

The Blue Cap

Journal of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association
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Bumper Issue!

Marking 25 Years of our Association Remembering the Great War

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Editorial

Welcome to the 2020 edition of The Blue Cap.

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic to our island early this year has meant that all Association Committee business has had to be conducted on line for many months. A necessary but regrettable result of Covid for the membership has been the postponement of many of the Association's educational, social and commemorative events this year.

Earlier this year, your Committee formed an Editorial Sub-Committee to produce a new regular newsletter (The Old Tough) and to prepare the 2020 edition of The Blue Cap. This was seen as an alternative means of maintaining regular communication with the membership at a difficult time. From the positive reaction we've received so far, we believe that you have welcomed The Old Tough initiative.

Another adverse effect of Covid and the associated closure of library research services has been the inability of our past Chairman, Tom Burke, to complete the 2018 edition (volume 23) of The Blue Cap which will commemorate in particular the events of 1918, the last year of the Great War. Tom hopes to have this delayed Blue Cap finished in the near future.

In the meantime your new Editorial Sub-Committee set itself the challenge of bringing you a bumper edition of The Blue Cap for 2020. It is now 25 years since Tom Burke was first inspired to recover and rehabilitate the memory of those Dublin Fusiliers who fought in large numbers in the First World War. Tom and some friends who shared his vision soon founded the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association as a vehicle for their work, and the Association proceeded to attract significant support from individuals and from official and political sources. It is entirely appropriate therefore that this year's edition of The Blue Cap should mark this important anniversary. Three of its articles are particularly relevant:

- A Foreword by our Chairman, Brian Moroney, recalling the major contributions of Tom Burke and Sean Connolly to the Association's development which included producing past editions of The Blue Cap;
- A dedication by Tom Burke to Dr Mary Clark, the Dublin City Archivist, on the occasion of her retirement, for her consistent support of the Association's work over more than 20 years, and
- An article by Dr Clark on the Association's archive of Dublin Fusilier memorabilia which is available for inspection and research in the Dublin City Archive and online. Dr Clark and the Archives and Records Association of Ireland have kindly permitted us to reproduce this article which first appeared in the Association's Autumn 2020 Newsletter.

In addition to these commemorative essays, this Blue Cap brings you two informative articles about aspects of the past history of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, viz:

- A previously unknown Dublin Fusilier's account of the first four weeks of the Great War including the important Battle of Le Cateau which resulted in the deaths of over 40 Fusiliers and the imprisonment of about 400 others for the duration of the War, and
- A biography of Henry Murray 'Chippi' Letchworth MA (1889-1964) who served as Captain, Commander of 'Y' Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, in the Great War and later rose to prominence in the teaching and scouting worlds.

In this edition, we have also decided to introduce a number of innovations including:

- A Trip Down Memory Lane feature (courtesy of Seamus Moriarty) where we recall one of our past visits to the battlefields of the Great War. This feature may help to compensate for the effective suspension of our foreign travel in these Covid times;
- A Writer Interview/Book Review slot with particular reference to new publications relevant to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers;
- A Dubs Quiz (courtesy of our Chairman, Brian Moroney);
- A Letters to the Editor page where we wish to encourage you, the membership, to comment on the Association's activity and on aspects of the Dublin Fusiliers' involvement in the Great War in particular. For this edition of The Blue Cap, we reproduce an interesting letter from an Evening Herald of 1964 relating to the Dubs, and
- A Miscellanea feature where we will welcome small articles from members on interesting aspects of the Great War and in particular on the history of the Dubs, its men and their families. So get writing!

Finally his colleagues on the Editorial Sub-Committee would like to thank Thomas Murphy for his technical expertise and patience in accommodating our numerous requests for changes to this lengthy journal in order to achieve a quality publication on this occasion.

We hope that you enjoy this 2020 edition of The Blue Cap. We look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions at the e-mail address below. We will take these views into account in developing future editions of the journal.

Paul Appleby, Sally Copeland-Keogh, Thomas Murphy and John Sheehan
The Editorial Sub-Committee
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Tribute to Tom Burke and Sean Connolly

Spectamur Agendo, the Motto of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, By our Deeds shall we be Judged. A motto you would normally find at the end of an article concerning the 'Dubs'. But not on this occasion, for this letter looks principally on two of our Founders and honours their deeds in establishing the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association as one of the leading Associations telling the story of the Men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the Great War, their history and that of their families and relatives.

Tom Burke and Sean Connolly surely switched on a light when they first met back in 1996. It was a light that would shine into the deepest hidden corners of our history. It was a light that would slowly encourage others to take the trail of remembrance, of personal histories tucked away, remove any vestiges of embarrassment in taking that trail and most importantly restore long subdued pride and honour and, yes, in some case sorrow. For not all tales end in warmth and joy, but all deserve to be told.

Tom and Sean began a journey and gathered about them a band of fellow enthusiasts, much as a general will gather his army about him. Their task was simple, take a sensitive and oft times confusing period of Irish History and bring it to the Public, not by retelling of the events themselves but of the people central to those events, not by glorifying history but by honestly telling of men and their deeds, the story of ordinary men who lived in extraordinary times.

Their sensitive touch reached out to so many people, awakening in all walks of life a desire to become involved in, or to at least participate in, this fascinating story of our nation. Presidents, Royalty, Politicians, men and women from all walks of life joined the journey. From the Quiet Central Room of the Civic Museum, to the Splendour of Dublin Castle, to the International Ceremony in Messines where the President of Ireland stood shoulder to shoulder with the Queen of England and King Albert II of Belgium to celebrate the opening of the Peace Park. If you ask Tom Burke of his memory of that day he will tell you of the pipers of the Irish Army and the British Army practising together for the ceremony and how their music blended and rang out over the old Battlefield. For that moment in time comrades in arms, just like those men from the Island of Ireland who fought in that conflict a century ago, a coming together that warmed Tom's heart !!

Tom and Sean trudged the battlefields of WW1, trench map in one hand recollections of those who fought there in the other. Putting flesh to the bones of the stories and clothing it all in humanity. For this they were honoured at home and abroad, but for them telling the story of the Dubs and of the Irishmen of the Great War was reward enough.

They both resigned as leaders of the Association in 2019 to pursue a well deserved rest and other hobbies - of which we will no doubt hear about in time to come.

They decided that the Phrase that Old Soldiers Never Die, They Simply Fade Away, would not be true of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. They paid homage to those who worked so hard in times past to tell the Dubs' story and put their own honest, learned and deeply moving touch to their task. We owe them much.

Spectamur Agendo, Tom and Sean.

Brian Moroney, Chairperson

Dedication to Dr Mary Clark on her Retirement as Dublin City Archivist

After forty-one years of dedicated and professional service as Dublin City Archivist, Dr Mary Clark will be retiring from her position at the end of 2020. As she recently informed me in an email: *'While I will miss you and the RDFA, also the wonderful staff here in Pearse Street, I won't be sorry to finish up and slow down!...it's certainly time to head for home.'*

I met Mary for the first time back in the summer of 1996 when we, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association (RDFA), put our first exhibition on display at the then Dublin Civic Museum in South William Street, Dublin. This historic building is now the headquarters of the Irish Georgian Society. Her office and archive reading room were on the top of the building. The reading room was bright and had that silent academic atmosphere of an archive reading room. I was a regular visitor to the archive, and I recall our long chats on the history of Dublin, its historic places and people; a topic I have yet to meet another historian who knows more about than Mary. She was so kind and helpful to me in any research I had ongoing at the time.

In terms of her place in the history of the RDFA, I can state quite definitely that without her input, the work and contribution the RDFA made, and hopefully will continue to make, to the history of Ireland's role in the Great War, and in particular the history of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, would not have been told without her. When we started first, it was Mary and the Dublin City Archive who gave us permission to use the Dublin Civic Museum in South William Street as our postal address, and crucially, permission to hold our lectures and present the numerous exhibitions over the following years. This was a wonderful benefit to our fledgling society. It was also brave enough of Mary, Noel Carroll RIP (the then PRO, Dublin Corporation) and Dublin City Council to make and approve of this facility in the centre of Dublin. Remember, this was 1996, and the perception of British soldiers in Ireland by some folks, regardless of whether they were Irish or not, was not very favourable.

From the many exhibitions and lectures we presented, we gathered material in the form of letters, diaries, pictures of RDF men, their families and a range of memorabilia relating to the RDF donated by relatives of men who had served in the Regiment. For many years, I held this material in a room in UCD. Being an archivist, Mary saw the historic value of this material. At a meeting I attended with Mary and the then Dublin City Manager, John Fitzgerald, at their City Quay Offices, it was agreed that the documents, letters, diaries and exhibition material collected by the RDFA over the previous years would become a collection in the Dublin City Library and Archive and catalogued as the RDFA Archive. In my opinion, this event sits as one of the most important events in the history of the RDFA. The archive materialised in 2003 when Mary and the Dublin City Archive moved from the Dublin Civic Museum to the refurbished and extended Pearse Street Library.

Following the move, our exhibitions and annual series of lectures continued at the new facilities in Pearse Street Library. The work of archiving the RDFA Archive was taken on and supervised by Mary's deputy archivist, Ms Ellen Murphy, to whom we also owe a great depth

of gratitude. Following each new addition to the archive, Mary organised the Lord Mayor of Dublin to accept the new material on behalf of Dublin City Council and the people of Dublin. Mary gave me the honour of presenting my book on the Battle of Messines in the Pearse Street Library and accepting the 2nd Lieut. Michael Wall archive of letters in 2017.

One collection Mary took great pride in was the Monica Roberts collection of letters written from the Western Front by Dublin Fusiliers and Royal Flying Corps men. Throughout the academic year, history students from Dublin universities and colleges would regularly visit the Archive to view the original documents. Mary would set out on the tables in the Reading Room lots of interesting documents relating to the history of Dublin. Always on the table would be a selection of documents from the Monica Roberts collection. In doing so, our future historians would learn not only about Nelson's Pillar but of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers as well. Thanks to Mary, many collections in the RDFA Archive were digitised by the Digital Repository of Ireland in 2018 and placed on the website of Dublin City Library and Archive. The website address is: <http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-services-recreation-culture-dublin-city-public-libraries-and-archive-heritage-and-histo-42>.

In August 2020, she organised for the Monica Roberts collection again to be digitised by the Digital Repository of Ireland and placed on the world-wide Europeana platform. This website can be seen at: <https://www.dri.ie/dcla%E2%80%99s-royal-dublin-fusiliers-association-archive-aggregated-europeana>.

Indeed her most recent highlighting of the RDFA Archive was in an article she wrote titled, *The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association: Twenty Five Years A-Growing*, in the autumn 2020 newsletter of The Archives and Records Association of Ireland.



Ms Ellen Murphy, deputy Dublin City Archivist, and Dr Mary Clark, Dublin City Archivist. (Ellen has since left Dublin City Library and Archive to take up a position as archivist in the Registry of Deeds.)

In conclusion, Dublin City Archive was established in 1979 to provide public access to the historic records of Dublin City and County. Thanks to Dr Mary Clark, Ellen Murphy and their colleagues at the Dublin City Archive, the history of the men who served in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and their families is now part of Dublin's folklore and historic record.

Thank you for your friendship, Mary, and for your dedicated professionalism as an archivist over the many years I have known you. On behalf of the Committee, membership and friends of the RDFA, may I wish you and Raymond many years of retired health and happiness. I will miss you too, Mary.

Tom Burke
President
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive: Twenty-Five Years A-Growing

Mary Clark, Dublin City Library & Archive

(Credits: Tom Burke; Louise Kennedy; Ellen Murphy; Padraic Stack)

Standard archival doctrine maintains that a series of collections grouped around a theme does not constitute an archive – because it is not organic, not in the way collections generated by an organisation are organic, and can therefore be classified as archives. The story of the RDFA archive proves otherwise. It began in 1995, with a chance encounter between Tom Burke and his elderly neighbour. Tom was an engineer in UCD, and was very keen on sports, mainly GAA – he played hurling – and rugby – he is a dedicated Leinster supporter. So when his neighbour told Tom that he had been in the British Army but felt the need to keep this a secret, Tom was surprised and saddened – no-one in his own family had fought in the Great War so he never had occasion to think about those veterans. This was all about to change. The neighbour produced a battered shoe-box containing medals and certificates which he hadn't shown to anyone for decades – and soon there was a constant stream of people to Tom's house, bearing letters, photographs, medals, diaries, telling stories of their relatives who had fought in the Great War as members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. And they urged Tom to arrange a public exhibition of these private treasures – after all this time, the relatives were prepared to step into the light.



Monica Roberts

By the end of 1995, Tom, along with other like-minded men, had founded the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, to capture the stories of these veterans, to research the background to their experience of the Great War and to mediate this to the public through lectures and through articles in their RDFA journal, *The Blue Cap*. Other elements were to follow: group visits to France, Belgium and Gallipoli and a website www.greatwar.ie launched in April 2001 at a State Reception in Dublin Castle by then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern T.D. And, after a diligent search, Tom had finally found a venue for his exhibition. Mainly thanks to Tom and the

committee of the RDFA, and before them, Kevin Myers and Frank McGuinness, the Meath Peace Group, the late Professor David Fitzpatrick of TCD, and later Sebastian Barry, we now largely accept the story of the Great War as an integral part of Irish history. But this was not the case in 1995, when the Great War was still contentious, with participation considered to be at best British, at worst traitorous. So when Tom wrote to various heritage institutions, outlining his plans for an exhibition and asking if they would care to host it, the answer was uniformly 'no'. Tom then wrote to the late Noel Carroll, then PRO of Dublin Corporation, who was unfazed by any hint that this exhibition might be controversial, 'but isn't it about Dublin – Royal Dublin Fusiliers?' and he arranged for it to take place in the Dublin Civic Museum in Autumn 1996.

The Octagon Room of the Civic Museum (now HQ of the Irish Georgian Society) was a very large space to fill – as well as floor and wall-space, there were thirteen outsized display cases to fill. Now that he could guarantee that the exhibition would go ahead, Tom re-doubled his efforts to persuade more people to lend their treasures for display. In addition, he collected stories about the soldiers to create wall-panels, which included photographs of them in uniform. The exhibition was opened in November 1996 by Dick Spring T.D. Minister for Foreign Affairs, with the British Ambassador to Ireland, Veronica Sutherland. While we wondered whether there would be an attack of some kind on the exhibition – it never came; instead, there was a steady stream of visitors all day, every day, and frequent visits from school groups.



GEORGE VINCENT POULTON, ROYAL DUBLIN FUSILIERS

Many people who attended the 1996 exhibition brought memorabilia with them and offered to include their prized possessions in the next presentation. And so the 1998 exhibition was born and took place again in the Civic Museum. The context had completely changed, as the Good Friday Agreement in the same year guaranteed parity of esteem, among other progressive benefits. Interpreted in Northern Ireland as equality for the culture, history and

customs of nationalists vis-à-vis unionists, in the Republic it was the opposite, equality for unionists vis-à-vis nationalists, and the work carried out by the RDFA fitted well with this. The 1998 exhibition was opened by Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, with the British ambassador present again, along with the ambassadors of Belgium and Turkey. In a spirit of reconciliation, parliamentary members of the Official Unionist Party of N.I also attended. In the same spirit, Tom was awarded an Honorary MBE in December 2004.

One outcome of holding any exhibition, is that this always leads to donations of relevant material. When the RDFA closed the 1996 and 1998 exhibitions, and attempted to return memorabilia to the lenders, Tom Burke was usually told: 'No, my children and grandchildren aren't interested, I'd rather you kept it and made good use of it.'

Other events, such as lectures and seminars, led to further donations so that by 2005 Tom's house was full and he resolved to come to an agreement to place the collection with an archival institution. Remembering that Dublin Corporation had given him a space when no-one else would, Tom decided to approach Dublin City Library & Archive, which had moved into the refurbished Pearse Street Library in 2003, and was very glad to accept Tom's offer.



GUNNING BROTHERS' COLLECTION RECUPERATION IN EGYPT

While the staff at DCLA was of course delighted, it was daunting to be offered an entire archive. Tom was aware of this, and brought in one collection at a time, each one accompanied by his own notes of information obtained from the donor. This gave some breathing space and allowed the staff to accession, list and pack the collections into archival-quality storage: the RDFA Archive now contains 130 collections.

With the Celtic Tiger still roaring, DCLA could afford to purchase nine albums from Preservation Equipment along with packets of archival-quality mylar. These were for the Monica Roberts collection of letters which she had received from the Irish soldiers (mainly Dublin Fusiliers) in the Great War – from France and Belgium, but also from Turkey. The daughter of a Church of Ireland minister, as soon as war broke out in 1914, Monica and her friends raised money through holding concerts and plays, which they used to purchase small gifts for the soldiers – socks and Vaseline for tired feet, handkerchiefs, but most welcome were cigarettes and tobacco. Monica included her name and address in every parcel she sent and when the recipient wrote to thank her, this started a correspondence which only ended with his death. Monica's daughter, Mrs Mary Shackleton, who donated the correspondence to the RDFA Archive, stipulated that it should be available for everyone, but particularly for schoolboys who were seventeen years old – the age most of Monica's correspondents were when they died. DCLA partnered with a number of secondary schools who visited on a yearly basis just to see Monica's collection and as the boys leafed through the letters (safely enclosed in mylar!) they started off looking bored, then began to engage with the material – and when their teacher told them: 'These soldiers were the same age as you, lads' they were very shocked. Meanwhile the collection had become famous, with scholars from England, Belgium and France coming especially to see it. When asked, they explained that most letters which survive from the Great War were written by officers – while this was a very rare instance of letters written by the lower ranks – corporals and privates.

The range and quality of the RDFA Archive allowed DCLA to generate five exhibitions from the collections, which described the progress of the Great War, while trying to convey its outright horror. Our first exhibition, Letters from the Great War, was curated by staff member the late Andrew O'Brien and was created in 2007 to accompany Dublin City Libraries' festival 'One City, One Book' which highlighted Sebastian Barry's novel, 'A long, long way.' At one public reading, Sebastian was accused of inaccuracy by giving his protagonist, Willie Dunne, a soldier with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, a gift for writing poetic letters.

The author pointed out that the Irish system of national education was outstanding and far from confining itself to the three Rs it ranged widely and included poetry in its remit. He also remarked that real poetic letters, written by real-life Irish soldiers, could be read in the Monica Roberts collection.

The next four exhibitions were all sponsored by Dublin City Council, through its Decade of Commemorations fund. These were: Fragments: Stories from Gallipoli 1915 (accompanied by an exhibition from the Turkish Embassy, Çanakkale: Road to Peace out of War); Dublin Remembers: Stories from the Somme 1916; Irish women in the Great War (2018); and The Peace at Home: Dublin after the First World War (2018). The City Council supported these exhibitions in many practical ways, such as arranging publicity and providing transport, while the Lord Mayor of the day was there to open the exhibitions.

Digitisation is an essential tool of modern archivists, and as soon as the RDFA Archive began to be deposited, DCLA began an in-house scanning programme for it. In 2013, portions of the RDFA Archive were published online in a searchable format on our website www.databases.ie; other portions were moved later to an in-house platform, called Vital; in 2018, the RDFA Archive was published online by the Digital Repository of Ireland; and in 2020, coinciding with its 25th anniversary, the RDFA Archive has been published by the DRI on Europeana.

While we still have collections to list and scan, there is one last exhibition to be mounted in 2022 - to mark the centenary of the disbandment of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. People often accuse archivists of living in the past, but as the RDFA archive shows, this is only part of the story. We mine the past, to shape the present, and to inform the future. We also hope that the organic growth of this archive, from Tom Burke's meeting with his neighbour, to publication across Europe, has been demonstrated here.

A Remarkable Find: A Dublin Fusilier's Account of the Early Weeks of the First World War

Paul Appleby

Introduction

Some years ago while administering my late uncle's affairs, I found among his family papers a number of items relating to an uncle of his, a former Dublin Fusilier, who had served in the 1st Battalion in Egypt and India between 1905 and 1912. As a reservist at the outbreak of the First World War ('WW1') in 1914, he was recalled and served in the 2nd Battalion of the Fusiliers in France that August. The Fusilier in question was 9197 Private Thomas McDonald ('Tom').

In this article, I provide some information on Tom's life and outline the content of his WW1 diary relating to the opening weeks of the War. This period covers the important Battle of Le Cateau on 26 August 1914 which saved the British Expeditionary Force ('BEF') from annihilation but led to the capture of some 400 Royal Dublin Fusiliers (including Tom) by German troops on the following day.

It is unusual to find a permanent record by a non-officer of the events associated with WW1. What is also noteworthy in this case is the vivid description of the hardships borne by the ordinary soldier in the opening weeks of the War.

Who was Tom McDonald?

Before discussing the content of Tom's diary, it may be useful to provide some information on the man himself. Thomas Joseph McDonald was born in Dublin on 28 March 1885. His father and mother were John and Sarah McDonald, 55 Lower Kevin Street, Dublin. Sarah's maiden name was Kelly. John McDonald was a mason by trade.

In 1898, Tom became apprenticed to John Meehan, a 'brick and stonelayer of the City of Dublin' for seven years.

On 31 March 1901 (the date of the 1901 Census), the 16 year old Tom was living with his older sister, 'Margret' (aged 24), and her husband, Isaac Maher (aged 27), at 11 Rathmines Road, Dublin. The occupations of Isaac and Tom were listed as warehouseman and mason's apprentice respectively.

On 6 January 1905, Tom enlisted in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers ('RDF'). From June 1905 to November 1912, he was a 'Pioneer' in the RDF and received engineering training. He subsequently served abroad in Egypt and India with the 1st Battalion of the Fusiliers and received a positive commendation of his Army service on returning to civilian life.

Back in Ireland, it is likely that Tom resumed work as a bricklayer. However as a member of the Army Reserve on the outbreak of WW1, he was required to re-enlist in the RDF and did so at Naas, Co Kildare, on 7 August 1914. Over the next two weeks, the RDF undertook training in England before arriving in Boulogne via Southampton on 22 August. Following his capture in fighting near Le Cateau in northern France on 27 August, he survived the War in German prisoner-of-war camps at Senne, Limburg and other locations. An undated photograph of a young Tom in uniform which may possibly have been taken in Egypt in about 1908 is below.



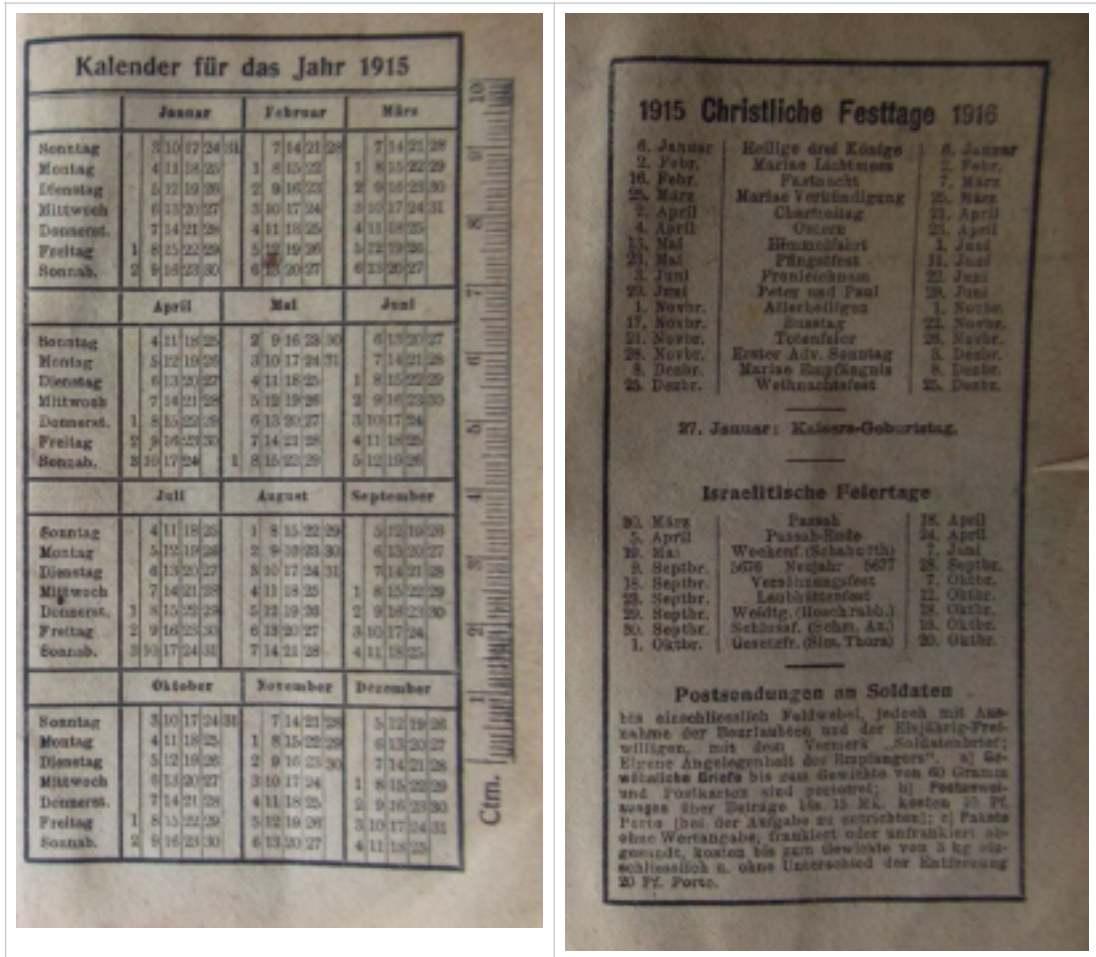
PRIVATE THOMAS MCDONALD

After the War, Tom returned to Ireland and worked as a bricklayer. He emigrated to the USA in 1923. Tom married a widow, Mary Alice ('Moll') Fitzpatrick (née Jones), in New York on 26 November 1924. They returned to Ireland in late 1928 and settled in Wicklow a few years later. They had no children. Tom died in Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, on 14 December 1952.

Private McDonald's WW1 Diary

Private McDonald's diary is written in pencil in a small notebook (14.3 cm x 8.3 cm approximately). The notebook originally contained about 116 pages (excluding the cover), but when found, it had no more than 100 pages as a result of the removal of pages,

presumably during the War years. The notebook is apparently of German origin, because it contains in the German language printed calendars of 1915 and 1916 on its first two pages and the dates of Christian and Jewish festivals and other information on its last two pages. Photographs of the 1915 calendar and Christian and Jewish festivals for 1915 and 1916 from Private McDonald's notebook are below.



It is not known precisely when Private McDonald obtained the notebook and started writing a diary. It was almost certainly not much earlier than early December 1914 when Irish soldiers began receiving preferential treatment from their German captors at their initial prisoner of war (POW) camp known as Sennelager, about 100 kms north-east of Dortmund. In late December 1914, they were moved south to a new POW Camp at Limburg an der Lahn (near the city of Frankfurt am Main). Encouraged by Sir Roger Casement, the German Authorities had hopes at this time that the soldiers might be persuaded to join an Irish Brigade and fight for Germany against Britain in the light of the latter's occupation of Ireland. These German hopes were never realised.

Over the four years of his captivity in Germany, Private McDonald recorded the dates of receipt by him of correspondence and parcels from specific persons (particularly in Ireland, Britain and Switzerland) and the dates of his replies. This record-keeping became the main purpose of the diary. No doubt this reflected the importance from Private McDonald's perspective of maintaining regular contact with those who were sending him food, clothes,

tobacco and similar sustenance. While these supplies were likely shared with his companions, it is not known if the record-keeping was a personal initiative of Tom's or was mandated by, say, a non-commissioned officer who was captured with him.

As time went on, Private McDonald's notations of incoming and outgoing post became more abbreviated and compressed. As he had little prospect of acquiring another notebook, it is likely that he was trying to ensure that his notebook lasted for the duration of the War.

After mid-1915, the notebook contains little comment on Camp conditions or news from home. For instance, there is no reference to the 1916 Rising in Dublin, the news of which would have reached the Irish prisoners. Was this restraint solely due to the need to conserve paper? Or was Private McDonald exercising some self-censorship for fear of reprisals if the notebook was discovered by his captors at a later date? Given that the latter had by that time re-introduced a tough regimen after the unsuccessful efforts to recruit a large number of volunteers for an Irish Brigade, it seems likely that the limitation of his notations to the uncontroversial subject of incoming/outgoing post was a conscious decision made by Private McDonald.

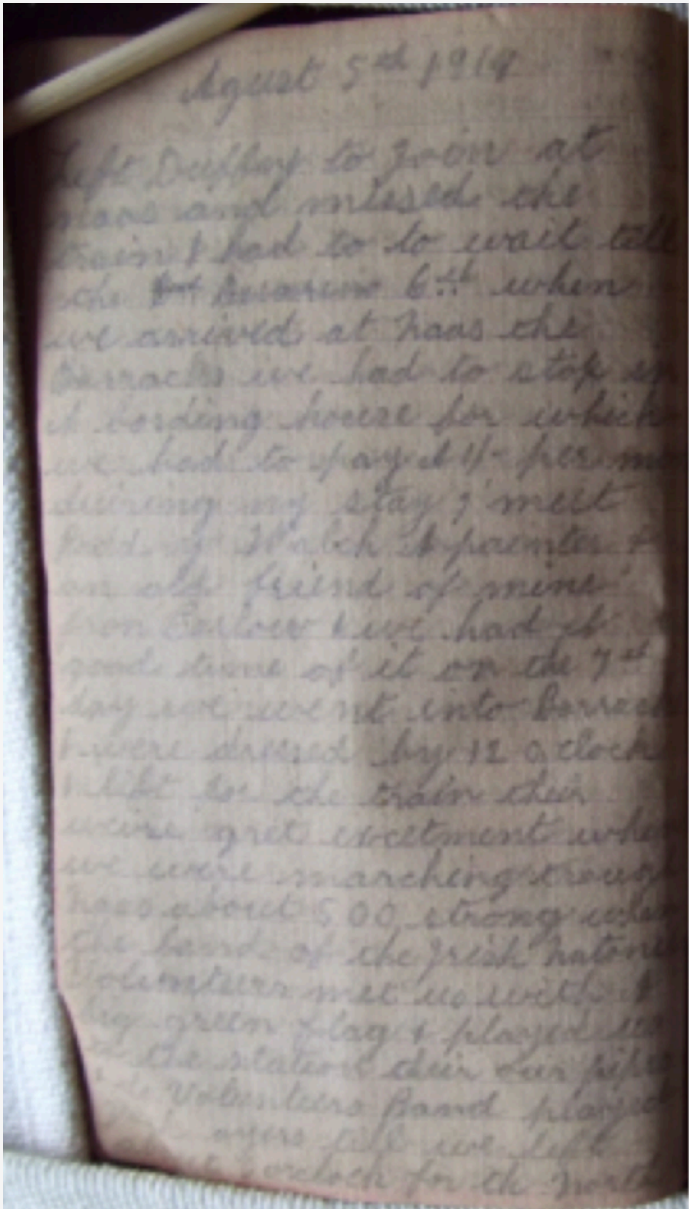
What is particularly interesting about the notebook is that the first 30 or so pages contain a vivid account in diary form of the first weeks of the War, including the fighting near Le Cateau which led to the capture of Private McDonald and his fellow Royal Dublin Fusiliers during the British retreat from Mons. This account was likely written into the notebook after Private McDonald acquired it and perhaps four months after the events he recorded. This delay in composing the document has given rise to errors of detail relating to the movement of troops and the subsequent fighting in northern France in late August 1914. For instance, the names of some places do not coincide with known material from other military and related sources. In fairness to Private McDonald however, the geography of northern France would have been unfamiliar to him and the other Fusiliers, and they may only have learnt of the names of places as they passed through them. Nevertheless, it has been largely possible to overcome this weakness by consulting authoritative sources and relating Private McDonald's narrative to the actual places where the recorded events occurred.

At times, the diary also contains views, rumours and occasionally erroneous assumptions about certain events. These nevertheless offer an interesting perspective on the tribulations of the ordinary soldier as he faced potentially life-and-death situations with limited information.

As was typical of the time, Tom's academic education went no further than national school, and as a result, his account of the first weeks of the War has many spelling and grammatical errors and little punctuation or structure. Coupled with the small size of the script, the age of the pencilled writing and the abbreviated notations, the diary is quite dense in places. In consequence, considerable effort had to be expended to decipher the content into a comprehensible form. In doing so, it has, I believe, been possible to transcribe over 99% of the diary content accurately.

Any exact transcription of Private McDonald's account would, I believe, be inconvenient for the reader as the spelling mistakes and other errors would distract attention from the content

of the narrative. By way of example, the following table includes a photograph of one page of Private McDonald's diary and a line-by-line transcription of his notations in printed form.

The Account in Private McDonald's Hand	Accurate Line-by-Line Transcription in Print of Private McDonald's Account
	<p>August 5th 1914</p> <p>Left Duffey to join at naas and missed the train I had to to wait till the 6th Duarine 6th when we arrived at Naas the Barracks we had to stop in a bording house for which we had to payd 4/- per man duiring my stay I met Paddy Walsh a painter & an old friend of mine from Carlow & we had a good time of it on the 7th day we went into Barracks & were dressed by 12 o'clock & left for the train their weire gret excetment when we were marching trough Naas about 500 strong when the band of the Irish Natonil Volunteers met us with a big green flag & played us to the station their our pipes & the Volunteers Band played Irish ayers till we left about 6 o'clock for the North...</p>

In order to improve the readability of Private McDonald's account, I have made certain changes to his notations and left intact other inaccuracies in order not to erode his authentic 'voice'. For the purpose of this article, I have adopted the following practices:

- I have corrected spelling errors but have left the tense of many verbs unchanged. Where there is doubt about the accuracy of any aspect of the transcription, this doubt is noted by inserting a question mark in square brackets after the word or phrase;
- I have inserted paragraphs and punctuation in the text in order to improve the diary's coherence;
- I have removed a small number of duplicated or erased words and have occasionally added words which appear to be missing from the text in order to make it more comprehensible. These additions are identified in square brackets in the transcription.

The effect of these changes is illustrated on a following page which includes the above text in its amended form.

I have also supplemented Private McDonald's narrative with a commentary on the events he described. This provides a context for his recorded experiences of those initial weeks of the War which, I hope, makes greater sense of the narrative. In order to distinguish Private McDonald's diary from my commentary, the diary contents are in italics and follow the contextual information relating to the events he describes. All of my additions to the narrative in square brackets are not italicised.

The First Weeks of the War: 3 to 22 August 1914

On 3 August, Germany declared war on France, and on the following day, it declared war on neutral Belgium. As Britain had promised to protect Belgian neutrality and to act in concert with France in the event of German aggression, the British Government mobilised its military forces and called up its reservists. A BEF comprising four Infantry Divisions and a Cavalry Division was initially sent to France to support the French and Belgian armies. The BEF would first come into contact with the German Army near Mons in southern Belgium on 22 August.

Unsure as to whether Germany planned to invade Britain, the British Government initially kept two Infantry Divisions at home. As part of this precautionary move, the 4th Infantry Division which included the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers was posted to York. However after a few days, the War Office decided to send the 4th Division to France as well. On 18 August, the Division arrived in Harrow outside London where it continued a fitness training programme for the men, most of whom were reservists. On the morning of 22 August, headquarters staff of the 10th Brigade and two of its constituent units, the 1st Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, left Southampton aboard the SS *Caledonia* and reached Boulogne in France that evening.

Private McDonald's account of those initial weeks now follows:

"This is the diary of No 9197, Pte. Thomas McDonald, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, from the time I was called up to join the Colours for active service on the 5th day of August 1914 to the finish of the great European War on the [No date is included in Tom's narrative].

August 5th 1914: Left Duffey [?] to join at Naas and missed the train. I had to wait till the 6th. When we arrived at Naas Barracks, we had to stop in a boarding house for which we had to pay a 1/- per man. During my stay, I met Paddy Walsh, a painter and an old friend of mine from Carlow, and we had a good time of it.

On the 7th day, we went into Barracks and were dressed by 12 o'clock and left for the train. There was great excitement when we were marching through Naas about 500 strong when the band of the Irish National Volunteers met us with a big green flag and played us to the station. There, our pipes and the Volunteers Band played Irish airs till we left about 6 o'clock for the North Wall, where we got the boat about 9 o'clock for Gravesend.

When we arrived at Holyhead, it was raining very hard. And at about 6 o'clock on the 8th, we entrained for Gravesend and got there about 2 o'clock and marched to barracks where we packed up all the regimental stuff. And on the 9th, we got 5/- per man. This went on till the night of the 11th when about 12 o'clock we got an order to shift. We did not know where we were going as all our movements were kept secret.

But on the 12th, we arrived in York and [were] put up in the Art Gallery. This was an awful place as we were packed like sheep, nothing to eat and no way to buy anything and no blankets. And we had to sleep on the greasy floor. We had a rough time of it as we had to sleep in our clothes and equipment, and we were wishing to be sent to France. This was happening from the 12th when the medical officer said it was not fit for pigs and we were.

On the 15th, we were shifted to the Race Course under canvas which was very good as we had plenty of room to move about and a canteen to buy what we liked. And we got a few baths which was badly needed. Here, the people used to come and see us, and we had a very pleasant time till the morning of the 18th.

About 4 a.m., we got another order to shift, and about 2 o'clock we found ourselves in Harrow, a very nice place too. We had to march about 5 miles to a field in the country and pitch our camp. And had we been a lot of wild buffalos, we could not be fenced in any better. That evening, we were told there was a stream up the road where we could get a wash. So we went in search of the spring and found the right one - a public house called the Hare. And when the Gods got the range of it, they were all like hares going to the spring. But unluckily it was spoiled, for some way our officers got to hear, and they put a force of

police and the provost sergeant to guard it. So any who was not up in time had to remain thirsty.

Here we done some very hard route marching with the 10th Brigade, and any man who fell out was rejected for active service and sent to our details in Cork. Here we remained until about 2 a.m. on the 22nd and entrained for Southampton and were on the boat by 8 a.m.

About 10 a.m., we sailed out. To where we were going no one [knew] as we were under sealed orders. But [after] sailing about all day, near evening we meet about 9 of our battleships, and we gave them a rousing good cheer. On that night about 10 o'clock, we arrived at Boulogne, France. And all the piers was crowded with all in the town shouting ('are we downhearted') and sing songs."

Moving to the Front: 23-25 August

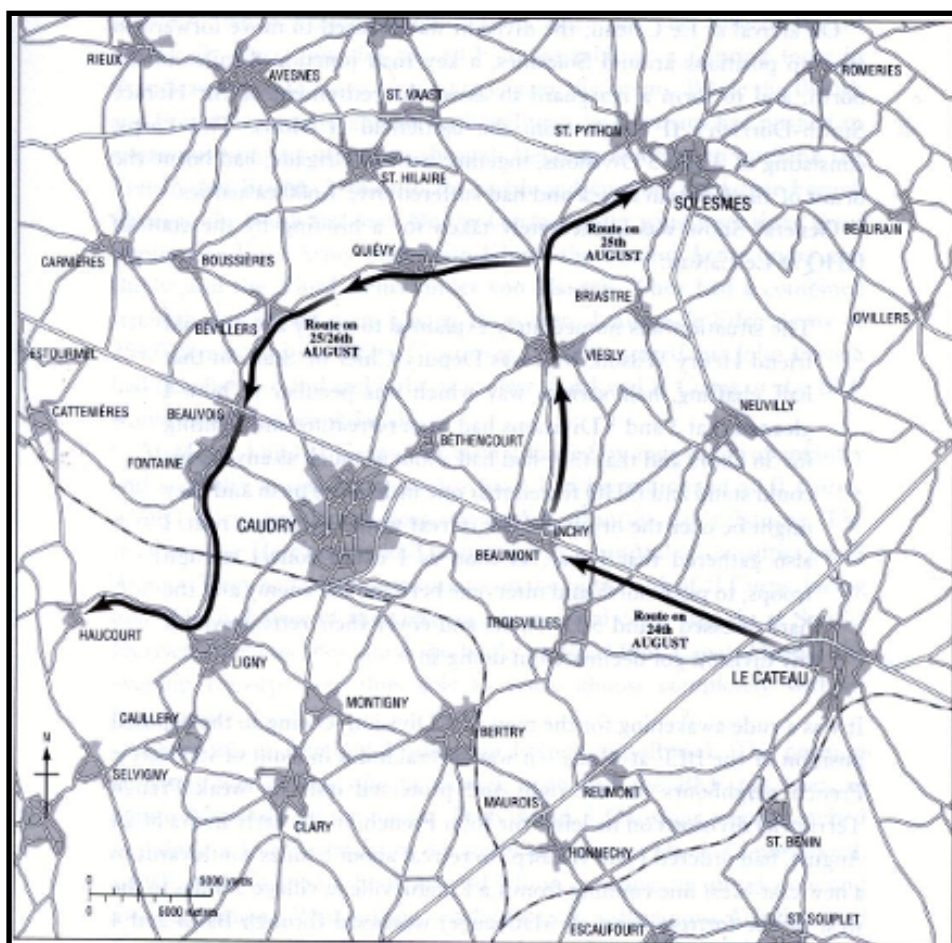
Meanwhile in southern Belgium, the British and French Armies were facing overwhelming German forces which outnumbered them by more than two to one. On 23 August, the BEF held with difficulty a poor defensive position along the Condé-Mons Canal, but the strength of the German attacks in the preceding days had forced the retirement of the French Army on the British right. The BEF had no option but to retire in concert with the French to avoid being surrounded. There followed a series of desperate retreats which continued for two weeks to the outskirts of Paris, a distance of more than 170 miles. The BEF lost 15,000 killed, wounded and captured. However this was but a fraction of the French Army's casualties of 250,000 in those first three weeks.

As the exhausted troops of the BEF were falling back from Mons, the 4th Division was pushed forward to meet the growing German threat. The 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and the 1st Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, left Boulogne by train late on 23 August and alighted in Le Cateau the following morning. From there, the Dublin Fusiliers, the Warwickshires and the rest of the 10th Brigade marched north-west to Inchy and the adjoining village of Beaumont where they rested and camped overnight. While the Dublin Fusiliers provided the outposts, Captain NP Clarke, 'A' Company, was ordered that evening to reconnoitre the road north towards Solesmes in case a night march was required.

At 2 am on 25 August, the 10th Brigade did indeed set off towards Solesmes and the hamlet of St Python, where they were tasked that day with covering the retreat of II Corps which had been heavily engaged at Mons. In mid-afternoon, the Dublin Fusiliers and the Warwickshires took up a position to the north of Fontaine au Tertre Farm where they first received German shellfire at about 5.30 pm just as rain began to fall. The 2nd Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders who were close by suffered five casualties, one of whom was killed. In their first engagement of the War later that evening, the Dublin Fusiliers fired on approaching German cavalry and scattered them resulting in a number of enemy casualties.

That night, General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, the commander of II Corps, determined that his 3rd and 5th Divisions, assisted by the 4th Division under Major-General Sir Thomas D'Oyly Snow, would have to make a stand around Le Cateau in order to prevent the advancing Germans from overtaking his exhausted force. After the retreating II Corps had passed through Solesmes, the Dublin Fusiliers and the rest of the 10th Brigade withdrew to the south west and took up a position near Haucourt on the left flank of the proposed defensive line. The Fusiliers' tiring march that night lasted about six hours from 11 pm to 5 am.

The following map shows the movement of the Dublin Fusiliers and Warwickshires between the mornings of 24 and 26 August. John Hutton and Pen & Sword Books Ltd have kindly permitted the use of this map and a later second map in this article. This map appears in page 35 of his book, *August 1914: Surrender at St Quentin* (1990).



This is Private McDonald's account of the RDF movements at Boulogne and over the subsequent days. Where he is mistaken in identifying a time or place name, the correct time or name (according to authoritative sources) is inserted in his narrative in square brackets without italics:

"It did not take us long to disembark, and we were soon swinging through the town singing ('it's a long way to Tipperary') and greeted by cheers as we went through. There was not much men to be seen - only women and children waving

flags and singing the Marseillaise. This was a great chance for anyone who was fond of kissing, as the women young and old would rush through the ranks. And before you would know where you were, she would have her arms around you and start kissing you for all she was worth. And any who had children in their arms and couldn't rush you would shout out ('kiss me'). Here we marched about 3 miles outside of the town and was put under canvas.

All that day Sunday 23rd, we were cleaning up and got served out with our emergency rations, and the people came to see us. There is one fault with the French women - they are very forward which did not look very well in front of about 1,200 Irish soldiers. Here we could not get to buy anything. But we got one small tin of tobacco per man. And there was not enough pipes for all, so we had to draw for them. I won one of them.

All went well for the remainder till 5 p.m. when an airman came in and reported the Germans strongly advancing on Mons, and we were wanting at once to reinforce the Belgium troops. Then my Division was warned to move at once. I forgot to tell you that I was belonging to the 4th Division, 10th Brigade, under the command of Lieutenant General Haldane.

So by 7 a.m. [7 pm], we were on the move through Boulogne to the railway singing once more ('it's a long way to Tipperary') and not thinking it was such a long way. For by the following Wednesday, there was many a poor fellow who will never again see his dear old home in sweet Tipperary. Well by 9 a.m. [9 pm], we were all packed again like sheep in the roughest old railway carriages you could see and not as would let us see each other. Anyway we had to stick it and that till the next day, Monday 24th.

Without as much as a drink of water on our way to the front, we meet the first sign of battle. For about Bapaume, we meet a train load of wounded going to the back, and they told us to hurry up, or we would be late as there was plenty to do.

So we went on again until we reached a place called St Quentin [Le Cateau]. Here, we got out and started our march. The day was very hot, and we felt it awful after been cramped up in a train for about 18 hours.

When we got to Le Cateau [Beaumont], we rested for the night. It is only a small town, and the people are very nice. They brought us in lots of cider which was very nice. You must remember I am still in France, and the people was as different as chalk and cheese. I don't know if [it] was the sound of the big guns had them so or not, but they were very nice.

When dusk [came] they all cleared off, and [we] put out some outposts. And my company A under the command of Captain Clarke stood to arms that night while the remainder of the Battalion slept. This meant no rest for poor A Coy. Well luckily enough, the cavalry did not come that night.

So next morning, Tuesday 25th, at day break, we moved on again. And when about two hours on the march, we got orders to drum up our breakfast. And while doing so, an airman came in and reported that a party of the Vlins ['Uhlans' are German Cavalry] had entered the village of Beaumont [?] and killed all the women and children. We could do nothing as it was out of our way off to our left, and we were going more to the right. So we had after an hour's halt to push on again.

And when we got about 14 miles on the road, we got orders to retire back to Beaumont [St Python] and entrench ourself as soon as we could. When we got outside Beaumont [St Python], we entrenched and waited to see what was going to happen. We could see the shells cracking, but none came near us.

About 4 p.m., the rain came down in torrents, and at 6 p.m., we retired to the back of a farmhouse [Fontaine au Tertre Farm outside St Python]. For the first time, A Coy got a rest, and D Coy was sent out on outposts. So we drummed up and got some tea. There was a fine orchard here, and we made our own arrangements with the apples and pears until one of our officers got the range of us. He gave us a lecture and said it was not a robbing expedition we were on.

Then just as we got a canteen of tea, the shells began to hop all around us. But we were so hungry we kept cool. Myself and a fellow named O'Hara [possibly Private John O'Hara from Dublin] was mucking in, and we seen a fellow named Murphy was Irish enough to milk a cow. So Spud whitened the tea. This was the first time I had seen it white since I left Dublin on the 6th. So the three of us had a good titner [?] under shellfire.

We just had time to get the tea, bully beef and biscuits down when we heard that the Vlins were coming. And just as we cleared out, the shells were dropping in the farmyard. Just as we got to the back of the farm, our outposts opened fire on the Vlins and gave them a warm time of it. We got a lot of their horses, and there was some of them badly wounded. We did not see how much men was killed. There must have been a lot according to the amount of horses that came in without counting what was killed.

Just at the crossroads, there was one of the Seaforth Highlanders buried. This was the first of our Brigade we seen killed.

(Here I forgot to mention that while we were in the trenches outside Beaumont [either Solesmes or St Python], I made my will in my pay and active service book in favour of my sister, Mrs M Maher, and my first cousin, Mrs Mary Fitzpatrick. A strange place to think of writing one.)

Just after that, we started on an awful march to get in front of the Germans before they took up a new position. All this time, the Germans were setting fire to

Beaumont [?], and we could see it in the distance in flames which looked awful, especially in the night. We still kept going. We went through several towns, and they all looked desperate. On the way, we passed several Battalions of my Division sleeping on the roadside. We could not rest at all as it was our lot to get to a certain place at any cost. So we were going [at] breakneck speed without a halt.”

The Battle of Le Cateau, 26 August

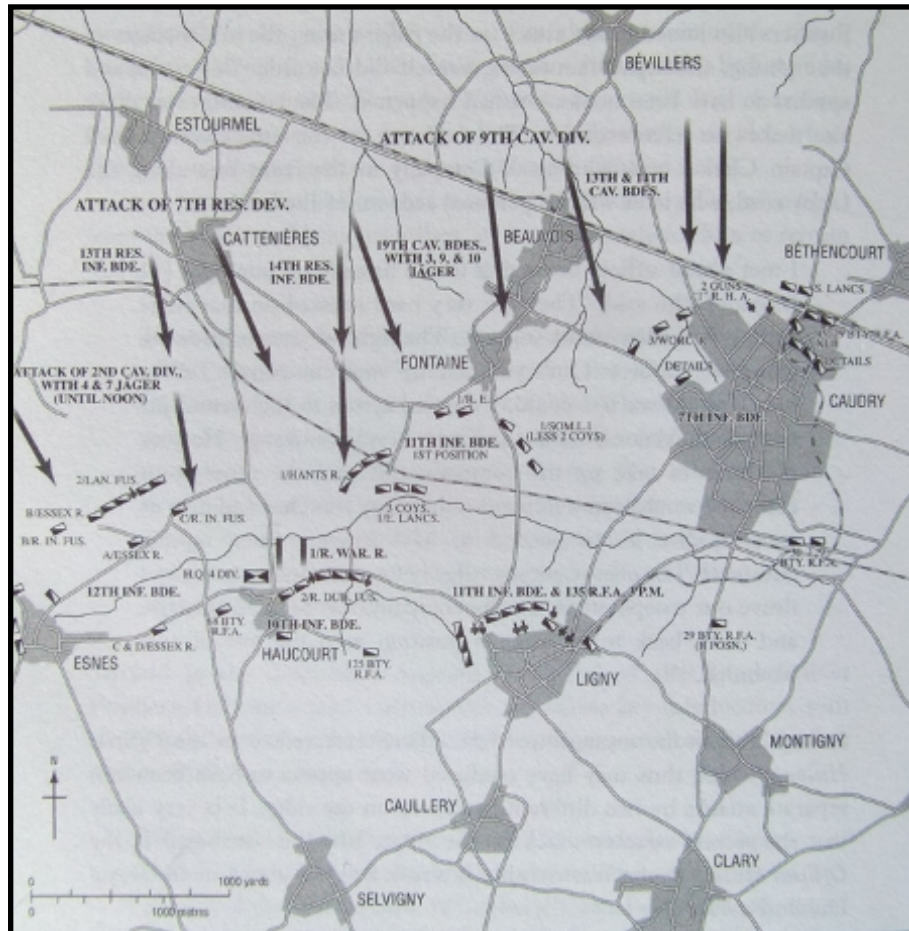
The hastily assembled British defensive line extended some ten miles to the west of Le Cateau. From left to right, it mainly comprised the 4th, 3rd and 5th Divisions respectively supported by a number of artillery batteries. The BEF was attacked shortly after dawn by vastly superior German forces. The Germans also had the advantage of surprise as some British senior officers later acknowledged that they had no idea that the German Army was so close. Communication and other problems on 26 August were exacerbated by the War Office decision some weeks earlier to send the 4th Division to France without adequate support units, including signals, cavalry reconnaissance, heavy artillery, ammunition columns, cyclists and field ambulances. Moreover Brigadier-General Sir James Aylmer Haldane, the commander of the 10th Brigade, got lost during the retirement from St Python and never restored contact with the commanders of two of his regiments (the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Warwickshires) in the fighting that day. And yet despite the disorganisation, the British succeeded in their primary objective which was to reduce German pressure on the retreating BEF force and avoid a rout.

The German attacks would fall most heavily on the flanks of the British defensive line. The 4th Division guarded the left flank with the 12th and 11th Infantry Brigades initially in advanced positions to the north of the Warnelle Ravine and the 10th Division in reserve to the south of it. Shortly after dawn, German machine guns and artillery surprised part of the 12th Brigade (1st Battalion, King's Own Royal Lancasters) on the extreme left and inflicted heavy casualties. Lieutenant-Colonel John Elkington commanding the Warwickshires immediately sought to render assistance by challenging the German attack of the ridge. While ultimately the 12th Brigade position was lost, the Warwickshires suffered close to 50 casualties in covering the retreat of the Royal Lancasters.

In response to the German attack, Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Mainwaring of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers (who were likely deployed to the left of the Warwickshires) ordered 'A' Company under Captain Clarke to extend along the Haucourt/Ligny road to face the expected German attack. 'D' Company under Captain GS Higginson was placed to their rear on higher ground. A platoon of 'B' Company was also placed in a forward position. After a short delay and with the approval of Major HM Shewan who was in command of these forward troops, Captain Clarke led 'A' Company up the ridge in support of the Warwickshires. However when German control of the ridge could no longer be sensibly contested, they too were ordered to return to their original position having suffered two casualties. 'B' and 'C' Companies under Captains

RLH Conlan and SG Wheeler respectively ultimately took up a position with Mainwaring some 2,000 metres further back, where Mainwaring was no longer in touch with his front line companies.

This map shows the relative positions on the British left flank of the RDF ('2/R. DUB. FUS.' just east of Haucourt in the following map) and some other 4th Division regiments on 26 August vis-à-vis the attacking German Army.



From about 10.30 am all along the 4th Division defensive line, a situation of stalemate existed. The Germans, having suffered substantial casualties themselves and unwilling to brave the clear fields of fire available to the British defenders, resorted to artillery bombardment pending the arrival of additional reinforcements. British gun batteries also shelled the German lines throughout the day. Two of them came into action a few hundred metres from Mainwaring who assigned 'C' Company as protection, and the men entrenched about 300 metres in front of the batteries. At 2 pm, German heavy artillery were deployed against the 4th Division defences around Haucourt and Ligny, and many men were killed and wounded under this barrage which continued for several hours. Captain Conlan, 'B' Company, was one of those wounded.

Reviewing the situation around noon, Major-General D'Oyly Snow was satisfied that the German attacks on his 4th Division had been contained, and he issued orders that there would

be no retirement. Twice in the early afternoon, Mainwaring confirmed that the Royal Dublin Fusiliers would comply.

However the situation on the British right flank around Le Cateau had become critical. Despite reinforcements and dogged resistance, the right flank was giving way under huge German pressure, and General Smith-Dorrien of II Corps decided in the early afternoon that there would have to be a general retirement. While orders to that effect were issued, some of those in the front line never received them. The successful retirement of the 3rd, 4th and 5th Divisions later that day was greatly assisted by isolated front line units in those Divisions continuing to oppose German attacks and by the failure of the German Army to deploy their cavalry to pursue the retreating British when they eventually overcame the remaining resistance. One such example took place near Caudry, where two Scottish regiments, predominantly Gordon Highlanders, fought to the end.

Major-General D'Oyly Snow of the 4th Division received his orders to retire around 4 pm which closely coincided with newly reinforced German attacks on his left flank. However these advances were successfully contained with the assistance of French cavalry and artillery support under General Sordet. The 12th and 11th Brigades (which had earlier retired to the south bank of the Warnelle Ravine) began to withdraw after 5 pm and 6 pm respectively, but no word reached Mainwaring or Elkington. When Mainwaring noticed the retirement of artillery and some nearby infantry units, he sent a note to Major-General D'Oyly Snow seeking clarification. Captain RM Watson, his Adjutant, returned 20 minutes later with the news that the General and his staff had abandoned their headquarters. In consequence at about 5.30 pm, Mainwaring ordered withdrawal, but he made no effort to confirm that his 'A' and 'D' Companies in the front line had already retired, apparently operating under the assumption that they had already done so. Major-General D'Oyly Snow later blamed insufficient signals and mounted units for the failure to communicate both the retirement order and the route of withdrawal to all of the officers under his command.

Like Mainwaring, Elkington withdrew on his own initiative from his headquarters with a small group of men at about 6.30 pm and equally inexplicably, failed to alert his officers in the front line 300 metres away to his retirement. At 8 pm, one of those officers, Major Poole, realised that the rest of the 4th Division had retired. At that point, the advancing Germans had occupied at least part of Haucourt as there were exchanges of fire with the British left flank. It was also likely that part of Ligny was by then in German hands. As the senior officer present, Major Poole ordered the evacuation of the front line at 10 pm. As it was presumed that the Germans would be using the local roads, it was decided to withdraw from the front line along a cart track towards Caullery. Some 600 to 700 men assembled in silence in the darkness. About 300 men each belonged to the Warwickshires and the Dublin Fusiliers with most of the balance being from the Royal Irish Fusiliers and the Royal Lancasters who were part of the 10th and 12th Brigades respectively.

As recorded in his diary, this was Private McDonald's experience of the fighting on 26 August. His account begins with the arrival of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the vicinity of Ligny after their overnight march from St Python:

"Next morning, the 26th, at day break, we halted for 15 minutes to get into fours, and every man was bet. In fact, they were asleep standing in the ranks. And some was so done up they sat down and looked as if they were not able to go any further when our commander Colonel Mainwaring rode along saying: 'Men, for God's sake, stick it out for another mile and a half if you don't want a German army corps to come down and wipe you out'.

So after that, we pushed on again as best we could, and after one hour's march, we got to the place we wanted to go to. It was called Ligny, and we lay in a field. And if they went in search of a bog, they could not find a wetter one. I nor my chum O'Hara did not lie down. We went to make some tea, and just as it was finished, a shell dropped a bit in front of us. No one was hit. So we had to retire on to the road and entrench ourselves as hard as we could.

This was a mistake for us to get shelled and might have meant the lot of us being wiped out over the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. They were told to get on the skyline and entrench themselves to keep the enemy in check while we were getting a rest. And instead, they let them up on us. They got cut up themselves, and the King's Own Regiment and the dear old Dubs nearly paid the same fate. But luckily, we ducked it again. [This criticism of the Warwickshires seems to have no valid basis.]

But we were in a very exposed position all day. For from about 6 in the morning till 8.30 at night - 14½ hours, we were under shellfire with very little head cover, so here we had to stick it out. At about 8 a.m. that morning, 5 of our guns arrived, and it was a terrible artillery duel all day. It was surprising to see the fine shooting done by our gunners. Had we more guns, we would have blowing them off the face of the earth. As it was, they lost terribly. We could see them going up regularly.

Towards evening, our guns were silenced. 3 of them blew up and no ammunition for the other two. So they had to retire. So when the Germans seen they were not getting answered, they sent out an aeroplane to reconnoitre. And when he came right over us and hovered for a while, then dropped a little - that was the range for the enemy's guns. They opened fire on us and gave us what's. I thought it was all up with me as they were getting killed all around me. I said to the man next [to] me named Brennan: 'now it is all up with us. They have got the right range of us'. And he said: 'that is right - keep cool'.

It was awful to hear the moans of the wounded and dying crying for water. Their shells struck behind me and in front [of] me, and I never as got as much as a scratch. Nor neither did my next door neighbour, Brennan. All during the terrible shell fire, we slept as if we were at home, we were so tired.

At 8.30 when the shell fire stopped, we thought we were going to get a rest, but the Germans were not going to give us any rest. They sent their cavalry around to see what they could do, and they got a good time of it as we had a platoon under Sergeant Coyne [probably 7558 Sergeant Michael Coyne from Portlaoise], and they soon seen them off.

(Here I forgot to mention that about 10 a.m. that morning while the melée was taking place on the hill, there was word came that the hill was to be saved by reinforcements. So the Dublins was to go. So Colonel Mainwaring told A Coy to advance. So we extended and advanced. When about 1,000 or 1,100 yards from the enemy, they opened fire on us. And they are the worst shots in the world, or they would have shot the lot of us down. And they haven't got the pluck of a rabbit, or they would have come out with fixed bayonets and wiped what of the British Army that was in France off the face of the earth.

For the lot of the British Army in France at the time was only 160,000, while the strength of the Germans, according to their own estimation, was 800,000. Had they only known how weak we were and era [?] a bit of pluck to come out of their trenches and fight us, they would have made sausages of us all, or wurst as they call it themselves.

Well we got to about 800 [yards] or nearer to their trenches. General Haldane counteracted our advance and sent the word to retire in slow order which we did in fine style. In fact, we came so slow that you would think we were looking for mushrooms. When we got back, there was only one man hit, Pte Geoghegan [7636 Private Martin Geoghegan] from Carlow. He was shot through the stomach and died in the little chapel at our back that was changed into an Hospital. This is all I think I forgot.)

The little chapel I refer to was more like a slaughter house than a hospital. There was at least 2 inches of blood on the floor, and the field, road and ditches outside was packed with dead men that was carried in from the morning's tuck in on the hill. It was so bad no one could describe it unless you seen it yourself.

Well, after Sgt Coyne's platoon beating of the cavalry, we were about to turn about to lie in the reverse direction in case any more of them would come, when through some mistake, the Royal Irish Fusiliers trying to get in with the German cavalry got mixed up with the Dublins, and there was a lot of firing. And only for some miracle, we would have been into each other with fixed bayonets as the cheers were going on: 'come on the Fogs', and the others were: 'come on the Dubs'. This was soon finished. I and one of the Fogs got together, and he gave me a piece of raw bacon, and I gave him half a tin of tobacco. I don't know what became of him, for I never seen him since.

After that, we lay out for the cavalry with fixed bayonets, but they took the lesson they got and didn't come back. It rained all the night, and we were drowned.

(Here again, I forgot to mention that early in the day when things were looking their worst, we were told not to mind. We would soon be all right as there were 45,000 French coming up on our left. And they are coming yet again in the evening. Before the guns were silenced, the remainder of the Brigade retired, and the Dubs were left behind and told to hold the trenches at all cost. Here it was looking blue as we thought it was all up with us. But luckily enough for us, they had not the pluck to come out. So we had a while longer to live - some of us anyway.) ”

Capture, 27 August 1914

The following sketch (based on a contemporary illustration) shows the main roads and tracks linking Haucourt, Caullery, Ligny and Clary. Some of these were used by the Dublin Fusiliers and the Warwickshires in their withdrawal from the front line facing the Warnelle Ravine. Point 'A' is the junction of the Haucourt/Ligny road with the cart track which separated both Regiments in the front line and along which they retired to the south.



Despite the intention of Major Poole that all regiments would retire together, this did not happen. When Major RG Parker commanding his detachment of Royal Lancasters realised that the Warwickshires had already left, he followed them on to the cart track and independently withdrew southwards across country. Major Shewan commanding the Royal Dublin Fusiliers insisted on first retrieving a machine gun wagon which had been abandoned in or near Haucourt following earlier hostilities. Only when it was recovered and his wounded men loaded on to it did the Dublins start.

However in the darkness, further confusion occurred. A platoon of Dublin Fusiliers under Lieutenant RFH Massy-Westropp became separated from their colleagues. As they made their way south that night, this platoon engaged and dispersed a party of German soldiers who had occupied a local farm lying in their path of withdrawal. At dawn, they managed to rejoin Major Poole and the Warwickshires in Caullery.

In the meantime, the main group of Dublin Fusiliers took a wrong turning towards the east and arrived into Ligny at about 2.30 am. While the officers determined their next move, the wet, fatigued and hungry Fusiliers dropped into the puddles on the road and slept. In the village Major Shewan learned that German troops had passed through earlier, and he decided therefore to leave his wounded in the village church before continuing. Having procured some bread for his men, Major Shewan led the Fusiliers out the road at first light towards Clary, some four kms to the south-east. 'A' Company under Captain Clarke and two platoons under Captain AS Trigona comprised the advanced guard with Lieutenant West at 'point', while Captain GS Higginson commanded the rearguard.

As the advanced guard approached Clary, it was fired on at a range of about 400 metres wounding three of the five man 'point'. The advance halted, and the main part of the column took cover in a disused distillery nearby. In the poor light of dawn, it was first thought that British or maybe French forces were firing on what they assumed to be advancing Germans. In signal exchanges with the party who had fired at them, Trigona identified themselves as Dublin Fusiliers and received a reply in English encouraging them to continue forward. Unconvinced, he asked his interlocutor to send out a man who, having appeared, only walked forward a short distance before dropping to the ground.

Peering through their binoculars, the officers behind were confident that the 'villagers' were wearing British uniforms. A battalion cyclist rode forward through the static Dublins to convey to the 'villagers' the news that the column was British like them. Ignoring an order to turn back from the non-commissioned officer on 'point' who believed the 'villagers' to be the enemy, the cyclist was promptly shot dead just in front of the village. This killing served to resume hostilities between the Dublin Fusiliers and the firing party who were now confirmed to be Germans.

Under heavy rifle and machine gun fire, the Dublin Fusiliers sought what little protection the beet crop in the adjacent fields offered, while others took refuge in the old distillery. Upset by the sudden noise, the horses drawing the machine gun wagon which Major Shewan had carefully retrieved from Haucourt bolted back down the road towards Ligny. Realising that

the column was seriously exposed, he ordered his men to fall back. Captain Clarke sought to organise a retreat to a farmhouse a few hundred metres back close to a light railway embankment which offered a possibility of temporary shelter. Notwithstanding the covering fire given to each party of retreating Fusiliers, the German rifle and machine gun fire was intense, and casualties became numerous. The Germans also brought their artillery into action. Eventually only Captains Clarke and Trigona and 35 other Fusiliers managed to escape back to Ligny unharmed. What few wounded they brought with them were left at the village church which was serving as a hospital.

2nd Lieutenant JGM Dunlop, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and some 44 other ranks were killed in action that day at Ligny or died later of their wounds. According to the Commonwealth Graves Commission, 26 Dublin Fusiliers who died on 26 and 27 August 1914 lie buried in Honnechy British Cemetery near Ligny and a further 17 with no known graves are remembered on the La Ferté-Sous-Jouarre Memorial, east of Paris. It is likely that the balance of men killed at Ligny on 27 August were members of other regiments.



A further 400 officers and men approximately who were isolated in the open were captured during the following hours. The wounded officers included Major Shewan, Captain Higginson and Lieutenants Vernon and West.

It is clear from Private McDonald's account that he was in the vanguard of the column which was captured on 27 August. Here he recounts the events of that day commencing at midnight:

"Well as their cavalry or infantry did not come up to 12 a.m., we were to retire. So we started, and after marching all night through an orulla [?] - an awful job it was too - we came to the village called Cambrai [Ligny] and got issued with

some bread. And we were told that we were going to get a train and get up with the remainder of the Brigade.

This was the Thursday of the 27th. So the bread was split up, and we got the order to advance. So we sent out an advance party of which I was one. First went two men, Ptes. O'Hara and Hynes. Then about 50 yards behind them, four men and a Sgt Coyne - Ptes Brennan, Butler [probably 9369 Private Michael Butler from Dublin], Doyle and myself. Then about 20 yards behind us came what was left of the Dubs - about 400 all told. We had not gone far when day began to break, and soon after we heard about half a dozen shots. And when we went on to see what was wrong, we found O'Hara shot right through the stomach and Hynes through the thigh. We could see no one about. So I took off O'Hara's equipment and gave him a drink of water, and he told me he was dying. I could not stay with him, so I bid him goodbye and started to advance again never expecting to see him on the land of the living again. But I heard since that he was getting on alright in Hospital.

Well when we went on a bit further, we were fired on, and we could see the German outposts return to their main body. So I ran back and told Captain Fragoney [Trigona] what was happening, and he told me: 'I was a fool. It was impossible for the Germans to be there. It was a mistake and that they were the French.'

So I ran up to join my party again and told them what had happened. And we started to advance again when there was a volley fired at us, and we had to scatter in all directions. I stood on the road, and I heard O'Hara shouting: 'Hector, run and save yourself'.

So I went to the side of the road. All the cover I could get there was no cover at all. It was an open plain where the corn was cut and a few mangold [beet] fields. While it takes to tell you we were into it as hard as we could, and I could hear the bullets whizzing through the mangold leaves like the rain. Here the Germans had us at their mercy, and they showed us no quarter. They shelled us and gave us rifle fire as hard as they could.

This lasted for about three and a half hours, and all our officers got wounded. About nine [am] all were counted out. Still we kept on but losing heavily. Some of the rear of the force got away, but they were all captured later as we were surrounded. When Captain DAVIS [Davey] of the RAMC got wounded, he could do no more for the wounded. He seen the officers all gone. He thought it best to peg [?] in. So he got his towel on a rifle and bayonet and hoisted the white flag.

So this ended my days in the fighting line when he put the flag. It was near making the Germans shoot some of us that were in the front as we had no bugler

to sound the ceasefire. And been in front, we knew nothing of him hoisting the flag. And so we kept firing after it was put up.

When they came down to take us away, it was awful to see all that was killed. My chum, Tony Butler, was killed. Sgt Coyne of the four were killed. We lost over 300 killed and wounded. When we were taken into the village of Ligny, we were put in a chapel and kept for about 3 hours. Then we were marched about 2½ miles under heavy escort to another chapel where there was more prisoners. And there on the way, it was awful to see the battlefield of the 26th. And the night of the 26th, we seen where the Gordons were cut up, and they lost heavily too.

But we can say for every British soldier killed, there were three Germans. So for our short time in the field, we did not do so bad. We had only a few days fighting, but it was fighting for there were shellfire, rifle fire and several bayonet charges. We had the worst of the fighting as we meet the whole main force of the Germans to delay on their rush for Paris, for the French were not mobilised. And had the reinforcements come in time, we would have been saved, but they are too slow. And anyone who ever [?] them cannot say anything else.

We slept in the chapel all the night where we were packed like sheep. For then there were about 800 or more prisoners, and we heard awful rumours about the Gordons which I found out later to be true.”

‘Our Tramp and Starvation March through France and Belgium’, 29 August-2 September

There are few contemporary records indicating what happened to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in their first days of captivity. One source (Grayson) suggests that the men spent ‘seven days’ marching from Ligny to Mons, a distance of ‘30 miles’ and that the prisoners reached Sennelager camp on 7 September. While noting this account, the distance from Ligny to Mons is closer to 80 kms (50 miles), and even with this longer distance, the seven days reported for the march to Mons seems unduly long as this averages less than twelve kms or eight miles per day.

As we shall see, Private McDonald indicates that the march to Mons took four days which equates to a realistic 20 kms per day on average. While it is possible that his recollections are flawed, his account seems likely to be more accurate in the light of the reported duration of daily marching. In any event, this is how he describes the Fusiliers’ march in German custody:

“Saturday 29th [August 1914]: We started on our march for Germany. This was a very weary thing. We would start at about 6 a.m. each morning till 11 a.m. Then we would have to go out into the fields and tear up any potatoes we could find, draw water, and the Germans would kill a cow and cook it. We had no way of drawn any of this except on a piece of paper or any old tins we could find. What

we got was very little as there was a big escort to be fed before we got any. Then at three, we would move on till 6 or 7 p.m. till we reached another chapel and rest till the next day. The chapels were small, and there was no room. This went on every day, and all the food we got was looted.

On the 30th, we slept in a school, and a German soldier brought us plenty of pears.

On Monday the 31st, we slept in a chapel. This, they told us, to be very careful of as it was dated back to 1400. It was awful to see the ruins as we came through Belgium especially Tuva [?].

On the 1st September, we arrived [at] Mons and slept in the railway station.

Next day 2nd, [we] arrived at Halle where we got into a train for Sennelager.

All along the road, the people were very good to us. They gave us bread, apples, pears and other things, and they left out buckets of water for us getting a drink. We were a queer looking lot with our clothes all tore with the barbed wire and no caps, and they fairly enjoyed the Gordons in their kilts as it was the first time they had seen them. So that finished our tramp and starvation march through France and Belgium.”

The Aftermath

What became of the rest of the Dublin Fusiliers who withdrew from their positions at Le Cateau?

Like many regiments, the RDF broke up into groups as they retired and joined up with other groups of soldiers on the journey southwards. It was fortunate that no concerted effort was made by the German Army to harass the retreating BEF. The following groups of Dublin Fusiliers rejoined Captain and Adjutant Watson and about 50 other ranks at the times and places indicated:

- Captain Wheeler with about 50 men of ‘C’ Company joined on the following morning (27 August) at Le Catelet, about 18 kms south-west of Ligny;
- Sergeant-Major F Treacher with 50 men and 1st Line Transport joined on 30 August near Carlepont, about 85 kms south-south-west of Ligny;
- Sergeant-Major R Hall and 100 men joined on 5 September when the retreat ended close to the outskirts of Paris.

Many of these men were probably deployed behind the front line at Le Cateau.

Another group of about 50 Dublin Fusiliers under Lieutenant-Colonel Mainwaring left his headquarters on the evening of 26 August. He may have had only 40 with him by the time they stopped to rest at dusk, because a number of very tired men could not keep up. Some hours later, he woke his men, and they continued to march southwards through the night.

The next morning, he met Lieutenant-Colonel Elkington and some Warwickshires on the road, and they reached St Quentin, about 35 kms south of Ligny, in the early afternoon. Everyone was exhausted. A set of circumstances arose which led to both Lieutenant-Colonels signing a document of surrender that afternoon for which they would be court-martialled and cashiered out of the Army in disgrace within weeks. Tom Burke's article in the 2014 edition of *The Blue Cap* (Volume 19) contains a summary of this infamous incident.

Meanwhile, Captains Clarke and Trigona and 35 Dublin Fusiliers, accompanied by a further 38 men who had become detached from their regiments in the fighting at Mons and/or Le Cateau, were travelling across German communications lines towards the coast usually at night. All reached safety after about a week, were repatriated and returned to serve with their regiments in France a short while later.

When the retreat of the RDF and its counterparts in the BEF ultimately stopped on 5 September close to Paris, the Fusiliers had retreated about 321 kms (200 miles) from Haucourt in ten days. Most particularly, the Battalion had lost about half its strength, most of whom comprised the 450 casualties, mostly from 'A' and 'D' Companies, who were killed, wounded and captured near Ligny on 27 August.

While about 43 Dublin Fusiliers lost their lives on 26 and 27 August, many hundreds (including Private Tom McDonald) suffered hardship for more than four years in German POW camps. In contrast to some of those who escaped that day and would die later in the War, most of the prisoners survived the War and returned home. As for Private McDonald, he seems to have been fortunate to have emerged unscathed from the fighting on 27 August, particularly as he was in the vanguard of the Dublin Fusiliers attacked by German troops at Clary that day.

Conclusion

As indicated earlier, the Battle of Le Cateau was regarded as an Allied success, because II Corps (with some assistance from the French) temporarily stopped the advance of a superior German force and gave the BEF precious time to effect a safe retreat. Although the fate of both the Dublin Fusiliers and the Warwickshires in the front line was seriously compromised by the failure to inform them that afternoon of the order to retire, the positive verdict of John Hutton on their performance that day is unqualified:

“Although the day had ended badly for the Warwickshires and the Dublin Fusiliers, they could, in truth, regard their day's labour as having contributed significantly to the success of 4 Division at Le Cateau. They had stood their ground and repulsed the enemy whenever he had tried to advance against them. In doing so, they had defied all the odds. The German advance had been

effectively blocked. The BEF was able now to withdraw to better positions, regroup and ultimately reinforce without facing any serious challenge from the Germans over the next few crucial days, when defeat stared the BEF in the face...”

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RDFA Messines Trip, June 2017

Seamus Moriarty

Tuesday 6th June

Early morning Ryanair flight Dublin to Brussels International. Met up with coach driver David from near Versailles. Also, we were accompanied by guide Colette Lanney from DM Tours, Carrickmacross throughout the trip. This is the second trip with David and Colette and both are honorary RDFA members at this stage. A one hour journey to **Ghent** and we arrived at noon for a full Irish breakfast in Mary Foley's Famous Irish Restaurant in the Hotel Onderbergen.

Tom Burke led an hour-long tour of the site of the battle that led to the capture of **Wijtschate**. This was part of the larger Battle of Messines Ridge from the 7th to 14th June 2017 and it was captured jointly by the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions. The Wijtschate sector had been devastated at the outset of the battle by a series of Allied mine explosions under the German front line. Tom explained, with the assistance of trench maps, the planning of the battle and how it evolved. He also identified the spot where it is most likely Major Willie Redmond received his fatal wounds and where 2nd Lieut. Michael Wall was killed. It is also likely that both were victims of friendly fire, a real hazard for those in the front line during a creeping barrage. The party said a silent prayer and left a marker to note our visit. At the start of the walk we had visited Irish Farm Cemetery which had been the jump off point of the 6th Royal Irish Regiment in which Willie Redmond served.

Arrived at our accommodation in the Hotel Mercure in **Lille Roubaix** at about 16.30. After dinner, we left for Ypres and the Last Post ceremony at the **Menin Gate**. A large New Zealand presence included Patsy Reddy, Governor General of New Zealand. Capt. Seamus Greene (Rtd.) carried the RDFA standard during the march past. The cross-community Harmony North schools choir from 7 north Belfast schools and 24 strong sang a selection of appropriate melodies. Returned to the hotel after the ceremony.



RDFA STANDARD AT THE MENIN GATE

On the journey to Ypres, Philip Lecane told the story of Lieut. Richard Shackleton, 24 years old, 8th Bn. North Staffordshire Regiment and Lieut. Lucas King, 20 years old, King's Royal Rifle Corps. Their lives are being researched by Michael Lee, RDFA member. Both are commemorated on the Menin Gate and after the ceremony, with the assistance of Denis Mullen, both names were located. Michael Lee is researching the WW1 dead from three Church of Ireland parishes in the Blackrock, Co Dublin area.

On our return journey to our hotel we paid a brief visit to the **Island of Ireland Peace Park** in Messines and availed of the opportunity to see the Tower from the inside.

Cold and windy all day with intermittent wintry showers in the morning.

Wednesday 7th June

Drove to the Kuk Westhoek Football Stadium and ferried by bus to the **Island of Ireland Peace Park** in Messines for the ceremony to commemorate the centenary of the Battle of Messines Ridge 7th to 14th June 1917. We arrived at 11.45 for the ceremony which commenced at 2.00 pm with the arrival of An Taoiseach Enda Kenny TD, HRH Prince William Duke of Cambridge and HRH Princess Astrid, Princess of Belgium. Wreaths were laid at the Tower by all three parties followed by some readings from members of the Irish Defence Forces and British Army representatives. Among other wreaths laid were those from the German and Australian Governments.



SEAMUS GREENE WITH THE RDF STANDARD

Another was left on behalf of the 16th (Irish) and the 36th (Ulster) Divisions by sisters Teresa Abbott and Angela Raleigh of the RDFA. Local Flanders children laid flowers at plinths representing the four provinces of Ireland. Musical contributions were courtesy of the Royal Band of the Belgian Navy. It was an impressive ceremony involving three Governments and carried out with the efficiency and decorum that has come to be expected from such events by this stage.

At a smaller and more private ceremony later An Taoiseach, Prince William and Princess Astrid visited the 16th (Irish) Division memorial which is in the form of a Celtic cross at **Wijtschate**. The RDFA was represented here by among others our President Nicholas Broughall, who also spoke with Prince William. Master of Ceremonies was Carol Walker of the Somme Association.

On the journey to Locre and dinner at Redmond's pub we visited **Bailleul Cemetery** and the grave of the grand uncle of our tour guide Colette Lanney. He was Maurice Duggan from Kildwan, Bunmahon, Co. Waterford, who died on 7th June 2017 while serving with the Royal Irish Regiment. He was 19 years old. The soldiers had given Bailleul the more pronounceable name of Ballyhooley, near where some of them had trained in Co Cork, prior to moving to the front.

Dinner in Redmond's, **Locre** was followed by an enjoyable sing-song facilitated by a local musician who surprised us with his *cúpla focail* and complimented us with the observation that 'the Irish are very easy to entertain - they all know only the same three or four songs'. As has been traditional with all RDFA trips to Flanders, the party also visited the grave of Major Willie Redmond adjacent in Locre which is one of the few WW1 graves that is not in a cemetery. We also paid our respects at two 'shot at dawn' graves, one of whom was a 16-year-old, in Locre Church graveyard.



HEADSTONE OF MAJOR WILLIAM REDMOND

Cold and windy all day but threatened rain never materialised.

Thursday 8th June

Our first destination was **Langemark German Cemetery**, which has had a design update since our previous visit, including a new entrance. Local people had been willing to provide ground for Allied cemeteries but were not so accommodating to the German war dead. Langemark consequently contains the remains of some 9,500 casualties from a series of 18 smaller German burial sites in the region. One particular mass grave ('the comrades' grave') has some 25,000 bodies. There now remain just three German cemeteries in Flanders. Tom Burke commented that in his years coming to the region he has never encountered a German visitor to any of their compatriots' resting places.



LANGEMARK GERMAN CEMETERY

We followed up with another cemetery visit and to the grave of Frances Ledwidge at **Artillery Wood Cemetery**. He had been killed by shell fire on 31st July 1917 while employed with a work party building a road behind the lines. There is also a memorial to the poet nearby and, as we saw it, would benefit from some maintenance. John Moore brought the group's attention to the grave close to Ledwidge of Welsh pastoral poet EH Evans, who was killed on the same day as Ledwidge. If they had met and discussed poetry it would have been intriguing to eavesdrop on such a conversation. Even though Evans only wrote in Welsh they would have had a lot in common.

The party then visited the site of the planned joint 36th and 16th Division memorial on **Frezenberg Ridge**. A piece of Welsh granite is already in situ awaiting the sculptor. The local planners are becoming concerned at the proliferation of memorials in their area but have approved this development. This was initiated and largely funded by the RDFA. Assisting us in this regard from the Flemish side has been Erwin Ureel, who has been a great local support to our activities over many years. Erwin joined us in Redmond's pub the previous evening.

Adjourned for lunch in **Ypres** at the T Klein Stadhuus Restaurant, near the Cloth Hall.

Pond Farm Museum, St Julien has been developed on his family farm by Stijn Butaye whose family has been in residence there since before World War 1. After the 2nd Battle of Ypres in May 1915 the farm was German occupied and by 1917 was one of the many reinforced strongpoints on the German Army's defensive line. The Museum exists in the first building the family constructed as their residence when retaking possession of their farm in 1921. Stijn gave us a tour and the experience of a family whose farm and home for much of the War were on the front line in the Ypres Salient. Most items on display were recovered from the farm itself and include the usual ephemera of trench warfare - helmets, bayonets, shell casings and bullets. Also, to be seen is a still extant German bunker. Finding the remains of an Allied tank has inspired him to join a group who plan to build a working replica WW1 tank, the shell of which was viewed.

His website at www.depondfarm.be is worth a visit, if only to view the remarkable photo of a visit to the farm in 2008 by Harry Patch, the last surviving veteran of the War in the year before he died aged 111. As of now, the Museum is not a commercial concern and operates by donations from visitors. Since our return Brian Moroney of the RDFA has posted a very complimentary comment on the Museum on Tripadvisor.



RDF GROUP AT ARTILLERY WOOD CEMETERY

The **Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917** is in Zonnebeke and quite close to Tyne Cot Military Cemetery. It is devoted to the Battle of Passchendaele, also known as the 3rd Battle

of Ypres. This was a further failed Allied attempt to break through the German front line in 1917. In only 100 days some 450,000 lost their lives for only 8 km of ground. Weather, particularly heavy rain and consequent mud, played a major role in the battle. Opened in 1989 and extended in 2002 the Museum is considered by many to be one of the finest military museums anywhere. A replica network of trenches was added in 2013. While outside of the Museum, these are accessible from the Museum itself. There are also impressive gardens and a coffee shop. Ideally, to do justice to the Museum and gardens a minimum of a half day visit is required.

Warm and sunny all day.

Friday 9th June

Booked out of our hotel and headed to **Ypres** for some downtime. We also visited St George's Memorial Church, which is a small piece of Flanders that will be forever England. Designed by Sir Reginald Bloomfield, who was also the architect of the nearby Menin Gate Memorial. The foundation stone was laid by Field Marshal Lord Plummer, who was an appropriate choice as he had been the architect of victory in the Battle of Messines. It was funded by Old Etonians, 300 of whom lost their lives in the Ypres Salient. An adjacent school catered for the children of workers of the Imperial War Graves Commission. Prince Leopold III of Belgium, himself an Old Etonian, later visited the school. After a search, the recently installed memorial to RDF John Dempsey was located.



ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, YPRES

Left for Brussels International Airport and the 14.20 flight to the Ould Sod after our farewells to David our driver. Tom Burke also thanked Brian Moroney, David and Colette for all their work in helping make the trip so enjoyable.

Until we meet again don't know where, don't know when- - - - -.



**Captain Henry Murray “Chippi” Letchworth, M.A. (1889 – 1964),
Commander of “Y” Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers**

John Sheehan

Henry Murray Letchworth was born on 6th February 1889 at Exton which is a small village in Hampshire, England. He had a twin brother Arthur Gordon Letchworth and older brother George Howard Letchworth. His twin brother Arthur served with the Royal Munster Fusiliers and after the War worked as a clerk with the Health Ministry (he died in 1933). In his early years Henry lived with his aunt at Newlyn, Adelaide Road, Kingston, Surbiton where he was recorded in the 1891 and 1901 census.

In his teenage years Henry entered the Haileybury and Imperial Service College which is known as a prestigious British Independent school, near Hertford (32km from central London). In 1907 he matriculated to the Oriel College, Oxford where he studied Theology. In 1915 he achieved a Master's Degree and started working as an Assistant Master at the Beechmont Preparatory School, Sevenoaks, Kent.

When the Great War broke out, Henry responded to the King's call and put his application forward. On the 22nd March 1915 to become an officer in the British Army, his candidature was accepted and he was appointed a commission in the Special Reserve of Officers with the 4th Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. On the 20th December 1915 the London Gazette supplement confirmed that 2nd Lieutenant Henry M. Letchworth has attested to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

During his time in Ireland he was stationed with the RDF in Templemore Barracks. Ironically he got his first combat experience here, when the 4th Battalion was sent to Dublin during the Easter Rising 24 -30 April 1916 where they suffered casualties. A detachment of the 4th Battalion is also reported as being in Dublin Castle.

In July 1916 2nd Lieutenant Letchworth was attached to the 8th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. At this time the unit fought on the Western Front as part of the 48th Brigade of the

16th (Irish) Division. Their hardest challenge took place on the fields of France and Belgium – the 1916 Somme offensive.

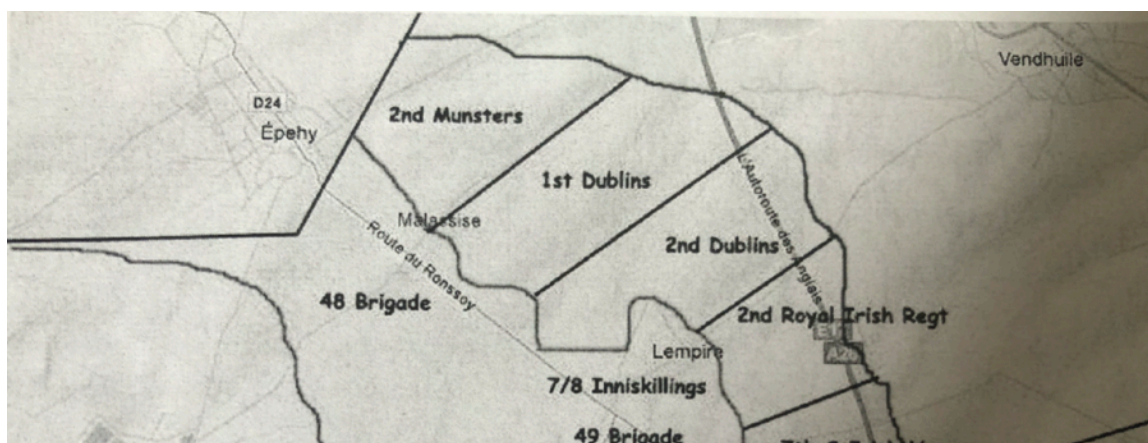
Henry was sent back to England on the 7th September 1916 from Le Havre on the HMMS Panama and he arrived back to Southampton on the 14th of September 1916. Due to his health condition the medical board of the Southern General Hospital in Bristol granted him a leave from 18th September to 17th October.

Henry joined the 4th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers again on 26th October 1916. At this time they were based in Mullingar. The following year on the 1st July Henry was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant (25.10.1917 London Gazette).

At this time he was attached to the 7th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, which arrived back from their service in the Balkans the previous year. Most likely this move took place during the reorganisations in October 1917, when the Battalion was transferred to the 48th Brigade 16th (Irish) Division or earlier. Henry must have proved himself as a valuable front line officer as from the 15th February 1918 he was appointed to the rank of Acting Captain but things took a very different turn on the 21st March 1918.

The previous year the German High Command had decided to make a decisive attack in the west in the following spring and their target was the British Army in the Somme area. The German plan was to destroy British units before American forces could build up their strength. The new offensive was called “Kaiserschlacht” (Kaiser’s Battle) or known now as the “Spring Offensive”.

The Germans planned to use their new tactics, which they practised on the Russian front – intense artillery barrage against key points such as machine-gun posts, headquarters, railways, telephone lines, etc. Attacks would be carried out by small well trained groups – storm troopers, whose main aim was to move forward through gaps in the front and try to surround the main frontline troops.



MAP OF IRISH REGIMENTS' POSITIONS NEAR EPEHY, 21 MARCH 1918

The attack began with the artillery bombardment at 4.40 am on 21st March. The bombardment targeted an area of 150 sq miles, the biggest barrage of the entire War. Over 1,100,000 shells were fired in five hours. Over 320 soldiers from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers were killed in this battle and many of them taken prisoners. Henry was 1st Battalion, Y

Company commander at this time. Captain Letchworth became one of the 4 officers and 290 men missing after the attacks. He was captured along with Capt. J. Kee near Epehy and Lempire. He wrote the following statement on the 16th January 1919:

I was in command of Y Company, which had 2 platoons in the front line and 2 in support at C.H.Q. At 4.30am 21.3.18 the enemy started a very heavy barrage of gas and H.E. which continued until 10.30am Platoon commanders got fair cover for the platoons, but we lost around a quarter of our strength during the bombardment. At 7am I visited the platoons, the fog was then very thick and continued so all morning. All communications with B.H.Q. except by runners, was broken.

Enemy first attacked at about 10.30am and got into the front line, but we drove them out again with the aid of one of the reserve platoons by 11.30. Informed B.H.Q. 11.30 and got a reply to hold on. Had conference with O.C. X a Z coys about noon. At 12.30pm saw the enemy in trenches in our sight, and at 1pm they were firing from LEMPIRE. Suffered heavy casualties from their machine gun fire. A second attack started at 2pm, in which remains of coy were driven back around C.H.Q. all platoon commanders had casualties. Only 30 men were left. Sent off last message to B.H.Q. at 2.30pm, after that time the enemy were in our rear, and our own guns were firing on us. The enemy's third attack took place about 3.45pm. I was captured with Capt. J. Kee (X coy, which was to my left) who was very badly wounded in the thigh at 4.15pm.

Captain Letchworth became one of the 4 officers and 290 men missing after the attacks. He was captured near Epehy and Lempire. The Book "Bluecaps" indicates what he said in his last message which he sent off at 2.30pm to the Battalion Headquarters:

Reports from the wounded made it clear that the men in the front line were very hard pressed, but at the same moment a very noble message from Acting Capt. Letchworth, commanding Y Coy that "he was surrounded but would hold on to the end."

William Kee, Acting Captain, MC from Meenagrove, Co. Donegal officially served in the 7th Battalion but after commission in 1915 rose the ranks to be Acting Captain and was attached to the 1st Battalion. He was a brave man mentioned in Despatches twice and awarded a Military Cross (bar posthumously 16th September 1918) for valour at the Somme, he died three days later in German hands on the 24th March 1918.

Captain Letchworth had the fortune (good or bad is a matter of opinion in those "days of death") to be taken prisoner of war by the German forces and sent to Karlsruhe officers prison camp in Baden. Officers were held in camps reserved only for them. Their living conditions were less harsh than the regular soldiers' camps. They had beds, separate rooms for their meals and they were able to be involved in study and sport. After his capture, his next of kin address was recorded as Reverend Canon H.H. Letchworth, 3 Ethelberth Road, Canterbury.



THIEPVAL MEMORIAL

During his time as a POW, he became lifelong friends with Lieutenant John Herbert Brereton Sewell from the 5th Manchester Regiment who introduced him a few years later to scouting which would become a new passion in his life.

Henry was released from the prison camp on the 19th November 1918 and he arrived back to England. He relinquished his rank Acting Captain and left the army service with the 4th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers on the 23rd August 1920.

He returned to teaching and became Co-Principal at Chafyn Grove School in Salisbury from 1920 onwards. Four years after he was liberated from the Prisoner of War camp, he met his friend again with whom he was a POW – John H.B. Sewell was invited to join the staff of Chafyn Grove School. Henry himself had never been a scout. Sewell was already a District Commissioner for Stockport and quickly enthused him with the ideals and challenge of the scouting movement.

John H.B. Sewell remained at the school until 1931 and from then onwards Letchworth was in full time charge of the 16th Salisbury (Chafyn Grove School) Scout Group.

When the Second World War broke out he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant on the 25th November 1942. On the 25th May 1944 he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant. Henry resigned on 30th April 1945 and relinquished his commission.

His main passion all his life had been teaching and Scouting. He joined the Scouts Organisation in 1923 and remained active with them for forty years. His great capability in Training Scouters was soon recognised and in 1928 he became Asst. County Commissioner (Training) and was subsequently active in arranging courses for Scouters. In 1954 he became a Deputy Camp Chief attached to Gillwell Park, a rare distinction.



Henry Murray Letchworth died in December 1964 after a short illness. He was 75 years of age. For his service during the First World War as a Royal Dublin Fusiliers officer he was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. It's not known if he received any awards in respect of his service in World War Two. For his devotion and hard work for the Scouting Organisation he received the highest award presented by the Scout Association "for services of the most exceptional character" – The Silver Wolf Award. This award is only given by the Chief Scout of the World.





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12. Silver Wolf Award - Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silver_Wolf_Award.
13. The Scouter, June 1954.

Bull Island Military Rifle Range

Before they went to Suvla Bay in 1915, the 6th and 7th Royal Dublin Fusiliers learned to shoot at the rifle range on Bull Island. The range was located to the left of the road immediately after crossing the wooden bridge. The earth bank where the targets were located is still there and in good condition ("The Butts"). The target area is part of the boundary of the Royal Dublin Golf Club. The soldiers fired toward the golf course.



Paddy Teeling has worked there as a gardener for over thirty years. In that time, he collected many .303 and other bullets which date from the time the range was used. There is even a piece of shrapnel. He donated the collection to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive. We arranged to have them certified as safe.



The battalions gave the name "Dolly Mount" to one of the peaks on the Kosturino Ridge, now in Northern Macedonia, in November 1915. The 10th (Irish) Division lost about 500 men when they were attacked by the Bulgarians in December 1915 and forced to withdraw to Thessaloniki.

Very few of the thousands who cross the wooden bridge know about this part of our history. By coincidence, when I was about 12, I was walking along the harbour side of the Bull Wall at low tide. Among the rocks, I found a live .303 bullet opposite what I now know was the firing range. I wondered then how it got there but now I can guess.

Sean Connolly

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Records:

Additional Burial information now accessible

When doing some research on one of The Pals, I discovered that it is now possible to view the original clerical records related to a cemetery. A nephew of Lieut. George Alexander Clarke contacted us looking for information. It was easy to discover that he died of wounds on 24 March 1918 and was buried in Honnechy Cemetery. From Whitworth Road in Drumcondra, Dublin, he had enlisted as a private in "D" Company, 7th Battalion. He served in Gallipoli and was sent to hospital in Malta suffering from "fever" in June 1916. He was commissioned into the 8th Battalion and was serving with the 1st Battalion when the German attack began on 21 March 1918.

The records associated with Honnechy cemetery now contain the burial records for Villers Outreaux Extension cemetery where George was originally buried.

COMPREHENSIVE REPORT
GRAVES REGISTRATION REPORT FORM.
Commaire-VILLERS OUTREAU.

Army Form W. 3872

REPORT No. 3 SCHEDULE No. 2/c

PLACE OF BURIAL VILLERS OUTREAU C.C. EXTENSION.

Map Reference 5751.14.b.9.1.

The following are buried here: cancel reports as stated on Schedule

Regiment	No.	Name	Rank and Initials	Date of Death	Cross Erected or G.R. U.D.	Plot, Row and Grave
17/WEST YORKS.	✓ 4773	GALLI	✓ PTE F	✓ 31.8.17	✓	9
14/1 " "	✓ 14904	COOPER	✓ SQUAD	✓ 31.8.17	✓	10
7/LOMP INF REG 88	✓	COUSCHANCE, ALEXANDER (RUSSIAN)			✓	11
S.A.P.	✓	UNKNOWN BRITISH LIEUTENANT.				12
		(long leather coat as worn by alman. Light colour) (khaki stockings reaching to the knees and very thick) (The boots had been removed. The breeches bore traces of) (machine oil).-----				
2/R. MUNSTER FUS.	✓ 6956	ROW "C". DANER	✓ PTE	✓ 25.3.18	✓	1
	✓	UNKNOWN BRITISH SOLDIER.		25.3.18	✓	2
	✓	UNKNOWN BRITISH SOLDIER.		"	✓	3
R.E.	✓ 178162	BATES	✓ SFR S.	"	✓	4
R. DUBLIN FUS.	✓	CLARKE	✓ LT S A	✓ 24.3.18	✓	5
2/R. MUNSTER FUS.	✓ 18178	BYRNE	✓ PTE F	"	✓	6
	✓	PREVET		25.3.18	✓	7
11/HAMPSHIRE REG.	✓ 31276	PICKETT	✓ PTE O E	"	✓	8

Cards made "Damer" "Byrne" & "Pickett" 16.10.20 ENTERED 16.10.20

SLIPS CHECKED 16.10.20

G. D. WILSON—PUBLISHED BY THE COMMISSION FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE RECORDS OF THE GREAT WAR
244—780 70,000 4/12

Villers Outreaux is a small village located on the German side, about 15 km from the frontline. This would suggest that George was wounded in the attack on 21 March and brought to a German casualty station in the village where he died on the 24th. After the war, when the bodies were being transferred to Honnechy, the detailed records show that a German burial record was found in a bottle in the coffin of Private T Damer of the 2nd Royal Munster Fusiliers who died on 25 March.



The additional burial documents may help to discover what actually happened to individual soldiers.

Sean Connolly

Dubs in Durrow

Seven months of lockdowns, restrictions and uncertainty have left all of us anxious and disheartened. So with this in mind, George and I decided to have a night away in Durrow, a local town, which we have only ever driven through before. We stayed in The Ashbrook Arms Hotel and stumbled across a painting at their reception desk of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers training in the town centre in 1899. The hotel owner, Seán Murphy, who was born and bred in Durrow, was happy to show us the painting which he is proud to own. We took pictures (one of which is below) and excitedly shared the news and images with our fellow RDFA members.

On a stroll through the pretty town, we also discovered Bob's Bar. With the restrictions in place, it was not open, but there is a plaque on the wall and many pictures in the window of the bar owner's great uncle, Jack Moyney VC, who fought with the Irish Guards. Bob has a small museum dedicated to Jack and is happy to show people around and tell them of his brave relative's exploits in WW1.

Our fortuitous night away gave us the idea that once the world returns to normal, an RDFA trip to see the painting and visit Bob's Bar would benefit us all greatly.

Suzanne O'Neill



Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Durrow, 1899

Interview with Grant Tobin, Author of *Great War Headstones & Memorials of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers*

Sally Copeland-Keogh ('S'): Please provide some information on your background, Grant.

Grant Tobin ('GT'): I have, for as long as I can remember, been interested in Military History. As a New Zealander, my primary interest revolved around the Great War and the exploits of the NZEF (New Zealand Expeditionary Force), especially the Gallipoli campaign, and its importance in forging the ANZAC story.

S: When and how did you come to Ireland?

GT: In 1999, I moved to the UK from New Zealand and in late 2006, met my now wife, Joanne, who was born and bred in County Wicklow. I moved to County Wicklow, settling in Greystones in 2007 where our first daughter was born. One day in 2009, Joanne said that she had the opportunity to move to Belgium for her job, which I was delighted about. We spent three years living in Belgium, and I spent every free minute visiting the battlefields of Belgium and France. It was whilst living in Belgium that the idea for my commemorative books was born, as well as our second daughter.

S: What have you published so far?

GT: Whilst visiting the battlefields, you often find yourself in one of the CWGC cemeteries, and I found myself looking for NZEF headstones and photographing them. I was routinely asked to take a photograph for people who were not able to make the trip themselves. I decided that I would create a commemorative book series which would list every NZEF casualty, the cemetery in which they are located or the memorial on which they are commemorated, the GPS locations of each cemetery (something we take for granted today) and a photograph (included on CD/DVD) of every headstone as well as of the surrounding area. I spent hundreds of hours visiting cemeteries in order to realise my goal of visiting every NZEF Great War casualty as recognised by the CWGC. It has been a true labour of love. To date I have completed the project for the following countries with many more partially complete:

- Belgium
- France
- The Netherlands
- Germany
- Ireland
- Switzerland
- Turkey
- New Zealand.

I self-published the first volume – *We Will Remember Them, New Zealand Casualties of the Great War*, covering Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany in 2010 and Volume 2 covering France in 2012. With every book sold, I also donated \$5NZ to the CWGC. The books are not a money-making enterprise but are my way of producing something that helps keep their memory alive whilst helping those who travel to the battlefields.

S: How did your Royal Dublin Fusiliers project come about?

GT: My wife also has a keen interest in Military History, and as such we found ourselves attending the ANZAC services in Ieper and Messines, Belgium, followed by visits to areas of Irish interest, for example the Island of Ireland Peace Park near Messines. (And walking through the fields to the New Zealand memorial a few minutes away). I found myself reading and researching the various Irish regiments, and primarily due to living close to Dublin, decided to narrow my focus on the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Over the last few years, I've found myself, again, visiting cemeteries as part of this research, and again, taking photographs.

This led to the idea of once again producing commemorative books. I decided to start with the Island of Ireland itself and to date have visited and photographed every Great War Casualty (as recorded by the CWGC) other than three men who lie in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin. I am eagerly awaiting the end of lockdown so I can visit Glasnevin and complete the photographs. The book itself is entitled ***Great War Headstones & Memorials of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers***. As mentioned earlier, this is Volume 1 covering the Island of Ireland.

I am currently planning volume 2 covering Belgium and volume 3 covering France. Luckily, work takes me to Belgium quite often, and I hope to complete both of these volumes next year, travel restrictions permitting. The books follow the same format as my earlier NZEF work. Each casualty is listed by Cemetery/Memorial (using, with permission, CWGC information). For Volume 1, I have also added other information such as the cause of death. An index by surname is also provided as is information to help visitors locate the cemeteries, namely GPS and what3words.

I have decided to produce softcover and hardback versions of the book (both A5 in size), each with a DVD of all the photographs. I am now just waiting to take the last three photographs and will be able to provide the books to those who would like a copy before Christmas. Cost wise, again, this is not a money-making venture. So costs will be as follows (plus postage):

- Softcover – 13 Euro
- Hardback – 19 Euro.

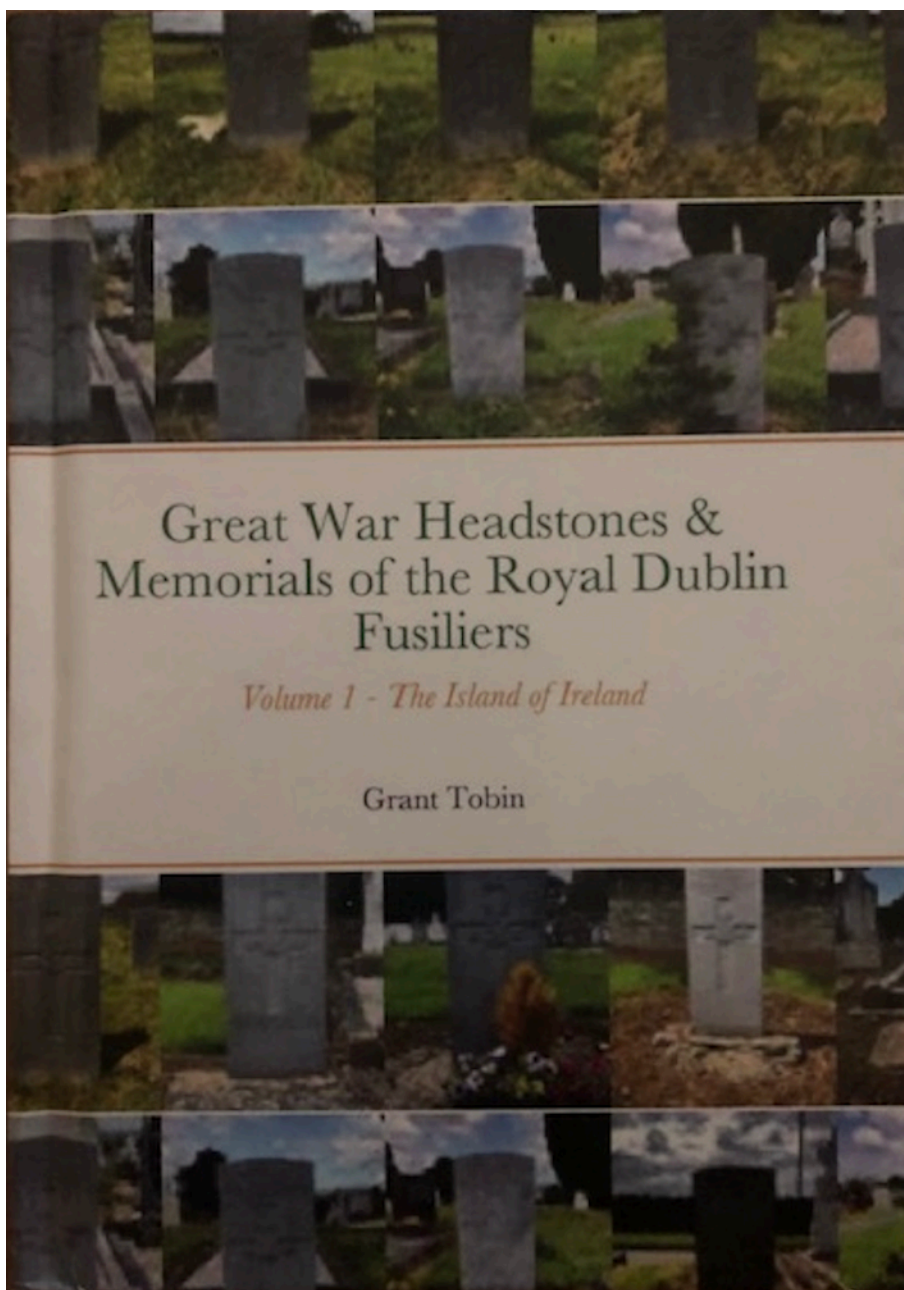
If anyone has any questions or would like to reserve a copy (I will be arranging for 30 of each to start with), they can contact me directly on granttobin2@hotmail.co.uk.

S: How many volumes do you intend to publish?

GT: I believe that there will be six. As mentioned, one is nearly complete, while the next two are in planning at present.

S: A wonderful venture, Grant. We in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association wish you all the best with your important remembrance project.

GT: Thank you.



The Activities of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association in 2020

Paul Taylor

The year 2020 will surely be remembered by all as the year best forgotten. It brought hardship, stress and sorrow to far too many people. Many clubs and associations have ceased to function, but I am pleased to report that your Committee has endeavoured to keep the Dubs Association vibrant.

The Committee members are Brian Moroney, Seamus Greene, Philip Lecane, Niall Leinster, John Sheehan, Sally Copeland Keogh, George Jones, Suzanne O'Neill, Aidan Kavanagh, Seán Slattery, David Buckley, Thomas Murphy, Paul Appleby and Paul Taylor.

The year started very optimistically on 18 January when a sub-committee met with the Military Attaché of the British Embassy to set in motion plans to commemorate the centenary of the disbandment of the Regiment in June 2022. The Embassy is more than willing to assist us with our events both in Dublin and Windsor.

We have also been in contact with the Dean of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, who has very kindly offered the Cathedral for a commemorative service on Sunday, 12 June 2022.

Contact has been established with our sister regimental associations who are also keen to join with us in our commemoration. George Jones has been in touch with The Naval Association who are delighted to join us for ceremonies in Liverpool as part of our proposed trip to Windsor in June 2022. Although a start has been made in organising this important occasion, much work needs to be done as soon as circumstances permit.

The Committee has held regular monthly meetings via Zoom video conferencing, thanks to Thomas Murphy.

In April, I contacted members and gave an update on the Association and asked for details of e-mail addresses. An editorial sub-committee was set up with a view to producing a regular newsletter called The Old Tough, the first edition of which was sent to members at the end of May. A second edition was circulated in mid-September. The newsletter has attracted a very positive response. The members of this sub-committee are Thomas Murphy, Sally Copeland Keogh and Paul Appleby. John Sheehan has since joined them.

Tom Burke is currently working on his final edition of The Blue Cap, but unfortunately due to Covid-19 restrictions, his access to archives has ceased. Tom's journal will cover the final year of World War 1 and will be well worth waiting for. Future editions of The Blue Cap will be produced by the editorial sub-committee.

Committee member, Aidan Kavanagh, runs his personal Facebook page dedicated to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. It is a mine of interesting information and photographs and well worth a visit.

A planned trip to Salonika in May for which fifteen members signed up was necessarily cancelled due to Covid-19. Hopefully it will be rescheduled in better times. David Buckley has kindly offered to organise some local tours next year, again when circumstances permit.

Brian Moroney, Chairman, represented the Association at the very limited National Day of Commemoration Ceremony in Kilmainham in July. Seán Ryan represented us at the commemoration of Sergeant Martin Doyle VC MM in New Ross in February. Martin served in the RDF and RMF during the Great War. His grave is in Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Blackhorse Avenue, Dublin. Seán carried the RDFA Standard during the parade and unveiling ceremony, while Capt. Éamon Sheridan laid the wreath on behalf of the Association.

Charities like The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association will have to report to the Charities Regulator next year on the extent of their compliance with a new Charities Governance Code. In preparation for its implementation, Association Trustees participated during 2020 in information events and webinars run by the Charities Regulator to assist charities comply with the new obligations. Work on this is ongoing at year end. Many thanks to Paul Appleby for his skills and dedication to this task.

A draft new constitution for the Association is currently being prepared in order to ensure we comply fully with the foregoing. This revised constitution is being put before the membership at our Annual General Meeting for consideration and approval.

In October we sent a message of greetings and support to the Kilkenny War Memorial Association on the unveiling of a sculpture to Thomas Woodgate, who served with the RAF and who died in the sinking of the RMS Leinster aged fourteen years.

A planned commemoration in Mount Jerome Cemetery for Sunday, 1 November, had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions. The event was to remember former members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who are interred there. Some of their relatives are members of our Association. Members Aidan Kavanagh, John O'Brien and Seán Ryan are in the process of preparing an information booklet and map showing the location of these Dubs' graves. The commemoration will be rescheduled when permitted. Members will be advised of the details when known.

We have recently learned of the proposed retirement in December of Dr Mary Clark, Dublin City Archivist. Mary has been a long-time friend and supporter of our Association, and we shall be forever in her debt. May we wish her a long and happy retirement. As soon as circumstances permit, we propose making a suitable presentation to Mary.

Unfortunately due again to Covid-19, there will be no Annual Christmas Dinner this year. It is hoped that when circumstances allow, perhaps a lunch could be arranged. Christmas Cards will not be produced as their sale depended greatly on the Christmas Dinner.

The AGM for 2020 must of necessity be held by virtual meeting. All members will be asked to furnish their e-mail address and download the Zoom App in order to participate in the event. Those who cannot participate by Zoom are being afforded the opportunity to vote by proxy on the resolutions before the Meeting.

Key tasks for 2021 therefore are to continue planning for the June 2022 commemorations, to produce the new constitution and to comply with the Charities Regulator's requirements. A tour would also be envisaged when circumstances allow.

In the meantime we can only hope for an early end to the current pandemic. Keep safe, colleagues, and I look forward to seeing us all together again soon.

Reminder

Annual Membership of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

We encourage our existing members to renew their membership of the Association for 2021 so that we can continue to remember the men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who served during the Great War and at other times. By doing so, you are supporting this journal, our new newsletters, the remembrance ceremonies in which we participate and our occasional trips to places connected to the Dublin Fusiliers.

We also welcome new members including those who have a family or other interest in the Fusiliers. Annual membership is a modest €20 for members on the island of Ireland or €25 for members outside of Ireland.

Those who wish to become a member of the Association or renew their membership will find the membership form and contact information for Seamus Greene, our Membership Secretary, at the following address: <https://www.greatwar.ie/member-information/>.

Letter to the Editor

As mentioned in our Editorial, we would like to receive letters from members about your Association, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Regiment, former members of the 'Dubs' or their families.

For this first 'Letter to the Editor' page, we reproduce a letter which appeared in *The Evening Herald*, page 6, on 15 September 1964. The letter speaks for itself, and we hope that you enjoy it.

The Editorial Sub-Committee

Memories of old 'Dubs'

Sir—A lot of letters have appeared in your popular paper concerning the good old days, mostly dealing with the music hall and Dublin "characters" of that period. Here is another insight into that

period—but of a different trend.

Recently I was passing Beggar's Bush Barracks when I saw an old chap, hat in hand, facing and looking into the barracks. I knew by his mannerism that he was in a reminiscent mood and jokingly I enquired: "What's on your mind, old timer?"

"Look son," says he. "you may not know it but the best soldiers in the world were trained on that square—the Royal Dublin Fusiliers." He then unfolded his story which I consider very interesting.

He was a soldier's son and lived in the married quarters in the barracks. He was seven years when he remembered his father coming home from the Boer War with his Regiment,

proudly marching into the barracks, with bands playing and colours flying.

Then, when the first world war broke out, he enlisted in his father's regiment and never regretted the step he took, as, he said, no man could have soldiered with better men. He mentioned such names as Jim Finegan, Kit Doyle, "Ginger" Hayes, Kit Bodkin and "Cudgy" Murray. Apparently, these men were personalities in the Regiment.

That is why, he said, he never passes the barracks without saying a little prayer for those he fought with and are now departed. No doubt this story will bring back nostalgic memories to the few remaining old "Dubs."

E. FITZGERALD

With thanks to Irish Newspaper Archives and the Evening Herald

A Little Quiz to help settle the Christmas Feast

1. Name the 'other person' assassinated alongside Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914.
(Name please - not title.)
2. Name the vessel that carried the 2nd RDF to France in 1914.
3. Where did the 'Dubs' first come into contact with the German Army. (Town.)
4. On which Cape would one find 'V' beach?
5. Name please at least 2 of the Irish Battalions who fought in Gallipoli along with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Royal Munster Fusiliers.
6. On which 'Battlefield' would you find Contalmaison and Mametz?
7. Name the Poet please:

I heard the Poor Old Woman say:
At break of day the fowler came.
8. Name a 'Dubs' VC Winner of the Great War.
9. Did any of the 'Dubs' VC winners live to receive their Medal from the King?
10. Each evening at 20.00 hours, the Last Post is played at the Menin Gate. What year did this ceremony began: 1927, 1928, or 1929?

(Answers on the bottom of page 64)

Dear Member

A Christmas Card to let you know we are thinking of you and hope to meet again in 2021. Merry Christmas!

From the Committee of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association 2020.



May you have a virus-free
and happy Christmas 2020!



Looking forward to meeting up once again in 2021

**THE ROYAL DUBLIN
FUSILIERS ASSOCIATION**

Recent News

A. Recently Published Royal Dublin Fusilier Biographies

Two recent publications recalled the past service of two men with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

The September-October 2020 edition of *History Ireland* (Volume 28, No 5) contained an account of the service of Private James Murray, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, in the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902, and later in the Great War during 1916 and 1917. His life was marked by a number of family tragedies including the death of his first wife and their two young children. The story of James, his families and their lives of poverty in Dublin are outlined with sensitivity by his great-grandson, John Murray, in the *History Ireland* article.

On 8 November 2020 in *The Sunday Times*, the prominent sports journalist, David Walsh, wrote about his granduncle, Father Ned Dowling, a former chaplain to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the Great War. Father Dowling kept a diary during the War which detailed some horrific experiences. Like many others, he did not talk much about the War, and the diary was only discovered after his death. Using the diary, David Walsh recounts in his article some of what his granduncle saw and endured during the War.

If you missed them, both articles are well worth reading.

B. Deceased Members and Friends

We have been saddened to hear of the deaths of the following members and friends of the Association:

- Des Byrne (Malahide);
- John Donnelly (Blackrock);
- Kate Lecane (Monkstown), wife of our esteemed Committee member, Philip, and
- Janet Ryan (Glasnevin and formerly Yorkshire).

They all positively supported the Association's activities over many years. Our condolences go to their families and friends. May they rest in peace.

Answers to Quiz Questions

1. Sophie, Duchess of Hohenburg.
2. The SS Caledonia.
3. Le Cateau, though if you answered St. Python, well done.
4. Cape Helles – Gallipoli Campaign.
5. The 6th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, the 5th Battalion of the Connaught Rangers, the 6th Battalion of the Leinster Regiment, the 5th and 6th Battalions of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the 5th and 6th Battalions of the Royal Irish Fusiliers and the 5th Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment.
6. The Somme.
7. Francis Ledwidge.
8. Horace Curtis, Robert Downie and James Ockendon.
9. Yes - all three received their medals from King George V.
10. 1928.