

The Old Tough

Newsletter of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association
(Registered Charity No 20038816)



Issue 10: Summer 2023

Editorial

Welcome to the Summer edition of *The Old Tough*.

Some weeks ago, Professor Richard S Grayson, Oxford Brookes University, spoke to members of the Army Records Society on the WW1 diary of Captain Noel Drury, 6th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. This proved to be a stimulating lecture. This edition of *The Old Tough* newsletter contains an article summarising his remarks to the Society. We believe that Professor Grayson's recent book on Drury's diary has brought the role of the Dublin Fusiliers in WW1 to a wider audience, and his observations on the content of the diary were certainly welcome. We hope that you will find this article interesting.

Our memorial article in this edition relates to a former Presbyterian Church which is now part of the offices of the VHI in Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1. This highlights the threat posed to the fabric of old buildings when they are redeveloped or re-purposed. Fortunately, the WW1 memorial within this former Church remains intact. The fact that many similar minority congregations in the last 100 years have been rationalised or have disappeared altogether also reminds us that Dublin at the time of WW1 had a more diverse religious composition, at least within the Christian tradition.

Other articles in this edition include the following:

- the latest Dubs' news and
- information on upcoming events.

We hope that you find these articles informative and interesting. As ever, we welcome feedback from members on the articles in *The Old Tough* and on the work of the Association. Similarly, we would like to receive suggestions and contributions from members for future editions of this newsletter or for our annual journal, *The Blue Cap*. All such communications can be sent to rdfa1918@gmail.com.

The Editorial Committee

Paul Appleby, David Buckley, Philip Lecane, Thomas Murphy and John F Sheehan

**Talk by Professor Richard S Grayson, Oxford Brookes University,
27 June 2023**

WW1 Diary of Noel Drury, 6 RDF: Gallipoli, Salonika, Middle East and Western Front

Paul Appleby

By arrangement with the Army Records Society, The Boydell Press published in 2022 a book by Professor Richard S Grayson, Oxford Brookes University, on the First World War Diary of Captain Noel Drury, 6th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Professor Grayson has previously written a number of books about Ireland and WW1, including *Dublin's Great Wars: The First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2018). On 27 June last, he gave an online lecture on Noel Drury's Diary to members of the Army Records Society, and the Society kindly allowed some Committee members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association to attend the lecture. This note constitutes some of the highlights of Professor Grayson's remarks.

Born in Dublin on Christmas Eve 1883, Noel was son of Frances (née Figgis) and John Drury. The family was Presbyterian. Noel had two younger brothers, Kenneth (who qualified as a doctor and served in the Royal Army Medical Corps in WW1) and Jack who died of Spanish flu at the end of the War. Although Noel enrolled in TCD in 1901 aged 17, he does not seem to have graduated with a qualification. After his father's death in 1907 (his mother had died in 1895), he took over the family's paper manufacturing mill in Saggart, Co Dublin. Interestingly, paper from the mill was used to print James Connolly's newspaper, *The Workers' Republic*, and the 1916 Proclamation.

Noel Drury was a Freemason and became involved in wider Dublin business circles before the War. He was a pioneer of motorcycle racing in Ireland and took part in some of the early Isle of Man TT races. Yacht racing also came to be an interest. The paper mill closed in early 1926, although a buyer did not acquire it until late 1927 when it was the only paper mill in the Irish Free State. Noel Drury was active in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Old Comrades Association into the 1930s. However he does not seem to have married or fathered any children. Little is known of his later life, except that he lived in Foxrock, Co Dublin, for several decades. Perhaps he did not need to work after the sale of the family business. He died in 1975 and is buried in Deansgrange Cemetery. His WW1 Diary was passed by a relative to the National Army Museum in London after his death.

Noel Drury enlisted at the start of the War and was initially posted to the 5th Battalion of the Connaught Rangers before being transferred to the 6th Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, his original preference. After a period of training, the Battalion was deployed to Gallipoli as part of

the Suvla Bay landings in August 1915 where they saw heavy fighting on Hill 70 and the ridge of Kiretch Tepe Sirt. In early October, they were redeployed with other units to Greece to support their allies, the Serbs. The Battle of Kosturino with Bulgarian forces in early December 1915 inflicted further losses on the Battalion. Six months after the general withdrawal back to Salonika, Drury succumbed to malaria and was away from his Regiment recuperating for a year. He returned in time to accompany the Battalion to Egypt in September 1917, where they were involved in the advance on Jerusalem that winter and later attacks on Turkish forces, particularly at Tell 'Asur, in March 1918. In July, the Battalion was redeployed to France and took part in the 100 days offensive seeing action at Le Catelet, Le Cateau and the River Selle, during which time Drury served as the Battalion's Adjutant. After Germany's surrender in November, the Battalion formed part of the Allies' occupation force in Germany. Drury was demobilised in early 1919.

Professor Grayson indicated that the four volumes of Drury's Diary comprise some 240,000 words which he has edited down to less than 20,000 in the book. Although those numbers suggest a drastic culling of text, he prioritised the retention of commentary on military affairs. His deletions comprised repetitive text and the terms of many of the military orders which were included in the Diary. He also trimmed Drury's travel observations particularly in Salonika and Palestine, when Drury had the opportunity to take leave at various times.

Professor Grayson considers the Diary to be an important record of the War. Firstly it was unusual that Drury and his men had served in four theatres of war between 1915 and 1918. This experience gave rise to interesting commentary in the Diary, such as the static trench warfare without adequate artillery support in Gallipoli and Salonika relative to the more mobile movement of forces in Palestine and France. In the latter arena, Drury described his Battalion's attacks under creeping artillery barrages and their street fighting in late 1918.

Secondly comparatively little was written about the 6th Battalion in the War which Professor Grayson attributed to its overwhelmingly working class character. In contrast, the exploits of the 7th Battalion, particularly its 'D' Company, received extensive publicity, primarily because its middle and upper class volunteers had strong links with persons of similar class in the newspapers. Later the 10th Battalion, mainly drawn from the commercial world, also received good media coverage. The Diary was important therefore in correcting this class imbalance.

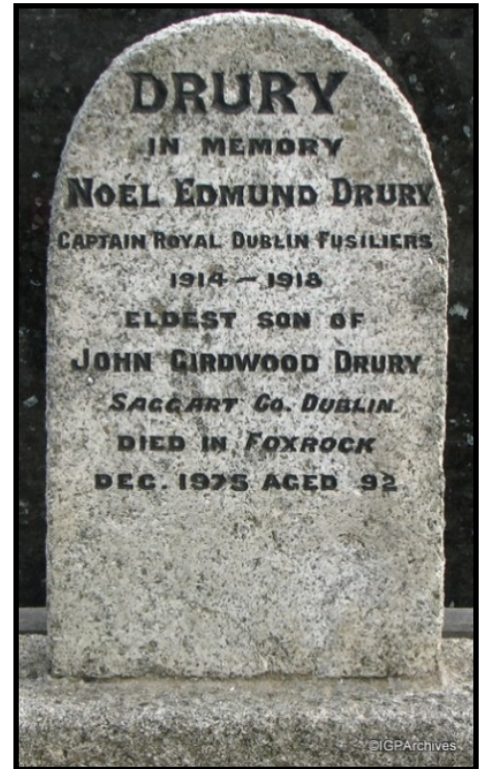
In Professor Grayson's view, the period of training contains a rich source of material on daily military life. Interestingly, it led to a lowering of religious barriers as it forced Drury to engage for the first time with religious practices that were not his own. He regularly went to Catholic ceremonies and gained respect for the Regiment's Catholic Chaplain. Later, he proved to be a strong critic of the Gallipoli campaign: 'we went to Gallipoli without any orders, and without any maps'. Shortly after arrival in Greece, Drury expressed disapproval of the political decision to

send reinforcements there in aid of the Serbs as ‘the Serbs are almost scuppered already’. He also criticised in his Diary the performance of officers and other regiments from time to time.

It is clear that Drury was proud of his Regiment and its celebrated history. He included at the start of the Diary a rendering of Pericles’ oration from Thucydides which, Professor Grayson suggests, was meant as a tribute to the officers and men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers:

“They gave their bodies to the common weal and received, each for his own memory, praise that will never die, and with it the grandest of all sepulchres, not that in which their mortal bodies are laid, but a home in the minds of men where their glory remains fresh to stir to speech or action as the occasion comes by.”

While Noel Drury may have spent the last 55 years of his life out of the Regiment, it seems that he continued to identify strongly as one of its officers. Remarkably his headstone in Deansgrange Cemetery describes him as ‘Captain Royal Dublin Fusiliers 1914-1918’.



Sources

Richard S Grayson (Editor), *The First World War Diary of Noel Drury, 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers: Gallipoli, Salonika, the Middle East and the Western Front*, The Boydell Press for the Army Records Society, 2022.

<https://www.igp-web.com/IGPArchives/ire/dublin/photos/tombstones/deansgrange/deansgrange-st-nessans-9/target147.html>

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Note

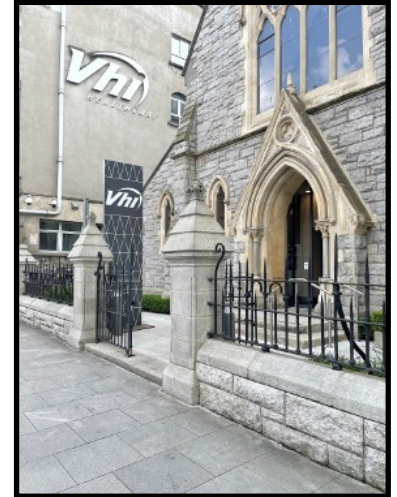
The First World War Diary of Noel Drury, 6th Royal Dublin Fusiliers: Gallipoli, Salonika, the Middle East and the Western Front is available for purchase from The Boydell Press at Stg£75. See <https://boydellandbrewer.com/>.

However the Army Records Society will sell the book at a discounted rate of Stg£39 (including postage and packaging) to members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association with addresses in the Republic of Ireland. The corresponding rate for UK member addressees is Stg£30.50. Purchase may be made by calling Claire Hayzelden at the Society’s Membership Department (Monday – Friday, 9.00-17.00) on [0044 1462 896688](tel:00441462896688) with the payment details.

Memorial in the former Scots Presbyterian Church, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin (now the offices of the VHI)

John F Sheehan

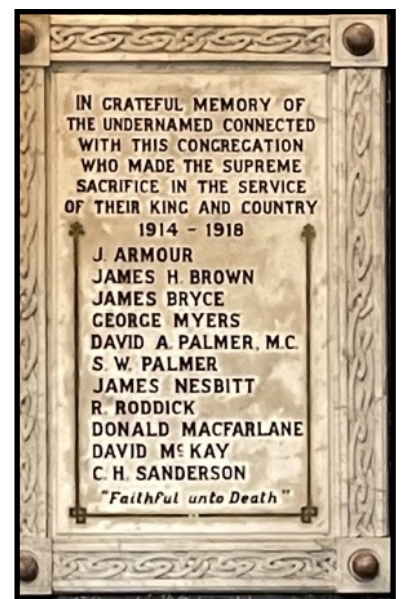
In early June I had occasion to visit the VHI offices in Lower Abbey Street. Not having been there for about 20 years I noticed that there is a new entrance to the reception area, and it is through the former Scots Presbyterian Church. Having concluded my business I looked around the building which is tastefully converted to meet the needs of the VHI. The main structure was not altered but internally a number of changes have taken place. There now appears to be a series of large TV screens joined together making up a very large TV screen. Unfortunately, these block the very ornate stained glass window which is about 4 metres in circumference. However it is possible to see the window from the sides.



As I do in all church buildings I looked for the WW1 memorial. Whilst at first I didn't see one I looked to the right of the stained glass window; it's not quite visible at first as it is located where the public do not have access, but then I saw a whitish marble plaque in the distance. With the help of my zoom camera on the phone I took a photo, and it was indeed a WW1 memorial with 11 names on it, all of whom had been parishioners of the Church.

When I returned home I started my research into the names and to my delight and sadness at the same time I identified the 11 names, three of whom served and died with the RDF. Another two whilst not being killed while serving with the RDF had served with them previously. I set out hereunder the names from the memorial with some details of their service and death in that terrible First World War.

The saddest of all being that of the Palmer brothers, David and Samuel. David in the 1901 Census was 8 years of age living in Bushmills. He was born on 27 September 1892 at Kilcrea. In 1910 he passed his final exam in clerkship and was appointed to the Dublin Metropolitan Police office in Dublin. He enlisted as a reservist in the South Irish Horse at 18 years and 4 months, soldier number 568. In October 1915 he was discharged as a sergeant and commissioned as an officer in the RDF, completing his officer training at Alconah, Crowborough, and appointed to the 3rd Battalion, RDF, in Dublin. He was sent to France, wounded at Cambrai in November 1917, promoted to acting captain in March 1918. He received a gunshot wound to the right shoulder from a German aircraft and died near Morchies on 25 March 1918. His brother was killed two days later on



27 March while serving in France. David was previously awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous gallantry in action at Wytschaete on 29 October 1916 (London Gazette, 21 December 1916), when 'he led a raid against the enemy with great courage and determination. Later he spent four hours in 'No Man's Land' searching for a wounded officer'. He was mentioned in despatches and received three certificates of gallantry. His mother sadly died the same year on 7 July 1918, aged 50 years.

A summary of the service of the 11 men involved follows:

1. Pte Rifleman John Armour reg 1036 Royal Irish Rifles, KIA, France, 28 March 1918 born Newtownards, Co Down, or he could be Pte John Armour reg 19954 5th Inniskilling Fusiliers, born Ballymoney, Co Antrim, died of wounds, 23 November 1918.
2. Lance Corp James Harrison Brown reg 55406, Royal Fusiliers, 10th Battalion, formerly RASC (mechanical transport), lived at Ontario, Strand Road, Clontarf, Dublin. KIA, France, 26 April 1917, aged 19 years.
3. Lt James Bryce, Royal Irish Fusiliers, 17th Battalion, formerly RDF, reg 14187, lived at 23 Hollybrook Road, Clontarf, Dublin. KIA, Ponteuers, France, 27 May 1918. Buried Soissons Memorial, France.
4. Pte Signaller George Myers reg 27070, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 7th Battalion, formerly RDF. Born Dublin, lived at 13 North Earl Street, Dublin, wounded 14 December 1914, gunshot wound lower thigh. KIA, 6 April 1916, France.
5. Acting Capt. David Adams Palmer MC, 3rd Battalion RDF, attached Tank Corps, also Sgt in South Irish Horse, died of wounds, 25 March 1918. Address 10 Leinster Ave, North Dock, Dublin. Lived at Bushmills, Co Antrim. Buried Dermancourt Cemetery, Somme, France.
6. Lt Samuel William Palmer RDF, 10th Battalion, KIA, 27 March 1918.
7. Pte James Nesbitt reg 3488, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion, died of wounds, gunshot wound to the lung, France, 26 May 1915. Lived at Ballymacarrett, Co Down.
8. Sgt Robert Smith Roddick, reg 17413, 10th Battalion, RDF, lived at 8 Palmerston Place, Inns Quay, Dublin. KIA, 4 November 1916, Somme, France, aged 30. Buried Knightsbridge Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsalt, France.
9. Pte Donald Macfarlane reg 23434, Cameron Highlanders, 40 Bayview Ave, Mountjoy, Dublin. Killed, 19 October 1917, Eastern Cemetery, Boulogne, France.
10. Lance Corp David McKay reg 3654, Royal Irish 5th Lancers, KIA, France, 20 September 1914. Born Coupar, Fife, Scotland.
11. Lance Corp Charles Heaney Sanderson reg 25761, Royal Irish Regiment, 7th Battalion, formerly South Irish Horse, 5 Maryfield Road, Terenure, Dublin. Died POW Camp, Sennelager, Germany, 14 October 1918, aged 22 years.



Dubs' News

Death of our Member, Joe Gallagher

The death of a long-time member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, Mr Joseph (Joe) Gallagher, occurred on 22 May 2023 in the Mater Hospital, Dublin, after a short illness. This news was greeted with much sadness by his friends in the Association. Chairman Brian Moroney was among the Association's members who paid their respects at his funeral in St Columba's Church, Iona Road, Drumcondra, on 25 May last.

Joe was a very active member from the beginning of the Association. He took part in our first research trips to Gallipoli and Salonika and assisted in finding the location of the 10th (Irish) Division memorial in North Macedonia. In fact he was a regular presence at our events and functions for over 20 years. Joe took his camera everywhere, and it is believed that many of his photographs charting the Association's development have been donated to the Association's archive in the Dublin City Library and Archive.



Joe's knowledge of military history was legendary. As a long-time member of the Military History Society of Ireland, he visited many battlefield sites, including those related to the Crimean, Peninsular and Anglo-Boer Wars and the American Civil War. At home he was an active member of the FCA, first in the 20th Infantry Battalion and later in the Military Police Company. He also held a senior position in the Organisation of National Ex-servicemen. During his career with Bord Fáilte – the Irish Tourist Board, he sent posters of prominent tourism locations in Ireland to the members of the Irish Army serving with the United Nations in the Lebanon. This initiative was much appreciated by the officers and men serving there.

Joe is survived by his cousins, extended family, neighbours and many friends. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

Killester Community Garden

The Killester Garden Village was originally developed by the British Government for WW1 ex-servicemen. In recent years, the local community has been active in remembering the former residents of the Village, and members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association supported a remembrance event there on 12 November last.

On 9 May last, *The Irish Times* reported that Dublin City Council officials had turned down a local proposal for a community garden with a First World War theme within the Village. The reason given

for the refusal was that the proposal did not have sufficient support locally, notwithstanding the fact that the relevant local councillors had unanimously given it their backing. Those leading the Killester WW1 Memorial Campaign are now in discussion with the Council to try to find an acceptable resolution.

Frezenberg Memorial

On 18 August 2017, a memorial to the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions was unveiled at Frezenberg Ridge outside Ypres in Belgium. This commemorated the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Langemark, 16-18 August 1917, when men from both Divisions fought side by side for the last time during WW1. The memorial stone was mainly funded by the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association with additional donations from other regimental associations, members and friends. A Belgian supporter of the Association, Mr Erwin Ureel, played a major role in bringing this project to fruition. A plaque was later added in memory of Fr Willie Doyle MC SJ, Chaplain to the 8th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was killed during the Battle of Langemark.

Some months ago, our President, Tom Burke, and Chairman, Brian Moroney, became aware that the area around the memorial stone was overgrown and that the surrounding fence had been removed. Representations have since been made to the relevant Belgian local authorities seeking improved maintenance of the area, and we are hopeful that this will yield results. However in the absence of the protective fence, the memorial is vulnerable to damage. A possible re-location of the memorial stone to a more suitable site in the vicinity is now being examined. We will keep you up-to-date with developments.



RDF Stained Glass Window, Cathal Brugha Barracks

Some 20 years ago, the Association arranged for the installation of a stained glass window in memory of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the Garrison Church within Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin, where the Dubs were based from time to time. The cost of this window was generously supported by our then members. The condition of some elements of the window (lettering, etc) has since deteriorated, and following work by Captain (Retired) Seamus Greene, the Association's Committee has recently decided to have the window refurbished at a cost of about €900. When this work has been completed, a photograph of the window will be included in a future edition of this newsletter.

Remembrance Events

The Association was represented at a number of recent remembrance events. A selection of photographs from some of these events follows.



Seán Ryan with the Dubs' Standard (second from left) at the ANZAC Day Ceremony, Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin, on 25 April 2023



Anthony Barnes with the Dubs' Standard (right) with, from left, John O'Brien and Seán Ryan at the Combined Irish Regiments Parade, London, on 11 June 2023



Seán Ryan with the Dubs' Standard (second from left) at Guillemont Church, France, during the Somme Commemoration on 1 July 2023



At the National Day of Commemoration in Collins Barracks, Cork, on 9 July 2023 were, from left, George Jones, Thomas Murphy, John F Sheehan and Brian Moroney

Note

Photographs courtesy of Paul Appleby, Seamus Greene, John O'Brien and Suzanne O'Neill

Upcoming Events

RDFA Trip to WW1 Sites in Belgium, 4 to 7 September 2023

Arrangements are well advanced for the Association's tour of WW1 sites of Irish interest in Belgium in early September. Some 24 members have committed to attend. The trip will be based in Ypres/Ieper, and the Association will participate in the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate on one or more of the evenings that we are there. Planned tour stops include Ghent, Mons, Langemarck, Kemmel and the Frezenberg and Messines Ridges. Among the locations of Irish interest which we will visit is the grave of Major Willie Redmond at Locre. The members involved are anticipating a busy but rewarding four days of sightseeing. A full report on the trip will be included in our next annual journal, *The Blue Cap*.

Dublin Festival of History, 25 September to 15 October 2023

Our President, Mr Tom Burke MBE, has agreed to give a talk at 2 pm on Saturday, 30 September next, in Pearse Street Library, Dublin 2, as part of the Dublin Festival of History. Tom's talk will focus on life for returning Irish soldiers after the Great War. The working title of the talk is *From Shoe Box to Window Box: Remembrance of WW1 in Ireland from 1919 to the Present Day*. While entry will be free of charge, it may be a ticketed event. Therefore note the date in your diary, and keep an eye on <https://dublinfoestivalofhistory.ie> and <https://eventbrite.ie> for further information nearer the scheduled date.

Forthcoming Remembrance Events

Members will be aware that various events remembering the fallen of WW1 and other conflicts take place annually. The following list outlines the known public remembrance events for the rest of 2023.

Date/Time	Event	Place
26 August, noon	Centenary Community Day marking the 100 th anniversary of the completion of the Killester Garden Village	Middle Third Green, Killester. Entry is free of charge, but see https://eventbrite.ie for bookings.
10 October, 09.45	RMS Leinster Commemoration	RMS Leinster Anchor, Dún Laoghaire Seafront
11 November, 11.00	Killester Remembrance Ceremony	Killester Garden Village, Dublin
12 November, morning (date/time to be confirmed)	German Remembrance Day	Glencree, Co Wicklow
12 November, 15.00 (time to be confirmed)	Remembrance Sunday Service	Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin

This list of remembrance events will be updated in the autumn edition of *The Old Tough* as events are arranged. Members are encouraged to attend some of these events if it is possible to do so.

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Spectamur Agendo

(We are judged by our deeds)