

In Memory

Of

Tom Kettle

Essay

Presented

By

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Much of the writings on Tom Kettle focus mainly on his life as an essayist, academic, journalist and political activist with little or no account of his time and death as a British soldier.¹ What I hope to do with this essay is to fill that gap in the life of Kettle and focus on his brief life as a British soldier and more specifically as a Dublin Fusilier.

The period of transition from Irish Volunteer to British soldier was approximately two months. On 4 August 1914, Tom was in Belgium buying guns for the Irish Volunteers. Two months later he expressed an interest in joining the British Army. On 4 October 1914, Lieutenant-General Sir Lawrence Parsons, the first Commanding Officer of the newly forming 16th(Irish) Division noted in his diary:²

Had a wire from Tennant (Under Secretary of State for War) asking if I would take Kettle as Lieutenant. Said yes.

Tom Kettle had no great affinity for the British Army in Ireland.³ He wrote: *'We are not going to rely for our national security upon the whims or fancies of some tall fellow with gold braid down the seams of his breeches.'*⁴ However by late July 1916, Tom referred to the British Army as being, *'our army in France.'*⁵ Several factors influenced this volte face. His witnessing the devastation of German artillery in Belgium which convinced him that the fight for European independence was far greater than the fight for Irish independence. At a camp set up for the Dublin Fusiliers in Tivoli Fields in Dun Laoghaire he stated that he cared for liberty more than he cared for Ireland.⁶ It may have been this liberal driven conscience, along with his Catholic faith with its doctrine of sacrifice formed perhaps as an undergrad in UCD which ultimately drove him into the British Army.⁷ Tom's biographer J.B. Lyons noted that; *'like the crusaders who had steamed across Europe with Richard Coeur-de-lion, he (Kettle), desired to break a lance against the foe; And in what better company to do it than the Dublin Fusiliers?'*⁸ Some 400 students and graduates of UCD also joined the British Army.⁹ Forty-two of his fellow Clongownians joined the Dublin Fusiliers.¹⁰

¹ Lyons, John B. *The Enigma of Tom Kettle* (Dublin: The Glendale Press, 1983).p.301. Lyons gave two lines to the death of Tom Kettle. See also Phillips, Terry. "Enigmas of the Great War: Thomas Kettle and Francis Ledwidge," *Irish Studies Review* 16, no. 4 (November 2008). No mention of Ginchy in entire text. Dawson, William. "Tom Kettle: The Essayist," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 20, no. 80 (December 1931).Pp.598-610. One line: 'In the autumn of 1916 he was killed in action at Ginchy.' p.599. Senia Paseta simply refers to 'Kettle's death in battle in September 1916.' Paseta, Senia. "Thomas Kettle: 'An Irish Soldier in the Army of Europe' ?," in *Ireland and the Great War 'a War to Unite Us All' ?*, ed. Adrain Gregory and Senia Paseta(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).p.24.

² "Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archive,Parsons Archive,G B 9 9 K C L M A," (London: King's College).

³ Lyons.p.244. See also Editor. "The Freeman's Journal."20 April 1914.

⁴ Lyons.p.243. See also Editor. 30 March 1914.

⁵ Kettle, Tom. *Thew Ways of War* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1917).p.161.

⁶ Lyons.p.278.

⁷ Paseta.p.16.

⁸ Lyons.p.267. See also Kettle. p.179.

⁹ Lyons.p.282. In 1918, a proposal that honorary war Bachelor of Science degrees be conferred on all second medical students who had nine months war-service was rejected by the Students Representative Council which objected to British uniforms been worn in UCD by Professors and others.

¹⁰ "The Clongownian ", (1917). Pp.33-47. Each week during the war, two special masses were said for Clongownian students at the front. The boys offered their Holy Communion on Mondays and their Rosaries on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays for the same intentions.

On 8 January 1915, Parsons interviewed Tom Kettle at Kilworth Camp in county Cork. The purpose of the interview was for Parsons to assess Tom's application and capability of becoming an officer. Parsons noted: ¹¹

Talked to Kettle (formerly M.P) who I don't think took it too well, also to (Stephen) Gwynn (M.P) who looked very ill but would not take a commission.

Parsons had changed his mind and refused Tom's application for a commission. ¹² He had doubts about Tom's ability to be an officer in an army at war. A month later on 8 February Parsons still hadn't changed his mind and told Tom that he couldn't have a commission. According to Parsons, Kettle '*took it badly*' ¹³ The reason Tom didn't take Parsons's interview too well was perhaps because Parsons put a bit of reality in front of him about what he expected of his officers. All officer applications, no matter who they were went through Parsons, who specified that: ¹⁴

If he (the applicant) has not had any previous military training, I tell him that he must enlist as a private soldier in the 7th Battalion of the Leinster Regiment in which 'C' Company is kept as the Candidates Company... I tell him plainly that if I do not consider him fit for Officer's or NCOs rank, he will have to go on service and, possibly die in a trench, as a Private.

Denis Gwynn described Tom as being a man of, '*eager impulses and without strong powers of discipline.*' ¹⁵ A strict disciplinarian, Parsons didn't want men with such failings. Tom's poor state of health at the time worried Parsons. Allusions to '*poor health*' and '*nerves*' were in fact oblique references to Tom's difficulty with alcohol. ¹⁶

However on 10 March 1915, Parsons had changed his mind and decided to give Kettle '*another chance*' and offered him a place in the Cadet Company of the 7th Leinsters. ¹⁷ Interestingly The London Gazette noted that Tom had been placed in the 7th Leinsters on 15 December 1914 and commissioned into the 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 31 March 1915. ¹⁸

Parsons and Kettle clashed on several occasions and yet on a personal level Parsons had affections for Tom. Parsons diary made several references to lunch dates.

¹¹ "Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archive,Parsons Archive,GB 9 9 K C L M A." Gwynn enlisted as a private soldier but was commissioned into the 6th Connagught Rangers in April 1915. See Lyons.p.276.

¹² Denman, Terence. *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992).p.47.

¹³ *Ibid.*p.47.

¹⁴ "Parsons, Lieut.- General Sir L W," (London: Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archive,King's College London,GB99 KCLMA).

¹⁵ Denman.p.47. See also Lyons.p.278.

¹⁶ Pasetta.p.20.

¹⁷ Denman.p.47.

¹⁸ "The London Gazette," (London: H.M.S.O). 996 Supplement to London Gazette 1 February 1915 and Supplement 4271 dated 4 May 1915.

On one occasion while in training at Fermoy, Tom was asked to appear before the General on a disciplinary offense.¹⁹

'Lieutenant Kettle, this cannot go on.'

'If you don't obey orders, the British Army cannot hold us both.' Parsons said.

'We'll be very sorry to lose you General,' replied Tom with disarming indifference.

Tom spent most of his time at Fermoy on recruiting tours around Ireland.²⁰ He went to Tyrone, Drogheda, Navan and Cavan. In England he went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne.²¹ He made about 182 recruiting speeches.²² He and Stephen Gwynn worked together to produce a collection of recruiting ballads titled *Battle Songs of the Irish Brigade*. His poem *The Last Crusade* appeared in *The Freemans's Journal* on 17 April 1915.²³

Advanced nationalists ridiculed Tom on some of these recruiting tours depicting him in cartoons as a kettle blowing off steam and hot air. K. O'Doherty called him *'Tommy Atkins Kettle'* in the magazine in *Eire Ireland*.²⁴ Tom said he had received, *'a portmanteau of letters of abuse, mostly anonymous.'*²⁵ In an attempt to counter-argue Tom's accounts of German atrocities in Belgium, Surgeon McArdle of UCD's Medical Society made light of these accounts. Tom challenged McArdle to a public debate and asked could it be before 1 December (1914) because on that date he expected to join his regiment the Dublin Fusiliers; *'and go into training for the fight against imperialism, Prussia and the Gospel of the Devil.'*²⁶

On 31 December 1915, Tom had finished his time with the 7th Leinsters and had been assigned to the 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers.²⁷ By that time, as a unit of the 48th Infantry Brigade in the 16th (Irish) Division, the 9th Dublins had sailed for France.²⁸ Their battalion strength was thirty-three officers and 919 men of other ranks. Their destination was the Loos Front at Noeux les Mines facing German occupied village of Hulluch.²⁹

When the 9th Dublins sailed to France, Tom was not with them. He remained in Dublin up to 14 July 1916 and was in the city during the Easter Rising.³⁰

¹⁹ Lyons.p.279.

²⁰ Denman.p.47.

²¹ Ibid.p.61. See also Lyons.p.274,p.276.

²² Lyons.p.278. Paset puts his number of speeches as being 200. See Paset.p.18.

²³ Lyons.

²⁴ Novick, Ben. *Conceiving Revolution - Irish Nationalist Propaganda During the First World War* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001).p.191.

²⁵ Lyons.p.275.

²⁶ Ibid.p.271.

²⁷ "Tom Kettle Pro Ref Wo 339/13445," (London: The Public Records Office). See also Lyons.p.271.

²⁸ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974," (London: Public Records Office). The battalion sailed for France from England on 20 December 1915.

²⁹ Ibid. Connolly lasted a little over a month in command. On 28 January 1916, he 'relinquished command' and proceeded to England on leave.' No reason was given for this. His place was temporarily taken over by Major F.W. Soper.

³⁰ Lyons.p.295.

Being an officer in the British Army, he would have been bound to report for duty and take part in putting down the rising. It seems he didn't because according to Lyons, Tom spent Easter with his family. He denounced the Rising as madness.³¹ Before he left for France he called on some friends such as the Hogans in Bettystown to say goodbye. At another friend's house he was described as being; *'full of laughter, cheerful and almost boyish.'*³² However at other farewells to friends his high spirits had fallen. Following an evening meal at the Gresham Hotel with James O'Brien and Dr Louis Courtney, saying goodbye, a dejected Kettle threw his hands in the air and said; *'I go, never to return.'*³³

On 19 July 1916, Tom arrived at his battalion in France when they had taken over a section of front line trench at Hulluch during the late evening from the 8th Royal Irish Fusiliers. The battalion diary noted; *'Hostile artillery became very active as relieving battalion was moving out.'*³⁴ Over next three to four days, the 9th Dublins came under German artillery barrages.

He arrived at a time when the battalion was short of officers following the dreadful gas attack the Germans had launched over the Irish lines at Hulluch back in late April, ironically during the Easter Rising in Dublin. During April 1916, the Irish Division suffered 2,128 casualties; approximately 538 were killed, the remainder were to suffer chronic lung and breathing conditions for the rest of their lives.³⁵

Tom was assigned as Second-in-Command of 'B' Company, 9th Dublin Fusiliers. He was given a servant, eighteen-year-old 9168 Private Robert Bingham from Belfast.³⁶ Some 88% of the 9th Dublins were Irish; 78 % were from Dublin, mainly between the canals. The majority were volunteers who enlisted back in the autumn of 1914; single with an average age in the early-twenties.³⁷

Despite the hardship they shared, Tom seemed a content man living amongst the Dublin whom he grew to admire and they in turn admired him. He quickly identified with their plight and willingness to get on with the miserable life they had volunteered into. Lyons noted that Tom; *'submitted uncomplainingly to the wretchedness of trench warfare.'*³⁸

³¹ Ibid.p.284.

³² Ibid.p.293.

³³ Ibid.p.294.

³⁴ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974." 19 July 1916.

³⁵ "War Diary 16th (Irish) Division 1 December 1915 to 30 April 1917,W095/1955 " (London: Public Records Office).

³⁶ "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 " (Dublin: University College Dublin). 414.3

³⁷ Burke, Tom. "Whence Came the Royal Dublin Fusiliers?," *The Irish Sword* XXIV, no. No. 98 Winter (2005),p.449.

³⁸ Lyons.p.296.

The 9th Dublins along with the rest of the 16th (Irish) Division remained in the Hulluch sector until 30 August 1916. During the weeks Tom was in this sector, the battalion carried out the routines of battalion rotations in and out of the front line and carrying out trench maintenance work. To keep the men combat sharp, occasionally they carried out raids on the German lines, which in most cases ended up in costly failure. Tom took no part in any raids or combat related activity.

Despite the relative inactivity of the battalion, or the '*day by dayness*' as Tom referred to the dull life he experienced in the trenches, during the months of July and August 1916, his battalion casualties amounted to ninety for July and fifty-seven for August, a total of 147 of which thirty-eight had died.³⁹

It was in this Hulluch sector that Tom wrote *Silhouettes From The Front*, a chapter in *The Ways of War*. He described the warfare he experienced as being the '*wall-paper war*' because the pattern of war was so repetitive. He described the job of the sentry, the shell holes in No Man's Land with unburied bodies lying in them. '*Strange things happen there*' he noted. He described the barbed wire on which; '*blood-stained strips of uniform and fragments more sinister have been known to hang un-collected for a long time.*'⁴⁰

On 30 August, the 16th (Irish) Division left the Hulluch sector and was brought south to the Somme by train followed by a long route march in wet weather – which no doubt didn't go down too well with Lieut. Kettle. The Irish Division was just another Kitchener-type Division required to carry on the futile campaign of attrition the Somme had developed into. By that time, like many men, trench life began to impair on Tom's health. Yet, he refused to go on sick leave.⁴¹

On the morning of 4 September, the 9th Dublins moved up into the reserve line in the ruins of Carnoy. They were sent there to act as a reserve force to be called on if needed for the attack on Guillemont by 20th Division and 47th Brigade of the 16th (Irish) Division which had begun the previous day. Out of a total strength of 2,400 men of all ranks, in the attack on Guillemont, the 47th Brigade lost 1,147 all ranks, just under 50%.⁴²

It was in Carnoy that Tom met up with Emmet Dalton who had just arrived to the battalion.⁴³ Dalton found Tom writing a book; '*about the war and the Irish Division, namely the 16th.*'⁴⁴ The battle for Guillemont on 3 and 4 September was utter butchery and there is no doubt the scenes that Tom witnessed had a profound impact on his emotions because it was over those two days that he wrote some of his most moving, intimate and prophetic scripts. He had written much on political issues and war in the previous weeks but these last letters were more intimate and personal.

³⁹ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974." 31 July 2016. See also "Http://Www.Cwgc.Org the Commonwealth War Graves Commission", The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (2013). See also Kettle.p.176.

⁴⁰ Kettle.p.178. See also Lyons.p.296.

⁴¹ Lyons.p.298.

⁴² Denman.p.82.

⁴³ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974." 4 September 1916.

⁴⁴ "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ". 417.1

It was in Carnoy, in the field before Guillemont, that Tom wrote his now famous poem; *'To My Daughter Betty, the Gift of God'* in which he told his three-year-old Betty and those who scorned him why he enlisted.⁴⁵ He wrote to his wife Mary at 119 Upper Lesson Street telling her he had been to Mass and Holy Communion at 6:00 a.m. that morning and giving her; *'instructions about literary matters and a list of friends who were to receive his farewell messages.'*⁴⁶ He feared he was not going to come through the battle to take Ginchy which at that stage was a mound of rubble sitting on a hill overlooking the battlefield.

At midnight of 4/5 September, the 20th Division was replaced in the line by the 16th (Irish) Division who took over the front line at Guillemont. It was just before midnight that the 9th Dublins marched off in a downpour of rain over, *'an awfully uneven road'* to the new front line trenches named Fagan and Sherwood Trenches just in front of Trones Wood.⁴⁷ The march through the night, which was less than ten kilometres, took them three hours.

Over the next four days, the battalion was mainly involved in attempts to consolidate the new line captured at Guillemont and to probe the German defences in Ginchy by pushing out strong patrols along a line between the east end of Guillemont and nearby Leuze Wood.⁴⁸

This proved very costly work indeed on account of German shelling. Between 5 and 8 September, forty-two men from the 9th Dublins alone were killed.⁴⁹ Emmet Dalton recalled that the battalion lost 200 men on the morning of 7 September from German shellfire.⁵⁰ Some of the young men killed during those two days were Private Laurence Keegan, age twenty-one from No. 13 Charleville Mall, North Strand and twenty-three year old Private Henry Hunt from No. 23 Temple Street, Dublin.⁵¹ Is it any wonder why Tom became somewhat forlorn and fearful that he may not come through the next few days alive.

During the night of 7 / 8 September, the battalion pushed out from Sherwood Trench up just beyond Guillemont and spent the next day digging jump off trenches for the attack on Ginchy. Tom remained back in his dugout in Sherwood Trench throughout the 8 September. It was from his dugout that he wrote his last letter home.

⁴⁵Kettle.Pp.48-49. "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ". 420. See letter from Lance - Cpl. Browne, 10th RDF to Mrs Mary Kettle 10 March 1917. Betty was born on 13 January 1913. See "Tom Kettle Pro Ref Wo 339/13445."

⁴⁶ Lyons.p.299.

⁴⁷ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974." 4 September 1916. See also "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ".417.1

⁴⁸ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974." 5-8 September 1916.

⁴⁹ "Http://Www.Cwgc.Org the Commonwealth War Graves Commission".

⁵⁰ "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ".417 / 1

⁵¹ "Http://Www.Cwgc.Org the Commonwealth War Graves Commission".

It was to his brother Larry.⁵²

...If I live I mean to spend the rest of my life working for perpetual peace. I have seen war and faced modern artillery, and know what an outrage it is against simple men...We are moving up tonight into the battle of the Somme. The bombardment, destruction and bloodshed are beyond all imagination, nor did I ever think the valour of simple men could be quite as beautiful as that of my Dublin Fusiliers. I have had two chances of leaving them-one on sick leave and one to take a staff job. I have chosen to stay with my comrades. I am calm and happy but desperately anxious to live.

He was offered a job as Base Censor but turned it down and went with his men into battle.⁵³ His motivation for being with his men was probably the same as Willie Redmond's when he went with his men at Wijtschate the following year. Conscience and an effort to remove from their detractors the accusation that they lacked the courage for active service.⁵⁴

Emmet Dalton recalled what he and Tom did on 8 September: ⁵⁵

Well, during the morning of the 8th, Tom and I were discussing the losses we had sustained when an orderly arrived with a note for each of us saying . 'Be in readiness, battalion will take up (a x b) position in front of Ginchy tonight at twelve midnight.' I was with Tom when we advanced to the position that night and the stench of the dead that covered our road was so awful that we both used some foot powder on our faces. When we reached our objective, we dug ourselves in.

That night, his servant, Private Robert Bingham was with Tom. In an act, which can only be described as immense kindness, Tom sent Bingham to see the doctor thus removing him from the attack and saving his life. Bingham later wrote:⁵⁶

The night before going into action I was changing my socks beside him, I had sore feet at that time, when he seen them he sent me to the doctor. I went to the hospital and did not see him since until I heard of his death from a pal of mine in hospital.

Tom and his men lay crouched in their jump-off positions in front of Ginchy throughout that long and hot September day during which Father Felix Burke spent some time with the Catholic officers and gave a general absolution.⁵⁷ No doubt Father Willie Doyle did the same thing.

⁵² "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ".

⁵³ Kettle, Tom. *The Days Burden and Other Essays* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1968).p.40.

⁵⁴ Paseta.p.19.

⁵⁵ "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ".417.1

⁵⁶ Ibid.414.5

⁵⁷ Lyons.p.301.

The Commanding Officer of the 48th Brigade, Brigadier-General F.W. Ramsay sent his men a good-luck message. He had every confidence that they would; '*carry out the task allotted to them with the courage and determination of the Irish race.*'⁵⁸ As zero hour approached, Tom went among his men with cheerful and encouraging words.⁵⁹

Zero hour for the attack was set at 4:45 p.m. The normal tactic of a dawn assault was not used. It was hoped that the late evening attack would prevent the Germans launching a counter-attack before darkness arrived.⁶⁰ A last minute change in artillery fire orders was made which added an extra two-minute bombardment on Ginchy. However, this order was not received in time by the 48th Brigade and they began their assault at 4:45 p.m. as per the original plan. On seeing this, the Germans immediately began their counter barrage and caught the 47th Brigade still in their jump-off trenches waiting for the extra two minutes.

What followed was none other than utter slaughter. The parapet over which the 7th Leinster Regiment mounted to charge the first line at Ginchy was covered with dismembered Irish bodies. When the 8th Munsters and 6th Royal Irish Regiment eventually charged the German line south-east of Ginchy, they were cut to pieces by German machine gun fire that was not supposed to be there. They made little or no progress. 2nd Lieut. J.F.B.O'Sullivan of the 6th Connaught Rangers described what it was like being under an artillery barrage:⁶¹

No sooner had I laboriously started off than a little man came running out of a corpse-strewn trench. His hands were holding something cupped in one of those round German fatigue caps, and grinning like a maniac, apparently wanted to share the joke. He came up and showed me the cap – filled and quivering with the owner's brains.

On the left of the attack however, the 48th Brigade had some success despite the fact that the 1st Munsters and 7th Royal Irish Rifles were also caught in their assembly trenches by both accurate German and wayward British artillery fire. During the morning, the 7th Royal Irish Rifles came under three hours of barrage from their own side. Despite informing the British gunners on two occasions that their shells were dropping short. By 2:00 p.m., the 7th Royal Irish Rifles had only 150 men available for the attack on Ginchy.⁶² All three brigades of 16th (Irish) Divisions attacked understrength.⁶³ And yet they managed to take the German front line into Ginchy.

⁵⁸ "War Diary 48th Brigade, December 1915 to December 1916, W095/1972," (London: Public Records Office). Brigade Order No.64. 8 September 1916

⁵⁹ Lyons.p.301.

⁶⁰ Denman.p.95.

⁶¹ "O' Sullivan, Lieutenant J F B - I W M Box Ref 77/167/1," (London: Imperial War Museum also available in RDF A Archive).

⁶² "War Diary 48th Brigade, December 1915 to December 1916, W095/1972." After battle report.

⁶³ Denman.p.95.

At 5:25 p.m. the 8th and 9th Dublins passed through the Munsters and Irish Rifles in the second wave of attack to finally take Ginchy. They had to be stopped from pushing on beyond the village. By 6:10 p.m. the 16th (Irish) Division took the village of Ginchy from Bavarian troops.⁶⁴ The 48th Brigade took about 200 German prisoners. Mainly Bavarian Catholics⁶⁵

During the night at about 11:00 p.m., the Germans launched a counter-attack of infantry and artillery thus proving the strategists theory wrong.⁶⁶ But the Dublins and 8th Royal Irish Fusiliers held on to Ginchy. It was during the night that Fr. Willie Doyle SJ won his Military Cross for tending to the Irish wounded.⁶⁷ In a letter to his father dated 11 September 1916, Fr. Doyle stated; *'For the past week I have been living literally in Hell.'*⁶⁸

Early next morning 10 September, most of the battered Irish battalions were relieved in their lines by Guards Regiments from the 3rd Guards Brigade who consolidated what the Irish troops had costly won. The Welsh Guards relieved the 9th Dublins.⁶⁹ Throughout the day, the Irish battalions returned to Carnoy and the Guardsmen collected the Irish dead. The Leinster Regiment historian wrote; *'We were met by our pipes, and the remains of the Irish Brigade marched passed our Brigadier (Brigadier-General Pereira) who, with tears in his eyes, said 'Well done, boys! I am proud of you.'*⁷⁰

Between 1 and 10 September 1916, the 16th (Irish) Division suffered a loss of 240 officers and 4,090 men of other ranks, a total loss of 4,330 killed wounded and missing. They started the month with 435 officers and 10,410 men.⁷¹ In the attack on Ginchy, Tom's 48th Brigade suffered a loss of eighty-two officers and 1,324 men, half their original strength.⁷² Of the twenty-four officers available for the attack on Ginchy from the 9th Dublin Fusiliers alone, only two officers marched back from Ginchy, they were 2nd Lieut. N. Hurst and eighteen year-old 2nd Lieut. Emmet Dalton.⁷³

Dalton won the Military Cross at Ginchy and was with Tom in the attack when he was killed. According to Dalton; *'I was just behind Tom when he went over the top. He was in a bent position and a bullet got over a steel waistcoat he wore and entered his heart.'*⁷⁴ Tom's death was random. The bullet that killed him could easily have killed Dalton beside him.

⁶⁴ "War Diary 48th Brigade, December 1915 to December 1916, W095/1972." After battle report.

⁶⁵ Denman.p.99.

⁶⁶ "War Diary 48th Brigade, December 1915 to December 1916, W095/1972." After battle report.

⁶⁷ Denman.p.99. Fr. Doyle was awarded the Military Cross in early January 1917. 'They have given me the M.C.,' he said, 'but His crosses are far more welcome.' See O'Rahilly, A. *Father William Doyle S.J* (London: Longman's Green and Company, 1920).p.262.

⁶⁸ O'Rahilly.p.252.

⁶⁹ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974." 10 September 1916.

⁷⁰ Whitton, F E. *The History of the Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment. (Royal Canadians)1914-1922* vol. 2 (Cork: Schull Books, 1998).p.318.

⁷¹ "War Diary 16th (Irish) Division 1 December 1915 to 30 April 1917,W095/1955 ". See also Denman.p.101.

⁷² Denman.p.99.

⁷³ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974."10 September 1916.

⁷⁴ "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ".417.1.

Tom lasted just fifty-three days with the 9th Dublins in France.⁷⁵ Dalton would later fight against the British in the Irish War of Independence and become Director of Munitions and Training in the Irish Free State Army. He said of Ginchy that it was; '*Sad... a glorious victory with terrible losses.*'⁷⁶ Another officer in the 8th Dublins that day at Ginchy was Captain Jack Hunt, whom like Dalton, later served the Irish Free State Army.

Tom's body may well have been found by the Welsh Guards and buried in or near Guillemont Road Cemetery which was started by the Guards Division after the battle to take Guillemont on 4 September 1916.⁷⁷ In subsequent shelling of this region, many graves were blown up and the remains scattered. Sadly Tom's final resting place was thus never found. His wife Mary Kettle was informed of Tom's death by a telegram sent to her at University College Dublin on 18 September 1916. Interestingly Tom gave his address as being University College Dublin. The telegram simply stated; '*The Army Council expresses their sympathy.*'⁷⁸

As stated, Tom arrived at his battalion in France on 19 July 1916. Accompanying him was twenty year-old 2nd Lieut. Thomas Goodwin Tyner from Coolalug House, Tinahely, county Wicklow.⁷⁹ The thirty-six year-old Kettle and the twenty year-old Tyner died on the same day. Both men's names along with the other young men who died with them on 9 September 1916 and whose bodies were never found are on the Thiepval Memorial. Their youthful German foe that died fighting against them at Ginchy were eventually buried a few kilometres away at Fricourt.

Fr. Felix Burke, a chaplain with the Dublin Fusiliers, found Tom to be an officer without '*swank*', an ideal officer.⁸⁰ But Tom Kettle was not a soldier. He was not conditioned to kill another human being. His purpose in life was to reconcile and educate. His pen was his rifle. Had he been confronted with a Bavarian soldier in a Ginchy trench, he could not possibly have killed or hurt him. His death and the death of young Thomas Tyner epitomised the tragedy of that terrible war. What a loss these two men were to Ireland. Just think of what they could have offered a post-war Ireland. Tom with his dream and ambitions to work for a peaceful reconciled Ireland and Europe. Tyner with his youthfulness, enthusiasm and sense of duty to his country. All this potential and possibility was lost and buried in a field near Ginchy. It was buried in Fricourt too.

Because he died in the uniform of a British soldier and not in the uniform of an Irish Volunteer, Tom believed he would be forgotten in Irish history, lost in the shadow of Patrick Pearse.⁸¹

⁷⁵ "War Diary 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers W095/1974." From 19 July to 9 September 1916.

⁷⁶ Dungan, Myles. *Irish Voices from the Great War* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1995), p.138. RTE Sound Archive.

⁷⁷ "Tom Kettle Archive L.A. 34 ".Letter to Mary Kettle by Emmet Dalton 14 October 1916.

⁷⁸ "Tom Kettle Pro Ref Wo 339/13445."

⁷⁹ "Http://Www.Cwgc.Org the Commonwealth War Graves Commission".

⁸⁰ Lyons.p.298.

⁸¹ Ibid.p.293.

In 2004, I wrote an article on Tom Kettle published in Dublin Historical Record. I concluded the article by writing:⁸²

Wouldn't it be nice if University College Dublin carried out Professor Scott's ambitions and erected a memorial to one of its long forgotten members of staff Tom Kettle.

Professor William Scott was head of the School of Architecture at UCD in Earlsfort Terrace in 1916 and in late September he wrote to Tom's wife offering her his skills as an architect to design a memorial in the form of a mural tablet to her late husband. He wished the memorial to be placed in the grounds of the New University College; *'to record his (Kettle's) connection with the University. This would be only a fitting tribute to his memory.'*⁸³

Well my dear friends, is it not grand to see in this centenary year of Tom's death that his place in Irish history was not lost in the shadow of Pearse and the hopes of Professor Scott and myself have at last come true.

May you rest in peace now Tom

Tom Burke

9 September 2016.

⁸² Burke, Tom. "In Memory of Tom Kettle 'B' Company, 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers," *Dublin Historical Record* LVIII, no. 2 (Autumn 2004).p.172.

⁸³ *Ibid.*p.172.

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