

Activities of the RDFA in 2018



Soldiers from The Irish Defence Forces at the opening ceremony of Kilkenny War Memorial 15 July 2018. Note Regimental Standards above memorial.

March 9 to April 28. An exhibition titled *Irish Women and World War 1* was presented by Dublin City Library and Archive at 138-144 Pearse Street, Dublin which drew on the collections of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive and other material held at Dublin City Library and Archive to explore different aspects of women's experiences during World War 1 and how they were impacted by class, working-life and political persuasion.

April 18 Wednesday all day: Seminar: *Dublin's Mansion House and the Anti-Conscription Movement, 1918*. With numbers in the army running low by 1918, the British Government planned to replenish its army by extending

conscription to Ireland. Presented by Dublin City Library and Archive, seminar took place in the Round Room at the Mansion House, Dawson Street, Dublin 2, examined the anti-conscription movement in Ireland 100 years ago. Speakers on the day included Ciarán Wallace (TCD), O'Neill's biographer Thomas J. Morrissey SJ, Brian Hanley (Edinburgh), Liz Gillis, Micheline Sheehy Skeffington (NUIG), Francis Devine (SIPTU) and Roger Cole.

April 3, 10, 17 and 24 Tuesdays: Lunch-time lecture series presented between 1:00 p.m. to 1:50 p.m., titled *Doing their bit: Irish women and the First World War*. These four lectures were presented by Dublin City Library and Archive in the Council Chamber, Dublin City Hall, Dame Street, Dublin. The final lecture on 24 April was given by Dr Fionnuala Walsh, UCD, who offered an overview of the topic and considered the war's lasting effects on Irish women and their role in Irish society.

April 25 Wednesday morning: Annual Dawn Service of Remembrance was held at 6:30 a.m. in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Blackhorse Avenue, Cabra, Dublin. This year the service marked the ending of World War 1.

May 25 to 29: RDFA tour of 1918 battlefields. This was a magnificent tour arranged and run by Brian Moroney and Seamus Greene. See report on tour by Seamus Moriarty and Tom Burke.

June 17 Sunday morning: The annual wreath laying service at the London Cenotaph organised by the Combined Irish Regiments Association, London took place. Well done to Mr David Ball, Combined Irish Regiments Association for arranging this event.

July 7 Saturday afternoon: The annual wreath-laying ceremony at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge, Dublin took place. The event was run by The Royal British Legion and the RDFA was well represented by the committee and members. Capt. (retd) Seamus Greene paraded the RDFA Standard as usual. Many thanks Seamus.

July 8 Sunday morning: The National Day of Commemoration took place at Collins Barracks, Dublin. Again, the RDFA was well represented by the committee and members.



John Doolin from Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny wearing his RDFA beret, blazer, and tie saluting at the unveiling of the Kilkenny WW1 War Memorial on 15 July 2018.

July 15 Sunday morning: To commemorate the 780 men from Kilkenny who died in WW1, The Kilkenny War Memorial Committee unveiled a beautiful memorial at Linear Park in Kilkenny City. Congratulations to this hard-working and dedicated committee of men and women in raising the funds and bringing this project to conclusion. Members and friends of the RDFA attended. Capt. (retd) Seamus Greene paraded the RDFA Standard.

August 10-12 Weekend: As part of the events for the 50th Birr Vintage Week of August 2018, a set of mock WW1 trenches were excavated in the training grounds of Birr Barracks. The project was organised by Stephen Callaghan, a post-graduate archaeology student at UCD with a keen interest in WW1. Some members of the RDFA went along to offer Stephen and his crew a hand in the dig to unearth the training trench.

August 12 Sunday: To commemorate the 3,271 people from Kilkenny who served in WW1, a memorial was unveiled at Mac Donagh Railway Station. The memorial was unveiled by a local man, Major-General Kieran Brennan, Deputy Chief of Staff (Operations), Irish Defence Forces. This project was again put

together by The Kilkenny War Memorial Committee. Thanks to RDFA members Berni Egan and Tom Burke for researching many of the names on the memorial.

October 9 Tuesday: To mark the centenary of the sinking of the *RMS Leinster*, a seminar consisting of talks in the morning and afternoon setting the background context to the sinking was held. In the evening, there was an eve of centenary talk given by RDFA Committee member Philip Lecane, author of *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster Disaster* and *Women and Children of the Leinster* who has spent twenty-five years researching those who were aboard the ship. The venue for many of the *RMS Leinster* events was at The Maritime Museum, Dun Laoghaire.



RDFA members John Gibbons and Kevin Cunningham offering 'advice' only at the WW1 training trench dig in Birr.

October 10 Wednesday: To commemorate the centenary of the sinking of the *RMS Leinster*, a state-run commemoration was presented at Dun Laoghaire Library, Dlr Lexicon, Moran Park, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Great credit must go to Philip Lecane and his dear wife Kate for all the hard work they put into the *RMS Leinster* centenary commemoration projects.


November 10 Friday: Mass at City Quay Church, Dublin. *To remember the fallen.* Sadly, due to a fall-off of attendees, this Mass did not take place.

November 11 Sunday: The annual Ecumenical Service of Remembrance at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, took place. Capt. (retd) Seamus Greene paraded the RDFA Standard.

December 7 Friday: The RDFA Annual Dinner took place at Masonic Hall, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2. As ever, Brian and Theresa organised a wonderful night of entertainment. Sadly, one or two of our regular attendees passed away during the year and were remembered as the night ended.

Dublin City Council
and The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association
Cordially welcomes you to an exhibition
To mark the centenary of Armistice 1918

THE PEACE AT HOME? DUBLIN AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR




Victory Parade, Dublin, 1919
[RTE Photographic Archive]

Dublin City Library & Archive
138-144 Pearse Street
Dublin 2
Admission Free

Opening Hours:
Monday-Thursday 10.00-20.00
Friday-Saturday 10.00-17.00

Comhairle Cathrach
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City Council



Exhibitions and other events relating to WW1 and 1918 presented in Dublin during 2018.

On Saturday 20 October 2018, Dublin County Choir, in which RDFA member Mrs Kathleen Byrne sang, presented John Rutter's *Requiem* and Karl Jenkins, *The Armed Man – A Mass for Peace* at Whitefriar Street Church, in Aungier Street, Dublin.

On 3 November 2018, the Dublin choir Lassus, presented a Remembrance Concert in St. Mary's Church on Haddington Road. The well-known concert trumpeter, John Walsh, played *The Last Post* and the end of the concert.

On 5 November 2018, to commemorate the ending of WW1, the RDFA in co-operation with Dublin City Library and Archive presented an exhibition at Pearse Street Library, Dublin. The exhibition titled, *The Peace at Home ? Dublin after the First World War*, was officially opened by the then Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Niall Ring. In attendance was Dr Mary Clarke, City Archivist, Mr Brendan Teeling, City Librarian. We would like to thank Dr Bernard Kelly who offered a lecture to the members of the RDFA. Thanks also goes to Ms Tara Doyle, Dublin City Library and Ms Gael Scanlon of The Irish National War Memorial Trust, Islandbridge. With the question mark after the word *Peace* in the title, the exhibition questioned peace in Ireland which did not last too long after 11 November 1918 in Ireland and indeed throughout Europe, particularly in western Europe, Turkey, and Greece. The exhibition ran from 5 November to 21 December 2018.

Throughout 2018, The National Library of Ireland in Kildare Street, Dublin, continued to present their WW1 exhibition titled *World War Ireland: Exploring Irish Experience*. This year marked the centenary of the ending of the war and there was a specific section of the exhibition dedicated to the events on the Western Front in 1918. Guided tours of the exhibition were offered by the library on the second Thursday

of every month. The RDFA wish to thank Brid O'Sullivan and her colleague Nicola Ralston at The National Library of Ireland for the continuation of this wonderful exhibition. On Tuesday 6 November, Tom Burke presented a lecture at the National Library titled: *'From shoe box to widow box-commemoration of the First World War in Ireland, 1919 to 1916.'*

As part of their *#Armistice 100* commemorations of the ending of WW1, UCD Library presented an exhibition in the college library titled: *'...and now the shells fall thick and fast.'* Documenting WW1: a UCD Library Cultural Heritage exhibition. The library also presented a series of lectures and a special performance of poetry and music by UCD Ad Astra Performing Arts Academy during November 2018.



The Haunting Soldier in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin,
November 2018.

On Sunday afternoon 4 November 2018, a ceremony took place in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin to unveil magnificent metallic structure, *The Haunting Soldier*. Standing over six meters tall, the sculptor was made from rusted scrap metal and created in Dorset by Chris Hannam. Mr Joe Duffy from RTE for the MC. Music and song was provided by Liam O'Maonlai and St. Mary's College Singers. In attendance was Minister Josepha Madigan TD, Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Mr Kingsley Donaldson, Northern Ireland WW1 Centenary Committee. Descendants of WW1 es-servicemen and women recalled memories of their relatives lives. The project was the brainchild of Ms Sabina Purcell.

The RDFA Archive at Dublin City Library and Archive in Pearse Street, Dublin, continues to grow. See the archive website at:

<https://www.dublincity.ie/residential/libraries/heritage-and-history/royal-dublin-fusiliers-association-archive>

For more information of WW1 centenary events see.

<https://www.decadeofcentenaries.com>

Poetry

The following is a poem written by Ms Suzanne Scot-McCarthy from Rush, north county Dublin, whose great-grandfather 3121 Sgt. Richard Scott, 2nd RDF, was killed on 10 May 1915 when the Battalion was in the front-line trenches at Wieltje. The Battalion War Diary noted on that day: *'Intermittent shelling throughout the day and accurate sniping towards evening. Quiet night.'* The CWGC records that twenty-seven men from the 2nd RDF died on 10 May 1915. With so many dead and horrifically wounded, the night was certainly not a quiet one for the 2nd RDF. In 2017, Suzanne travelled to Ieper to seek out where Richard and his comrades had died. She found his name on the Menin Gate and wrote the following poem in his memory.

Soul Searching

As I travelled on the trains
I looked out across the fields.
Your soul shivered through me,
Are you under those trees?

You are part of this landscape
Forever more.
Taken abruptly from this earth
Put back in the soil.

In both these lands
You sowed great seeds.
One bore children
The other bore trees.

I travelled through Belgium to see you.
But could not pinpoint.
The place
Where you did deflate.
So I traced your name right back
To the Menin Gate.

Your soul continued
To stay with me on this journey.
So I brought you back home
For all eternity.

Report of RDFA 2018 tour of 1918 Western Front battlefields in northern France**Friday 25 May - Tuesday 29 May 2018**

Seamus Moriarty and Tom Burke

Friday 25 May

With an early start at 6:30 a.m., we took an Aer Lingus flight to Brussels Centre where we met our bus and driver Damian McKenna of DM Tours, Clontibret, Co Monaghan. Our group consisted of thirty-one members and friends of the RDFA. With a quick chat from Brian on our plans for the day, we set off to our first destination, St. Symphorien Military Cemetery which is located about two kilometres east of Mons. The cemetery was established by the German army but is now a Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) burial ground of 284 German and 229 British soldiers, principally casualties of the Battle of Mons on 23 August 1914

It is the resting place of Maurice Dease from Coole, Co. Westmeath who, on his death on 23 August, was one of the first British officer casualties and the first posthumous recipient of the Victoria Cross in the war. Seamus Greene explained the unusual bi-level shape of the cemetery and many of the graves are in circles rather than the traditional rectangular CWGC format. In line with its origins as a German cemetery, it is very much in keeping with the aesthetics of German military cemeteries which are supposed to evoke the tranquil atmosphere of a woodland burial ground. It also has the grave of Gerard Lawrence Price from the 28th Bn. Canadian Infantry who was killed two minutes before Armistice at 11.00 a.m. on 11 November 1918.

Lunch was taken at La Roseliere Restaurant in Roisol which is about 110 kilometres along the A2 south west of St. Symphorien Military Cemetery and about twenty-kilometres northwest of St. Quentin. With many folks settled after a fine lunch and with table conversations in full flow, it took a stern voice from Brian to hustle along the folks back to the bus.

Our next and final destination of this long day was St. Mary's Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) located on the D39 that links the villages of Hulluch to Vermelles; a distance of about eighty-six kilometres north along the A26 from Roisol via Lens. St. Mary's Advanced Dressing Station was established during the Battle of Loos. The cemetery was made after the Armistice, by the concentration of graves from the battlefield of Loos; the great majority of the graves are those of men who fell in September and October 1915. The cemetery includes a row of unnamed Royal Dublin Fusiliers with the inscription *believed to be buried*. Also, here is the grave of John Kipling (*Lieut John Kipling, Irish Guards, 27 September 1915, Age 18*). He was the son of Rudyard Kipling and it was only in 2016 that the CWGC accepted this to be the grave of Lieut. John Kipling.

Tom Burke gave a background talk on the German gas and artillery attack on the 16th (Irish) Division lines facing Hulluch on 27-29 April 1916. The Irish Division suffered 2,128 casualties; approx. 538 were killed. Of the 538 who were killed, 200 were members of the 8th and 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The 8th and 7th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers from the 49th Brigade on the left of the Dublins suffered a loss of 129 death casualties. The highest number of casualties in the Irish Division were suffered by the 8th Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Some 176 from the Battalion died instantly from the gas cloud; 137 have no known grave and are listed on the Loos Memorial at Dud Corner. The remainder were buried nearby at Philosophe Military Cemetery and at Noeux-Les Mines Communal Cemetery.

Assisting us during this stage of our tour was a local young lady from Hulluch named Anne Sophie Douchin. Her knowledge of the pre-war history of Hulluch and the region was a great contribution to our tour. Anne Sophie was one of the speakers at the seminar titled *The Tragedy of Hulluch* organised by the RDFA in co-operation with Dublin City Library and Archive and held on 16 April 2016 at the Council Chamber at Dublin City Hall. The title of her lecture was, *Hulluch then and now – A pictorial presentation of Hulluch during and after the years of war*. The sun was setting as we reached our hotel for the next four nights; the Novotel Lens Noyelles, Noyelles-Godault, about fourteen kilometres east of Lens along the A21.

Saturday 26 May

Following our after-breakfast morning brief of the day's activities given by Brian, our first place to visit was L'Eglise Saint Martin de Noeux-les-Mines in the village of Noeux-les-Mines. This church was near the HQ of the 16th (Irish) Division during their time facing Hulluch and many of the 1,500 hundred Irish soldiers based nearby used it for religious services. Fr Willie Doyle SJ celebrated Mass there on occasions. While at the church, we met a man from Bray, Co. Wicklow named Sean Downes. Brian and the lads had arranged to meet Sean at the church as he was touring the region on holiday. Sean worked for South Dublin County Council Library Service; his grand uncle, John Cleary, a fisherman also from Bray, had seen service in this area. Of particular interest to the Irish soldiers was the pre-revolutionary statue to Our Lady dating from the 15th century and which survived both the French Revolution and the destruction of the church during World War 1.

Before leaving this area to be redeployed elsewhere, Irish troops decided that a life-size statue of Our Lady of Victories should be carved in marble by the best Paris sculptor and erected in the church. It would be paid for by subscriptions from ordinary soldiers. The church was destroyed by a single shell from a naval gun in March 1917. The statue however had been delayed in arrival from Paris that morning, had not yet been installed in the church and survived the war.

At about 11:00 a.m., we departed Noeux-les-Mines, bid farewell to Sean Downes from Bray, and headed south about fifty kilometres along the A26; our destination was Croisilles British Cemetery. The village of Croisilles is about thirteen kilometres south-east of Arras. There are fifty-one RDF men buried in this cemetery. Most of them were casualties following the 16th (Irish) Division's successful attack on Tunnel Trench on 20 November 1917. Four of the RDF men buried in this cemetery were just nineteen years of age. One of them was 27294 Lance. /Sgt. James Byrne, 9th RDF, from 17 Philipsburgh Avenue, Fairview, Dublin. Another nineteen-year-old was 2nd Lieut. Bernard Ward from Balinrobe, Co. Mayo. At the cemetery, Tom gave us a briefing on the attack on Tunnel Trench and its aftermath. For further discussion of this attack, See *The Blue Cap*. Vol. 22. Pp.4-35.

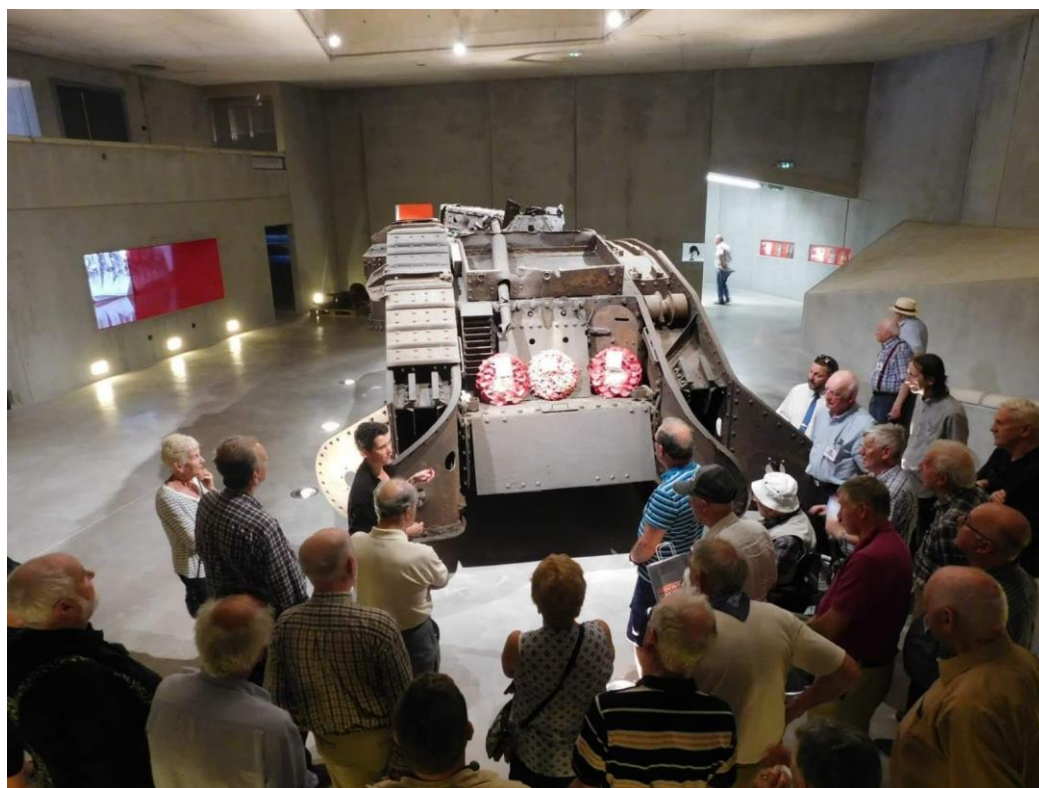
Lunch was taken at the IBIS Hotel in Cambrai.

Our afternoon tour began with a trip to the Tank Museum in Cambrai. This wonderful museum was opened in 2017. Located south-west of Cambrai, the centrepiece is 'Deborah', the only surviving tank from the 476 that had fought during the Battle of Cambrai; the first time in history that tanks were used *en masse*. This tank was discovered in 1998 and is displayed as is i.e., there has been no attempt to fully restore the vehicle. The shell hole which brought the tank to a halt and killed five of the crew is clearly visible. It was found by a local man who had been told by an elderly lady that she remembered a tank being buried in the area but could not remember exactly where.

At around 5:30 p.m., we headed back to the hotel for dinner at 7:30 p.m. From Cambrai back to Novotel Lens Noyelles, is about forty-five kilometres along the A1.



The 2018 RDFA tour party in front of the statute of Our Lady of Victories in L'Eglise Saint Martin de Noeux-les-Mines



Members given a talk on *Deborah* by a museum guide in the tank museum in Cambrai.

Sunday 27 May

Following our after-breakfast morning brief of the day's activities given by Brian, we headed off south along the A26 about fifty kilometres to the village of Lempire and stopped our bus at Malassise Farm, a farm halfway between Epehy and Lempire. The historic topic of the day was the German offensive that began on 21 March 1918. Our plan was to walk along the communication trench lines that ran north-eastwards from Malassise Farm out towards a German front line position known as Little Priel Farm and return to Lempire along Lempire Road or St. Patrick's Avenue as it was referred to on trench maps.

In his introductory remarks, Tom Burke emphasised that the day's events would be the primary focus of the trip i.e., the role of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the German Offensive of 1918. He divided his comments on the events into three questions: Why it took place; Where it took place and When it took place. Just for the record, before we took off from Dublin Airport, as a means of preparation and familiarisation with our tour, Tom had given us an interesting document he had prepared which offered notes on the sites we visited.

We set off from Malassise Farm. With laminated trench maps tucked under his arm, Tom took us through the events on that misty morning of 21 March 1918. He noted that the defensive system used by the 16th (Irish) Division at the time of the offensives was not so much the traditional front-line traverse-type trenches but a zoned system of heavily wired front-line posts and strong points. Along our way, which essentially was from Malassise Farm down to Priel Cuttings, turn right onto Lempire Road, (St. Patrick's Avenue) which runs parallel with the motorway and back into Lempire, Tom pointed out features mentioned in the RDF war diaries such as Old Copse, Mule Trench, Little Priel Farm, St. Patrick's Avenue, Zebra and Yak Posts. He told stories of events that occurred at some of these places when the Germans attacked from the direction of Little Priel Farm. At points along the way, the ground was very muddy and wet; a simple reminder of what it must have been like 100 years previous. See map over.

For one man who marched that muddy track, it was truly an historic day for him and his family. Kevin Cunningham, a veteran of many RDFA trips to the Western Front, spoke about his late father Sgt. Tommy Cunningham who was captured in this area while serving with the 2nd RDF on the morning of 21 March 1918. Tommy spent the remaining few months of the war in captivity. Under interrogation, Tommy was surprised at how accurate the Germans were as to the British formations that opposed them. Indeed, an attempt on his part to confuse them with wrong information resulted in being struck across the face by a German officer. Ironically, the resultant bloody face and uniform may have saved him from any further abuse, but this time from German civilians, as he was marched into captivity. In 1964 when his father was admitted to hospital in Dublin, two weeks before his death he announced proudly to his fellow patients that he was a former member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and had served in the First World War. The response was blank faces.



Route RDFA members took beginning at Malassise Farm down to Priel Cuttings, turn right onto Lempire Road, (St. Patrick's Avenue) and back into Lempire.



Kevin Cunningham talking to RDFA members at Enfer Wood in memory of his father Sgt. Tommy Cunningham, 2nd RDF who was captured nearby on 21 March 1918.

In an emotional speech at the end of the march, very near Enfer Wood, Kevin thanked Tom, Brian, Seamus, Sean, Philip, Nick and the late Pat Hogarty, the men behind The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, for helping to change attitudes in Ireland meaning that service in the Great War was now a badge of honour and no longer a cause of shame.

Our 'route march' finished up coming into the southern edge of Lempire. Our walking wasn't over as we had arranged to meet Brian and the bus at Unicorn Cemetery where we had lunch. We marched on from Lempire down towards the A26 motorway to the cemetery for tea and sandwiches. The sun shone beautifully in the sky. We had a great chat about the walk we had just completed. There were some sore feet in the group. There are twenty-one RDF men buried in this cemetery, the majority being casualties of the German offensive. Among them is forty-three-year-old 18877 Pte. Michel Greene, 2nd RDF, KIA 21 March 1918, married to Margaret Greene of Bishop Street, Tullow, Co. Carlow. He wasn't as lucky as Sgt. Cunningham that terrible day.

With a stern boom of a voice from our RSM Moroney to get back on the bus, our next place to visit was the Somme American Cemetery at Bony. Along the short journey, Brian gave a very interesting talk on the American input to WW1. Situated near the village and close to the St. Quinten Canal, this impressive cemetery contains 1,844 American graves, primarily

of those who had fallen in the assault on the Hindenburg Line.



Philip Lecane at the grave of George McElroy in Laventie Military Cemetery.

On the forenoon of our visit, there had been a joint US – France commemoration ceremony with copious wreaths. Among the organisations named on wreaths were the American Overseas Memorial Day Association, the Democrats Abroad France, the Robert P McCormick Foundation Chicago Illinois and the In Remembrance Day Foundation. An adjoining chapel, with a massive bronze door surmounted by an American eagle, contains walls with the names of 333 of the missing. Unlike CWGC cemeteries, each internment here was marked by a substantial white marble cross. Landscaping tends to a much greater element in US cemeteries than in their CWGC counterparts. It is interesting that landscaped cemeteries date largely from the very start and end of the war only and the industrial killing such as Passchendaele and the Somme did not allow for such niceties. That evening, tired, hungry and some emotionally drained after a fascinating day, we headed off back up the motorway to our hotel. A hot shower and a warm evening meal awaited us.



Members of the RDFA outside Malassise Farm on Sunday 27 May 2018.

Monday 28 May

As usual after breakfast, Brian gave us his outline plan for the day's activities. Essentially today's focus of attention were the months of October and November 1918 and specifically the activities of the 2nd RDF during that period at Le Cateau (October 1918) and the final attack of the 2nd RDF at Floursies in early November 1918.

Although not specifically related to the Dubs and the theme of the day's tour, our day began by heading north to Laventie Military Cemetery which is about twelve kilometres southwest of Armentieres. Here lies the remains George McElroy, a famous Irish aviator who flew with the RFC and was killed on 31 July 1918.



George McElroy RFC.

Standing at McElroy's grave, Philip Lecane, who has spent several years researching the life of McElroy, spoke on the career of two of the most successful Royal Flying Corps fighter pilots in WW1; namely George McElroy and Edward 'Mick' Mannock. McElroy, who was credited with forty-nine victories, was born in Donnybrook, Dublin over the school where his father was a teacher (the approximate site of the Dublin Bus Garage in Donnybrook). A pre-war civil servant, he enlisted as a motor dispatch rider and later joined the Royal Flying Corps. Edward 'Mick' Mannock's father was an English soldier stationed in Ballincollig Barracks, Co. Cork. There is some confusion as to where Mannock was born. He was pro-Home Rule for Ireland and left-wing in politics. McElroy's tutor, Mannock is credited with seventy 'shooting downs'. Like McElroy he too was killed in July 1918. His case file noted he was flying too close to the ground after shooting down a German plane. A recently discovered photo taken shortly before he died, shows a face marked by deep strain and suggests that he may have been under considerable mental pressure at the time of his death.



Brian Moroney speaking at the graves of the five RDF men in Floursies.

While he has no known grave, it has been suggested that a grave of an unknown airman ('A British Airman of the Great War Known onto God') in Laventie may be Mannock's final resting place.

Leaving Laventie Military Cemetery, we headed south to Le Cateau. Along our bus journey Paul Appleby took the microphone on the bus and told us a very interesting story. Paul explained the background of his granduncle John (Jack) Appleby of the 12th London Regiment whose name is listed among those with no known grave on the Cambrai Memorial, Louverval. He was born in Rathdangan, Co Wicklow, in 1894. In the 1911 Census for Dublin, he is listed as a telegraph messenger living at Gray Street in the Liberties; but by 1916 he had been promoted to postman. For reasons probably

related to his workplace but which are otherwise unknown, he enlisted in the Post Office Rifles in December 1916. By April 1917, he was in the front line with the 12th London Regiment, the CWGC refer to this battalion as The Rangers, and participated in the Third Battle of the Scarpe at Arras in early May and the Battle of Langemarck at Ypres in mid-August. He was killed by a shell during the Battle of Cambrai on 1 or 2 December 1917 near Bourlon Wood. His name is also recorded on the WW1 Memorial in Woodenbridge, Co. Wicklow. Intriguingly in addition to the standard family memoriam card, a second memorial card has survived from his girlfriend, Miss Cissie Dorgan, 14 Henrietta Street, Dublin. The building is now preserved as a museum to tenement life in Dublin. Her close relationship to Jack makes it even more difficult to understand why he decided to enlist so late in the war at a time when long casualty lists were such a feature in the Irish newspapers.

Because it was near enough to Le Cateau and of great historic interest, Brian decided to stop at the famous Riqueval Bridge over the St. Quentin Canal which is located about thirty kilometres southwest of Le Cateau. On 29 September 1918, in their effort to break through the Hindenburg Line, the 46th (North Midland) Division took the Riqueval Bridge. While gathered round the WFA memorial recently placed at the bridge, Brian gave us a fine background talk on the taking of the bridge by the 46th Division. On completion of Brian's talk and a brief wander around the bridge, we headed off north-eastwards about thirty kilometres along the D932 to Le Cateau. Lunch was taken at L'Estaminet du Musee restaurant in the centre of Le Cateau.



Capt. (retd) Seamus Greene leading the parade of RDFA Standard and members into Floursies.

After lunch, we began our tour of the battlefield over which the 2nd RDF fought their way into Le Cateau in October 1918. We headed first to a location named Etang Saint Crepin where there is a bend in the River Selle. It is located on the D12 about five kilometres south of Le Cateau. With trench map stuck to the side of the bus, Tom gave us a fascinating account of how the 2nd RDF crossed the river in the face of strong German machine gun fire on the morning of 17 October 1918. How they fought up the slopes of the riverbank, were set back and eventually took Dublin Farm. Unfortunately, we never got to see Dublin Farm. Next tour for definite.



Brian and Anne Sophie engaging in conversation with some of the townsfolk of Floursies on 28 May 2018.

Tom told us that when on 18 October, during house clearing operations along the Le Cateau - Basual Road that 14017 Sgt. Horace Curtis, 2nd RDF, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his brave action. Tom highlighted the tragic twist of history that back in August 1914, the 2nd RDF fought nearby and here they were four years later fighting the Germans over the same ground. He told us there would be a full account of the battalion's action written in *The Blue Cap* Vol. 23 of 2018.

Back on the bus and we headed for the village of Floursies; the village that the 2nd RDF liberated on 8 November 1918. There was no more fitting a place for the RDFA to visit than this village as it was the last action the Battalion carried out in WW1. Floursies is about forty-five kilometres east of Le Cateau along the D962.

The little Catholic church cemetery in the village contains five RDF graves which have come to the attention of the RDFA recently. They all died on the same day, 8 November 1918, in what was the last action of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in WW1. Advised in advance of our visit, the village community, including the Mayor Alain Deltour, were lined up to meet us and accompanied our party in the march behind the RDFA standard, held by Capt. (Retd.) Seamus Greene, to the cemetery. Invaluable translation support was provided here, as elsewhere on the trip, by Ciara Byrne, daughter of the RDFA stalwart from our early days and of many a trip, the late Des Byrne. Brian Moroney gave an excellent and very professional address in French, which was much appreciated by our hosts. After the speeches, the event concluded with a wine reception hosted by the village. There was a connection between our visit and the deaths of the five soldiers. An elderly gentleman at the reception recalled meeting a man who remembered the incident as a child and how the five bodies were carried on a ladder into the very house where the gentleman still lives and laid out in the kitchen before burial. Understandably as a child he found seeing the dead bodies somewhat traumatic. The success of the event held in brilliant sunshine reflected well on both our hosts and the RDFA party as their guests. It was a truly historic event in the calendar of the RDFA. One got the impression that little of note happens in Floursies and the visit of our thirty-one strong party will be remembered for many a day. It would be a lasting legacy of the RDFA if a memorial was placed in Floursies to the RDF men who died liberating the village in early November 1918.

Tuesday 29 May

Sadly, today was the day our tour came to an end. However, before we headed for the airport that evening, there was some important places we visited that were relevant to the Dubs. After Brian gave his final morning brief, with cases packed and bills paid, we headed to Le Cateau; we wanted to visit the train station to end our tour where it all began for 2nd RDF. However, along our way south, at the request of David Baxter, we took a brief detour and stop at Avesnes-le-Sec, Communal Cemetery Extension. Along our way David Baxter spoke about his mother's cousin, John (Jack) Griffin. Before enlisting in August 1914 with the 5th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, Jack was a fitter at Inchicore Railway Works. He served in a wide variety of theatres of war Gallipoli, Salonika, Palestine where he was involved in the capture and defence of Jerusalem. He was later deployed to France and was killed on 8 November 1918 with the 5th Inniskillings and is buried in Avesnes-le-Sec Communal Cemetery Extension, Grave Reference D.16. David explained that the Griffin family has died out and it is likely that this was the first time Jack had a visitor from any of his family. It proved to be an emotional experience for David.



Philip Lecane telling us the story of RDF officer Lieut. William Frederic McHutchinson at Le Cateau train station on 29 May 2018.

On leaving the cemetery, a local lady approached our party; it transpired that she was the wife of the local mayor. She explained that the area was liberated in three days of fighting in atrocious weather in October 1918.

On we went to Le Cateau CWGC Cemetery for a brief visit. There are only fourteen RDF men buried in this cemetery; the majority died of wounds received during months of October and early November 1918. The cemetery was laid out by the Germans in February 1916 with separate plots for British and German dead. It contains the graves of some 5,000 German and 700 British interments and thirty-four Russian prisoners-of-war in a separate

plot. The explanation board at the cemetery mentions only one Commonwealth formation, the 5th Connaught Rangers, who rushed the town on the evening of 10 October 1918 – a remarkable compliment to our brother regiment from the West of Ireland.

We did not stay too long Le Cateau Cemetery and headed for the train station at Le Cateau where the 2nd RDF detrained to begin their war way back in August 1914. At this point I must note that Joe Gallagher video recorded much of the tour. There were some very interesting words spoken by Philp and Tom at the station. Philp spoke first. He had intended to offer this interesting story earlier in the tour, but time and logistics prevented. He told us that in 2005, a WW1 English researcher at the National Archives in Kew, London, named Tom Tulloch-Marshall found the grave of an unidentified RDF Officer in Villiers-Bretonneux Cemetery, twenty-eight kilometres south of Albert. After much research, Tulloch-Marshall established that the officer buried in the grave was William Frederick McHutchinson killed during the German offensive of March 1918. Wounded in the head by a machine gun bullet he was brought by two RDF men to a dressing station, which in the meantime had been captured by the Germans. McHutchinson died soon afterwards and was buried by the Germans. Hence the confusion about who was buried in the grave. Philip went on to speak about the role of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in ensuring that every member of the British and Commonwealth armies, navies, air forces and nursing services is buried in a marked grave or commemorated on a memorial.



Sgt. Horace Curtis VC 2nd RDF.

Tom Burke gave some background on Sergeant Major Horace Curtis who received the Victoria Cross and concluded his talk on the 2nd RDF attack on Le Cateau on 18 October 1918. Born in Cornwall, he initially saw service with his local regiment, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry but in September 1914 was transferred to the 7th RDF and later to the 2nd RDF. Through both his own side's barrage and enemy fire, he silenced two machine guns whereupon the remaining four guns surrendered. Tom said that Curtis survived the war and explained that while he did not discuss his wartime experiences with his family, he did have an 'overpowering emotion of anger towards the German soldier. Sgt. Curtis VC died in 1968.

The final sentence Tom spoke somewhat emotionally was to tell us that he was resigning from the position of Chairman of the RDFA after almost twenty-three years of service. He believed there was no better place to inform us than where it all began for the regiment in August 1914 – the train station at Le Cateau.

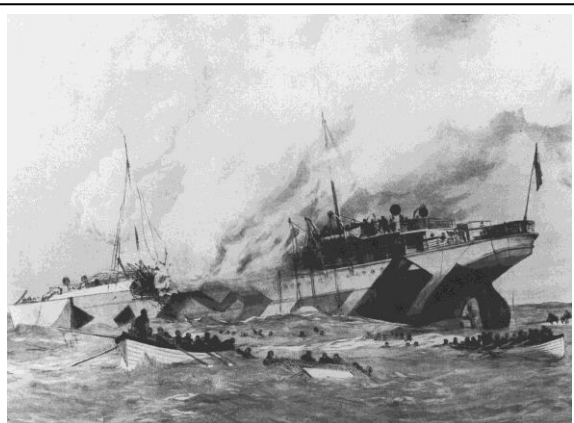


Some of the RDFA tour party enjoying the afternoon rain in Mons 29 May 2019.

Quietly and in a reflective mood, we departed Le Cateau and headed for Mons, our final place to visit and relax before heading to the airport at Brussels for a late evening flight back to Dublin. The plan had been to visit the recently opened Mons Memorial Museum but because of heavy showers, the only inclement weather of the whole trip, unfortunately this would be an event for another day. From Mons the party travelled to Brussels Airport for the return evening flight to Dublin.

For more information on the CWGC cemeteries we visited in our 2018 tour, see the following CWGC websites.

CWGC Cemetery	CWGC Website
St. Symphorien Military Cemetery.	https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/90801/
St. Mary's Advanced Dressing Station (ADS)	https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/33800/
Croisilles Railway Cemetery	https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2000032/
Unicorn Cemetery.	https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/17500/
Laventie Military Cemetery	https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/34300/
Le Cateau Military Cemetery	https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/65800/
Avesnes-le-Sec, Communal Cemetery Extension	https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/19501/



The sinking of the *RMS Leinster* on
10 October 1918.

***RMS Leinster: Marking the centenary of Ireland's
greatest maritime loss.***

Philip Lecane

**In memory of my wife Kate, who died
on 27 November 2020.**

**She unfailingly supported my *RMS Leinster*
commemorative activities.**

On 10 October 1918, the Dún Laoghaire (then Kingstown), County Dublin to Holyhead, Wales mail steamer *RMS Leinster* was sunk in the Irish Sea by German submarine UB-123. Aboard the ship were seventy-nine crew, twenty-two postal sorters, 202 civilians and 510 soldiers, sailors and military nurses. Current research by the

www.rmsleinster.com website team shows that 569 people were lost in the sinking. It was the greatest ever loss of life in the Irish Sea and the highest death toll on an Irish owned ship. More people died in the sinking than during the week-long 1916 Easter Rising. (*The Dead of the Irish Revolution* by Eunan O'Halpin and Daithí Ó Corráin identifies 504 people who were killed in the Rising.)

The sinking had international ramifications. The civilian and military casualties came from Ireland, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. On 14 October 1918, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson alluded to the sinking in replying to a German overture for peace terms. "*At the very moment that the German Government approaches the Government of the United States with proposals of peace, its submarines are engaged in sinking passenger ships at sea.....*". On 18 or 19 October 1918, UB-123 was lost in the Northern Barrage, a huge minefield laid by the American and British navies between the Orkney Islands on the north coast of Scotland and Bergen, on the coast of Norway. UB-123's thirty-six-man crew were lost in the sinking. On 21 October 1918, eleven days after the sinking of the *RMS Leinster*, Admiral Reinhard Scheer of the German High Seas Fleet signalled his submarines: "*To all U-boats. Commence return from Patrol at once. Because of ongoing negotiations any hostile actions against merchant vessels prohibited. Returning U-boats are allowed to attack warships only in daylight. End of message. Admiral.*" On 11 November 1918, Germany signed an Armistice with the Allied Powers. The First World War was over.

I first heard of the *RMS Leinster* when I joined a local history society soon after moving from Cork to Dún Laoghaire in 1984. Very little was known about the sinking, apart from the fact that the ship was commanded by Captain William Birch (who was lost in the sinking) and the authoritative certainty that the sinking had claimed exactly 501 lives (based on a statement made by the ship's owners, the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company). Amazed that so little was known about such an incredible happening, I was drawn to the story. As the *RMS Leinster's* passengers did not have to give their names when buying tickets, no official passenger list was ever published. My interest in the sinking began in pre-internet days. Working fulltime, research meant trips to the National Library on Saturdays. At the Library I painstakingly worked my way through contemporary newspapers, with the aim of compiling a passenger and crew list from news reports. In 1998, *Death in the Irish Sea: The sinking of the RMS Leinster* by Maritime Historian Roy Stokes was published. The book told the story of the sinking in the context of the German submarine campaign against British and Irish shipping in the Irish Sea. I felt there was room for another book on the *RMS Leinster*, one which would focus on the personal stories of those aboard the ship. In 2003, Canadian Will Lockhart (whose relative Frank Higgerty was lost in the sinking) and I set up the website www.rmsleinster.com. In October 2003 and October 2008 the eighty-fifth and ninetieth anniversaries of the sinking were marked by commemorative services in Dún Laoghaire and Holyhead.



Philip Lecane at the grave of Assistant Administrator May Westwell (31), Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin. The wreath is from the children of St. Barnabas School, Warrington.

Also in 2008, An Post (the Irish Post Office) issued a stamp to mark the 90th anniversary. In 2005, my book *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster Disaster* was published. It contained a list of everyone I had discovered to have been aboard the ship. In 2014, Brian Ellis (whose relative Hugh Rowlands had been lost in the sinking) used my book to create a database of those known to have been aboard the *RMS Leinster*.)

On my retirement in January 2016, I volunteered to work in the Library Service of the National Maritime Museum in Dún Laoghaire. The Museum has a number of *RMS Leinster* artifacts, including a model of the ship given to the ship's owners (The City of Dublin Steam Packet Company) by the ship's builders (Lairds of Birkenhead). The aforementioned Brian Ellis is Museum Librarian. He set about transferring the 2014 database to a touchscreen in the Museum, facilitating visitors to the Museum to access information on everyone known to have been on the ship. Will Lockhart and I invited Brian and his wife Lucille to join the *RMS Leinster* website team. It was agreed that the database would also be put up on the www.rmsleinster.com website. Since then, intrepid research by Lucille has greatly added to the information on the database.

In 2018, the Irish government decided that the centenary of the *RMS Leinster* would be marked by a state commemoration in Dún Laoghaire on 10 October 2018. With the financial support of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, a committee was established to plan for the state commemoration. Chaired by Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, the committee included representatives of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Department of Defence, the National Maritime Museum, St. John Ambulance and a local group called *The Mailboat Leinster Centenary Committee*. Meanwhile, a committee was formed in Holyhead to make plans to mark the centenary there.

In 2017 and 2018 I wrote a series of articles and gave talks on the sinking to local history societies in Counties Dublin, Kildare, Clare and Cork, focusing on the casualties and survivors from those counties. I also gave a number of radio, television and newspaper interviews. In June 2018, I travelled to the Isle of Man to hold commemorative services at the graves of six *RMS Leinster* casualties buried on the island. On a visit to Nottingham, I met a member of the Nottingham Civic Society who had secured funding to replace a damaged headstone on the grave of a father and son who were lost in the sinking. I made contact with the local historical and genealogical society in Geneva, Florida, where American sailor Perry Taylor, who was lost in the sinking, is buried. The society agreed to hold a commemorative service to mark the centenary of his death.

The National Maritime Museum marked the centenary with a weeklong programme of events, including an exhibition on the sinking, a performance by the Dublin-Welsh Male Voice Choir, a *History Ireland* "Hedge School" (a panel discussion) and a daylong seminar placing the *RMS Leinster* sinking in the context of the First World War at sea. The Museum provided a focal point for those attending the centenary commemorations. Many of those in attendance travelled from abroad, coming to remember relatives who had been aboard the *RMS Leinster*. The highlight of the National Maritime Museum's exhibition was – and is – the Brian Ellis designed touchscreen containing information on every person known to have been aboard the *RMS Leinster*.



Tom Burke, Kate Lecane and Sally Copeland Keogh at the launch of "Women and Children of the RMS Leinster: Restored to History."

In the run up to the centenary, Librarian Carmel Kelly's children's book *RMS Leinster: The Forgotten Tragedy* and my book *Women and Children of the RMS Leinster: Restored to History* were published. The Lexicon Library in Dún Laoghaire held an *RMS Leinster* exhibition, which included a Lego model of the ship. The Library also hosted a number of centenary events, including the play *It Happened Here in Dún Laoghaire* and an imaginary monologue spoken by the recovered *RMS Leinster* anchor on Dún Laoghaire's seafront. One of the library staff built a scale model of the anchor which was displayed in the library.

Preceded by an ecumenical service in St. Michael's Church, the actual centenary of the sinking on 10 October was marked in Dún Laoghaire by a very moving dignified public official state

commemorative ceremony. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht produced an excellent centenary commemorative booklet. *The Mailboat Leinster Centenary Committee* held a number of centenary events, including boat trips to the site of the *RMS Leinster* wreck. The centenary was marked by an *RMS Leinster* exhibition at the Office of Public Works (OPW) Phoenix Park Interpretative Centre. The OPW also held an official commemorative service in Grangegorman Military Cemetery where 144 casualties of the sinking are buried. The centenary day concluded with a performance at the Pavilion Theatre, Dún Laoghaire of *Fatal Voyage: The Story of the sinking of the RMS Leinster*. Funded by An Post (The Irish Post Office), the performance was based on the book *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster Disaster*. An Post also published a special stamp to mark the centenary.

Apart from commemorations in Dún Laoghaire and Holyhead, the centenary was marked by events in Longford, Ardcath in County Meath, Ennis and Tulla in County Clare, Courtmacsherry and Barryroe in County Cork, the Isle of Man, Warrington, Nottingham, Southampton and Geneva in Florida. The events outside of Dún Laoghaire and Holyhead were focused on a particular casualty or casualties with local connections.

On 10 October 2019, a Postal Sorters Relatives Group was formed to bring together relatives of the Sorters who were on the *RMS Leinster* and to further research these men. On 11 November 2020, the Kilkenny Great War Memorial Committee unveiled a statue to commemorate fourteen-year-old Thomas Woodgate, Royal Air Force, from Callan, County Kilkenny. Lost in the sinking of the *RMS Leinster*, he falsified his age when enlisting. Invigorated by the success of the *RMS Leinster* Centenary Commemoration, the work of remembering Ireland's greatest maritime tragedy continues.

We Will Remember Them
Members of the RDFA who died in recent years.



Lieut.-General Gerry McMahon former Chief-of-Staff of The Irish Defence Forces on the day he inspected the Scots Guards in London.

Lieut.-General Gerry McMahon (1935-2018) former Chief-of-Staff of The Irish Defence Forces died on 19 January 2018. Gerry, as he insisted as being called, was a member of the RDFA for many years. He accompanied the RDFA on several battlefield tours to France and Flanders and regularly attended the annual dinner with his wife Ann. Some years ago, as a guest of honour, he reviewed a parade of the Combined Irish Regiments Association march pass the Cenotaph in London. As is tradition, retired officers of the British Army, wore a bowler hat when in civvies on parade. Gerry was asked by a retired officer of the London Irish Rifles would he like to wear a bowler hat to which Gerry politely replied; 'Sorry, but that particular hat when worn with a certain orange garment has bad vibes where I come from in Ireland.' He took out of his pocket his old black Irish Defence Forces beret and pinned on it the cap badge of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Gerry's Irish solution to an Irish problem.

Jim Purcell from Balbriggan in north county Dublin died during the early days of 2018. He was one of the early members of the RDFA. Jim had relative,

Sgt. William Purcell, who served with the 7th RDF in Gallipoli. Jim was a colleague of Sean Connolly in the Irish Revenue Commissioners between 1969 and 2005. Sean recalled that Jim, 'was a great colleague. It was always a pleasure to meet him.'



Tina Copley, nee Connolly wearing her laddies RDFA Scarf at Islandbridge, Dublin.

Ken Devitt was another one of the men who joined the RDFA at its beginning. Ken died on 8 February 2017. His funeral took place at St. Brigid's Church, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin. Ken lectured in printing at Dublin's Institute of Technology, Bolton Street. At our first AGM, Ken volunteered to design and print our first RDFA letterhead paper. We are still using it Ken – thanks a million friend.

Edward (Ted) William Ryan (1928-2019) husband and life-long friend of Janet Ryan passed away on 3 February 2019. Ted's funeral was held at St. Mobhi's Church, Glasnevin, Dublin. on 4 February 2019.

Tina Copley, nee Connolly, was a loyal member of the RDFA who died on 1 February 2018. She attended our events and commemorations in memory of her grandfather, Sgt. Andrew Kinsella of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who was killed on 29 March 1918 in the German Spring Offensive. By coincidence, Tina was born on his anniversary. She is missed by her husband, Fergus, daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren, her brother Sean, and her many friends.



Tommy Leydon, a master plasterer
from Phibsborough, Dublin.

Tommy Leydon. Veteran of several RDFA trips to the Western Front, and Gallipoli, Tommy Leydon passed away in July 2019. Born in what is now Sean McDermott St., but then called Gloucester St., and brought up in Cabra he later moved to Phibsborough. The Leydon family is noted for having both master plasterers and military service figuring down through the generations. Tommy understood that service in the army dated at least from as far back as the Crimean War and it certainly continued to the Normandy landings of 1944. His grandfather, Patrick Leydon, like Tommy a plasterer by trade, served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in World War 1. Unfortunately, in September 1918 and with the conflict nearing its end, Patrick Leydon was among eighteen 1st RDF casualties of a German shell which hit their trench. Patrick has no known grave and is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial in Belgium. The grandfather of Tommy's wife Kathleen, James Murphy, also saw service in the same conflict with the 6th RDF but in his case in Salonika in present day Greece. Likewise, however he did not survive the war and his grave in Struma Military Cemetery, near Thessaloniki; a long way from his native Dorset Street in the Dublin's north inner city. Tommy was proud of his family's heritage and rarely missed the annual Remembrance Sunday ceremony in St. Patrick's Cathedral as part of the RDFA contingent. Tommy passed away on 9 July 2019 at St. Pappin's Nursing Home surrounded by his family.

A loveable, quiet, and very generous man was a staunch Dub and member of the RDFA for many years. Following Requiem Mass at St. Peter's, Tommy's remains were taken to Dardistown Crematorium. *Ar dheis De go raibh a anam dilis*

Tom Phelan from Raheny and formerly of Montpellier Hill, Dublin, passed away unexpectedly at his home on 16 June 2018. Tom was another member of the RDFA who joined at the beginning. Himself, Norman Adams, Sean Slattery and Seamus Moriarty, retired accountants, were regular attendees at our lectures and battlefield tours. Norman's father was an officer in the 10th RDF. Following the funeral mass in Raheny, Tom was buried in St. Fintan's Cemetery, Sutton.

Major Sean Murphy (1932-2018) passed away at his home in county Waterford on 3 November 2018. Sean was a leading figure in the Republic of Ireland Branch of the Royal British Legion. Born in Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim. Seeking to earn a living and the chance to see a bit of the world, as a young man, Sean enlisted into the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in Enniskillen and worked hard through the ranks to become a Major on retirement. In later life, Sean graduated from the Open University with a Bachelor of Arts degree. His long career of service was recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List of 2014. He was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. Sean's obituary in *The Irish Times* of 15 December 2018 noted that Sean, 'had been recognised as one who's life bridged Ireland's division.' *Faugh a Ballagh* Sean.

Eddie Lendrum a native of Carrickfergus in Co. Antrim, passed away in October 2018. Eddie was one of Ireland's leading experts on the Gallipoli campaign and acted as a battlefield guide for many years. He served in The Irish Guards.