 24 March 1918	Survived - POW	Survived	DOW 30 March 1918	KIA 21 March 1918
TNA Kew File Reference	WO 339 / 44286	WO 339 - 96957	WO 339 – 82266	WO 339 – 109149	WO 339 – 85344

References

1. Medal Rolls British War and Victory Royal Dublin Fusiliers – Other Ranks – The National Archives WO329/1709-1712.
2. Ibid.
3. Medal Rolls British War and Victory Royal Dublin Fusiliers – Officers -TNA WO329/2259.
4. Papers of Captain O.L.Beater DFC. Imperial War Museum, London. Reference - 3385-86/65/1.
5. Beckett, Ian and Simpson, Keith. *A Nation at Arms-A social study of the British Army in the First World War*. Manchester University Press, Manchester,1985,p64
6. De Thomasson, *The British Army Exercise of 1913* in The Army Review Vol.6, January 1914, p153.
7. Ibid. p65
8. Errington. Lieut.-Col. F.H.L. *Inns of Court Training Corps During The Great War*. Printed and Published by Antony Rowe Ltd, Eastbourne. Reprinted by The Naval and Military Press ISBN 1-84342-139-9. p28
9. Private papers of Capt. W.T. Coyler, 2nd RDF. Imperial War Museum, reference 76/51/1.
10. Hanna, Henry. *The Pals at Suvla Bay*. E. Ponsonby Ltd, 116 Grafton Street, Dublin. 1916. p17
11. File of Robert Kee. TNA WO 339/44286.
12. File of James McCarthy. TNA WO 339/96957.
13. File of Sydney Darling. TNA WO 339/82266.
14. File of Frank Howden. TNA WO 339/109149.
15. File of David Karney. TNA WO 339/85344.
16. Hennessy, Thomas, *The Great War 1914/1918 Bank of Ireland Staff. Service Record*. Printed by Alex Thom and Co. Ltd, Dublin , 1920. Note. Butler was wounded in action near Gavrelle in France and died at No. 19 Casualty Clearing Station on 24 April 1917.
17. File of Robert Kee. TNA WO 339 / 44286
18. Diary of Frank and Cecil Gunning in possession of author. Cecil's diary p8.
19. *Soldiers Died In the Great War 1914-1919*. Part 73. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. HMSO, London, 1921.
20. Denman. T. *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War*. Irish Academic Press. Dublin. 1992.pp134-135.
21. *The Irish Times*, 30 October 1915.
22. *The Blue Cap*- Journal of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, Vol. 7. 2000. pp 14 to 22.
23. Family papers in possession of author.
24. Wyly,C.B. Col. *Crown and Company The Historical Records of the 2nd Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers*. p14.
25. Wyly,C.B. Col. *Crown and Company The Historical Records of the 2nd Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers*. Vol.II, Schull Books, Cork,2000. p14.
26. Medal Rolls British The 1914 / 1915 Star Royal Dublin Fusiliers – Other Ranks - TNA WO329/2818.
27. *Soldiers Died In the Great War 1914-1919*. CD Published by Naval and Military Press Ltd. UK. Version 1.1 1998.

Bibliography

The National Archives, Kew, London

The Medal Rolls of the RDF

The 1914 / 1915 Star-RDF Other Ranks - Reference - WO329/ 2818
 British War and Victory- RDF Other Ranks - Reference - WO329/1709-1712
 British War and Victory-RDF Officers - Reference - WO329/2259

Officer's Files

Robert Kee. WO 339/44286.
 James McCarthy. WO 339/96957
 Sydney Darling. WO 339/82266
 Frank Howden. WO 339/109149
 David Karney. WO 339/85344

Imperial War Museum, London

Papers of Captain O.L.Beater DFC. Imperial War Museum, London. Reference - 3385-86/65/1.
 Papers of Capt. W.T. Coyley, 2nd RDF. Imperial War Museum, London. Reference -7526-76/51/1.

Publications

Beckett, Ian and Simpson, Keith. *A Nation at Arms-A social study of the British Army in the First World War*. Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1985.
 Denman. T. *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War*. Irish Academic Press. Dublin. 1992.
 Errington. Lieut.-Col. F.H.L. *Inns of Court Training Corps During The Great War*. Printed and Published by Antony Rowe Ltd, Eastbourne. Reprinted by The Naval and Military Press ISBN 1-84342-139-9.
 Hanna, Henry. *The Pals at Suvla Bay*. E. Ponsonby Ltd, 116 Grafton Street, Dublin. 1916. p17
 Hennessy, Thomas, *The Great War 19141918 Bank of Ireland Staff. Service Record*. Printed by Alex Thom and Co. Ltd, Dublin , 1920.
 Wyly,C.B. Col. *Crown and Company The Historical Records of the 2nd Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers*. Vol.II, Schull Books, Cork,2000.
Soldiers Died In the Great War 1914-1919. Part 73. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. HMSO, London, 1921.

Newspapers

The Irish Times, 30 October 1915

Journals

The Blue Cap- Journal of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, Vol. 7. 2000.
The Army Review Vol.6, January 1914

RDFA Archive, Dublin

Diary of Frank and Cecil Gunning.

My Great-uncle Ernest Jarvis, the reluctant soldier.

Chris Weeks

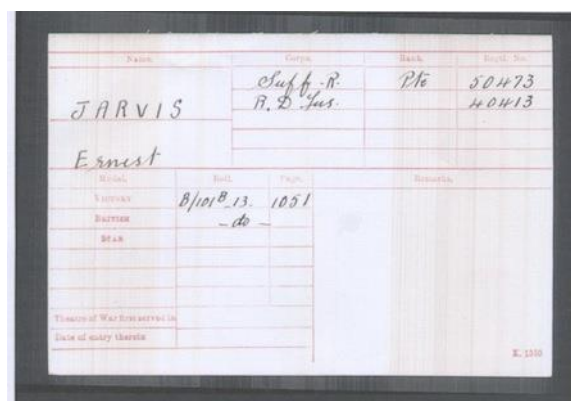
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

My grandmother, Winifred Jarvis, was born into the extended Jarvis family of Wood Farm, Felsted, Essex, in 1902. She had four brothers - Albert, Ernest, Stanley and Percy. Albert emigrated to Canada at the age of fourteen before my grandmother was born whilst Stanley and Percy were too young to be called up for military service during WW1. Ernest was the second oldest in the Jarvis family, having been born in 1880. When the war came in August 1914, Ernest had moved from farm life to live in the county town Chelmsford, working in the local store of Luckin Smiths. From my grandmother's description of Ernest, it seems that he was not cut out for the physical exertions of farm life preferring to live and work in a town. Unlike his cousins in the Jarvis and Livermore families, Ernest had not reacted to his country's call to arms in 1914 and in fact he told his sister Winifred that he did not want to go into the army. In January 1916 the Military Services Act brought in conscription as the numbers of volunteers began to dry up and thus it was that Ernest the reluctant soldier found himself in the Training Reserve.



Ernest before he enlisted

Regrettably his army service records do not exist, but the database of Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914 /1919 shows that he enlisted at Chelmsford and went into the training reserve as number 9342 and was likely to have been in the 10th (Reserve) Battalion based in Harwich. The same database shows that he died on 24 April 1917 whilst serving as Private 40413 in the 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. However, his medal index card shows that whilst he died serving with the RDF, he had also been in the Suffolk Regiment number 50473. Thus it appeared Ernest had initially joined a local regiment and at some point had been transferred to an Irish regiment in the 29th Infantry Division, famous for its involvement in the Gallipoli campaign.



Medal Index Card of Ernest Jarvis.

A visit to the National Archives at Kew Gardens enabled me to examine the Medal Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers which confirmed that Ernest Jarvis was Private 40413 and had previously been private 50473 in the 8th Battalion of the Suffolks. On the same page of this medal roll it showed a number of other men who had been in the 8th Suffolks and then transferred to the 1st RDF. Further researches into the Medal Roll showed that thirty-six men had transferred from the Suffolks to the RDF and there is a sequence of service numbers from 50468 to 50488 of the 2nd and 8th Battalions the Suffolk Regiment who became RDF men with service numbers from 40400 to 40420. My Great uncle was 40413. I will return to this link between the Suffolks and the Dublins at a later stage.

So exactly when did Ernest Jarvis, the reluctant soldier, go to France? The Suffolk Regiment records are held at the Public Records Office in Bury St. Edmunds. Whilst there are no lists of servicemen and no sequencing of service numbers,

information from a regimental expert suggests that Ernest joined the 8th Battalion Suffolks in May 1916 after his period in the Training Reserve and training in France possibly at the notorious Etaples National Archives Reference WO 95/2039, an entry for 28 May 1916 refers to forty-eight other ranks (ORs) joining the battalion. The 8th Suffolks were in the 53rd Brigade of the 18th (Eastern) Division under Ivor Maxse who proved himself to be one of the very best divisional and later corps commanders of WW1. The 18th Division was based around Carnoy and Bray in the southern part of the Somme sector leading up to the Battle of the Somme. On the fateful day of 1 July 1916 the 53rd Brigade was in reserve to the 55th and helped in the capture of Montauban Alley by carrying up water and supplies. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme, the 18th Division had 3,300 casualties. Ernest and the 8th Suffolks had been lucky not to be in the forefront of the attack.

The Somme continued with attacks and counter attacks. On 18 July, Ernest and his fellow Suffolks were involved in the task of trying to take Delville Wood. This was one of the many woods dotted about the battle zone and whose names have been attached to bloody fighting. Delville Wood has gone down in history as the scene of the massive slaughter involving the South African Brigade. That day, the 53rd Infantry Brigade was given the task of extricating the South Africans from their precarious position in the wood. The 8th Suffolks were set the objective of clearing the Germans out of Longueval village. They were involved in two days of intense fighting as the Germans refused to give any ground. The war diary tells us.

A company of 8th Suffolks did manage to relieve a detachment of South Africans on the edge of Delville Wood but by 4 30 pm on July 19th owing to severe losses from both shell and machine gun fire, the attack failed in its entirety and the men were not in a position to make a further assault.

By 6:00 a.m. on 21 July, the 8th Suffolks had been relieved by the 4th Royal Fusiliers and were out of the battle zone. See Map



Southern sector Battle of the Somme 1916.

For Ernest and the others, August brought a respite from the horrors of the Somme as they rested and trained in the Armentieres area waiting for their next task. This turned out to be the attack on Thiepval, the fortified village that had withstood numerous efforts to take it from the early part of the war. On 1 July 1916, the 36th (Ulster) Division had almost taken it but had to withdraw because of a lack of support on its flanks. A testimony to their sacrifice is shown by the many cemeteries around the area and to the Ulster Tower standing near to their attack position. It is no coincidence that the place chosen for the Memorial to the Missing of the Somme should be Thiepval as it dominates the surrounding rolling countryside.



Delville Wood and Longueval village today

In late September, the 18th Division practised for the attack at Varennes southeast of Thiepval where the whole trench system had been reconstructed. See map of Thiepval Sector.



Battle of the Somme Thiepval Sector 1916.

As the 18th Divisional history tells us, the preparation for the battle was extremely thorough. Officers were carried by a fleet of buses to the area to familiarize themselves with the terrain. The trench systems were completely renovated by the Engineers and the Royal Sussex Pioneers who dug new assembly trenches for the 53rd and 54th attacking brigades. All this work was done on four nights before the attack scheduled for 26th September. General Maxse was a perfectionist and his doctrine was “Without proper preparation the bravest troops fail and their heroism is wasted.” This doctrine was much appreciated by his men but not always followed by his fellow generals of WW1. The 8th battalion Suffolk war diary provides a very detailed account of the Thiepval battle and its preparations:

The 18th division attack to be carried out by the 53rd brigade with the 8th Suffolks on the right and the 10th Essex on the left. Every rifleman to carry 170 rounds into battle with haversack, tools, water bottle and two days' rations.

The Corps attack was carried out by the 11th and 18th Divisions. The 18th was on the left and the 8th Suffolks were in the forefront. Zero Hour was scheduled for 12:35 p.m. on 26 September 1916 and not the usual dawn attack. The attack was preceded by three days of artillery barrage using 105,000 rounds including gas. The Suffloks were given the objective of taking the Schwaben Redoubt which was heavily fortified and had with stood the 1 July bombardment. Interestingly Thiepval had been garrisoned by the same German regiment since 1914, the 180th Regiment of Wurtembergers, survivors of the original 1914 German army.

At first the Suffolks reached the objective without casualties and 27 September was spent in consolidation. On the 28 September the Corps attacked the Schwaben Redoubt with the 8th Suffolks the only regiment from the 53rd brigade strong enough in numbers to be used. By 2.30 p.m. On 28 September, the Suffolks had gained a foothold in the Schwaben Redoubt. The battle for the complex system of trenches went on, with bombing parties trying to knock out the nests of machine guns. All the regiments of the 18th Division were used to capture the Scwaben Redoubt and beyond.

Into October, the fierce hand-to-hand fighting continued and the shelling and incessant rain turned the whole landscape into the sea of mud so familiar to the soldiers of WW1. On 5 October, after the Schwaben Redoubt had been taken, the 18th Division was relieved by the 39th having suffered 1,990 casualties in eight days of extreme fighting. All the troops had performed well and General Maxse paid special tribute to the discipline, steadiness and fighting qualities of the 8th Suffolks. As the Suffolk's Regimental History noted. ‘It was perhaps its finest achievement of the war.’ Haig visited Maxse and expressed his appreciation.

Thiepval has withstood all attacks on it for exactly two years and it is a great honour to your division to have captured the whole of this strongly fortified village at the first attempt. Hearty congratulations to you all.



18th Division Memorial, Thiepval

Ernest survived the struggle for Thiepval although the 8th Battalion had lost 208 men, some of whom are buried nearby in the CWGC Mill Road cemetery which has the unusual feature of the grave stones being laid flat on the ground because

of the risk of subsidence caused by the many tunnels under that part of the old battle field.



CWGC Mill Road, Thiepval.

During October and November 1916, Ernest and the 8th Suffolks were stationed around Albert, in and out of the front line trenches in front of Regina trench. On 16 October, an attack on Regina Trench was postponed until 21 October and when it was eventually taken the 8th Suffolks had been withdrawn and took no further part in the battle of the Somme. The remainder of 1916 was spent in training around Hautvillers, north of Abbeville.

Ernest had been in France for seven months when, in December, he went back to the UK on leave and married Edith May Halls in Chelmsford. This is confirmed in the marriage records on Ancestry and the fact that my grandmother and Ernest's sister had memories of the wedding. It was during this time that he told his family just how much he hated being a soldier, reflecting the horrific things that he had been involved in and witnessed. Given that the normal period of leave was a week though there may have been extensions for marriages, we can assume that he had to return to the front sometime in January 1917.

However, like so many others in the later stages of the war, returning from leave meant a transfer to another unit. In Ernest's case he joined a very famous regiment of the British army, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. At the outbreak of the war in 1914, the 1st Battalion of the RDF was in Madras as part of the Indian army. On 19 November 1915 it sailed from Bombay to Plymouth, where it joined the 86th brigade of the 29th Division. This then sailed from Avonmouth to Alexandria and then landed at Helles on 25 April 1915 as part of the Dardenelles campaign. The casualties were so heavy that at one point it had to join up with the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers to form a battalion known

as The Dubsters. After being reconstituted as the 1st Battalion RDF, it left Gallipoli on 1 January 1916 arriving in Marseilles on 19 March 1916. It was then involved with the other regiments of the 86th brigade in day one of the Battle of the Somme, attacking Beaumont Hamel following the explosion of the Hawthorn Ridge mine and experiencing a high casualty rate. Part of the 29th Division was the Newfoundland regiment commemorated today at the Newfoundland Park Beaumont Hamel. Being an Irish regiment, the RDF had relied upon volunteers from the south of Ireland but after the initial burst of enthusiasm the number of volunteers failed to keep pace with the casualty rates. Ireland did not have conscription so that by 1917 many non-Irish soldiers had to be drafted into the Irish regiments. Thus Ernest Jarvis formerly Private 50473, 8th Battalion, Suffolks became Private 40413, 1st Battalion, RDF and went into 'W' or 'X' Company.

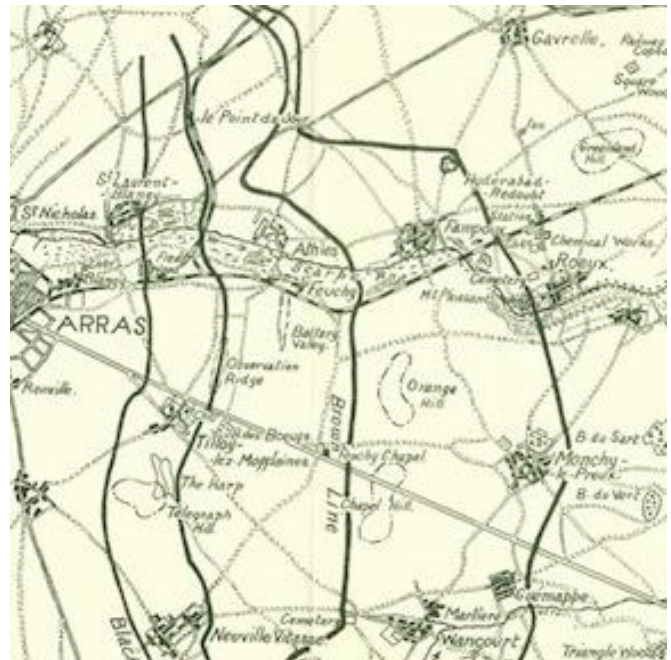
My researches into the war diary of the 1st RDF National Archives Reference, WO 95/2301, shows that between 1 January and 5 April 1917, the battalion received 397 ORs and looking at the Medal Rolls shows that at least thirty-six men from the Suffolk Regiment were transferred. Of these thirty-six there were eight from the 8th Suffolks with regimental numbers 50468, 50469, 50472, 50473 (Ernest Jarvis) 50476, 50477, 50478, and 50479 who all received new regimental numbers 40405, 40406, 40408, 40409, 40411, 40412, 40413 (Ernest) 40414. These men were : FRED BORTON, CHARLES COOK, MATTHEW FAHMY, HENRY GAMBLE, WILLIAM HOLLOWAY, SID HARRIS, ERNEST JARVIS and FRED LAMBERT.

In January 1917, these former Suffolk men found themselves posted to a familiar part of the Somme. The 1st RDF war diary tells us that in January 1917 they occupied trenches around Carnoy and Guillemont. This was somewhat ironic given that this is precisely the area where the new Dubliners had joined the Suffolks in May 1916. In January and early February 1917 it was a routine of marching backwards and forwards from billets in the village of Meaulte to the front line trenches at Guillemont. Towards the end of February they were involved in assault practice ready for an attack on the Potsdam trench at Sally Saillise.

The 1st Battalion RDF war diary WO 95/2301 reports the attack of 28 February to 1 March in much graphic detail, as does the regimental history, *Neill's Blue Caps* republished by Skull Books, Co. Cork. 'Casualties were caused by our own barrage and there was fierce hand to hand fighting.' Further difficulties were encountered by the usual problems of mud and the uncut wire and as a consequence the Dublins were initially forced back. On 2 March, they were relieved having suffered 159 casualties. Haig wrote: "Congratulations 29th Division on success of minor operations carried out on the morning of 28th February."

The war was full of such minor operations causing numerous casualties and gaining little except to remind the enemy that they were the defenders waiting to be attacked. However, in the case of the Potsdam trench, it appears even more of a hollow victory because within one month the Germans had withdrawn from the area fought over and retreated behind the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line. Not for the first time, many brave men had died in vain.

The RDF and 29th Division were now to be involved in the Battle of Arras which, though less well known than the Somme or Ypres, proved to be the shortest but most bloody of them all measured in terms of the daily rate of attrition. The war diary tells us that in March, the 1st Battalion RDF was located around Ville sur Corbie in the south of the Somme, involved in training and resting. The diary points out that the battalion was in a weak state so that each company was reduced to only two platoons. During March and early April it received drafts of 321 ORs to bring it up to fighting strength. By 12 April the battalion had reached Arras and was billeted in the Citadel. This may have been prophetic because this is the present location of the Memorial to the Missing of the battle of Arras upon whose walls some of the battalion's names would appear. The battalion was not used in the early days of the battle but on 18th April it moved up to the front relieving the Lancashire Fusiliers in the village of Monchy le Preux. This fortified village, like Thiepval before, dominated the rolling Artois countryside and had proved a difficult nut to crack. See map of The Battle of Arras.



The Battle of Arras – Map

Monchy was captured, after heavy fighting, by a combination of the 37th Infantry Division and the Cavalry on 11 April 1917. The Germans counter-attacked and almost drove the British out had it not been for the Newfoundlanders (29th Division) who managed to hold it on 14 April. Their sacrifice is commemorated by the Caribou statue in the modern, restored village of Monchy le Preux. See below.

When the RDF occupied Monchy, it was under constant heavy shellfire and it was extremely dangerous to move about. Casualties were frequent and the village was still full of the bodies of men and horses from the Essex Yeomanry, who had been trapped and caught by the German artillery on 11 April. On 21 April 1917, the 1st Dublins were relieved and went back to sleep in the wet caves below the ruined city of Arras. The rest did not last long because on 23 April the battalion took over the eastern defences of Monchy le Preux and were ordered to attack Infantry Hill at 4:30 p.m. on 24 April. However, a communications breakdown resulted in the attack going ahead without any artillery barrage.



Newfoundland Memorial, Monchy le Preux.

Companies 'W' and 'X' of the 1st RDF went bravely forward, but as the war diary describes, they came under very heavy rifle and machine gun fire resulting in 80 killed or wounded and thirty-seven missing. (Figure 10 and 11)



Trench map of the area attacked by the RDF on 24 April 1917



Today the area attacked by the RDF on 24 April 1917

The attack was a total failure and the battalion was withdrawn from the area to recover. Amongst the missing was private 40413 Ernest Jarvis, the reluctant soldier. The man who hated the experience of war had become another casualty.

I do not know when my great grandmother Lucy Jarvis was informed that her son was missing but the Essex Chronicle newspaper of 6 July 1917 included his name in the wounded and missing column. I have been unable to find any evidence as to when it was confirmed that Ernest Jarvis had been killed. He has no known grave and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial to the Missing which includes 35,000 names of men who died during April/May 1917 and March 1918 but have no known resting place.

This beautiful memorial was designed by Sir Edward Lutyens and is located on the Arras ring road close by the Citadel in which Ernest and the Dubliners had first billeted on their arrival in Arras. See below.



The Memorial to the Missing Arras.

The panel for the RDF is in Bay 9 and contains the names of those who were killed and missing during their short engagement in the Battle of Arras. Earlier, I referred to eight men who had been transferred from the 8th Suffolks to the RDF. Of these eight, three were killed and missing on 24 April 1917. Sid Harris 40412 from South

Norwood London aged twenty, Fred Lambert 40414 from East Dulwich London aged twenty-nine, and Ernest Jarvis 40413 from Boreham Chelmsford Essex aged twenty-seven (the CWGC citation says twenty-five) all appear on the RDF panel in Bay 9.



RDF panel in Bay 9 of the Arras Memorial

Whilst Ernest has no CWGC headstone, his name is remembered on the Arras memorial and on the list of 1914 to 1919 dead in Chelmsford Cathedral.



1914-19 War Memorial Chelmsford Cathedral

beautifully illustrated, printed volumes that can be found in the main libraries in Ireland. I am indebted to Sean Connolly of the RDF Association who provided me with the details of the IMR and also with a copy of the page which includes Ernest Jarvis. Thus, amongst the 49,400 names are those of non-Irishmen who had died whilst serving in an Irish regiment during WW1.

Those famous regiments, like the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, have long since gone following the Republic of Ireland's independence. Yet in the Garden of Remembrance in Westminster Abbey their names appear every year providing us all with an opportunity to remember all who served and made the ultimate sacrifice regardless of their nationality.



RDF plot in the Westminster Abbey Garden of Remembrance

Amazingly, his name and those of the others killed and missing with him appear in Ireland's Memorial Records (IMR). This was completed in 1922 and contains the names of 49,400 men who fell in the Great War. They are listed in eight

Ernest's death brought devastation to the Jarvis family of Boreham, Essex. My grandmother and her many sisters would forever remember their gentle, elder brother whom they always called Bunny. His wife, May, never remarried having been widowed only three months after their marriage. Their daughter Beryl, who was born in 1917 and died in 2009, never ever saw her father. She like thousands of others lived in a one-parent family the awful legacy of the war that touched everyone.

The Bandsman and the Conductorette

Sean Connolly

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

If there were Oscars for the presentation of the story of a soldier who served in the First World War, then Alan Twyford of the RDFA would be a worthy winner. He has donated a remarkable book to our archive which tells the story of his grandparents Percy and Grace Harvey. Percy was a musician in the band of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, having enlisted in 1905 at the age of fourteen. He served in Egypt, the Sudan and Malta before returning to England. He was based in Milton Barracks, Gravesend, where he married Grace Lydia Barrett in August 1912. She worked as a "conductorette" on the trams.

The 2nd Battalion was sent to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force on 22 August 1914, the day The Old Toughs of the 2nd RDF left Southampton for France. Percy would have been expected to carry out medical orderly duties in wartime. Less than a week after arriving in France, he was injured and captured when his battalion fought the Germans near Ligny on 27 August. He spent the rest of the war in various Prisoner of War Camps and did not return home until December 1918.

Alan's booklet is remarkable for the collection of photographs and documents that it contains. These are beautifully integrated in the text which conveys a rounded picture of a remarkable man who lived for over 90 years and who celebrated a diamond wedding anniversary with his wife. His story helps to convey an impression of the type of men who lie behind the long lists of names and serial numbers on the memorials.

When asked to write down some details of his life, Percy wrote a summary that is more memorable than many of the multi-volume autobiographies touted in the media:

Lived in Thurrock nearly 56 years. Played football for Grays Athletic. Several years. Several Gold Medals. Joined the Army Royal Dublin Fusiliers from the Duke of Yorks Royal Military School, Chelsea, in 1905. Married 1912 at Gravesend. Taken prisoner of war at Mons 1914. Sent to Russia for punishment to work. Got four children, five grandchildren, five great grandchildren. Received a letter from Royal Hospital Chelsea enquiring about my welfare but happy both are well.

Alan has also included original audio recordings of Percy and Grace that were made in 1977. Percy comments on his experience in Egypt, among other things.



Percy Harvey, Prisoner 1584
Chemnitz, Saxony, Germany.

The colour, design and layout of the book, with its realistic reproduction of documents, sets a very high standard. There are also photographs and

postcards of purely military interest such as those of the battalion on duty during industrial unrest in 1911, prisoners during the war and the band in action.

Those who are wondering how to present their research on a family tree will learn much from this labour of love



Percy Harvey, team captain, seated behind the winner's shield. Aldershot 1911.

Poetry

Private 15752 John O'Leary from Skerries, north county Dublin left his home town on 20 October 1914 and travelled by train to Amiens Street Station in Dublin. He went on to a recruiting office in Grafton Street and enlisted in the 6th Royal Irish Fusiliers, 31st Brigade, 10th (Irish) Division. His diary noted on 21 October 1914.

Attended at recruiting office in forenoon as per instructions – appeared before the doctors and got stiffly examined by them, passed successfully and got 2s/9d and told to appear at Amien Street Station in the afternoon to embark on a train for Depot at Armagh. Attended as per instructed. Met officer at Amien Street Station and received railway warrant and ticket and proceeded per rail to Barracks. Arrived at Armagh same night and went to Barracks and slept my first night at Armagh Barrack and had my first taste of Barrack life, which I found strange at first.

John trained in Armagh for about five weeks, 'eight parades per day and the same every day', before departing to Basingstoke. He took part in

the landings at Suvla Bay in Gallipoli in August 1915. In mid-September while digging a support trench he was wounded from Turkish shell, a wooden splinter went into his leg. His platoon Sgt C.T. Quance, a young Cardiff man of nineteen years of age, was wounded in the same shelling and died about a week after receiving the splinter wound. John's wound turned septic and he was eventually evacuated to England and discharged from the army in June 1916 'being no longer physically fit for War Service.' He went back to Skerries.



Men of the 10th (Irish) Division at Basingstoke attending a Church parade in May 1915.

John's brief diary was donated to the RDFA archive by his son Joseph who lives near Lusk, Co. Dublin. The following is a poem written in John's diary by an unknown author named R.E. Varreda titled.

My Souvenir

*What shall I bring you sister o'mine
When I come back from the war?
A ribbon your dear black hair to twine
A shawl from a Berlin store
Say, shall I chose you some Prussian hack
When the Uhlans we overwhelm,
Shall I bring you a Potsdam goblet back,
Or the crest from Princes Helm.*

*Little you care what I lay at your feet.
Ribbon or crest or shawl,
What if I bring you nothing, Sweet,
Nor maybe come home at all,
Ah! But you'll know brave heart you'll know
Two things I'll have kept to send
My Honour for which you bade me go
And my love my love to the en.*

Mission Accomplished

Sean Connolly

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

When Mary McAleese completed her second term as President of Ireland later this year, she was inundated with well-deserved accolades. Our Association is grateful for the major role she took to restore the men and women of the First World War to their proper place in our historical heritage. It was apparent before her appointment that she had a genuine interest in the issue and during her term of office she regularly spoke about the personal loss and pain that the war caused throughout the island. As a “Builder of Bridges”, she recognised the shared nature of the sad legacy and undertook a number of historic missions that increased the public awareness of what the losses in Belgium, France and Gallipoli.

The inauguration of the Irish Round Tower and Peace Park in Messines in November 1998 produced iconic images of the President of Ireland, the Queen of England and the King of Belgium jointly remembering Irish soldiers. On the site of an Irish victory, Mary McAleese, who under the Irish constitution is the Supreme Commander of the Irish Defence Forces, honoured the tens of thousands of her countrymen who had died fighting in Flanders. Soldiers serving in the Irish and British armies participated in this historic ceremony.



President McAleese and H.M. Queen Elizabeth II at Messines in November 1998.

Two months earlier, President McAleese had opened our Association's second exhibition in Dublin's Civic Museum. It covered the Irish Regiments in the First World War. Her presence was a significant honour for our recently established organisation. At that time, some relatives of those killed in the War found it

difficult to discuss the links with the British Army. In her speech on that occasion, the President referred to the tendency to regard the First World War as an episode in British history. She said that “the blindfolds and blinkers of traditional allegiances were being lifted in a gradual and unstoppable process”.

In June 2007, on the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Messines, President McAleese returned to Flanders to lay a wreath at the 16th (Irish) Division Memorial at Wytschaete. On that occasion, our Chairman, Tom Burke, was invited to be her guide on a tour of the battlefield.



President McAleese attending the RDFA exhibition at Civic Museum, September 1998.

During her official state visit to Turkey in March 2010, she spent a day on the Gallipoli Peninsula where over 3,400 Irish soldiers were killed during the failed campaign. She laid a wreath at the Helles Memorial in their memory. She laid another wreath at V Beach Cemetery to commemorate the hundreds of Royal Dublin and Munster Fusiliers who had been slaughtered while attempting to land from the River Clyde and the open rowing boats. She then went north to unveil a new memorial to the 10th (Irish) Division at Green Hill Cemetery, overlooking Suvla Bay.



Dr. Martin McAleese, the President
and Tom Burke at the Helles Memorial in
Gallipoli March, 2006.

This was the first official recognition by the state of the Irish involvement in the Gallipoli campaign. The President expressed a hope that a joint British-Irish commemoration would be held to mark the centenary in 2015. The Association helped to plan the route and locations for the Gallipoli visit and took part in the ceremonies on the day.

When the President met Queen Elizabeth in Messines in 1998, the possibility of a royal visit to Dublin seemed very remote. In her final year in office, she was host to the British Monarch's outstandingly successful trip to Ireland.



H.M. Queen Elizabeth II and President McAleese at National
War Memorial Garden, Islandbridge, Dublin.

The presence of the Queen at the National War Memorial at Islandbridge was an echo of the ceremony at Messines and was a fitting conclusion to the President's efforts on behalf of those from our country who served in the First World War. We wish the President and her family further successes in the next phase of her career.



RDFA Members Patricia and Margaret Horne and friend
Hilda O'Connell meet President Mary and Martin McAleese
at Aras an Uachtarain, June 2010.



Tom Burke at Aras an Uachtaráin November 2011 during
the reception for those who had helped the President in her
cross border initiatives.

**Remarks by President McAleese
at the State Dinner
In honour of Queen Elizabeth II
Dublin Castle
18 May 2011.**

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highness, Taoiseach, Prime Minister, First Minister, Tanaiste, Foreign Secretary, Distinguished Guests:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to Dublin Castle this evening on this the first ever State Visit to take place between our two countries. This visit is a culmination of the success of the Peace Process. It is an acknowledgment that while we cannot change the past, we have chosen to change the future.

The relationship between our two neighbouring nations is long, complex and has often been turbulent. Like the tides that surround each of us, we have shaped and altered each other. This evening we celebrate a new chapter in our relationship that may still be a work in progress, but happily, has also become a work of progress, of partnership and friendship.

The contemporary British-Irish relationship is multifaceted and strongly underpinned by the most important connection of all — people and families. Large numbers of British born people live here in Ireland and many more of our citizens have British backgrounds, ancestry and identity. In Britain, those of Irish birth, descent or identity are numbered in millions.

The two way flow of people between these islands goes back millennia. This very room is dedicated to St Patrick, whose name is synonymous with Ireland. Yet he is reputed to have been born in Britain. Patrick's life as the man who brought Christianity to Ireland is illustrative of the considerable exchange of ideas and knowledge that there has been between our two nations throughout history.

It has been a fascinating two way street with Britain bestowing on Ireland our system of common law, parliamentary tradition, independent civil service, gracious Georgian architecture, love of English literature and our obsession with the Premiership. Conversely, Britain greatly benefitted from the Irish genius of the likes of — Edmund

Burke, the Duke of Wellington, Daniel O'Connell, Charles Stuart Parnell, Maria Edgeworth, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw and even Father Ted. Indeed, it was Shaw who wryly observed that: "England had conquered Ireland, so there was nothing for it but to come over and conquer England."

However, even Shaw might not have dared to imagine that this cultural conquest would come in time to include rugby and cricket.

The Irish in Britain and the British in Ireland both as individuals and communities, have made an invaluable contribution to both our homelands while also cementing the links between us.

Today those links provide the foundation for a thriving economic relationship. As close trade and investment partners and as partners in the European Union, Britain and Ireland are essential to each other's economic wellbeing. It is imperative that we work fluently together to promote the conditions that stimulate prosperity and opportunity for all of our people.

It is only right that on this historic visit we should reflect on the difficult centuries which have brought us to this point. Inevitably where there are the colonisers and the colonised, the past is a repository of sources of bitter division. The harsh facts cannot be altered nor loss nor grief erased but with time and generosity, interpretations and perspectives can soften and open up space for new accommodations. Yesterday, Your Majesty, you visited our Garden of Remembrance and laid a wreath there in honour of the sacrifice and achievement of those who fought against Britain for Irish independence. Today at Islandbridge, just as we did at the Island of Ireland Peace Park at Messines in 1998, we commemorated together the thousands of Irishmen who gave their lives in British uniform in the Great War.

As the first citizen of Ireland, like my fellow countrymen and women, I am deeply proud of Ireland's difficult journey to national sovereignty. I am proud of how we have used our independence to build a republic which asserts the religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities not just of all its citizens but of all human beings. I am particularly proud of this island's peace-makers who having experienced first-hand the appalling toxic harvest of failing to resolve old

hatreds and political differences, rejected the perennial culture of conflict and compromised enough to let a new future in.

The Good Friday Agreement represented a fresh start and committed us all to partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of future relationships. Under the Agreement, unionism and nationalism were accorded equal recognition as political aspirations and philosophies. Northern Ireland's present status within the United Kingdom was solemnly recognised, as was the option for a united Ireland if that secures the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

The collegial and cooperative relationship between the British and Irish Governments was crucial to the success of the Peace Process and we can thank the deepening engagement between us as equal partners in the European Union for the growth of friendship and trust. The Governments' collaborative efforts to bring peace and power-sharing to Northern Ireland have yielded huge dividends for the peoples of these two islands.

W.B. Yeats once wrote in another context that "peace comes dropping slow." The journey to peace has been cruelly slow and arduous but it has taken us to a place where hope thrives and the past no longer threatens to overwhelm our present and our future. The legacy of the Good Friday Agreement is already profound and encouraging. We all of us have a duty to protect, nurture and develop it.

Your Majesty, from our previous conversations I know of your deep support for the peace process and your longing to see relationships between our two countries sustained on a template of good neighbourliness. Your visit here is an important sign - among a growing number of signs - that we have embarked on the fresh start envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement. Your visit is a formal recognition of what has, for many years, been a reality – that Ireland and Britain are neighbours, equals, colleagues and friends. Though the seas between us have often been stormy, we have chosen to build a solid and enduring bridge of friendship between us and to cross it to a new, a happier future.

Your Majesty, your Royal Highness it is in that spirit of mutual respect and warm friendship, it is

in faith in that future, that I offer you the traditional warm Irish welcome - cead mile failte - one hundred thousand welcomes. I now invite you, distinguished guests, to stand and join me in a toast: To the health and happiness of Her Majesty and His Royal Highness; To the well-being and prosperity of the people of Britain; To the cause of peace and reconciliation on this island; And to continued friendship and kinship between the peoples of Ireland and Britain.

Go raibh maith agaibh.

Reception to thank donors to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Archive.

Speech by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Gerry Breen. 6 November 2010.

Today, the Irishmen and Irishwomen who fought in the First World War have an accepted part in our history and this is due very largely to the determination of you, the members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, in ensuring that they will never be forgotten. We in Dublin City Council are proud to work with you through the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive, which is held here in this building by Dublin City Archives. The RDFA Archive relies entirely on the generosity of the families who have willingly donated their precious papers and mementoes to be housed with this growing collection. This year we have again received a number of family collections for the RDFA Archive and I would now like to thank the depositors for their generosity. Behind each of these donations is a story of human endeavour and heroism, often in the face of overwhelming odds.

Mr. Paddy Reid has given us papers relating to his maternal grandfather, Private Patrick O'Neill. A Dubliner, Private O'Neill was gassed at Ypres, probably at Mouse Trap Farm following the German attack there in April and May of 1915. He was discharged from the British Army in May of 1918 'in consequence of being surplus to military requirements having suffered impairment since entry into the service'.

Mrs. Gay Conroy has given two collections to the RDFA Archive. The first relates to nurse Mrs. Kate Middleton Curtis, who was Lady Superintendent at Temple Hill Auxiliary Hospital In Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

This collection includes an autograph book with inscriptions by the soldiers explaining why they were in hospital. The second collection donated by Mrs. Conroy relates to her grandfather Hugh Joseph Hayes, who was commissioned in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers during the First World War and subsequently joined the Irish Army and served in its Volunteer Reserve until 1929.

We are also indebted to Canon W.B. Heney, who has given photographs and medals belonging to his late uncle, Second Lieutenant Charles Frederick Heney. During the First World War, Charles Heney served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and with the Royal Army Service Corps and was based in Egypt for three years. He survived the Great War, only to die suddenly in 1936 at the early age of forty-two.

The aftermath of the Great War is explored in the archives of the Irish War Memorial Committee, which was founded in the summer of 1919, with the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Field-Marshal Viscount French of Ypres. The Committee under such high profile and dedicated public servants as Senator Andrew Jameson eventually contracted Sir Edward Lutyens to design a War Memorial Gardens at Longmeadows, Islandbridge, Dublin which now stands as one of the finest such Memorials in Europe. The Irish War Memorial Committee Archive was donated to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association by the Royal British Legion, Republic of Ireland Branch. This donation was facilitated by Patrick Hugh Lynch, historian of The Irish Soldiers and Sailors' Land Trust.

Of course, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers existed long before the First World War, and originated in India, where the regiment was formed in 1881 by the amalgamation of the Royal Madras Fusiliers and the Royal Bombay Fusiliers. This is reflected in the letters donated by Miss Louise Halloran, written in 1892 by James Armstrong Giltrap, 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was then stationed in Karachi. He describes health risks associated with malnutrition and the searing heat.

We are also grateful for background materials and publications relating to the First World War. This year, the RDFA Archive has received a full set of nine volumes of The Great World War, edited by Frank A. Mumby, published in London between 1916 and 1920. This has been given by Mr. Jimmie Ronayne Conron, who has previously donated the Moriarty Collection to the RDFA Archive. Mr. Glenn Thompson has kindly

presented issues of the journal Stand To! while Liam Morris has given two books, A Photographic History of the First World War and The Manchester Guardian History of the War.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive is being housed in the Special Strongroom at Dublin City Library and Archive, which has been built to B.S. 5454 with four-hour fire rating, air-conditioning for environmental control and gas fire-suppression system.

The collections are available for inspection in the Reading Room at Dublin City Library & Archive and are widely consulted by members of the public. In addition to cataloguing these collections, the staff at Dublin City Archives regularly generate displays based on their contents, including the exhibition Letters from the Great War, which is on display today.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, and in particular your committee in reminding us that the Great War is a chapter in Irish history as well as in world history. I wish your association continued success in the future.

Information about the archive can be found via the Dublin City Council website www.dublincity.ie

Follow the links; Recreation and Culture / Libraries/Heritage and History / Dublin City Archives / Royal Dublin Fusiliers Archive.

Association Activities 2010-11

Our members commemorated those who served in the Great War by their participation in the annual cycle of ceremonies at Grangegorman Military Cemetery, St Anne's Church, Dawson Street, The Cenotaph in London, The National War Memorial at Islandbridge, the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, City Quay Church, and St Patrick's Cathedral.



Fr. Eoin Thynne, Head Chaplain, Irish Defence Forces, leading the Dawn Service at Grangegorman Cemetery, Dublin, 25 April 2010.

On 2 June 2010, Dr. Ian Paisley and his wife, Baron and Baroness Bannside, visited our Gallipoli exhibition at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. This was arranged at his own request during his official visit to Dublin. Over tea, he confirmed his appreciation of our work. He wore the Association tie and his wife wore our scarf during their visit to the Dail next day.



Dr Ian Paisley and his wife, Eileen, Dr Ian Adamson, and RDF Association members at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham.



RDFA Member Michael Synnott who laid the Association wreath at Royal British Legion ceremony at the National War Memorial Gardens on the 10th July.

On 24 July 2010, Sally Keogh organised a members' trip to Galway. They visited Renmore Barracks, the former depot of the Connaught Rangers, Galway Museum, St Nicholas Collegiate Church and the Cathedral. All participants appreciated Sally's skills in planning and leading the expedition. See the report in this edition.

We arranged two lectures in 2010. On 9 October, Professor Richard Grayson, Goldsmiths College, University of London, spoke on the topic "*Belfast Boys - How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War*".

The 9th Royal Irish Rifles recruited from the Shankill Road and the 6th Connaught Rangers from the Falls Road. An estimated 12,000 enlisted from West Belfast.

On 6 November, Dr. David Murphy, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, gave a lecture on the "*The Breaking Point of the French Army – the failed Nivelle Offensive of 1917*". There was full house to hear a deeply researched analysis of an important event. This was followed by a reception by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Gerry Breen to mark the additions to our Archive.

On 11 November, there was a ceremony in Glasnevin cemetery to mark the erection of headstones on the unmarked graves of 43 soldiers from the First and Second World Wars. On the same day, some Committee members attended the commemoration at Stormont.

During the year, we hosted two workshops at the National Museum, Collins Barracks, for those wishing to trace relatives.

On 10 December, the weather did its worst to thwart the work of Brian and Therese Moroney who organised the Association Annual Dinner in the Masonic Hall, Molesworth Street, Dublin. It failed. Despite the arctic conditions in the city, there was a large attendance and much enjoyment.

RDF trip to Galway – 24 July 2010

John F Sheehan

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

On Saturday 24 July a group of members led by Sally Keogh left Heuston (some may remember it as Kingsbridge) Station by train at 7.30 a.m. to travel to Galway arriving at 10.30am to be met by Joe Loughnane and Colman Shaughnessy of the Connaught Rangers Association. After our initial introductions we walked over Lough Italia Bridge to Renmore Military Barracks the Barracks having been the headquarters of the Connaught Rangers from 1880 approx. up to its disbandment in 1922, now in the care of the Western Command of the Irish Army. There we were welcomed in by Lt. Stephen Quigley to be joined later by Sgt. Seamus McDonagh. While partaking of some light refreshments Joe Loughnane quoted from Col. Jourdain's book 'Ranging Memories.'

There was a tennis tournament in Galway in July 1914. On 25 July, which was a Saturday, I had gone down for a short time to watch the play, when I received a private message, which convinced me that it was now only a matter of days before the war was declared. I went home to pack, many people laughing at my prophecy when I declared that war would break out in a few days. I packed all my own household up as fast as I could. It was nearly complete before the 1 August. On Monday 3 August (Bank Holiday) little work could be done, although the popular and well-known Galway Races were on. After a cup of tea I walked out with my wife and two other officers on the ground outside the Barrack walls at Renmore, and down to Cromwell's Fort to get a breath of fresh air, after a busy day. It was a warm, calm evening, a veritable calm before the storm, and I was talking with one officer, and remember saying that now after

years of work, we could set all the machinery in motion by one word 'mobilize', as Von Moltke did in 1870. As I spoke I looked at the Barrack gate, and there was an orderly running towards me with a telegram. I said: 'And here it is.' This was exactly at 6.53pm, and I heard afterwards that at 4pm. The British Government had given orders for the mobilization of the Army. I opened the telegram, which I have still, and read it out:

Commanding Depot, Galway.
General mobilization ordered.



Sally, Des and members of the RDF group who visited Renmore Barracks. Chest out Nick!

Following our refreshments we were brought around the Museum which features many artefacts of the Barracks colonial past and indeed a very impressive display of Connaught Rangers uniforms and equipment, and of early Irish army items as well as Liam Mellows motor bike, the Barracks being named after this republican leader. Leaving Renmore we visited the memorial to the members of the Irish Defence Forces who died on peace keeping duties and also the adjoining Garrison Church.

We walked back to the city and had lunch, following that we were brought to the Galway Museum, here the top floor had on display an exhibition, its focus primarily was on the social socio economic effects of war on the population of Galway city and county which encompassed a history of soldiering in the west of Ireland (Wars of the Empire) starting with the Lally Militia, the 88th and 94th regiments, an amalgamation of these later became the Connaught Rangers and their involvement in the Crimean War, India, the South

African War, the Zulu War and of course the First World War. This was a wonderful display and to make the exhibition even more interesting, we were given a guided tour by Damien Quinn who was the organiser of it. The weather improving all day, we walked to St. Nicholas Collegiate Church, Shop Street which houses the first Galway memorial to the men who died in WW1. Here also are some memorials, banners and flags dedicated to the Rangers. Over then to Galway Cathedral crossing the river Corrib to visit the memorial window, this stained glass window was placed in the Cathedral at the time of its construction in 1965 and was made possible with public subscriptions, quoting from the Ranger journal of July 1965 ‘ Our gratitude must be expressed to Captain Russell Maguire for his very hard work on this venture. He has been greatly impressed, he says, by the extraordinary affection which still exists for the memory of the Connaught Rangers – after all these long years. And he has been deeply touched by the letters in which this has been expressed by subscribers – particularly ladies – from so many parts of the world.

Basically any Regiment – maybe particularly ours – means Names. To read lists of men who served in the Peninsula, the Crimea, India, Africa and the many ‘foreign fields’ of 1914-18, one must notice that so many family names are repeated generation after generation. Those names still exist, and flourish, in Connaught and now the memory of their ancestors is permanently commemorated in Galway as well as in the Memorial Chapel of the Irish Regiments in Westminster Cathedral, London.’

Unfortunately the location of the window within the Cathedral makes it quite difficult to read the inscription but the stained glass is that of David & Goliath. That same year 1965 Lt. Col. H.F.N. Jourdain C.M.G. celebrated his 93rd birthday. His publications have been of great assistance to anyone interested in the Connaught’s or indeed military history generally. Leaving the Cathedral we went to the County Hall to see the limestone plaque erected in 2007 to the Connaught Rangers in WW1. Our final stop brought us to the Crimean cannon’s outside the City Hall. These were for many years located in Eyre Square flanking the bronze statue of Lord Dunkellin who was a Crimean war veteran himself.

After what was a most memorable day in Galway made possible with the help, guidance and assistance of Joe and Colman together with their wide ranging knowledge of army and naval history, we boarded the 6.05pm train to Dublin being entertained as always on route by our good friend of the association Tony Behan. We returned home tired but with a lot more information on Galway, the Connaught Rangers and our colonial military history. Both Joe and Colman extended an invitation to other interested members to make the trip.

29th Division Memorial wreath

Lyn Edmonds

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

It was a great honour to mark the 95th Anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign by laying a wreath on behalf of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association at the 29th Division Memorial, Stretton-on-Dunsmore, Warwickshire on Sunday 14 March 2010. This is an annual commemoration of the 29th Division’s review by the King in March 1915, when my grandfather would have been one of the many troops lining the roads that day.



Following the address by David Ray, wreaths were laid on behalf of the town of Rugby, the Gallipoli Association, the Heart of England Branch of the Western Front Association, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, the Royal Military Police Association and also the Great War Society.

The Last Post was sounded and the Standard Bearers lowered their standards for the Exhortation. There followed a minute's silence, reveille and the raising of Standards.

Two platoons of the Great War Society 'Living History' troops were also present in period dress adding a historic touch to the occasion. Mr. Noel Doolan who laid the wreath on behalf of the Royal Military Police Association, also laid a small cross in remembrance of his grandfather, Henry Graham. Although not present at Stretton in 1915 Pte. Henry Graham was a Royal Dublin Fusilier for part of the War, later transferring to the Connaught Rangers.

Rededication of the Grave of Private Hugh Fenlon, 11th Battalion RDF, Enniscorthy, 25 May 2011.

Sally Keogh

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

Flags billowed in the wild morning wind above the grave of Pte Hugh Fenlon at Enniscorthy, on Wednesday 25 May. Flags of the Royal British Legion Republic of Ireland, the UN forces and the Tricolour were borne by local representatives, with the flag of the RDF borne by our own Capt Seamus Greene. The occasion was the rededication of the grave of Pte Hugh Fenlon, organised by the Wexford Branch of the Royal British Legion with the support of the Enniscorthy Town Council.

Pte. Fenlon was born in Athy, Co. Kildare, enlisted in Carlow Town and saw action in Flanders and France. He was wounded in action and died of his wounds in Enniscorthy on 28th October, 1918. Despite the best efforts of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the RBL Wexford Branch, nothing else is known of his service in WW1 and he had no family to look after his grave.



The grave of Pte. Hugh Fenlon

The Rev. R. Lawless of St. Aidan's Cathedral Enniscorthy and Rev. C. Long of St. Mary's Church Enniscorthy conducted a short service and the President of the Royal British Legion, Republic of Ireland, The O'Morchoe, recited the ode of commemoration. The newly erected War Grave headstone with the RDF crest shone bright against the wreaths of red poppies. Mr. Anthony Nolan played the Last Post and Reveille and gave a beautifully sweet rendition of our National Anthem. It was a moving occasion and the twenty-one members of the RDFA were warmly welcomed and were very glad to be a part of it. Following short addresses by The O'Morchoe and Tom Burke, the group was treated to very welcome refreshments by the Wexford Branch of the Royal British Legion at their Enniscorthy meeting room. As we enjoyed the hospitality, a RBL member read a poem he had composed about a recently discovered relative from Cranford Co. Wexford who was killed in action at the Somme. It is an imaginative piece from the point of view of the young recruit. It encompasses his possible reasons and expectations on enlisting in Gorey; his thoughts in the battlefield as he is faced with the reality of war and death; and finally a plea for his loved ones, his own family, to visit his grave and not forget him. Perhaps we had done just that for Pte. Hugh Fenlon.

Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow

In windswept Leighlinbridge, amid squalls of rain, we visited the 2002 memorial to WW1 veterans from the locality.



RDFA members at War Memorial in Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow

The Project, according to our local guide Paul Maguire, was the brainchild of a local architect who rallied support over several years for his idea. It is a beautiful monument, a mini Menin Gate, located alongside the river Barrow, close to the Lord Baginbun Inn. The marble was donated free of charge and the painstaking inscriptions of about 250 names of WW1 Carlow recruits was carried out on a voluntary basis by a local stone carver. Philip Lecane an authority on the disaster of the sinking of the Leinster in WW1 found several names of people involved in that tragedy. His potted history of individuals brought the additional meaning to the memorial.

Woodenbridge and the Big Irish Oak

We were welcomed to the Woodenbridge Golf Club, by the President. It was at Woodenbridge, under the big Oak tree, that John Redmond, MP, addressed the Irish Volunteers on 20 September 1914, calling on them to join the British Army for the cause of Home Rule.



RDFA members and committee members of Woodenbridge Golf Club standing at site of John Redmond's speech of 20 September 1914.

Following dinner, the group (joined by some golf club members and visitors) was escorted across the Fairway to the magnificent tree, by the Club Captain. There, Philip Lecane, with his usual thoroughness and flair, brought to life the events of the time with interesting detail. In conclusion, he read Willie Redmond's letter from the field of battle to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. (Willie, brother of John, was killed at the Front in 1917.) It was poignant, as Philip pointed out, having witnessed the unifying events during the State Visit of Queen

Elizabeth II, that Willie Redmond had had such a dream for Ireland 90 years ago.

It was a most successful day for the Association. Thanks to Tom, Brian, Philip and the Committee who arranged it and continue to provide us with these historic outings. The President of Woodenbridge Golf Club plans to lay a plaque at the tree before he completes his term, to remind golfers of its significance and he has invited RSFA members to attend. The location is in a beautiful setting in the Vale of Avoca. In the words of the Club President, it is different from other man-made courses; "this one was not made by man but by God!" Photographs by Mr Liam Ryan, Fethard-on-Sea and Michael Lee, RTE and RDFA.

Paul Clark met The Queen wearing his Dubs tie.

RDFA member Paul Clark from UTV wore his Dubs tie when he met H.M. Queen Elizabeth II on the occasion of her visit to the studios of UTV in Belfast on 21 October 2010. Paul kindly noted his feelings for *The Blue Cap*.

I am a member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association because I stand with the Association's attempts to rehabilitate the memory of those brave Irish men who fought and died during the First World War, but who, subsequently, were written out of Irish history. I am also a member, because the Association has not forgotten the many Irish men and women – all of them volunteers - who fought, and died, during The Second World War. Well done The Dubs!

Tom Burke once told me that we in these islands are all "family;" and family rows run very deep. How true, Tom! I have met Tom, many times over the years during which I have been making television programmes about The First World War; in France, Belgium, and here at home in Ireland. I have always been impressed with his courage at reminding all of us of our collective history, and heritage. That's why I am a member of the Dubs.

The Association has shone a light in the dark corners of Irish memory, and reminded all of us of our responsibility to remember, and remember correctly. The Irish soldiers may have worn the uniform of the King, but they were not enemies of Ireland. So, when I was told I would be meeting

the Queen on her visit to the studios of UTV in Belfast, I deliberately wore the tie of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, to recognise, and remember those brave Irish men who had fought – and died in the words of Tom Kettle – for a dream born in a herdsman's shed, and for the secret scripture of the poor.

In Memoriam

Professor Richard Holmes, CBE

Members will be saddened to hear of the death of Professor Richard Holmes who died on April 30 2011, aged 65. In November 2005, we had the good fortune to host a lecture by him on the experiences of “Tommy”, the ordinary British soldier. Well-known for his TV programmes and books, Professor Holmes was much in demand. He agreed to make room in his busy schedule to come to Dublin because of his sympathy for the forgotten Irish soldiers of the Great War. The advance interest in the lecture was so great that we had to find a larger venue. About 170 attended on the day and were rewarded by presentation delivered with eloquence, compassion and humour. It was one of those occasions that nobody wanted to end.



Professor Richard Holmes at RDFA lecture in Dublin 2005.

It was hard to believe that such a charming man could be so multitalented. While serving as co-director of the Security Studies Institute, a department of Cranfield University, he was a Brigadier in the Territorial Army, the highest-ranking reserve officer in the UK. He had served

as an ADC to the Queen (1991-97). He was a magistrate in Hampshire, patron of the Guild of Battlefield Guides, president of the British Commission for Military History and the Battlefields Trust, as well as several other voluntary positions. He was the author of over twenty books and made a number of successful TV programmes. He is survived by his wife, Liz, who accompanied him on his Dublin trip, and their two daughters. May he rest in peace.



Mrs. Pat Goodwin with her husband Charlie wearing his RDFA tie and her baby granddaughter Maria Harvey. Pat was baby Maria's godmother as well as being her grandmother.

Mrs. Pat Goodwin died in Dublin with her family beside her on 12 July 2011. Pat was a member of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and both she and her husband Charlie, who is also a member, took a great interest in the work of the RDFA and attended many of our events. She had a great fondness of history. At our annual dinner, Pat was always first up to help Brian and Theresa in any way she could and her efforts and friendly smile will be missed by all who knew her. May you rest in pace Pat.



Cathal O'Shannon
Taken from the RTE website.

Cathal O'Shannon at the great age of eighty-three died in Dublin on 22 October 2011. Cathal

was a keen member of the RDFA who attended many of our lectures and annual dinners with his wife Patsy who sadly pre-deceased Cathal. He was an outstanding journalist in RTE for most of his life, however as a young man he joined the RAF and served in the Far East during the 2nd World War. As a TV documentary maker with RTÉ, among many other works he filmed and narrated the first deployment of Irish troops overseas on a UN mission to the Congo. In a TV documentary titled *Emmet Dalton Remembers*, Cathal interviewed Emmet Dalton who as an officer in the 9th RDF and was with Tom Kettle at Guillemont and Ginchy in September 1916. Among his other notable TV documentary achievements was the Spanish Civil War documentary titled *Even the Olives are Bleeding*. Cathal's enthusiasm for the work of the RDFA and smiling face will be missed by all the committee and members of the RDFA who knew him. May he rest in peace.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Cyberspace

There are now at least three websites available for those interested in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

www.greatwar.ie is our website which has summaries of the main First World War battles that involved Irish soldiers, some individual stories and much more.

www.royaldublinfusiliers.com contains a wealth of material about all of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Battalions that fought in the Great War. It is particularly useful for those interested in the 10th Battalion as it has a transcript of the War Diary. It also has sections on Prisoners of War, Including those who joined Casement's Brigade, the 1916 Rising, Serial Numbers and Courts Martial. Some of the material was copied from our website.

www.royaldublinfusiliers.com has a number of interesting individual stories and a collection of photographs, postcards and memorabilia relating to the regiment. It has a useful forum facility where help can be sought to clarify tracing questions.

There are many names of Royal Dublin Fusiliers on the wonderful Irish War Memorials website www.irishwarmemorials.ie/html/websiteNews.php developed by Michael Pegum. The archive section of RTE website www.rte.ie has a rich collection of sound and video material related to the war.

There is a large collection of rediscovered photographs of soldiers on the UK Independent website at <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/history/new-more-unseen-photographs-from-the-first-world-war-1984325.html> Our own website www.greatwar.ie continues to attract a steady stream of visitors. We get a regular flow of email requests for assistance in tracing relatives, now running at about 150 per annum.

RDFA Archive

Our archive is growing nicely and we wish to thank those members and friends who have placed their family documents into the archive over the past couple of years. We are always looking for new material to enhance our archive so if you think you have some old papers, letters, postcards etc belonging to a relative of yours who served in the RDF or other Irish regiment in WW1, Dr. Mary Clark, the Dublin City Archivist at Dublin City Library and Archive in Pearse Street would love to meet with you.

Spectamus Agendo



Website: www.greatwar.ie
Email address: rdfa@eircom.net