



## From Southampton to the Aisne, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the First World War, 22 August to 10 October 1914.

Tom Burke

To commemorate the centenary of the opening of the First World War in August 1914, on 14 June 2014, a party of twenty-seven members of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association departed Dublin on a five day tour of Le Cateau, Haucourt, the rivers Marne and Aisne which were the regions of northern France where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers (RDF) began their long and bloody campaign in that dreadful war. The tour titled *August 1914*, began in the railway station at Le Cateau where the battalion had arrived at the end of their journey from Boulogne in late August 1914, tracked the villages and countryside the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF travelled through on their journey of retreat south from Le Cateau to the river Aisne. The following text is a tour booklet that provided some historic background to the places the group visited and events the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF took part in between 22 August and 10 October 1914.

### Le Cateau and Haucourt

In the years leading up to the First World War, the British Government had prepared a detailed 'War Book' that covered every aspect of national activity in the event of a European war. It covered such matters as the requisitioning of naval transport, organisation of trains and the movement to mainland Europe of a British Expeditionary Force (BEF) which consisted of approximately 160,000 men. Telegrams were prepared for the recall of reservists. The result of the 'War Book' was that Britain was reasonably militarily organised when the First World War broke out.<sup>1</sup>

The BEF of August 1914 consisted of two army corps which was made up from a cavalry division and four infantry divisions namely the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Division. Approx. 50% of the BEF infantry regiments were ex-Regulars or Reservists who had left the Army up to seven years previous and in many cases were physically unfit for combat.<sup>2</sup> David Ascoli noted that some 62% of the embodied strength of the BEF was Reservists.<sup>3</sup> The BEF contained all the major regular battalions of the Irish Regiments who departed for France between 12 and 17 August 1914. When Irish troops arrived in France, they were met in France with cheers of 'Vive les Anglais.' John Lucy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Irish Rifles corrected them by saying, 'Nous ne sommes pas Anglais, nous sommes Irlandais'.<sup>4</sup>

By 20 August 1914, in accordance with an agreed plan between the British and French armies, the BEF had completed its concentration in the Le Cateau-Maubeuge area of northern France and prepared to confront the advancing German 1<sup>st</sup> Army.<sup>5</sup> They, the BEF, adopted the name 'The Old Contemptibles' following an order made by the Kaiser who told his men to walk over 'General French's contemptible little Army.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Neillands, Robin. *The Great War Generals on the Western Front. 1914 -19* (London: Robinson, 1999),p.42.

<sup>2</sup> Johnstone, T. *Orange Green and Khaki* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992),p.17.

<sup>3</sup> Ascoli, David. *The Mons Star* (London: Book Club Associates, 1982),p.8.

<sup>4</sup> Johnstone.p.17.

<sup>5</sup> Ascoli.p30 See also Samuels, M. *Doctrine and Dogma - German and British Infantry Tactics in the First World War* (London: Greenwood Press, 1992). p.150.

<sup>6</sup>Gilbert, Martin. *The First World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994),p.36.

According to Henry Harris, the first shots fired in war by a British soldier for over fifty years on the continent of Europe was fired by Corporal Edward Thomas of the 4<sup>th</sup> (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade in the BEF at 7:00 a.m. on a misty 22 August 1914 outside the village of Casteau, a mining village five kilometres north-east of Mons.<sup>7</sup> The people of Casteau had set out that morning for Mass in their Sunday best. They were caught and torn to shreds in the cross fire of British and German artillery and rifle fire. For all of 23 of August 1914, the BEF fought unsuccessfully to hold the line against the German advance through Mons and southern Belgium.<sup>8</sup>

On the previous day, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers left Southampton on board the *SS Caledonia* bound for Boulogne in France. The battalion strength was twenty-two officers and 1,023 other ranks.<sup>9</sup> They were a battalion of the 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade (Brigadier-General J.A.L. Haldane), 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. (Major-General T. D'O.Snow) 3<sup>rd</sup> (III) Army Corps (Lieut.-General W.P. Pulteney, British Expeditionary Force. (Field-Marshal Sir. John French). A typical infantry division consisted of 585 officers, 17,488 other ranks, 5,592 horses, seventy-six artillery guns and twenty-four machine guns, two machine guns per battalion.<sup>10</sup> The three infantry brigades that made up the 4<sup>th</sup> Division were the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. The 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade was made up four battalions, the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Warwickshire Regiment, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Seaforth Highlanders, the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Irish Fusiliers, all located at Shorncliff and the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF at Gravesend. The 4<sup>th</sup> Division did not travel with the BEF in mid-August.<sup>11</sup> They were 'temporarily detained in England for the purposes of home defence'.<sup>12</sup>

For fear of being cut off and surrounded at Mons by the German advance, early on 24 August, General French decided to withdraw his troops southwards away from Mons. The Commander of II Corps, General Smith-Dorrien, decided to make a stand and try to give a stopping blow to the seemingly inexorable advance of the German 1<sup>st</sup> Army. The place chosen for this dual was at Le Cateau, a village about twenty-five kilometres south-east of Cambrai. Both I Corps and II Corps of the BEF began to fall back. General Snow was ordered to move to a defensive position, 'where it was hoped that it (4<sup>th</sup> Division) would be able to render effective aid in the retirement of I and II Corps'.<sup>13</sup>

The 4<sup>th</sup> Division took up a defensive position on the left flank of Le Cateau with the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Haucourt and Esnes, the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade at Fontaine-au-Pire and 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade around Longsart.<sup>14</sup> Though complete in field artillery and infantry, the 4<sup>th</sup> Division was left short of much of its support units such as its divisional cavalry and cyclists, heavy battery, engineers, the greater part of its signal company, ammunition column and field ambulances.

<sup>7</sup> Harris, Henry E D. *The Irish Regiments in the First World War* (Cork.: Mercier Press, 1968).p.33.

<sup>8</sup>Not long after the Battle of Mons had begun, a rumour was started by the people of Mons that an angel had appeared 'on the traditional white horse and clad all in white with flaming sword', advancing and facing the Germans, 'forbade their further progress.' This heavenly hallucination created by frightened people of Mons was named The Angel of Mons. It wasn't until 10 November 1918 that Canadian troops liberated Mons from the Germans.

<sup>9</sup> Wylly, H.C. *Crown and Company, the Historical Records of the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. 1911 - 1922*, vol. 2 (Cork: Schull Books, 2000).p.14.

<sup>10</sup> Fuller, J F C. *The Army in My Time* (London: Rich and Cowan Ltd, 1935). *The Army in My Time.* p.133.

<sup>11</sup> Edmonds, J.E. Sir. (Brigadier-General). *History of the Great War Military Operations France and Belgium, Volume 1, 1914. Mons, the Retreat T the Seine, the Marne and the Aisne*, vol. I (London Shearer Publications, 1984). p.49.

<sup>12</sup> Wylly. *Crown and Company.* p.12 Note - The Committee of Imperial Defence presented a report to the British cabinet in October 1908 recommending that home defences 'should be of adequate strength' to repel a German invasion of Britain. Ryan, M W. "The Invasion Controversy of 1906-1908: Lieutenant-Colonel Charles a Court Repington and British Perceptions of the German Menace," *Military Affairs* 44, (1980). p8

Note for broader discussion on fear of German invasion of Britain see. Pennell, C. "Home Defence and Invasion Fears in the South East of England, August to December 1914," in *The International Society for First World War Studies* (Trinity College Dublin: 2005). p.3. Disagreement occurred between senior British naval and military staffs about precisely the size of the invading army. However it was finally decided that two of the six BEF divisions would stay at home to repel any German enemy attack. Williamson, Samuel R. *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914*, 2 vols. (London: The Ashfield Press, 1990). p.98.

<sup>13</sup> Wylly. *Crown and Company.* p.17.

<sup>14</sup> Ascoli.p.98.

Consequently there was little means of attending the wounded, no means of removing them and above all in terms of command and control through communications there was , 'no means of controlling from divisional headquarters the general movements of some fifteen thousand men extended along a front of five miles, except by use of mounted officers and orderlies'.<sup>15</sup>

On 24 August, the day Field-Marshal French decided to withdraw his BEF south, the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF were taken by train from Boulogne to Le Cateau. Late that evening, 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade received orders from GHQ to move northwards directly into the path of the German advance. During the night of 24/25 August, they marched north from Le Cateau train station along the Le Cateau to Cambrai road turning north at Inchy / Beaumont-en-Cambresis on through Viesly and on still north towards Solesmes turning north-west to St. Python, a hamlet on the north-western outskirts of Solesmes. Gunfire was heard in the distance.<sup>16</sup> Early on the morning of 25 August, they set about breakfast. It would be their only meal for the day. At about 4:30 p.m. in the afternoon they took up a defensive position near a farm on the northern outskirts of St. Python named Fontaine au Tertre. *Our group was given a lovely reception of wine, bread and cheese by the farmer, his family and local Marie in the farmyard of Fontaine au Tertre. Before we left we sang Tipperary.* The battalion received their first German shells at 6:00 p.m. that evening making them dig in for the first time in the war. At 9:00 p.m., two Uhlan scouts spotted in front of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF line were shot.<sup>17</sup> These were the first shots fired by the RDF in the war and came from men of the outlying piquet under the command of Capt. Supple.<sup>18</sup> Corporal O'Donnell of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF claimed he heard the first shots fired in anger by his comrades at 11:00 p.m.:<sup>19</sup>

About 11:00 p.m. there was a sudden burst of rifle fire from the men on the orchard - - the first shots fired by the Dublins in the War. It lasted about two minutes. We in the farmyard ( Fontaine au Tertre Farm) could hear the foot beat of the enemy's cavalry for miles racing back along the road. A little later, a rider less horse belonging to the Germans was led in by one of our men.

Much like of the rest of the retreating BEF, the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF was met with a German army which surrounded and outnumbered them by approximately three to one. Just after 11: 00 p.m. on the night of 25 August, the battalion en-mass withdrew from Fontaine au Tertre via Quievy, Bevillers, Beauvois skirting the northern edge of Ligny to a position north-east of Haucourt, a distance of about twenty kilometres. (See Map on Page 4.)<sup>20</sup> They had no alternative to retire as the advancing tide of German shelling drove them back.

Through the night, they marched south, shattered and confused the distance of about twenty kilometres from St. Python to Haucourt where they arrived at 5:00 a.m. on the morning of 26 August.<sup>21</sup> Lieut. Macky noted that, 'villages were burning in front of and each side of us'.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Edmonds. *Military Operations-France and Belgium, 1914*. Pp. 147-148.

<sup>16</sup> Hutton, John. *August 1914 Surrender at St Quentin* (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Military, 2010).Pp.47-48.

<sup>17</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481," (London: Public Records Office).

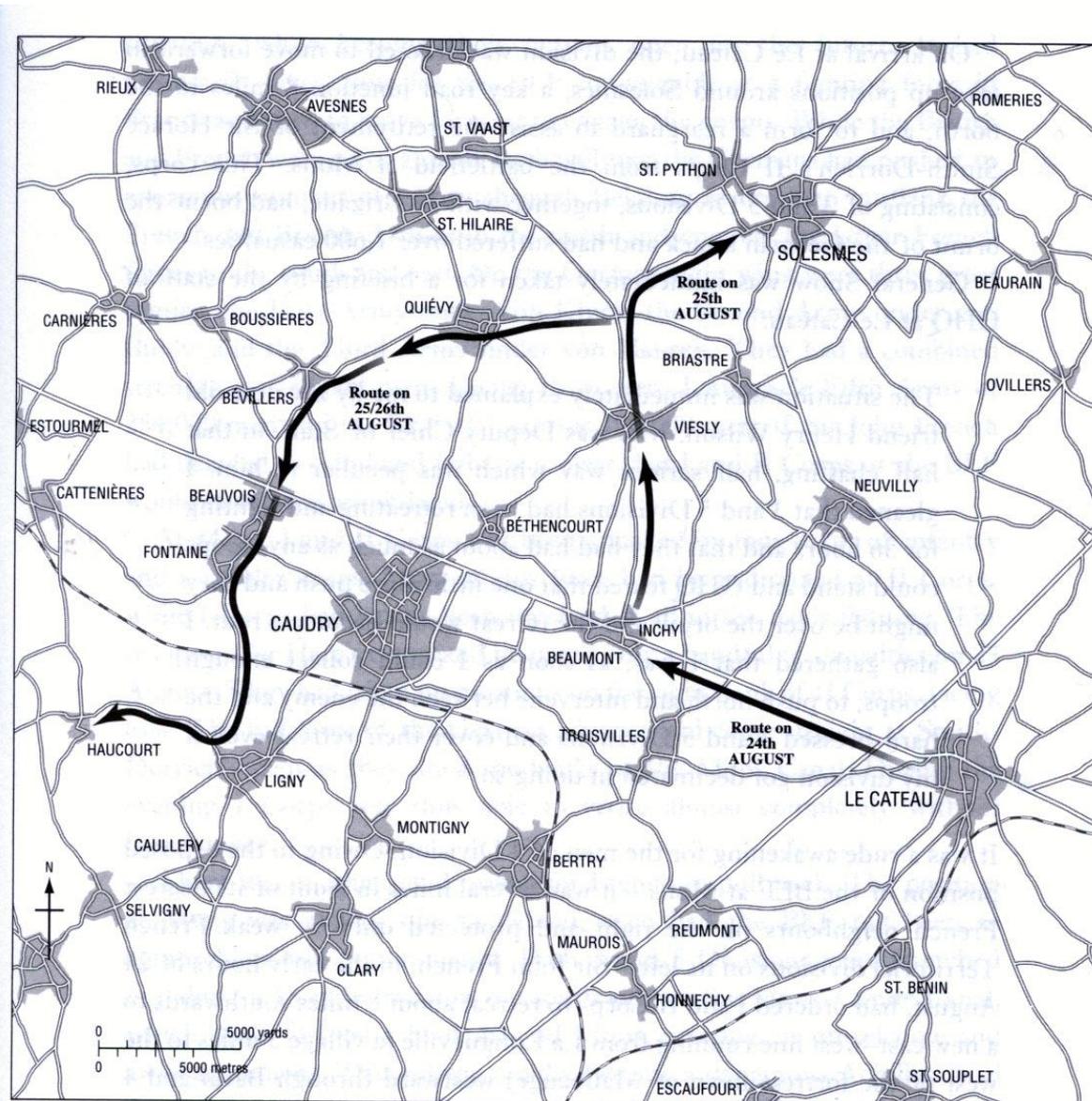
<sup>18</sup> Wylly. *Crown and Company*. p.17.

<sup>19</sup> Hutton. p.52.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.p.35.

<sup>21</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481."

<sup>22</sup> Hutton.p.58.



The movements of the 1st Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 24–26 August 1914.

Mainwaring sent his adjutant Captain R.M. Watson out to seek orders. Watson returned to say there was no sign of the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade staff. Col. Edmonds of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division staff instructed Mainwaring and his men to keep retreating south and not to delay. However, Mainwaring informed Edmonds that his men were tired and would move off after a brief rest.<sup>23</sup> At 06:15 a.m. on 26 August the battalion split up and was deployed 'in artillery formation' to take up defensive covering positions along the Haucourt to Ligny road.<sup>24</sup> At that time too, German advanced guards consisting of 'Cavalry and machine guns carried on motor cars' were firing into Haucourt.<sup>25</sup>

The wave of this mobile German attack was edging towards Haucourt engulfing British battalions of the 12<sup>th</sup> Brigade on the ridge to the north and northeast of the town as it moved forward. According to Watson, under Mainwaring's orders, the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF deployed as follows.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.p.76.

<sup>24</sup> "War Diary 10th Infantry Brigade August 1914 to December 1914 W095/1477," (London: Public Records Office). Report on action of 26 August 12914 by Capt. Wheeler, 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF.

<sup>25</sup> Hutton.p.78.

'A' Company under Capt. N. P. Clarke and 'D' Company under Capt. G.S. Higginson plus one platoon from 'B' Company all under the command of Major Shewan, took up a firing line position and support line on the high ground immediately east of Haucourt along the Haucourt-Ligny Road, now named the Rue du General de Gaulle D15. (See Map on Page 6)<sup>26</sup> According to Capt. Clarke they took part in an attack to capture the ridge above Haucourt to gain a high position. However, 'the enemy got to the ridge before we could reach it and drove our troops off it. So the company was ordered to retire and came back to its original position with the loss of two wounded'.<sup>27</sup>

This initial flurry was over by 10:30 a.m. on 26 August. In the confusion of this withdrawal, 'B' Company under Capt. Conlon and 'C' Company under Capt. Wheeler retreated south. Captain Watson ran after them and told them to stop which they did and took up a position about 800 meters north-west of Caullery which is a little over three kilometres southeast of Haucourt.<sup>28</sup> The exact position they took up was at the T Junction on the Rue Martin Legrand which leaves Haucourt from the south-west of Haucourt, and, the Rue de Selvigny. (See Map on Page 7)<sup>29</sup> They tried to communicate their position with 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade H.Q. but failed, however they did manage to get a verbal message to 4<sup>th</sup> Division H.Q. At about 1:00 p.m. Capt. Wheeler received a message 4<sup>th</sup> Division H.Q. informing him, 'that there would be no retirement'.<sup>30</sup> Capt. Watson's report confirmed this order from 4<sup>th</sup> Division H.Q. He noted in his report that 'under no circumstances would anyone retire.'<sup>31</sup> They came under German shellfire from about 2:00 p.m. and at about 4:45 pm., the few artillery pieces that supported the battalion, began to move off for fear of being captured. Captain Wheeler noted in his report. 'We were informed that the guns were being withdrawn and that we had better get away as fast we could. This was about 5:30 p.m. One platoon of 'C' Company being the last infantry to leave the position'.<sup>32</sup> Mainwaring sent Watson back to find 4<sup>th</sup> Division H.Q. On his way he met a Staff Officer who informed Watson that 4<sup>th</sup> Division knew nothing about the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF situation and that all the guns had gone and the battalion should get away too.<sup>33</sup>

Communications between units in retreat were a disaster at Le Cateau. The breakdown in communications had a profound effect on Haldane. He attributed the breakdown to the disintegration of his 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade. However, he learned some bitter lessons as a result.<sup>34</sup> Watson returned to Mainwaring with the message and the remnants of the two companies began their getaway at about 5:30 p.m. In artillery formation, they headed over the fields towards Elincourt, about eight kilometres south of Haucourt. By that time, Mainwaring was 'nearly done'.<sup>35</sup> They had lost all touch with 'A' and 'D' Companies who were still in the firing line further back along the Haucourt to Ligny-en-Cambresis Road. In fact Watson assumed they had received orders and were also gone.<sup>36</sup> He was wrong. The column of men from 'A' and 'D' Companies under Major Shewan was about 400 strong. With them was a scattering of men from other regiments.

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<sup>26</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481." Report by Captain R.M. Watson titled.' Account by Capt. Watson, Adj, 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Haucourt. 1914.

<sup>27</sup> Hutton.p.85.

<sup>28</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481." Report by Captain Watson.

<sup>29</sup> "War Diary 10th Infantry Brigade August 1914 to December 1914 W095/1477."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Report by on action of 26 August 1914 by Captain Wheeler, 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF.

<sup>31</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481." Account by Captain Watson, 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF on events of 26 August 1914 at Haucourt.

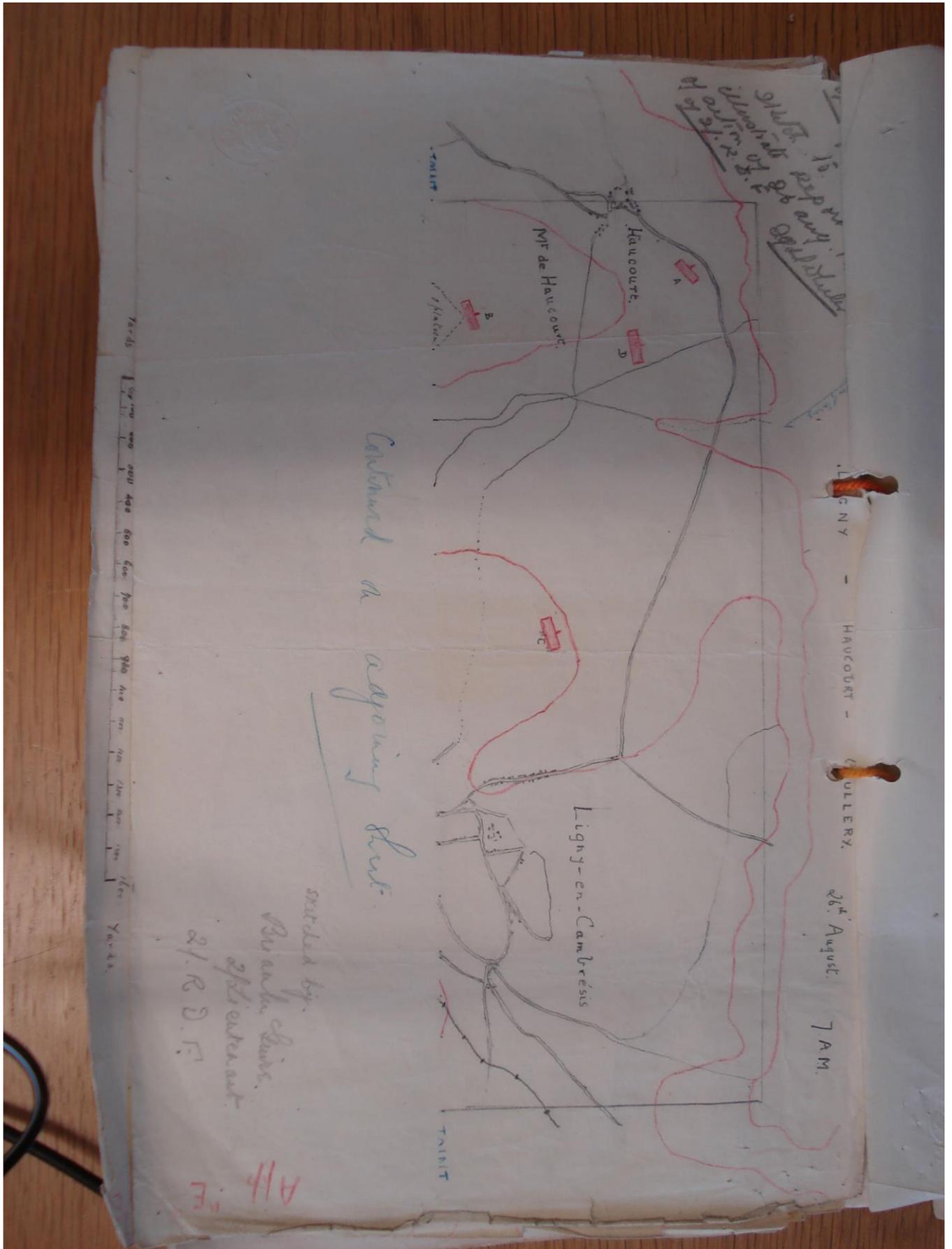
<sup>32</sup> "War Diary 10th Infantry Brigade August 1914 to December 1914 W095/1477." Report on action of 26 August 1914 by Capt. Wheeler, 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF.

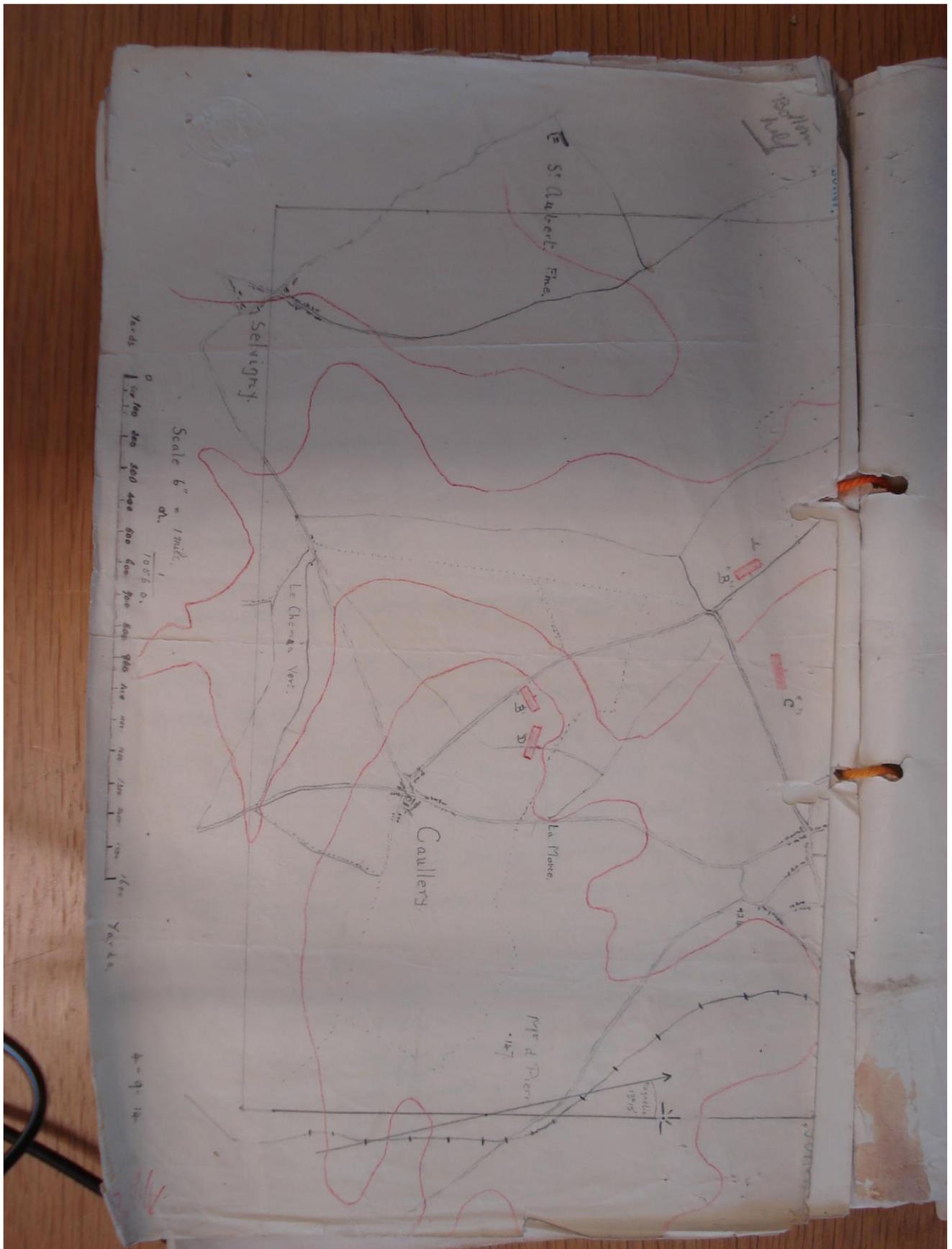
<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Account by Capt. Watson, 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF on events of 26 August 1914 at Haucourt.

<sup>34</sup> Hutton.Pp.90-91.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.p.104.

<sup>36</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481."





Without any orders, Shewan took the initiative and moved his men southwards toward Ligny along the now named Rue du General de Gaulle where they arrived at dawn on 27 August. According to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Macky, 'the men were very wet, fatigued and hungry and when we halted to ascertain our position and direction they immediately dropped into the puddles in the road and slept.'<sup>37</sup> They didn't hang around Ligny for too long either. Having marched through the night, some nearly sleep walking; they left their wounded in the village church at Ligny and pressed on to the next village due south-east which was Clary. Major Shewan placed guards on the column. An advance guard of 'A' Company came under Captain N.P. Clarke with two platoons under Captain G.S. Trigona, a rear guard under Captain Higginson and point being under Lieutenant West.<sup>38</sup>

About one kilometre out the road to Clary, now named Route de Ligny (D15), the column reached a disused distillery when they heard the sound of gunfire coming at them from the direction of Montigny-en-Cambresis which is a little over one kilometre north of Clary. The advance party under Captains Trigona and Clarke were out the road ahead of the column and in view of Clary, the rest of the column were back the road and took cover around the distillery. It was still dawn and there was some confusion in the ranks as to who was actually firing at them, was it Germans or was it their own side.

The initial outburst of firing had wounded three of the five man 'point' who lay some meters ahead of Trigona. Their NCO was alive but still kept his head down. According to Captain Clarke their uniforms 'looked British.' The firing stopped and through binoculars from the distillery, Captain Trigona could be seen signalling towards Montigny while his men were lying down in extended order facing the village. (Note. *Crown and Company* stated Trigona was signalling towards Montigny, however *Dishonoured* suggests he was signalling towards Clary.) The main body was formed on the road and began to march forward, a cyclist scout was sent out to tell the villagers who 'looked British', not to fire on their own people. An English signal came from the village, 'What regiment is that.' Trigona replied 'Dublin Fusiliers.' The mysterious village signaller responded to Trigona saying, 'Dublin Fusiliers, right, come on.'

Unconvinced by this exchange, Trigona sent another signal. 'Will you send out a man?'<sup>39</sup> A man appeared walking out of the town and stopped about forty-five meters when he dropped prone on the ground. Trigona remained un-convinced, it was cat and mouse. By this time the cyclist had passed Trigona and came up to where the wounded 'point' men lay. The NCO by now knew the villages that 'looked British' were in fact Germans and told the cyclist to turn back. For some reason the cyclist ignored the order and carried on. He reached the outskirts of the village and was met with a single shot that killed him. This solitary shot heralded the outbreak of rifle and machine gun fire from concealed German positions along the margins of the village to the front and right of the Dublin Fusiliers.

The main body of men back out the road went into a state of panic and ran out into the beat fields for cover and back down the road to towards Ligny where they took cover in a farmhouse. The fighting on the Route de Ligny (D15), the road between Ligny and Clary, resulted in the death of one officer named 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. J.G.M Dunlop who came from Holywood, Co. Down. His father Archibold Dunlop, was the local general practitioner. His brother George was killed with the 1<sup>st</sup> RDF on 25 April 1915 at 'V' Beach in Gallipoli.<sup>40</sup> Six officers were captured, they were Major H.M Shewan (wounded), Captain G.S Higginson (wounded), Lieutenant J.E Vernon (wounded), Lieutenant C.H.L'E West (wounded), Lieutenant J.F.K Dobbs and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant F.C.S Macky.<sup>41</sup>

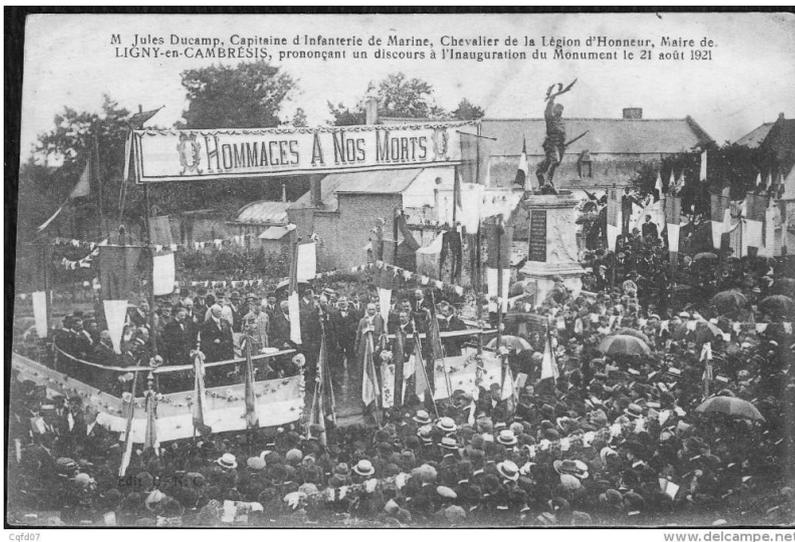
<sup>37</sup> Scott, Peter. *Dishonoured: The Colonel's Surrender at St. Quentin. The Retreat from Mons, August 1914* (London: Tom Donovan, 1994).p.48.

<sup>38</sup> Wylly.p.22.

<sup>39</sup> Scott.p.60. See also Wylly. Pp.22-23.

<sup>40</sup> "Http://Www.Cwgc.Org the Commonwealth War Graves Commission", The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (2013).See also *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919,Part 73 Royal Dublin Fusiliers* (Suffolk: J.B.Hayward and Son, 1989).

<sup>41</sup> Hutton.p.85. and p.107. According to Hutton,2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Macky 'eventually ended up several days later in Holland, where he was arrested and interred by the Dutch authorities'. Major Shewan was captured and remained a POW until the Armistice in 1918.



Some forty-four other ranks were killed in action or died of wounds. One eye witness of the killing that went on at Le Cateau wrote: 'On the way we stumbled on a dead English soldier in the undergrowth with his skull split open: then another with a bent bayonet in his breast.'<sup>42</sup>

*Our group stopped on the edge of a sugar beet field along this road the Route de Ligny (D15) and offered a prayer, a thought and read out the names of ten Dublin Fusiliers who were killed here. The above photograph shows the unveiling of WWI French War Memorial*

at Ligny on 21 August 1921. The only men to escape back to their own lines was Captains Trigona and Clarke and a party of seventy-three other ranks, thirty-five of whom were Dublin Fusiliers. This desperate band of men struck out across country and tracked across German positions. On their way they picked up strays from ten different regiments, eight Gordon Highlanders who became detached from their battalion and who had lay hidden for three days, joined up with this band during the night of 29/30 of August.<sup>43</sup> They reached Abbeville on 4 September and Boulogne the next day. They returned to England where they were 'refitted and eventually re-joined their respective corps.'<sup>44</sup> The delaying action given by small units such as Major Shewan's achieved its objective in slowing down the German advance though northern France and thus allowing time for the BEF to escape to fight another day. Brigadier-General Sir James E. Edmonds referred to the positive combined effect these small rear-guard units had on inflicting a delaying action on the German advance:<sup>45</sup>

Though a mere handful scattered along some eight thousand yards of front, they had prevented the enemy for several hours from advancing along the whole of that line...Beyond question they (the Germans) had suffered very heavily – as indeed was admitted by German officers to some of their British prisoners – and from one cause and another they were disinclined to take risks. The isolation of these British detachments was undersigned in no way detracts from the merit of their achievement.

In his book *Unter Emmich vor Lutlich: Unter Kluck vor Paris*, Hauptmann Heubner confirmed Edmonds conclusions about the effect of the parties left behind. His battalion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 6<sup>th</sup> Division, III Corps, came into battle late. He wrote, 'in front of us there still swarmed a number of scattered English troops, who were easily able to hide in the large woods of the district, and again and again forced us to waste time in deployments, as we could not tell what their strength might be'.<sup>46</sup> The Dublin Fusiliers who were captured at Le Cateau and Clary spent the next four years in German Prisoner of War Camps such as Limburg. Some men survived like Private Christopher Mc Donald from Rathfarnham in Dublin and 9259 Bandsman Percy Harvey from Tongham, near Seale in Kent.<sup>47</sup> Others like 9480 Private John Byrne of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF died in Limburg on 27 September 1918.

<sup>42</sup> Gilbert.p.60.

<sup>43</sup> Scott. p.64.

<sup>44</sup> Wylly.p.24.

<sup>45</sup> Edmonds. *Military Operations-France and Belgium, 1914.* p.197.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.p.197.

<sup>47</sup> "Mc Donald,Private Christopher, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers," (Dublin: RDFA Archive).  
And "Harvey, Bandsman Percy, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers," (Dublin: RDFA Archive).



His sister's husband, Private Michael Bowden of the same battalion died in Limburg on 23 May 1918. Both of these men came from Athy County Kildare.<sup>48</sup> Among those killed near the village of Clary was Lance Corporal John Boland of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF seen in adjacent photograph second man in from right. John lived with his family at 16 Russell Street, off Dublin's North Circular Road. At nineteen years of age like hundreds of young men, he joined the Dubs during the General Lockout in 1913 in order to earn a living. He was a messenger boy before he enlisted. Before he left Gravesend, he wrote to his mother telling her he did well in his musketry training. He was twenty years of age when he died. The Germans buried John

in a German Military cemetery. In 1924, John's body was re-interred in the British War Cemetery at Honnechy.<sup>49</sup> *Our group visited John's grave at Honnechy and laid a wreath in his memory.* On the same day as John was killed, other Dublin soldiers died as well. Willie Clark from Talbot Street, James King from Clarence Street, James Martin from Finglas, Mathew Sharkey from Corporation Buildings, Foley Street, George Frazer from Pembroke Street and Ned Howey from Skerries were some of the Dublin Fusiliers killed that day. The majority of the men killed on the 26/27 August 1914 are buried at Honnechy Cemetery. However those whose bodies were never discovered are remembered on the La Ferte-sons-Jouarre Memorial.<sup>50</sup>

*Brian and Seamus had organised a wreath laying ceremony at this memorial which took place on 17 June 2104. The Irish Ambassador at the time, Mr Rory Montgomery, the Marie of La Ferte-sons-Jouarre and French army veterans and Mr Julien Blake, area representative of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission attended the ceremony in memory of the Dublin Fusiliers mentioned on the memorial. After the ceremony our grope were hosted to a reception presented by the Marie in the Hotel de Ville in La Ferte-sons-Jouarre where speeches were made gifts were exchanged.*

Out of a battalion strength of twenty two-officers and 1,023 other ranks that landed in France on 23 August 1914, all that was left on 13 September after twenty days of fighting was ten officers and 478 other ranks, the rest were either killed, wounded or taken prisoner.<sup>51</sup> This terrible loss of men was typical of the losses incurred by the British Expeditionary Force which was almost wiped out. The French army was also almost annihilated; within four days of fighting they lost 40,000 men, 27,000 in one day on 22 August 1914, the bloodiest day in French military history.

<sup>48</sup> Family records given to author by Mr Tom Robinson, Portlaoise, Co.Loiois.

<sup>49</sup> "Boland, Lance Corporal John, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers," (Dublin: RDFA Archive). Note. Brendan Behan lived in 13 Russell Street. Honnechy is a village in the Department of the Nord, eight kilometres south-west of Le Cateau. Honnechy British Cemetery is north-east of the village, on the north-west side of the road to Reumont. Honnechy was part of the battlefield of Le Cateau in August 1914, and from that time it remained in German hands until 9 October 1918. There are some 348 men buried in this cemetery of which thirty-one are Royal Dublin Fusiliers, one of which was L/Cpl. John Boland. His grave reference number is IC26.

<sup>50</sup> "Http://Www.Cwgc.Org the Commonwealth War Graves Commission".See also *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-1919,Part 73 Royal Dublin Fusiliers.*

<sup>51</sup> Wylly.p.24.

## The surrender at St Quentin

At about 5:30 p.m. on evening of 26 August, Lieut.- Col. Arthur Mainwaring and a band of about 100 men marching in artillery formation, headed over the fields towards Elincourt. They arrived in St. Quentin shattered, broken physically and mentally. At fifty years of age and nearly ready for retirement, a veteran of the Boer War, Mainwaring was ill and totally exhausted when he reached the outskirts of St Quentin.

With the Germans in pursuit, Mainwaring and his men could not hang around this town either. On their way they had met up with approximately 100 men of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment commanded by Lieut.- Colonel John Ford Elkington. With no adequate transport such as trains left in the town, the Commander of II Corps, General Smith-Dorrien advised Mainwaring and his men in St. Quentin to keep heading south.<sup>52</sup> Mainwaring approached the Mayor of St. Quentin for help in getting away. The Mayor was convinced that the Germans had surrounded the town and implored Mainwaring to surrender to the Germans whom he hoped would save the town and its inhabitants from annihilation. Mainwaring and Elkington agreed with the Mayor's request and their men laid down their arms. Their surrender document was intercepted by an officer in the 4<sup>th</sup> (Royal Irish) Dragoon Guards who were ordered to St. Quentin to act as a protective screen between St. Quentin and the advancing Germans. The Dragoons officer, Major Tom Bridges, mustered the men who had surrendered and led them to safety.

Late in the afternoon of Saturday 12 September 1914, Colonels Mainwaring and Elkington stood trial before a courts martial at Chouy, a small village about sixteen kilometres south-east of Villiers-Cotteret. They faced two charges: the first was cowardice; the second was dishonourable conduct, having behaved in a scandalous manner unbecoming the character of an officer and a gentleman.<sup>53</sup> In his statement to the court, Colonel Mainwaring said he met General Smith-Dorrien in the town of St. Quentin. When Mainwaring went to look for a train for his men they were all gone, including Smith-Dorrien. In his defence, what else could they do? Fight the Germans to the death and destroy St. Quentin, or, surrender and give some of his men a chance of life albeit in a German P.O.W Camp.

On 14 September Mainwaring and Elkington were found guilty and cashiered out of the army in disgrace. Colonel Mainwaring, being a sick man, returned to England and over time fell into obscurity. He wrote several historical works on the history of the Dublin Fusiliers which included the history of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in the Boer War. Colonel Elkington set about regaining his honour as an 'officer and a gentleman.' He joined the French Foreign Legion as a private and served on the Western Front. On 28 September 1915, he was wounded and invalid home.

On 22 August 1916, he was re-appointed as a Lieut.- Colonel of the Warwickshire Regiment and awarded the D.S.O. He died on 27 June 1944. During the Second World War, his youngest son Captain Richard Elkington of the 10<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade was killed in Tunisia on 19 January 1943. They are jointly commemorated on a memorial window in Burghclere Church, Hampshire. In January 1927, Colonel Mainwaring and his wife lived in Melbourne, Derbyshire. He suffered a stroke that paralysed him down one side. By the Autumn of 1930, they had moved to Pounsley Mill, Blackboys, Framfield, East Sussex. It was here on 11 October 1930, at the age of sixty-six, that Arthur Edward Mainwaring died of a heart attack, aggravated by a stroke, chronic asthma and persistent high blood pressure. In death there was at least a small measure of posthumous rehabilitation, his death certificate describing him as a 'Retired Lieut. Colonel Royal Dublin Fusiliers.'<sup>54</sup>

On 7 August 2012, members of the RDFA were welcomed at St Thomas a Becket Church (Framfield Parish Church) in East Sussex by Ms Joan Burne and Mr John Mordaunt on the occasion of the RDFA's visit to the grave of Lieut.-Col. A.E. Mainwaring. The grave was discovered some years ago by RDFA deceased member Mr Dan Finnegan who took it upon himself to clean up and restore the grave.

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<sup>52</sup> Hutton.p126.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.p.146.

<sup>54</sup> Scott.Pp.70-73.

## The Marne and the Aisne

Those of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF who got away from Le Cateau and Haucourt, which was about 250 men, continued their retreat southwards. On 30 August 1914, they crossed the river Oise at Noyon and destroyed the bridge after they had crossed.

They continued their journey south in the heat of high summer through the French villages of Berveuil-Sur-Aine, Valerie, Nery, Verbiere, Baron and Lagny-Sur-Marne where on 3 September the battalion crossed the river Marne and bivouacked at Lussigny on the night of 4 September. They blew up the bridges behind them for fear the Germans could use them in their attack on Paris. The German army was only forty kilometres from Paris. The Dublins carried on their march southwards and arrived at Chevry on 5 September. News of the German retreat had come through to 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade headquarters. Chevry was the furthest point south the remnants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF had marched in their retreat from Haucourt. They had marched 321 kilometres (200 miles) from Haucourt in ten days.<sup>55</sup>

For thirty-three days nonstop the German troops had been in continuous advance, as had the British been on continuous retreat. The Kaiser's men had covered their advance mainly on foot carrying heavy packs of weapons and ammunition. Re-supply began to wane. Due to 'collateral' damage inflicted on the Belgian infra-structure, the Germans found it difficult to re-supply their advancing army, they were now vulnerable. The Battle of The Marne lasted for four days between 5 and 9 September and was essentially a French affair. The future of Paris and indeed the war depended on the French stopping the Germans. On 7 September, the Schlieffen Plan was stopped. The following day, RFC spotter planes reported German units retreating north. Their withdrawal presented an opportunity for the BEF to turn the retreat into an advance northwards. The war diary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF at this time noted the men's morale had improved and they looked 'much better'.<sup>56</sup> On 10 September, the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF re-crossed the Marne at the railway bridge at Saussoy (Ussy-sur-Marne). According to Kingston:<sup>57</sup>

The crossing was a slow process with the carts having to bump over the railway sleepers. To assist the remaining artillery and ambulances to negotiate the difficulties, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers remained at the bridge while the rest of the fighting troops continued to advance.

They continued their march back north through Villers Le Petit and Septmonts, the latter being reached on 13 September. Local villagers informed them that the Germans had retreated two days previous.<sup>58</sup> On the same day, the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade captured the iron girder bridge over the Aisne at Venizel which is about five kilometres east of the city of Soissons. The capturing of this bridge allowed the remainder of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division and other divisions to cross the Aisne and pursue the Germans who by that time had retired to the high ground above the Aisne along the Chemin des Dames. Early on the morning of the 14 September, in an effort of continuous pursuit, a much depleted 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF crossed the Aisne at Venizel and occupied the high ground above the village of Bucy-le-Long, a small French village about eight kilometres northeast of Soissons. *Our group stopped at this bridge for some photos.* The battalion's objective was to assist the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Brigades in their attack on the northern edge of the Vregny-Braye Plateau north east of Crouy and in particular the capture of La Montagne Farm.<sup>59</sup> (See Map on Page 13)

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<sup>55</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481."

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Kingston, Grahame P. *History of the 4th (British) Infantry Division 1914-1919* (London: The London Press, 2006),p53.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.p.55.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.p.61.





The 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF remained at La Montagne Farm consolidating their position until 1 October when they received orders to move to St. Marguerite (Missy-Sur-Aisne) five kilometres east of Bucy-le-Long.<sup>62</sup> *Our group found La Montagne Farm and were kindly given a tour of the farm by the farmer who promised us that the next time we come back he would show us some caves used by the Germans for treating their wounded.* Reservists from Ireland began to arrive and a party of forty-five men who had been cut off from the battalion at Haucourt re-joined the battalion.<sup>63</sup> The German retreat had stopped and trench warfare began. According to Wylly:<sup>64</sup>

It was now apparent that the German retreat had come to an end and that the enemy was holding positions which had been previously selected and prepared for defence; on the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup>, too, instructions were received that offensive action on the part of the British was for the present to cease and that the positions the troops were holding were to be strengthened. The trench warfare, which was for so long to endure, may now be said to have commenced.

Field Marshall French issued no further operational orders to his command for two whole weeks between 16 September and 1 October, the period during which trench warfare, with all its attendant horrors, first began. It was by then becoming clear that the Allied armies could not break through with frontal attacks on the Aisne and Joffre decided on an outflanking movement - the so called 'Race to the Sea' which began in late September 1914. The War Diary of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF noted on 28 September. 'The French outflanking movement against 1<sup>st</sup> Bavarian Corps has itself been met by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bavarian Corps'.<sup>65</sup> The trench system on the western front was consequently created by weeks of flanking attacks, each one stifled by the enemy's defence line.

This shifting movement to the north-west caused Field Marshall French to review the position of his army. At the end of September he proposed to Joffre that the BEF, currently sandwiched between two French armies in the centre of the Allied line, should resume its position beyond La Bassee, and, with the aid of Belgium units, fill the gap between the town and the sea, a distance of some sixty-five kilometres. This offered various logistical advantages. For example it placed the BEF close to their cross-Channel supply ports at Calais and Boulogne. Joffre was less enthusiastic, but on 1 October, the British commander told him, that with or without Joffre's agreement, he intended to shift his forces north and west. The move began on the night of 2 October 1914.<sup>66</sup> In terms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF, on 6 October they were relieved in their lines by French troops at St. Marguerite and began their journey north as per Field Marshall French's orders. They packed up their equipment and marched a distance of about eighty kilometres east from St. Marguerite through Harten-et-Taux, Ouchy La Ville, Pisseleux, Rully and arrived at the train station in Pont Sainte Maxence on 10 October. That evening at 7:30 p.m. they entrained for St. Omer in northern France where a new chapter in their history in the Ieper salient awaited them.<sup>67</sup>

*It was at La Montagne Farm that the RDFA August 1914 tour ended and we returned to Ireland. Sadly many of our countrymen like young John Boland whom we came to France to honour and remember never made that homeward journey.*

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<sup>62</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481."

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.See also Kingston.p.68.

<sup>64</sup> Wylly.p.31.

<sup>65</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481."

<sup>66</sup> Neillands.p.107.

<sup>67</sup> "War Diary 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, August 1914 to September 1916,W095/1481."

## La Ferte-sous-Jouarre Memorial

La Ferte-sous-Jouarre is a small town sixty-six kilometres to the east of Paris, located on the main road (N3) running east from Paris. The Memorial is situated in a small park on the south-western edge of the town, on the south bank of the River Marne, just off the main road to Paris, The Memorial Register is kept at the Town Hall. The memorial commemorates 3,740 officers and men of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) who fell at the battles of Mons, Le Cateau, the Marne and the Aisne between the end of August and early October 1914 and have no known graves. There are seventeen RDF men on the La Ferte-sous-Jouarre Memorial. Among them is Sergeant 10062 Edward John Shakespeare who lived with his family in the married quarters at Wellington Barracks on Dublin's South Circular Road.<sup>68</sup> He joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF and was a Sergeant when killed on 27 August 1914 at Ligny. He was the only son and had three sisters, Esther, Violet and Mabel. His body was never found and his name is listed on the La Ferte-Sous-Jouarre Memorial.



Also on this memorial is the name of Pte. 8514 Patrick Kennedy, 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF, marked 'X' in the adjacent photograph was killed in action on 27 August or died of wounds on 28 August 1914, he was twenty-nine years of age. Patrick was born in 1885 at the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin enlisted into the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF at Naas, Co. Kildare. He was one of the Reservists called back to the battalion at the outbreak of the war in early August 1914. Patrick had previously served with the battalion from 21 October 1902 to 20 October 1905 and had moved to Glasgow where he worked as a driver on the Glasgow Underground. He was a married man and his wife Isabella or Bella as he called her, gave birth to their son, Joshua Patrick on 1 September 1914 just a few days after his father had died. The telegram of her husband's death was kept from Bella until after the birth of Joshua.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup>Connolly, S. "The Career of Lieut Michael Andrew Condron," *The Blue Cap, Journal of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association* 18, (December 2013).p14. Wellington Barracks is now Griffith College., Dublin.

<sup>69</sup> "Kennedy,Private Patrick, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers," (Dublin: RDFA Archive). Pte, Kennedy had four granddaughters, one of whom is Helena Kennedy Q.C. who held a seat in the House of Lords.

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## The Bandsman and the Conductorette

Sean Connolly

If there were Oscars for the presentation of the story of a soldier who served in the First World War, then Alan Twyford would be a worthy winner. He has donated a remarkable book to the RDFA Archive which tells the story of his grandparents, Percy and Grace Harvey. Percy was a musician in the band of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF, having enlisted in 1905 at the age of fourteen. He served in Egypt, 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.

As a bandsman, Percy would have been expected to carry out medical orderly duties in wartime. Percy was one of those captured 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 ninety 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:<sup>1</sup>

*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 4 children, 5 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren. Received a letter from Royal*

*Hospital Chelsea enquiring about my welfare but happy both are well.*



In the adjacent photographs, the top photo was taken in Aldershot in 1911 of Bandsman Percy Harvey, 'C' Co.2<sup>nd</sup> RDF team captain seated behind the winner's shield. The bottom photograph is Percy Harvey, Prisoner 1584, Chemnitz, Saxony, Germany

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. The colour, design and layout of the book, with its realistic reproduction of documents set 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.

<sup>1</sup> "Harvey, Bandsman Percy, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers."

## Some further debate on recruitment in Ireland into the British Army during the First World War.

Tom Burke

Although perhaps subsided, the debate about Irish recruitment into the British armed services throughout the First World War is still alive. In 1927, the British Government established a commission to investigate 'the condition of British Ex-Servicemen in the Irish Free State'.<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of establishing pension entitlements, one of the first tasks the Commission undertook was to establish how many men recruited in Ireland served in the British army, navy and air force during the war. The following written in italics are transcripts of Minute Sheets written by Sir Adair Hore, Permanent Secretary of the British Ministry of Pensions in December 1927 and by a Mr. Plummer in November 1927 in which they outlined the numbers of men who enlisted in Ireland during the war.<sup>2</sup> The figures presented throw up differences between estimates of recruitment quoted in previous publication on Irish recruitment.<sup>3</sup> This brief paper will present the recruitment data contained in the Commission file and compare Commission figures with data published in other sources commonly quoted on Irish recruitment.

*Sir Adair Hore*

*The figures available show that the total recruits obtained from Ireland during the Great War was 134,202. Definite figures showing the provinces from which these recruits were enlisted are available only to the end of February 1918. But the following figures show the estimated totals up to November 11, 1918.*

Table 1.

<i>Province</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<i>Ulster</i>	<i>62,000</i>
<i>Munster</i>	<i>17,500</i>
<i>Leinster</i>	<i>48,000</i>
<i>Connaught</i>	<i>6,500</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>134,000</i>
<i>Total Munster, Leinster and Connaught</i>	<i>72,000</i>

<sup>1</sup> "British Ex-Servicemen in Irish Free State Commission to Enquire into Conditions Of . P I N 15/757," (London: Public Records Office, 1930).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Note. The Ireland referred to in the Commission data is the Ireland of 1918.

<sup>3</sup> Callan, Patrick. "Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland During the First World War," *The Irish Sword* XVII., (1987).  
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*In estimating the figures for the period for which they are not available rather more than the arithmetical proportion has been allotted to South Ireland. The figures for the British Isles are as follows.*

Table 2.<sup>4</sup>

*Population and Recruiting for the Army in the Empire*

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total enlistments from all sources to 11 November 1918</i>	<i>Estimated total population in July 1914</i>	<i>Percentage of total population represented by enlistments</i>	<i>Estimated male population in July 1914</i>	<i>Percentage of male population represented by enlistments</i>
<i>England</i>	<i>4,006,158</i>	<i>34,618,346</i>	<i>11.57</i>	<i>15,681,181</i>	<i>24.02</i>
<i>Wales</i>	<i>272,924</i>	<i>2,489,202</i>	<i>10.96</i>	<i>1,268,284</i>	<i>21.52</i>
<i>Scotland</i>	<i>557,618</i>	<i>4,849,500</i>	<i>11.50</i>	<i>2,351,843</i>	<i>23.71</i>
<i>Ireland</i>	<i>134,202</i>	<i>4,374,500</i>	<i>3.07</i>	<i>2,184,193</i>	<i>6.14</i>
<i>Totals</i>	<i>4,970,902</i>	<i>45,331,548</i>	<i>10.73</i>	<i>22,485,501</i>	<i>22.11</i>

*Note.*

- 1. England. In the population of England, the Isle of Man (50,000) is included, but the Channel Islands (100,000) are not included. Excluding Monmouthshire*
- 2. Wales. Including Monmouthshire*

*Statistical Branch.  
6<sup>th</sup> December 1927*

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<sup>4</sup> These figures do not include Irish men who enlisted in the rest of United Kingdom such as the men who enlisted into the Tyneside Irish, the Liverpool Irish or the London Irish battalions. See Denman.p.135.

Mr. Plummer

At the War Officer today I was able to obtain the figures shown on the attached schedule. Although trying several sources I failed to find any records of enlistments for the separate years in respect of England, Scotland and Wales. All the enlistments shown for Ireland are of a voluntary nature, as the Military Service Act did not apply. Just before the Armistice, however, as you probably know, the Government had made arrangements to put it in force unless a definite quota of men was obtained from each district in Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

Table 3.

<i>Country in UK</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Wales</i>	<i>Ireland</i>
<i>Total Male population 1 July 1914</i>	16,681,181	2,357,843	1,268,284	2,184,193
<i>Total number of recruits from 4 August 1914 to 11 November 1918</i>	4,006,158	557,618	272,924	134,202
<i>Percentage of enlistments compared with total male population</i>	24.02	23.71	21.52	6.14

Table 4.

Separate figures available only for Ireland for each year are as under:-

<i>Date</i>	<i>Amount</i>
<i>August 1914 to December to 31 December 1914</i>	44,134
<i>1 January 1915 to 31 December 1915</i>	46,371
<i>1 January 1916 to 31 December 1916</i>	19,057
<i>1 January 1917 to 31 December 1917</i>	14,023
<i>1 January 1918 to 31 March 1918</i>	2,733
<i>No separate returns are available from March 1918 to November 1918</i>	
<i>Total</i>	126,318

The figures above for Wales include the whole of Monmouth. The figures for England include the Isle of Man but not the Channel Islands. The figures for Ireland relate to enlistments in Ireland only. They exclude Irish enlistments in Great Britain.

29 November 1927.

<sup>5</sup> "British Ex-Servicemen in Irish Free State Commission to Enquire into Conditions Of . P I N 15/757."

Footnote

Sir A Hore,

I have asked Captain Bealesing ( writing not clear) to try and obtain separate figures for the area now represented by the Irish Free State, and he is paying a further visit to the War Office today for... Table 5. Figures showing recruiting by regimental districts (including counties as shown) and male population given by census return 1911.<sup>6</sup>

Regimental District	Comprising Counties	Male Population	Recruits 1914	Recruits 1915	Recruits 1916	Recruits 1917	Total Recruits to end of 1917
Tralee	Clare Limerick Cork Kerry	53,877 72,229 197,516 81,874	1,288	2,506	1,156	795	5,745
Cork City		Included in Cork County	2,524	3,677	2,206	1,699	10,106 14,577
Omagh	Donegal Londonderry Fermanagh Tyrone	84,627 67,663 31,690 71,738	3,643	3,016	1,148	892	8,699 8,200
Belfast	Antrim Down Belfast City	93,651 97,951 181,268	20,900	13,734	5,307	4,452	44,393 43,841
Armagh	Armagh Louth Monaghan Cavan	58,578 31,191 35,953 47,743	1,740	2,270	850	486	5,346 5,030
Naas	Dublin County Wicklow Kildare Carlow	78,708 31,113 37,684 18,481	1,681	1,570	624	476	4,361 (4,351)
Dublin	Dublin City	147,656	7,283	9,612	4,292	3,089	24,276 (24,266) 26,611
Birr	King's County Queen's County Meath Westmeath Longford	29,804 28,711 33,934 31,910 22,656	1,318	3,022	851	476	5,667 5,287

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



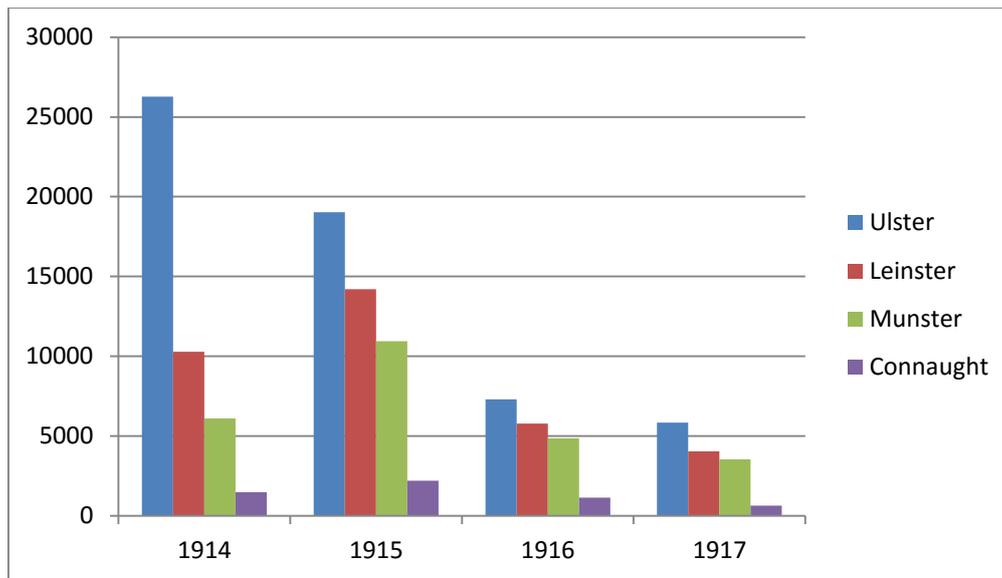


Figure 1.  
Graphical representation of data on recruitment contained in Table 5.

Table 6.  
Comparison of Pension Data with other quoted data.

Date	Total (Pension Records Data 12 Month intervals)	Date	Total (Callan 6 Month intervals)
August 1914 to December to 31 December 1914	44,134	4 August 1914 to February 1915	50,107
1 January 1915 to 31 December 1915	46,371	February 1915 to August 1915	25,235
1 January 1916 to 31 December 1916	19,057	August 1915 to February 1916	19,801
1 January 1917 to 31 December 1917	14,023	February 1916 to August 1916	9,323
1 January 1918 to 31 March 1918	2,733	August 1916 to February 1917	8,178
No separate returns are available from March 1918 to November 1918	7,884 (Computed)	February 1917 to August 1917	5,609
		August 1917 to February 1918	6,550
		February 1918 to August 1918	5,812
		August 1918 to 11 November 1918	9,845
Totals	134,202		140,460
Difference			+ 6,258

**Comments on comparison of recruitment data**

For the period 4 August 1914 to 11 November 1918, there is a difference of 6,258 between what Callan has recorded and what the British Ministry of Pensions **estimated** in 1927. Callan’s primary source was The Public Records Office, Kew, Reference, Nats 1-85. According to Callan, ‘a total of 140,460 men enlisted in Ireland in the British armed services during the war.’<sup>8</sup> As an explanation for this difference, note that Callan stated, ‘British armed services’ which presumably included the Royal Navy and Royal Flying Corps. The Pension Records data referred to the ‘Army in the Empire’ only, hence the possible difference.

David Fitzpatrick’s estimates of army enlistments in Ireland are in accordance with the Pension Records estimate of 1927. According to Fitzpatrick, ‘the best estimate for recruitment in Ireland after mobilisation suggests that the army secured about 134,000 men’. He also noted that ‘over 6,000’ enlisted into the navy and naval reserve and ‘about 4,000’ enlisted into the RFC. His estimates were ‘derived from a wide variety of official police and military returns in the PRO and the NAI’.<sup>9</sup> Fitzpatrick’s total figure for Army, Navy and RFC recruitment throughout the war as being 144,000, are some 4,460 more than Callan quoted.

It is important to state that the Commission’s data was estimated. It is possible that the Commission’s estimates were low. In January 1916, the government’s Chief Secretary for Irish Affairs, Augustine Birrell, stated that up to 15 December 1915, some 94,797 men had enlisted in Ireland.<sup>10</sup> For similar periods, the Commission estimates were lower than both Birrell’s and Callan’s sources who interestingly are relatively near each other. See Table 7.

Table 7.  
Comparison of Birrell data with Pension data

Province	Augustine Birrell figures up to 15 December 1915. <sup>11</sup> (17 months)	Pension Records up to 31 December 1915 <sup>12</sup> (17 months)	Callan data August 1914 to February 1916 <sup>13</sup> (18 months)
Leinster	27,458	24,486	
Ulster	49,760	45,303	
Munster	14,190	17,041	
Connaught	3,389	3,675	
Totals	94,797	90,505	95,143

With these anomalies, it seems the debate on Irish recruitment will continue.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.42.

<sup>9</sup> Fitzpatrick. p.388 and p.500. PRO (Public Records Office, Kew) NAI (National Archives of Ireland).

<sup>10</sup> Denman.p.133.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.p.133.

<sup>12</sup> "British Ex-Servicemen in Irish Free State Commission to Enquire into Conditions Of . P I N 15/757."

<sup>13</sup> Callan. "Recruiting for the British Army in Ireland During the First World War."

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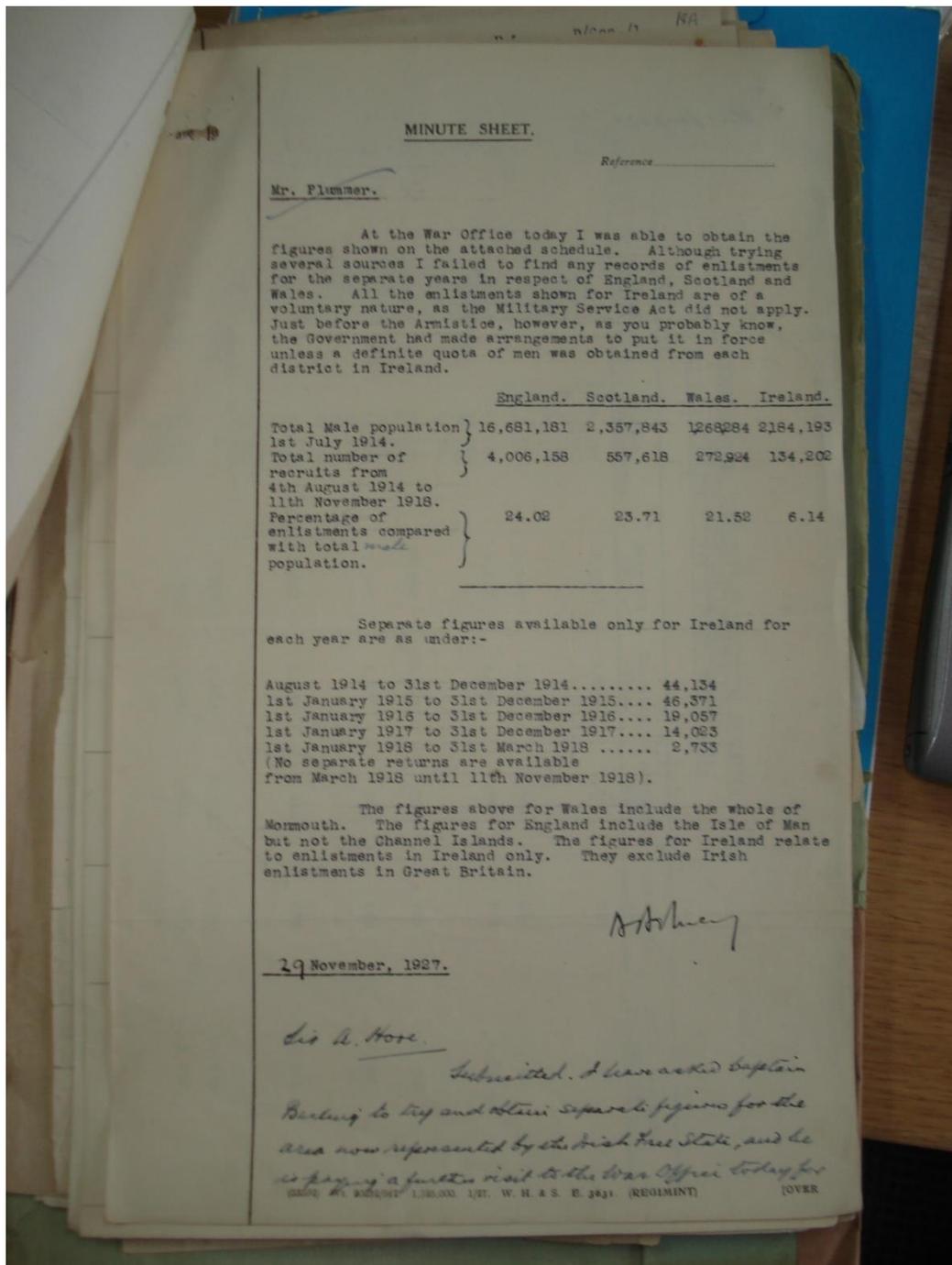


Image of page from Pensions File at the National Archives, Kew in London indicating Irish recruiting data.



### **Speech by President Michael D. Higgins at the dedication of the Cross of Sacrifice Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin Thursday, 31 July 2014.**

On 5 August, President Michael D. Higgins attended international commemoration service at St. Symphorien Cemetery near Mons in Belgium to mark the opening of the First World War. He later went to Liege to attend a similar ceremony.<sup>1</sup> At that service in St. Symphorien, HRH Prince Harry read out a letter from 17189 Private Michael Lennon, 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Dublin Fusiliers to his brother Frank. In the

letter Pte. Lennon wrote: 'Well Frank, I suppose we are for it tomorrow, if we don't get shelled on the way...I can only hope that we have all the luck to come through the night and if I should get bowled out – well it can't be helped.'<sup>2</sup> Pte. Michael Lennon was killed on 28 June 1915 in Gallipoli; his name is on the Helles Memorial.<sup>3</sup>

A few days before he travelled to Belgium, President Higgins addressed a gathering of dignitaries at a dedication ceremony to mark the unveiling of the Cross of Sacrifice by HRH Duke of Kent at Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin on Thursday 31 July 2014. In the context of how far we in the Republic of Ireland have come in acknowledging the suffering and misery that terrible war inflicted on the people of Ireland, President Higgins speech is historic and inspirational. The following is the text of President Higgins's speech at Glasnevin Cemetery.<sup>4</sup>

Your Royal Highness; Lord Mayors; A Airí / Ministers, Secretary of State; Ambassadors; A Cheann Foirne agus a Óglacha na hÉireann / Chief of Staff and Members of the Defence Forces, Representatives of the British Forces; A bhalla de hIontaobhas Ghlas Naíon / Members of the Glasnevin Trust; Representatives of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; A Dhaoine Uaisle / Ladies and Gentlemen; It is important that the First World War, and those whose lives it claimed, be not left as a blank space in Irish history. Today therefore is a significant day, as we dedicate this Cross of Sacrifice – the first such Cross to be erected in the Republic of Ireland. On an occasion such as this we eliminate all the barriers that have stood between those Irish soldiers whose lives were taken in the war, whose remains for which we have responsibility, and whose memories we have a duty to respect. San iliomad uaigneanna ar fud na hEorpa, tá glúil de fhir óga curtha taobh le taobh, agus is sna huaigheanna sin ar fad ina n-iomláine atá íospartach an chogaidh sin. [In so many graves across Europe, the flower of a generation lies together, and all of their graves taken together hold the victims of that war.]

We cannot give back their lives to the dead, nor whole bodies to those who were wounded, or repair the grief, undo the disrespect that was sometimes shown to those who fought or their families. But we honour them all now, even if at a distance, and we do not ask, nor would it be appropriate to interrogate, their reasons for enlisting.

<sup>1</sup> RTE Radio and Television covered both events and were assisted in their research and commentary by members of the RDFA.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, Amanda. "If I Should Get Bowled out, Well It Can't Be Helped..." <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2716425/>, The Daily Mail Online (5 August 2014).

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cwgc.org> the Commonwealth War Graves Commission".

<sup>4</sup> Higgins, President Michael D. "Speech at the Dedication of the Cross of Sacrifice Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin <http://www.president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/president-hrh-duke-of-kent-unveil-cross-of-sacrifice-1>", The Office of the President (31 July 2014).

If they could come back no doubt they would have questions to ask as to why it was, and how it came to be that their lives were taken. To all of them in their silence we offer our own silence, without judgement, and with respect for their ideals, as they knew them, and for the humanity they expressed towards each other. And we offer our sorrow too that they and their families were not given the compassion and the understanding over the decades that they should have received. The suffering visited upon our own people at home had perhaps blinded our sight and hardened hearts in so many ways.

As His Royal Highness, the Duke of Kent just said in his speech, the Cross of Sacrifice stands in cemeteries in the care of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission throughout Europe, indeed across the world – from Flanders to Gallipoli. As one in a web of many others, this monument reminds us that WWI was a war with a global reach, one that affected every part of the European continent – and that the Irish who fought in that war are an integral part of that history. In recent years, an increasing number of writers and scholars, religious and political leaders have redirected our gaze to the complexity of the Irish engagement with WWI, allowing for a more inclusive remembering at public level.



President Michael D Higgins, his wife Sabina, His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent and senior staff of the Irish Defence Forces at Glasnevin Cemetery on 31 July 2014.

As we are facing into that past, we are also progressing in our understanding of the complicated intertwining of loyalties which characterised Irish identities at the turn of the twentieth century. This is facilitated by easier access to, and a renewal of interest in, the writings of Irish soldiers – their diaries, notebooks, letters and poems. The line “not for flag, nor King, nor Emperor” in the sonnet Thomas Kettle dedicated to his three-year old daughter Betty four days before his death during the Battle of the Somme, or the poem Francis Ledwidge wrote in honour of his close friend Thomas McDonagh while recovering from his wounds in Manchester in 1916, lend us a better sense of those men’s multi-layered senses of belonging.

Such writings throw light on the complex motives and circumstances that led so many Irishmen to volunteer to join the British Army. Whether it was a true belief in ideals; driven by unionist or nationalist feelings, and within that, many different versions of each; escape from poverty; the search for adventure; a friendship network, or the continuation of a family tradition – it is not for us to judge those who fought and their motivations. We should seek, rather, to show such respect for this complexity as does not suggest that we sink into relativism, or a glossing over of differences, some of them enduring and not easily reconcilable.

One century later, the First World War remains somewhat of a mystery. Its origins are mysterious. So is its course. Why, when the hope of bringing the conflict to a decisive conclusion was dashed within months of its outbreak, did the combatants decide to persist, to mobilise for total war and eventually to commit the totality of their young manhood to mutual destruction? If all wars are an object of infinite sadness, this particular one also remains as an inextinguishable source of bewilderment.

But while historians still struggle to ascribe a definite meaning to the First World War, we now see more clearly what it is that was sacrificed: health, both mental and physical; youth – life itself. Huge destruction was inflicted on families and communities; a whole generation was destroyed that would have furnished their countries with workers, farmers, scholars, artists, administrators and political leaders. Not only did WWI bring human devastation and economic ruin to Europe, it also shattered the notion of a progress facilitated by science, technology, the promise of democracy; it put an abrupt end to the aspirations of happy modernity and ongoing human improvement harboured by Europeans for the previous forty years: “Never such innocence again”, as Philip Larkin put it in his poem “MCMXIV” [1914].

Today, on the eve of the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, we are invited to remember with authenticity and historical accuracy the sacrifice of so many Irish men and women who fought alongside soldiers from different nations, backgrounds and social circumstances. We are invited to go beyond disputes as to the legitimacy of the various motivations and causes embraced by those men, in order to reflect, together, on what was lost for everybody in the destructive experience of war. We are here to remember with respect and dignity the great human loss of those years. Our duty is to mark the graves of all who have lost their lives, wherever they may be – and I wish to salute the invaluable work carried out by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Glasnevin Trust to ensure that this duty is fulfilled.

The wall that stands before us lists 166 Commonwealth burials from the First World War. I invite anyone who reads those names to reflect and give a moment in respectful memory to the individual stories that go with them. Each man had parents and friends; many had a wife, or a lover, children, siblings. Indeed beyond the staggering statistics associated with WWI – a war whose casualties number in the millions – it is important, I believe, that we do justice to the dead by endeavouring to recover the human dimension of the experience of war, the tragedy of each single death, of every life shattered.

And while it is hard for us to recover imaginatively what life in the trenches was really like, again it is perhaps through reading the writings of the soldiers themselves that we can gain a better sense of the experience of those who fought and lived on the battlefields – the cold and damp, the confined space, the insipid food, the rats and lice, the deafening din of shelling for days on end, the fear, the stench of rotting flesh, the muddy waste land all around, the barbed wire and the burnt villages.

In the letters of soldiers home, in the memoirs too, some of them written after the war, we understand the harrowing character of a mechanical, industrial war. We also must surely be moved by the great humanity those soldiers felt for each other in the face of an incredible carnage. In their letters the combatants confer the title of courage on each other, thus suggesting to us, today, to acknowledge agency on the part of the men and women of the past, and to abstain from any portrayal of them as mere passive victims. These writings of WWI soldiers also call upon our contemporary responsibility not to leave the power and energies of nations, their formidable industrial capacity, to be unleashed for mutual destruction.

Finally, let me say how the welcome and significant progress of our understanding, in Ireland, for the period of the First World War has also given us a deeper empathy with the British people, for whom WWI, its experience and its recall form such an important element of their identity and mythology. It is an honour to host a monument to that memory. Just as the generation that produced WWI soldiers, had to leave behind the idiom of the 19th century – that language used for over a century to celebrate the idea and the hubris of progress – we today are invited to leave behind some of the terms and concepts of the twentieth century, such as its grammar of binary divisions between “the enemy” and “us”. The time has come for an ethics of narrative hospitality to replace our past “entrenchments” – that awful word bequeathed to us by an era scarred, not just by the consequences of war itself, but by the effect of the very idea of War, of the possibility of total war, on subsequent generations.

I want to thank you, Sir, for your presence and for your words of recognition for the Irish men and women who were killed during the First World War. The ability to share sombre and profound national memories is an important statement and act of friendship and respect. As friends we, Irish and British, share this moment of remembrance; and in mutual sympathy we dedicate this monument to the memory of all those who lost their lives during the too long, dreadful years of 1914 to 1918. Let us now, together, cultivate memory as a tool for the living and as a sure base for the future – memory employed in the task of building peace.

Note.

In his speech, President Higgins stated the following:

In recent years, an increasing number of writers and scholars, religious and political leaders have redirected our gaze to the complexity of the Irish engagement with WWI, allowing for a more inclusive remembering at public level. Take a bow The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association in contributing and indeed leading the way in creating an awareness of Ireland’s participation in the First World War. According to the Sinn Fein ex-Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr. Christy Burke.<sup>5</sup>

The work of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association has made an immense contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the Great War and has helped to forge closer bonds between both traditions on the island, and between Ireland and Britain as a whole.

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<sup>5</sup> "Speech Made by Cllr. Christie Burke, Sinn Fein, at the Internet Launch of the Monica Roberts Archive Collection at Dublin City Library and Archive, October 2014.," (Dublin: The Lord Mayor of Dublin Press Office, 2014).

**Speech by Lord Mayor Christy Burke**  
**At launch of online publication of**  
**The Monica Robert's Collection, Dublin City Library & Archive**  
**Thursday 16 October 2014.<sup>1</sup>**

Members of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, ladies and gentlemen, now that the centenary of the Great War is with us, it's time to take stock of what this means for Ireland. What is the place of the First World War in Irish history? We know for a fact that 206,000 Irishmen enlisted in the British Army and that 49,000 Irish dead are commemorated in the War Memorial Gardens in Islandbridge. These men had various reasons for enlisting. Some were fighting for Irish freedom, believing that they were creating a new society where the rights of small nations would be taken seriously and that Ireland would be given its independence when the war ended. Others were fighting because they needed a soldier's pay to support widowed mothers, anxious wives and hungry children. And there were others, and these were usually the youngest volunteers, who went off in search of adventure, with no idea of the horrors of war which awaited them.

The sincerity and courage of these ordinary men is beyond question and after many years of overlooking their contribution to history, we in Ireland today acknowledge this and remember them with respect. In this regard, the work of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association has made an immense contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the Great War and has helped to forge closer bonds between both traditions on the island, and between Ireland and Britain as a whole. I salute the work of the association and wish you continued success in the future.

Every group needs to have a legacy project and the First World War archive which The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association has gathered together will underpin your achievements and preserve them into the future. The RDFA Archive is held in this building by Dublin City Library & Archive and we at Dublin City Council are glad to work with you to bring these important collections to public attention in various ways. This month, there is a series of public lectures on the First World War in the Council Chamber at City Hall and next week a performance on the theme of Remembrance will take place here in this room.

Most importantly, we have now published the Monica Roberts Collection online. At the outbreak of the Great War, Monica was a young woman who lived in Stillorgan in County Dublin. She was moved by the plight of the soldiers and gathered her friends into a group called The Band of Helpers to the Soldiers, who raised funds through tea-parties and informal concerts. They then sent small gifts to the Front – Vaseline, boracic ointment and socks for sore feet; Oxo to warm up shivering soldiers; and practical items such as pencils, handkerchiefs and pocket knives. However, the soldiers' favourite gifts were tobacco, pipes and cigarettes.

Monica Roberts included a letter with her gifts – the soldiers responded and a correspondence was established. The letters are immensely valuable as they reveal the hardship of service in France and Belgium; the soldiers' opinion of the German army and 'Kaiser Bill'; and their longing for Dublin. Private Edward Mordaunt told Monica: 'I landed in France on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 1914. I have suffered cruel since then, the worst of it was the winter out here, we were frozed and up to our chests in water.' In May 1916, many of the soldiers commented unfavourably about the Easter Rising which had taken place in the previous month – the soldiers saw themselves as fighting for Irish independence and were surprised that someone else had the same idea!

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

The Monica Roberts Collection is the most intensively used in the Reading Room upstairs and because of its importance Dublin City Library and Archive decided to digitise it and publish it online so that it can be available on a world-wide basis. I would like to congratulate the staff responsible for this project – Dublin City Librarian Margaret Hayes and Dublin City Archivist Dr. Mary Clark; Ellen Murphy who was project manager and Christian Keegan who did the scanning; but most of all, Finola Frawley who transcribed every single one of the 453 letters and translated the ones which were in French – without Finola’s careful work, we would have nothing to publish. Finally I must thank the family of the late Monica Roberts who donated this important collection of letters to the RDFA Archive, especially her daughter Mary Shackleton and her granddaughter who is with us this evening. We hope that this online publication will keep alive the memory of these Irishmen who were caught up in a cruel and vicious war, not of their making.



A proud day for Capt. (ret'd) Seamus Greene and the RDFA. On 28 October 2014, Seamus stood under the Menin Gate Memorial in Ieper at a ceremony to mark the centenary of the First Battle of Ypres (19 October-22 November 1914). The RDFA Standard was the only standard on parade at the ceremony that evening. Come on the Dubs.

## **The struggle continues to finance a Great War memorial which will commemorate 870 Kilkenny men and women who fell in the Great War.**

Ken Kinsella

Plans for a Great War Memorial in Kilkenny were officially unveiled in June 2014 at a special dinner held in Kilkenny Castle. It was attended by former President of Ireland Mary McAleese, who was celebrating her birthday. During her time as President, Mrs. McAleese made a very important contribution in smoothing the path towards State recognition of Ireland's war dead. Her visit to Gallipoli in March 2010 was the first recognition, by the State, of Irishmen who fought and died in Turkey.

A group of local men and women formed the Kilkenny Great War Memorial Committee in 2011. The committee, chaired by Donal Croghan, has worked extraordinarily hard to find a suitable site in the city and begin the task of raising €100,000 at a time of great economic difficulties in the country. Its efforts were rewarded with the announcement that the memorial will be erected in the grounds of St. Mary's Church, St. Mary's Lane, off High Street in the center of the city. The memorial is just one of many Great War Memorials being erected in towns and villages all over Ireland. The church and graveyard are of huge national heritage significance and are protected under heritage legislation. The last parish service was celebrated in the church in 1951 and the church was deconsecrated some time later. Kilkenny Borough Council purchased the church and graveyard from the Church of Ireland in 2009 and there is no more fitting place in Kilkenny to commemorate those men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the forces of many countries. The development of St. Mary's Church by the Irish Heritage Council and Kilkenny Borough Council and the inclusion of a Great War Memorial will contribute to the wide spread interest of tourists to the history of the city and county.

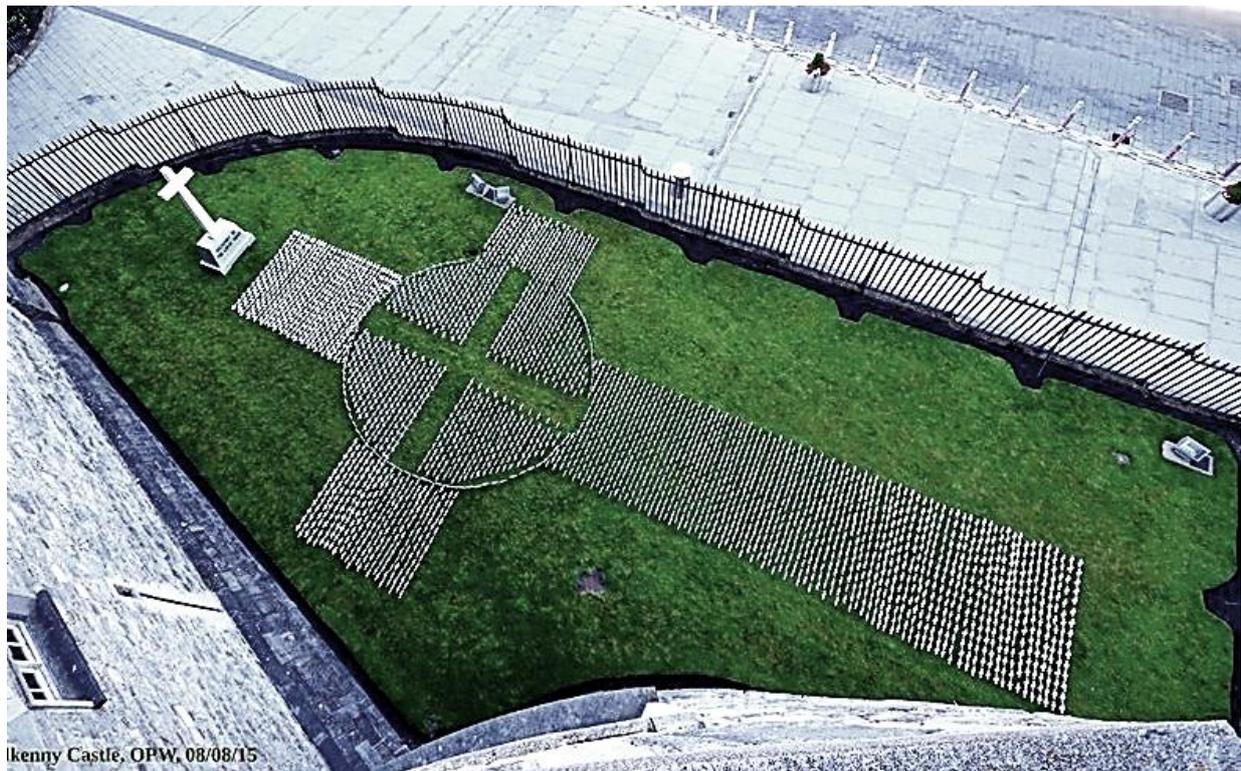
In early November 2014, the committee organised a parade re-enacting the march taken by Kilkenny soldiers en route to service in the Great War. It began at the Parade, Kilkenny Castle and proceeded via the Military Barracks to the local McDonagh Railway Station. The parade was lead, as it was in 1915, by St. Patricks Brass and Reed Band. It featured re-enactors dressed in khaki uniforms of the Great War, military vehicles, a colour party from the Irish Army and the Mayor of Kilkenny. This stunning event was supported by a large crowd of marchers, causing traffic disruption in the city.

The official fund-raising event, The Kilkenny Great War Memorial Exhibition, opened at the Parade on Saturday 8 August 2015 and continued until Sunday 9 August. The committee displayed 2,259 small white crosses on the Parade Lawn outside Kilkenny Castle. Each cross was dedicated to the memory of a person from Kilkenny, who served and survived the Great War. A further 870 small black crosses were displayed to represent those who fell in the war, making it a total of 3,129 crosses. Committee member John Joe Cullen said;

The men and women who are represented on these crosses are our flesh and blood. They lived and loved like us, having brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. Their families had to endure their loss, and our history dictated that they could not be mourned in public for fear of reprisals.

Wreaths were laid by dignitaries, including Kilkenny County Council Cathaoirleach, Mary Hilda Kavanagh. Ms Kavanagh said;

Many of those who did return home came back to their families with serious injuries, sometimes physical, sometimes psychological, sometimes both. Many found it difficult to talk about their experiences and in some respects, their stories did not fit the narrative of the new Ireland emerging in the aftermath of the Great War. This must have added to their pain and trauma and to the hurt of those who had been bereaved on the killing fields of Europe, North Africa and Asia.



The 3,129 crosses on the site of The Kilkenny War Memorial.

The Kilkenny Great War Memorial Committee is faced with the gigantic task of raising €100,000 to cover all the costs associated with the erection of the memorial. I am appealing to all institutions, associations, commercial companies and the general public to contribute generously to this most important project. The RDFA has made a donation of Euro 200.00. A great deal of water has passed under St. John's Bridge since 1918, so please let us not prolong the shame of neglecting our Kilkenny Great War dead.

Bank details:  
Bank of Ireland,  
Parliament Street,  
Kilkenny.  
Ireland.

Sort Code: 90-60-64,  
Account Number: 22546979,  
IBAN: IE29BOFII 9060 64 225469 79.

To donate via PayPal see website: [www.kilkennygreatwarmemorial.com](http://www.kilkennygreatwarmemorial.com)

## Newbridge school children remember The Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Seamus Greene

In the autumn of 2014, as part of the celebrations for their school centenary, twenty-five pupils of the Patrician Primary School in Newbridge staged a re-enactment of the young men from that town leaving to fight in the Great War.

Dressed in military uniform, the sixth class pupils marched from the Bord na Mona office building, which is located on the site of the old British Army Barracks, to the railway station just as the soldiers going to war had done a century ago. At the head of the parade, see adjacent photo, two of the boy soldiers carried the old RDFA Standard, which was loaned to the school for the events in Newbridge, France and Flanders. Equipped with bagpipes and tin drums, fifth class pupils played the role of the traditional pipe band and the school principal John O'Donovan, dressed for the occasion in his army uniform, led the parade. At the station they were met by soldiers from the Irish Army, who stood to attention as the young soldiers carried out their well-rehearsed military drills and also their presentation, which featured the calling out of the names of those who didn't return from the war. The group then boarded a train for a trip to Collins Barracks to view the WW1 exhibition there before returning home.



Days after that re-enactment, the young soldiers travelled in uniform to the Western Front to visit some of the historic battlefield sites of WW1; including The Menin Gate, Ypres, Passchendaele, Beaumont Hamel, and The Somme. While returning on foot from the visit to Passchendaele, the marching body aroused the attention of a group of Welsh Fusiliers veterans who were in Flanders to attend the unveiling of a Welsh Memorial. On hearing the young pipers and the other musicians in the band, the veterans came out of a nearby hostelry and were entertained by an exhibition of the young soldiers'

presentation. This included military drills, but more importantly, each of the young soldiers in turn took one pace forward to recite the name and personal history of his counterpart of 1914. This was but one of the many poignant moments this brave band of young soldiers encountered during their historic visit to commemorate the fallen of their town. In recognition of their appreciation of what the young soldiers from Newbridge were doing to remember the fallen, the veterans insisted on making a contribution to the school.

## Report of RDFA activities for the period October 2013 to December 2014

Sean Connolly



The following is a summary of the main activities the RDFA were involved in or contributed to during the above period.

- In February and March 2014, there was a series of seminars on the First World War held in the National Museum of Ireland at which the RDFA contributed both speakers and displays.
- Members attended the Gallipoli Dawn Service of Remembrance in Grangegorman Military Cemetery on ANZAC Day, 25 April.
- On 13 June, members took part in the annual commemoration of the disbanded Irish regiments at the Cenotaph in London.
- On 14 June 2014, a party of twenty-seven members of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association departed Dublin on a five day *August 1914* tour of the villages and countryside the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF passed through on their journey of retreat from Le Cateau to the rivers Marne and Aisne in the autumn of 1914. Among the tour group was the RTE Radio journalist Ms Louise Denvir who covered the tour for a First World War radio documentary subsequently presented RTE radio. This very successful tour was planned and organised by RDFA Committee members Brian Moroney, Seamus Greene, Marie Guilfoyle and Niall Leinster and co-ordinated by DM Tours Ltd of Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. The above photo was taken in Hotel de Ville at La Ferte and shows a smiling group of RDFA members, from left to right being Seamus Green, Brian Moroney, Tom Burke, Katy Reynolds and her father Colin Reynolds. The Reynolds family hired a taxi in Paris which drove them to our ceremony at La Ferte-sons-Jouarre. Moire Reynolds, Colin's wife (nee Kennedy) is a relative of Pte. Patrick Kennedy of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF killed in action on 27 August 1914 mentioned earlier. His name is on the La Ferte-sons-Jouarre Memorial.
- On Sunday 29 June, an Ecumenical Service of Reflection and Remembrance for Irish men and women who survived the First World War and returned to Ireland was held at Kilmacud Parish Church, Upper Kilmacud Road, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin. Members and friends of the RDFA supported and attended this Service. It was wonderful to see families bring along photos, letters and personal belongings of their relatives who served in the First World War and place them at the foot of the altar in their memory. The church was full and the event was a great success thanks to the organisation by Ms Sabina Purcell who is in the process of compiling a database of Irish men and women who served in the First World War and returned to Ireland at the end of the war. Anybody who could help Sabina in her project should contact her by Email at [returnedww1@gmail.com](mailto:returnedww1@gmail.com)
- On Saturday 12 July, The Royal British Legion wreath-laying ceremony was held at the National War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge. And on the following day The National Day of Commemoration was held at The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham.

- On Thursday 31 July a ceremony to mark the unveiling of a new Cross of Sacrifice provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and erected by the Glasnevin Trust took place at Glasnevin Cemetery, Finglas Road, Dublin.
- On Wednesday evening 17 September, our Chairman, Mr Tom Burke presented a lecture titled; *The Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the First World War* at The Little Museum of Dublin, 15 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2. Tom's lecture was followed by a lecture titled *Life in Emergency Dublin 1939-45* presented by Prof. Diarmaid Ferriter of UCD. Back in mid-June, our member Mr Kevin Myers presented a lecture titled *The Forgotten Irish* at the same venue.
- Marking the Centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, Dublin City Library and Archive presented a programme of lunch-time lectures between 7 and 28 October in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Dame Street in Dublin titled *Dublin and the Great War*. Members of the RDFA, Ken Kinsella, Tom Burke and Dr Seamus O'Maitiu presented papers titled *South Dubliners in the Great War; the RDF who they were and where they came from; Dublin townships and the Great War* respectively.
- On Thursday evening 16 October, Dublin City Library and Archive launched on the internet the wonderful Monica Roberts collection of letters which are a collection in the RDFA Archive. The collection was launched by the Sinn Fein Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr. Christy Burke, see his speech above. The collection consists of some 453 letters from fifty-three men who served in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and Royal Flying Corps. Each item in the collection has now been digitized and transcribed and is now available to view on-line. This was a magnificent project carried out by staff of Dublin City Library and Archive and great thanks go to Dublin City archivist Dr. Mary Clarke and her deputy Ms. Ellen Murphy. The letters can be accessed on the internet through <http://databases.dublincity.ie/monicaroberts/>. Before the launch, the RDFA AGM was held and the committee agreed to soldier on for another year.
- On Thursday night 23 October, Irish Times travel journalist and member of the RDFA Ms Mary Russell whose father was a Dublin Fusilier, presented a night of song, story, poetry and music titled 'An Evening of Remembrance' at Dublin City Library and Archive in Pearse Street. The Last Post was sounded, music and WW1 songs were provided by the Ringsend Singers. School children from Mount Carmel Secondary School gave readings that reflected their perceptions of war and in particular the First World War. The Irish poet, Paula Meehan read selection of poems that reflected the Remembrance theme of the evening.
- On Saturday 25 October, a daylong seminar on the First World War was presented by the Education and Outreach Department of the National Museum of Ireland and held at Collins Barracks, Dublin. The seminar was moderated by Tom Burke and papers were presented on a selection of topics such as; the experience of German soldiers during the First World War by Dr William Mulligan from UCD; sharing commemoration of the First World War between Britain and Ireland by Dr Catriona Pennell from the University of Exeter; the politics of commemoration in Ireland and Australia by Dr Elaine Byrne from the University of New South Wales; First World War collections in the National Museum by Mr Lar Joye, Curator, the National Museum of Ireland. The RDFA offered advice on researching a soldier who served in the First World War. Congratulations must go to Lar and his colleagues at the National Museum for presenting the exhibition titled *Recovered Voices – Stories of the Irish at War 1914 – 1915*. Although the exhibition was opened to the public in 2014, it was officially opened by the Minister for Decorative Arts & History, Minister Heather Humphreys on Wednesday 28 January 2015.
- During November, the annual Remembrance Services were held at City Quay Church and at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

- On Thursday night 13 November, the ex-Member of Parliament, John Hutton, Barron Hutton of Furness, presented a lecture to the RDFA at Pearse Street Library titled *August 1914, Surrender at St. Quentin*. John's lecture outlined the background to the controversial surrender of what was left of the 2<sup>nd</sup> RDF at St. Quentin in late August 1914 and subsequent courts martial of the battalion CO, Lieut.- Col. Arthur Mainwaring. The lecture was based on John's book titled; *August 1914, Surrender at St. Quentin* and published in 2010 by Pen and Sword, South Yorkshire.
- On Thursday 20 November, The National Library of Ireland opened a new First World War exhibition titled *World War Ireland: Exploring the Irish Experience*. The RDFA had an input to this exhibition which is currently running at the National Library in Kildare Street, Dublin and is set to run with changing themes and exhibits for the next four years. Our congratulations go to Nicola Ralston and Katherine McSharry of the National Library who put this exhibition together.
- The annual dinner of the RDFA was held Friday night 5 December at The Masonic Hall, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2. As ever again, great thanks and credit must go to Brian Moroney and his dear wife Theresa for organising this annual event.



reconciliation. The adjoining photograph shows Sean (left holding RDFA Standard) and Erwin in his kilt near Prowse Point Cemetery on Christmas Eve, 2014.

- On Christmas Eve, 2014, exactly one hundred years after the famous Christmas Truce of 1914, Tom Burke, Sean Connolly and Erwin Ureel camped out on a frosty, star-lit Christmas Eve on the location of the old front line where the truce took place, which in fact was near St Yvon on the edge of Ploegsteert Wood. The objective of the camp out was to create an awareness of the message and symbolism of the truce which was one of reconciliation between warring nations. That a universal message of peace is as important today as it was 100 years ago when young men, who had no personal quarrel with each other, stepped over the parapet and offered each other their hand in an act of friendship and



## Deaths

It was a terrible shock to us all in the RDFA to hear of the death of Josephine Connolly, the wife of our Secretary, Sean Connolly. Sadly Jo, as we all knew her and seen here with Sean, died following a long illness on 25 April 2014. Her body was cremated in Glasnevin Cemetery following a beautiful humanist ceremony. We will miss her smile, her ever-so-sharp wit and laughter. On behalf of all our members and friends in the RDFA, we extend our sympathies to Sean and his immediate family, Rory, Cormac and Deirdre.

Violet, or Pat Behan, as most of us knew her, passed away on 28 September 2014. Pat was Tony Behan's wife. For many years they both attended our annual dinner where, always following great demand from the members, Tony offered us his party piece namely *The Suit*. To Tony and his family, we extend our sympathies in your loss and hope to see you perform *The Suit* Tony at our future gatherings.



Jim Hickey, seen in adjacent photo on right hand side, was a long-time member of the RDFA. For many years he served as a volunteer for SSFA. A regular attendant at our lectures and meetings, Jim had a relative who served in the Dubs during WW1. Jim was an engaging man and would always make a constructive contribution to the debate and dialogue during and after the meetings, a feature of our meetings we will now miss. We offer our sympathies to Jim's family.

The well-known RTE Television presenter Liam O'Murchu passed away on 28 June 2015 at the age of eighty-six. A proud Cork man, Liam was one of Ireland's greatest voices for the advancement of the Irish language. Liam was an early member of the RDFA. His father served in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the Boer War. Ar dheis De go raibh a h-Anam.



On 1 July 2014, one of our earliest members Greg Verjans, seen in adjacent phot at the Thiepval memorial with Tom Burke, died all too young at the age of fifty-one peacefully at his home in Malahide, Co. Dublin with his wife Niav. Greg's interest in military history stemmed from the unusual fact that both his grandfather's served in the First World War, one man in a cavalry regiment of the British Army and the other in the Belgian army, hence the Greg's surname being Verjans. We offer Niav and Greg's family our deepest sympathy in their loss.

## Membership

Our membership for 2014 stands at 300, the breakdown is as follows:

Country	Membership 2012	Membership 2013	Membership 2014
Republic of Ireland	257	254	236
England	33	28	23
Northern Ireland	21	22	19
Wales	9	8	8
U.S.A.	5	5	5
Scotland	3	2	3
Canada	1	1	1
Belgium	0	1	1
Spain	1	1	1
Finland	0	0	1
Israel	1	1	1
Hong Kong	0	0	1
Total	331	323	300

## Spectamur Agendo



Comments / correspondence to

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The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association  
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Dublin 16  
Republic of Ireland

The RDFA website address is.

[www.greatwar.ie](http://www.greatwar.ie)