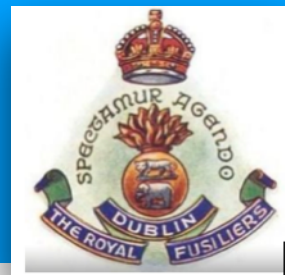


The Blue Cap

Journal of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association
Volume 25, December 2021
(Registered Charity No 20038816)



Contents

Title	Author/Publisher	Page
Editorial	<i>Editorial Committee</i>	2
20 Dublin Fusiliers Missing from the Fusiliers' Arch	<i>Paul Appleby</i>	3
The Journey of the Machine Gunner	<i>John O'Brien</i>	28
Members of the RIC who served in the RDF in WW1	<i>John F Sheehan</i>	38
The Falkiner Family: A Trilogy of Tragedy	<i>Ninian Falkiner</i>	42
Sgt Daniel James Brown 21193 MM	<i>James D Brown</i>	49
The WW1 Experience of Cpl James Molloy 11364	<i>Paul Kennedy and Peter Leggett</i>	53
Tracing a First World War Soldier	<i>Sean Connolly and Aidan Kavanagh</i>	70
RDFA Ypres Trip, 29 May – 2 June 2019	<i>Seamus Moriarty</i>	79
Report of Association Activities in 2021	<i>Paul Taylor</i>	89
Chairman's Statement to the 2021 AGM	<i>Brian Moroney</i>	91
Membership Reminder	<i>Sally Keogh</i>	93
Dubs' Quiz	<i>Brian Moroney</i>	94
Letter to the Editor	<i>Pte JP Gleeson 25234</i>	95
Recent Dubs' News	<i>Editorial Committee</i>	97
Answers to Dubs' Quiz	<i>Brian Moroney</i>	98
Season's Greetings	<i>RDFA Committee</i>	99

The views/opinions expressed in this journal are those of the contributors and are not necessarily shared by the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association. While the Association makes every effort to ensure that the journal's content is accurate, it cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions or for any effects arising therefrom. All material is copyrighted.

Editorial

Welcome to the 2021 edition of The Blue Cap.

The continuing challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic for society have meant that much Association business in 2021 continued to be conducted online. Thankfully by the Autumn when it became possible to meet socially (albeit with some continuing restrictions), your Association managed to safely hold a few indoor and outdoor events. However the recent deterioration in the prevalence of Covid has unfortunately forced the cancellation of our Annual Dinner again and the holding of our Annual General Meeting online for the second year in a row.

While the pandemic has had a serious impact on our economic and social lives, Covid has given rise to a determination by your Association to develop alternative communication channels with the membership. As an Editorial Committee, we are delighted to have brought you this year three editions of the new Association newsletter, The Old Tough. The Association's Facebook page, monitored by John O'Brien and Jon Toohey, is also proving very popular.

During the last twelve months, we requested members to submit articles of interest to the membership for possible future publication. As you will have noticed from the Contents overleaf, we are pleased that there has been a tremendous response to this invitation. Remarkably therefore, this edition of The Blue Cap is even bigger than last year's 'bumper' edition.

We believe that the articles in this Blue Cap are very informative, and we hope that you agree. We have also included a number of our regular features, including our Secretary's annual report on Association activities, our Chairman's Quiz and the Letter to the Editor. In an effort to compensate for our enforced abstinence from visits to foreign fields, we have included Seamus Moriarty's digest of our last overseas trip to the area around Ypres in Belgium in 2019. We expect that this will bring back pleasant memories of past Dubs' tours to the terrible battlefields of Belgium, France and further afield.

We wish to remind you that all Association activity in 2022 will be supported by membership fee income. We therefore encourage all members to pay their modest annual fee in early 2022.

We hope that you enjoy this 2021 edition of The Blue Cap. We look forward to receiving your comments and suggestions which we will take into account in developing future editions of the journal. We also invite you to send us at the email address below any articles for future publication.

Stay safe.

Paul Appleby, David Buckley, Sally Keogh, Thomas Murphy and John F Sheehan

The Editorial Committee

rdfa1918@gmail.com

Twenty Dublin Fusiliers Missing from the Fusiliers' Arch

Paul Appleby

Introduction

The Memorial Arch at the Grafton Street entrance to St Stephen's Green in Dublin is known as the Fusiliers' Arch. It commemorates the soldiers of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who died as a result of the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa between 1899 and 1902. 222 named persons (pictured) from the Regiment's five battalions are inscribed on the underside of the Arch. One of them, Sergeant Francis Price of the Fusiliers' 1st Battalion, was my granduncle.



Erected and formally inaugurated in 1907, I naturally assumed that the names on the Arch were an accurate statement of the loss of life among Royal Dublin Fusiliers in that War. However as I was tracing the service of my granduncle in South Africa and later of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers as a whole, I became aware of records which did not match the information inscribed on the Arch.

Name Inconsistencies

The first difference of consequence relates to the Battle of Colenso on 15 December 1899 where the local memorial at Ambleside (pictured below) records the names of 53 Royal Dublin Fusiliers who apparently died in the Boers' defeat of the British Army that day. Ignoring discrepancies in initials and in the spelling of surnames, only 49 of these names are on the Fusiliers' Arch. I immediately wondered if the extra four Fusilier names at Ambleside (Ptes W Bisset and J Grigg, 1st Battalion, and M Butler and T Cole, 2nd Battalion)

were real casualties or mere mistakes.

During the 24 hour ceasefire which was agreed between the Boers and the British for the day after the Battle, the hundreds of British dead were buried in mass graves across the battlefield at Colenso, while the wounded were hurriedly retrieved and taken to safety behind the front line. My initial belief was that the relative chaos after the Battle contributed to identification and other mistakes in contemporaneous records which were then carried on to the local Ambleside memorial.

Interestingly there are five names on the Arch which are not listed at Ambleside (namely L/Cpl P O'Reilly and Ptes J Donnelly and J Young, 1st Battalion, and C/Sgt J Gage and L/Cpl J Gibson, 2nd Battalion). At least four of these died of their wounds some days after the Battle of

Colenso. Accordingly it was probable, I felt, that the correct names were inscribed on the Fusiliers' Arch after the various errors and inconsistencies were later identified and resolved.



Duplication of Names

This comfortable conclusion was shaken by three particular developments. Firstly, my research caused me to doubt the accuracy of a small number of the 222 names inscribed on the Fusiliers' Arch. Specifically due to information similarities, it appears that the names of three Fusiliers may be duplicated on the Arch. The following names are recorded there as deaths of both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions:

- Pte M Cummings (under 2nd Battalion deaths) and Pte J Cummins (under 3rd Battalion deaths);

- Pte R O'Brien (under 2nd Battalion deaths) and Pte P O'Brien (under 3rd Battalion deaths);
- Pte T Oldham (under 2nd Battalion deaths) and Pte T Oldham (under 3rd Battalion deaths).

The available information indicates that all three were members of the 3rd Battalion who died while serving with the 2nd Battalion. The particular data similarities in the various records which suggest a duplication of these entries include the following:

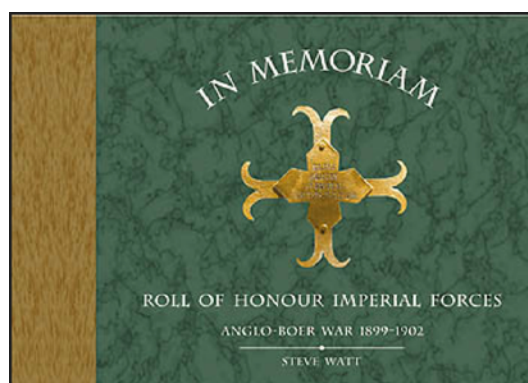
- 3380 Pte Cummings, 3rd Battalion serving with the 2nd Battalion, died of enteric/pneumonia at Aliwal North on 5 May 1900 (according to Romer and Mainwaring and Find My Past with the latter giving his initial as 'M'), while the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers records 2158 (former number 1380) Pte J Cummins, 3rd Battalion, dying in the same place on the same date – no cause of death given;
- 1600 Pte O'Brien, 3rd Battalion serving with the 2nd Battalion, died of enteric at Aliwal North on 2 May 1900 (according to Romer and Mainwaring and Find My Past). Sources differ as to this man's initial. Some (e.g., Watt) identify it as 'R', while others (like Find My Past) record it as 'P';
- 219 Pte J Oldham, 3rd Battalion serving with the 2nd Battalion, died of his wounds at Chieveley on 3 March 1900 (according to Find My Past). Romer and Mainwaring confirm Pte Oldham's date, place and cause of death without indicating that he was a member of the Regiment's 3rd Battalion. In the War Medal and Award Roll, it is stated that 219 Pte J Oldham, 3rd Battalion serving with the 2nd Battalion, died in May(!) 1900. Watt notes that Pte Oldham's initial was given as J or T on some records.

A Wrong Surname

While there are frequent discrepancies in the spelling of surnames and in the forename initials across the various records (including the Arch), it appears that one Arch surname is definitely wrong. I refer to the inscription, Pte TJ Paley, 2nd Battalion, whose correct name and number is 5618 Private Thomas Purcell. The basis for this conclusion is outlined at **Appendix A**.

Missing Names

However a third and more significant development undermined my belief in the accuracy of the Arch's record of the death toll suffered by Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the Anglo-Boer War. A South African friend drew my attention to a book by the late Steve Watt (1941-2019) entitled *In Memoriam: Roll of Honour Imperial Forces, Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* which was published by the University of KwaZulu-Natal Press in 2000. Among the more than 25,000 servicemen and women recorded as dying in the



War, this book identified 243 Royal Dublin Fusiliers! Before I started my research, it seemed improbable that the 222 names inscribed on the Fusiliers' Arch (comprising 219 men) might only record less than 90% of the Dublin Fusiliers who had died in that War.

However Watt is not the only source indicating that the Arch may understate the number of Dublin Fusilier deaths in the Anglo-Boer War. Volume 7 of *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902* gives a figure of 236 for the combined losses of the 1st and 2nd Battalions alone, while the Regimental histories of the 1st and 2nd Battalions by Wyllly and Romer and Mainwaring (R&M) respectively suggest that 252 commissioned officers (COs), non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers died in the War. Nine of those listed by R&M are identified as men from the 3rd, 4th and 5th Battalions who died while serving with the 2nd Battalion.

The following table outlines in summary form the figures from each of these sources:

		Fusiliers' Arch	Times History	Watt	Wyllly/R&M
1st Battalion	COs	2	2	3	3
	NCOs/Men	78	115	77	120
2nd Battalion	COs	7	7	7	8
	NCOs/Men	115	112	138	121
3rd Battalion	COs				
	NCOs/Men	4			
4th Battalion	COs				
	NCOs/Men	4		4	
5th Battalion	COs				
	NCOs/Men	12		13	
Unknown	NCOs/Men			1	
All Battalions		222	236	243	252

The major discrepancy between these various figures emanates from the losses sustained by the 1st Battalion, where Wyllly has recorded 123 COs, NCOs and men as lost, while the Fusiliers' Arch only recognises 80 deaths. It is also notable that Watt's figure of 138 deaths for NCOs and men in the 2nd Battalion greatly exceeds the other estimates. It is unfortunate that Wyllly's book fails to name the NCOs and men from the 1st Battalion who died in the War which makes it difficult to establish the extent to which there may have been a duplication of names among the reported deaths across the five battalions.

That said, it appears likely that by 1907 when the Arch was erected, the 222 names inscribed on the Arch was the result of an imperfect process to eliminate duplication across the various Battalion casualty figures. The suspicion must be that there was indeed duplication between the 1st and 2nd Battalion casualty figures of Wyllly and R&M, because many 1st Battalion officers and men lost their lives while serving with the 2nd Battalion in the early stages of the War.

In order to try to establish the basis for the 222 men listed on the Arch, I sought without success to locate in the UK National Archives a file dealing with the compilation of these names. Similar

queries sent to the National Archives in Dublin and to the Office of Public Works which is responsible today for the Fusiliers' Arch have not been successful to date.

Regardless of whether or not the 222 names on the Arch (comprising 219 men) are more accurate than the combined Wylly/R&M figure of 252, Steve Watt's identification of 243 Dublin Fusilier deaths in the Anglo-Boer War demanded investigation. Thankfully the greater online availability of original and transcribed military records in recent years now permits an assessment to be made of the accuracy of the extra names in Watt's listing relative to those on the Arch. The main focus of this article is therefore on the additional names identified in his book, and as the title of this article suggests, I am satisfied that a large number of these extra men did die as a result of the War.

Specifically, my research indicates that the following 20 Fusiliers who are recorded in Watt's book but are not listed on the Fusiliers' Arch also died as a result of the War. The information supporting the validity of each of these missing names is outlined in some detail in **Appendix B**. The primary Battalion ascribed to each Fusilier below is the Battalion from whose Roll he was awarded a South Africa Medal. Where relevant, other corps or battalions are also mentioned.

Number, Rank, Name and Battalion of Fusilier (in alphabetical order)	Cause, Place and Date of Death
3179 Sgt Henry Birks, 2 nd Battalion (Bn) - serving in 1 st Bn when he died	Larynx ulceration, Krugersdorp, 17/7/1902
6824 Pte James Byrne, 5 th Bn - formerly 1 st Bn	Drowned, Modder River, 6/12/1900
6465 Pte P Carroll, 5 th Bn - formerly 1 st Bn	Likely bathing accident, Taungs, 27/1/1901
6080 L/Cpl George Evans, 1 st Bn	Abscess of liver, Southampton, 20/3/1902
3266 Pte James R Evans, 1 st Bn	Died of wounds, Aldershot, 16/5/1900
2 nd Lt William Harold Goodwin, 1 st Bn - serving in the Army Service Corps when he died	Pneumonia, Pretoria, 8/7/1902
3245 Pte J Grigg, 1 st Bn - serving in 2 nd Bn when he died	Died of wounds, Colenso, 15/12/1899
4499 Sgt J Hanrahan, 2 nd Bn	Suicide, Pietermaritzburg, 2/7/1900
6020 Pte James Hennessy, 1 st Bn - serving in 3 rd Mounted Infantry (MI)	Enteric, Bloemfontein, 12/5/1900
2879 Pte John Hoey, 1 st Bn	Died of wounds, Southampton, 28/2/1900
6879 Pte John Hudson, 5 th Bn - formerly 1 st Bn	Dysentery, Kimberley, 28/10/1900
6881 Pte Charles Jordan, 5 th Bn - formerly 1 st Bn	Dysentery, Kimberley, 21/12/1900
3122 Pte John Kearns, 1 st Bn	Pneumonia, Pietermaritzburg, 13/9/1901
4651 Cpl Timothy Lawton, 2 nd Bn - serving in 1 st Bn when he died	Enteric, Witbank, 22/4/1902
5808 Pte Miles McDonnell, 2 nd Bn - serving in 1 st Bn when he died	Likely died of wounds, Southampton, 20/10/1900
4503 Pte Patrick Moran, 4 th Bn - serving in 2 nd Bn	Likely disease, Southampton, 16/6/1902
3640 Pte P Murray, 1 st Bn	Drowned, Colenso, 12/3/1900
3152 Pte Peter O'Dwyer, 1 st Bn	Enteric, Potchefstroom, 16/3/1902
6216 Pte William Sergeant, 1 st Bn	Dysentery, Frere, 6/1/1900
3567 Pte Thomas Twohig, 1 st Bn - serving in 2 nd MI	Enteric, Bloemfontein, 20/5/1900

Only recently, I realised that three of the above names were included in a previous article by Philip Lecane in Volume 9 of *The Blue Cap* dated September 2002. In a series entitled 'They are not forgotten: Memorials to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers', the names of Pte J Hoey, Pte McDonnell and Pte P Moran were noted as lying in the cemetery of the former Royal Victoria Hospital in Netley, near Southampton. The dates of death identified in the article coincide with the above dates.

Some Observations

What is striking about the information in the above table is that 18 of the 20 missing names were connected to the 1st Battalion of the Fusiliers in some way. While it is unexplained why so many 1st Battalion deaths were omitted from the Fusiliers' Arch, perhaps the dispersal of 1st Battalion personnel to the 2nd and 5th Battalions, to other corps (like the 2nd MI) and to hospitals in England played a part in eroding the accuracy of 1st Battalion records. In some (but not all) cases, the 1st Battalion may simply have lost touch with its men. In omitting a listing of 1st Battalion casualties from his book, was Wyllly aware that the available records were problematic?

In addition it may surprise some readers that 60% of the soldiers in the above table died from illness or a medical issue. However disease accounted for over 40% of deaths among Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the War, not far short of the 50% or so who were killed in action or later died of their wounds.

From Wyllly and other sources, it is clear that about 80% of serving Dublin Fusiliers were Irish-born at this time. Information is available on the place of birth of 18 of the soldiers in the above table, and 15 of them were born in Ireland which broadly conforms with this percentage. Ten were from the Fusiliers' designated recruiting area, comprising five from Dublin, two each from Kildare and Wicklow and one from Carlow.

Similarly, it is evident from the pre-enlistment occupations of 17 of the above soldiers that the majority (nine) were in unskilled occupations like labourers and porters. It is likely therefore that many of these men joined the British Army to improve their precarious economic circumstances at the time.

Other Dublin Fusilier Names in Watt

Watt identifies seven other Dublin Fusilier names which, on the basis of my research, suggest that their omission from the Arch is correct. My main reason for excluding each of these names is as follows:

- 2504 Pte W Bissett: While Watt and some sources (e.g., the local Ambleside Memorial – pictured earlier) say that he was killed at Colenso on 15 December 1899, other sources suggest that he survived his wounds. In particular, the War Medal and Award Roll for the 1st Battalion states that he later returned to England having completed his term of service;
- 2943 Pte M Butler: While Watt and some sources (e.g., the Ambleside Memorial) say that both 2943 Pte M Butler and 2943 Pte (or L/Cpl) P O'Keefe died at Colenso, the *Kildare*

Observer newspaper of 23 December 1899 noted that the latter name was an alias of Pte Butler. Moreover only 2943 Pte P O'Keefe (not 2943 Pte M Butler) is recognised in the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Similarly the Arch only recognises L/ Cpl P O'Keefe, 1st Battalion, which strongly suggests that the exclusion of the name of Pte M Butler from the Arch is correct;

- 5608 Pte T or J Cole: While Watt and some sources (e.g., the Ambleside Memorial) say that both 5505 Pte J Cole and 5608 Pte T or J Cole died at Colenso, only the former name is recognised in the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Similarly the Arch only contains the name of Pte J Cole, 1st Battalion. As I have not been able to verify that a second Pte Cole died, this name's exclusion from the Arch is probably correct;
- a Pte J Hunt: While Watt and some sources say that both 5873 Pte H Hunt and an unnumbered Pte J Hunt died in or en route to the UK, 5873 Pte J Hunt is the only deceased Hunt recognised in the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Meanwhile the Arch only contains the name of Pte H Hunt, 2nd Battalion. Having regard in particular to the similar circumstances of death pertaining to these entries, it is probable that only one man named Hunt died;
- a Pte P Mulligan: while Watt and some sources say that both 6404 Pte J Mulligan and an unnumbered Pte P Mulligan died of disease in or en route to the UK, 6404 Pte P Mulligan is the only deceased Mulligan recognised in the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Meanwhile the Arch only recognises the name of Pte J Mulligan, 1st Battalion. Having regard once again to the similar circumstances of death pertaining to both entries, it is probable that only one man named Mulligan died;
- 2395 Pte J Smith: Watt and some sources suggest that 2395 Pte J Smith, 2nd Battalion, died of wounds sustained during the Battle of Pieter's Hill on 27 February 1900. However the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* of 20 March 1900 contradicted this by reporting that this man was then sick in hospital. Moreover the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers indicates that 2395 Pte J Smith, 4th Battalion serving with the 2nd Battalion, later earned clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for operations in Cape Colony, Orange Free State and the Transvaal. These circumstances strongly suggest that this man survived the War;
- 2206 Pte A Walker: Watt indicates that 2206 Pte A Walker, 5th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Kroonstad on 16 February 1902. However this appears to be a transcription error as other sources (e.g., Find My Past) attribute this date and place of death to 2206 Pte A Walker, 5th Battalion, Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment).

Named Arch Casualties omitted by Watt

While Watt's research has added to our knowledge of Dublin Fusilier casualties in the Anglo-Boer War, it is also the case that there are a handful of names listed on the Arch that are not included in Watt's book. The three names involved are:

- Pte L Murphy, 1st Battalion: The problem with this recorded death is that no source has been located to confirm that a man of this name died. There were two Pte L Murphys in the 1st Battalion, numbered 2811 and 2972, and they are recorded in the War Medal and Award Roll as being in South Africa up to November 1900 and January 1901 respectively. They then returned home, because they had completed their terms of service with the Regiment;
- 1717 Pte William Sherwood, 3rd Battalion: A corroboration of this man's death in the War is found in a note on his original Attestation Paper dated 21 February 1895 (available on Find My Past). However the note fails to mention a date, cause or place of death;
- 3815 Sgt Thomas Daniels, 4th Battalion: This man is recorded by a number of sources (e.g., Find My Past) of dying of pneumonia at Kroonstad on 30 August 1902.

With the possible exception of Pte Murphy therefore, there appears to be no good reason why these Dublin Fusilier names on the Arch should not be accepted as genuine War deaths.

Potential Additional Names

In reviewing the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, it is clear that several hundred men were invalided out of the Regiment as a result of the hardships of the Anglo-Boer War. About ten of them were stated to be deceased when the Roll was finalised.

One of these men was 5130 Private James Carolan, 2nd Battalion, who is not recorded on the Arch or by Watt. He left South Africa suffering from chronic diarrhoea in August 1900. On Census night (31 March 1901), he was a private soldier in the 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was living with his parents and siblings at 51 Bellevue Buildings, Usher's Quay, Dublin. On 16 August 1901, he was discharged from the Regiment having been deemed to be medically unfit for further service. A few months later on 23 January 1902, he died aged just 30 in Mercer's Hospital, Dublin, from dysentery, a common disease in the War. While his then civilian status excludes him from being remembered on the Arch, deaths like his suggest that the War's toll on the men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers who served in South Africa was greater than the numbers on the Arch or in Watt's book indicate.

Conclusion

The main sources used in preparing this article are outlined at **Appendix C**.

The outcome of this research exercise is that 239 officers and men of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers are known to have died as a result of the Anglo-Boer War. This is 20 more than the 222 battalion names (comprising 219 individuals) which are inscribed on the Fusiliers' Arch. The following table outlines the battalions to which these additional 20 soldiers belonged (according to the Regiment's War Medal and Award Roll), compared with the battalions assigned by the Arch to the other 219 individuals:

Revised Death Toll by Battalion and Rank		
1 st Battalion	COs	3 (+1)
	NCOs/Men	88 (+10)
2 nd Battalion	COs	7 (-)
	NCOs/Men	116 (+4)
3 rd Battalion	COs	
	NCOs/Men	4 (-)
4 th Battalion	COs	
	NCOs/Men	5 (+1)
5 th Battalion	COs	
	NCOs/Men	16 (+4)
All Battalions		239 (+20)

We may never fully know how the extra 20 names came to be overlooked when the Arch was being erected. Five died in England which may mean that their deaths were not included in the records of the Regiment which were then being compiled in South Africa.

One of these five and another two individuals died after the War ended on 31 May 1902 which might initially be thought to explain their exclusion from the Arch. But as there are three men remembered on the Arch who also died after the War concluded, the timing of their deaths would not appear to be a factor in their exclusion.

And then there is the case of Sgt J Hanrahan who committed suicide, which in itself may not have been considered by the Regiment to be an honourable War death worthy of recognition on the Arch.

In the vast majority of cases therefore, there appears to be no plausible reason why these 20 names should have been omitted from the Fusiliers' Arch. In particular the Regiment's own War Medal and Award Roll which was completed during and shortly after the War ended identified all 20 deaths. In consequence, there seems to be little doubt that the Regiment conducted inadequate enquiries of its potential sources (including its own Medal and Award Roll) in compiling the names to be inscribed on the Arch.

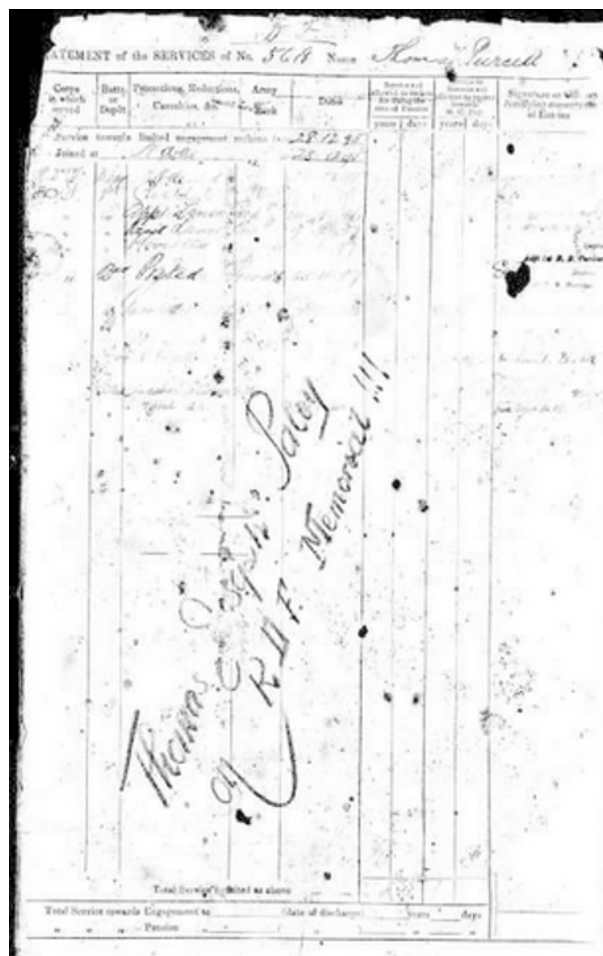
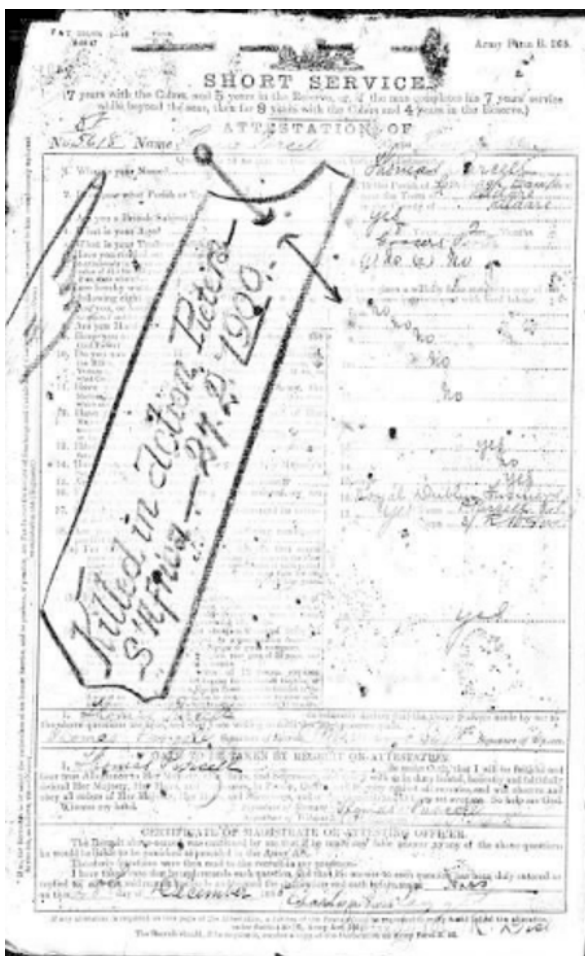
It is troubling that the ultimate sacrifice of these 20 Dublin Fusiliers had been apparently forgotten by the time the Arch was inaugurated just five years after the War ended. Consistent with the Association's purpose of remembering with reverence deceased Royal Dublin Fusiliers and their families, it is important that the record of deaths on the Arch should be corrected in the Fusiliers' home city as soon as possible.

Appendix A

Evidence for Concluding that Pte TJ Paley's Name on the Arch should read Pte T Purcell

Private Purcell's Attestation Paper and other information relating to him may be viewed on www.fold3.com. Thomas Purcell, a Catholic, was born in the Curragh Camp. Before enlistment at Naas on 28 December 1895 aged 18 years and two months, he was a grocer's porter. His mother, Ellen, and siblings lived at South Terrace, Inchicore, Dublin. His siblings included four brothers and seven sisters. Initially 5618 Private Purcell was assigned to the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, before being posted to the 2nd Battalion on 25 November 1897.

His Attestation Paper notes that he was killed in action on Pieter's Hill on 27 February 1900 as is evident from the following notation on his record: *"Killed in Action. Pieters – S' Africa – 27.2.1900."* What is particularly interesting in the context of this research is that on a later page is scrawled the following notation in apparent outrage: *"Thomas Joseph Paley on RDF Memorial !!!"* Although the quality of the following copy extracts from his record is poor, it nevertheless offers conclusive evidence that the name of Pte Paley on the Arch is wrong. Indeed I have been unable to locate any source (aside from the Arch) which identifies a Pte TJ Paley, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, as a casualty of Pieter's Hill or of the War as a whole.



Appendix B

The Information Known about the 20 Men Omitted from the Fusiliers' Arch (in alphabetical order)

3179 Sergeant Henry Birks

According to the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects, 3179 Sergeant H Birks, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Krugersdorp (near Johannesburg) on 14 July 1902. He was born in Longdon (Staffordshire, England). Prior to enlistment on 2 January 1889, he was a labourer by trade. His father, William, and mother (unnamed) were recorded as his next-of-kin.

On 24 July 1902, *The Scotsman* newspaper reported that on the previous day, the War Office had announced the death of 3179 Sergeant H Birks, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, at Krugersdorp on 14 July 1902. The cause of death was given as ulceration of his larynx.

In his book, Steve Watt reports that 3179 Sergeant H Bushes, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Krugersdorp on 17 July 1902. As the main monument at his burial place in Krugersdorp gives his details, this may be what is locally recorded. A further variation of the surname was provided in an earlier report in *The Scotsman*. Citing a War Office statement of 11 July 1902, it reported that 3179 Sergeant H Burkes, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was dangerously ill with bronchitis at Krugersdorp. Neither of these alternative versions of the surnames is corroborated elsewhere.

Find My Past states that Sergeant Birks's first name was Henry and that he is remembered on a Town Hall plaque in his birthplace of Longton, Staffordshire. He was also mentioned in despatches in the *London Gazette* of 10 September 1901.

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the 2nd Battalion, Sergeant Birks was awarded five clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the successes at Talana (20 October 1899), the defence of Ladysmith (2 November 1899 to 28 February 1900) and the subsequent advances against the Boers in Cape Colony, Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The Roll adds that he was invalided in April 1901.

While it is undoubtedly correct that Sergeant Birks was part of the 2nd Battalion during most of the Anglo-Boer War, it appears that he switched to the 1st Battalion later on. This may have happened in mid-January 1902 when the 1st Battalion took over the duties of the 2nd Battalion at Krugersdorp after the latter were deployed to Aden. Wylly states that as part of the handover of duties:

"...an exchange of drafts took place, the 1st Battalion sending a number of young soldiers to the 2nd, and receiving in exchange men of the Army Reserve and those whose period of army service was nearly completed."

6824 Private James Byrne

There is broad agreement among the various sources that 6824 Private T Byrne, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, drowned in the Modder River on 6 December 1900. Many of these sources indicate that he was with the 2nd Battalion. Watt adds that he is remembered on a memorial at the West End Garden of Remembrance in Kimberley (Orange Free State). Apparently his body was originally buried beside the Modder River at a place known as Doorns B and later exhumed.

That said, there are caveats relating to the first name and battalion of the deceased. Firstly Fold 3 holds a partial Attestation Paper for 6824 James Byrne, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. This man, aged 18, enlisted in the Regiment in Wicklow in 1899. He was born in Barrandarry, near Wicklow Town, and was a farm labourer prior to enlisting. It is not clear in which battalion he enlisted, but as the 2nd Battalion was in South Africa at the time, he likely joined the 1st Battalion.

After his death, the *Northern Whig* of 12 December 1900 reported that 6824 Private T Byrne, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, had been drowned in the Modder River on 6 December.

While no mention of him has been located in the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects, the War Medal and Award Roll indicates that 6824 Private J T Byrne, 5th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was awarded a Cape Colony clasp on his Queen's South Africa Medal. As indicated, the Record has his initial, J, struck through and T substituted in its place. A manuscript tick on his record suggests that he was originally with the 1st Battalion.

As Byrne is a common surname in Ireland, I sought to confirm that 6824 Private James Byrne was not among the seven soldiers named Byrne whose deaths are already recorded on the Fusiliers' Arch. Having researched the matter, I am satisfied that the following eight Dublin Fusiliers of that surname were killed in South Africa during the War:

Number	Rank, Name and Battalion	Cause of Death	Place of Death	Date of Death
4864	Pte C Byrne, 2 nd Bn	Killed in Action	Talana	20/10/1899
4449	Pte A Byrne, 1 st Bn	Killed in Action	Colenso	15/12/1899
2976	Pte J Byrne, 1 st Bn	Killed in Action	Colenso	15/12/1899
2200	Pte J Byrne, 1 st Bn	Enteric	Durban	13/4/1900
6824	Pte James Byrne, 5 th Bn	Drowned	Modder River	6/12/1900
4590	Pte W Byrne, 5 th Bn	Disease	Kimberley	22/12/1901
5611	Pte F Byrne, 1 st Bn	Enteric	Krugersdorp	13/2/1902
6407	Pte P Byrne, 1 st Bn – in 5MI	Wounds - Accident	Eshowe	12/4/1902

Find My Past is in agreement that eight Byrnes from the Dublin Fusiliers were killed and identifies the seven men whose names are inscribed on the Fusiliers' Arch - the exception being 6824 Private James Byrne.

6465 Pte P Carroll

According to the War Medal and Award Roll, 6465 Private P Carroll, 5th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, earned Cape Colony, Orange Free State and 1901 clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal. The document indicating entitlement to the 1901 clasp identifies him as deceased. A manuscript tick on his record suggests that he was originally with the 1st Battalion.

REGT NO	RANK	NAME	INITIALS	REGIMENT	CASUALTY	PLACE	DATE	INTERRED	MMT	REMARKS
	PTE	CARROLL		R DUBLIN FUSILIE RS,X	D	TAUNGS?	27- 01- 190 1	VRYBURG	1	TAUNGS

Consistent with the spreadsheet format of his book (example above), Watt (page 66) indicates that Private Carroll, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died on 27 January 1901 and that he is remembered on a memorial in Vryburg, west of Johannesburg. Watt signifies in his database that he was initially buried at Taungs, later exhumed and re-interred in the nearby town of Vryburg.

7064	PTE	COURTNEY	T	R DUBLIN FUSILIE RS,5	KA	TAUNGS	23- 02- 190 1	VRYBURG	1	TAUNGS.CONWAY, 27-01-1901(1)
------	-----	----------	---	--------------------------------	----	--------	------------------------	---------	---	---------------------------------

Watt (page 90) also records the death by accident of 7064 Private T Courtney, 5th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, at Taungs on 23 February 1901. The *Cork Examiner* of 26 February 1901 reported that Private Courtenay's (sic) death was caused by injuries sustained while bathing at Taungs. Watt's remarks column relating to Private Courtney mentions the date of 27 January 1901 which denotes the date of injury and is the same date as Private Carroll's death. This suggests that Private Courtney may have suffered injury in the same incident that caused the death of Private Carroll. Like Private Carroll, Private Courtney was initially buried at Taungs, later exhumed and re-interred in Vryburg. However unlike Private Carroll, Private Courtney is remembered on the Fusiliers' Arch in Dublin.

No further information on Private Carroll or the circumstances of his death has been located. Based on his regimental number, he probably enlisted in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in late 1898.

6080 Lance-Corporal George Evans

Watt reports that 6080 Lance-Corporal G Evans, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Netley Hospital near Southampton on 20 March 1902. He was then aged 25 and belonged to the Church of England. The burial records for Netley Hospital confirm that Lance-Corporal George Evans, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was buried there, aged 25, on 22 March 1902. Other sources confirm his death but record his rank as Private, while Philip Lecane's 2002 article on Netley does not include reference to his death.

According to his Militia Attestation Paper, George Evans, aged 21, enlisted in the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 26 April 1897. After a period of drill training, he joined the regular

Army (Royal Dublin Fusiliers) on 10 June 1897. At the time of his enlistment, he was a butcher in Dublin. However George Evans was actually born in Malacca in the East Indies (Malaysia today).

According to the War Medal and Award Roll, George Evans, 1st Battalion, received four clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the relief of Ladysmith (28 February 1900), for expelling the Boers from Natal at Laing's Nek (11 June 1900) and for the later successful advances against the Boers in Orange Free State and the Transvaal. It is probable therefore that after arrival in South Africa in early December 1899, he remained with the majority of the 1st Battalion protecting the lines of communication to the rear, while the main force of the British Army (including the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and three companies of its 1st Battalion) made repeated attempts to breach the Boers' entrenched positions behind the River Tugela at Colenso and elsewhere.

Only one source suggests that George Evans may have been wounded in the War. On his Attestation Paper for the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, it is recorded that George was wounded and died of disease, specifically an abscess to the liver. He had left South Africa for England on 31 January 1902, most likely on a hospital ship. His next-of-kin is given as his father, John, at New Row, Templemore (Co Tipperary). The 1901 Census for Ireland confirms that English-born John Evans, aged 61 and a Catholic, resided at 13 New Row, Templemore, with his wife, Mary, aged 46, five children and two relations.

In the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects, the next-of-kin of George Evans is recorded as his sister, Flora Cooksley. In Ireland's 1901 Census records, Flora (aged 23), a member of the Church of Ireland, was living with her husband, John, aged 29, in house 76/45 Guinness Trust Buildings, New Bride Street, Dublin. Interestingly, Flora is recorded as having been born on board HMTS *Himalaya* in the Indian Ocean.

3266 Private James R Evans

According to the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects, 3266 Private James R Evans, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Aldershot (Hampshire, England) on 16 May 1900. He was a married man as his next-of-kin was his widow (unnamed).

According to the records for Aldershot Military Burial Ground, 3266 Private James R Evans, 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was buried there on 18 May 1900. Watt adds that he died of his wounds, aged 32. The reference to the 2nd Battalion is probably explained by the fact that three companies of the 1st Battalion were assigned to the 2nd Battalion on arrival in South Africa to compensate for the latter's losses in the early weeks of the War.

Two editions of *The Police Gazette* provide some information on his background. 3266 Private James R Evans, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, aged 30, was born in St Peter's Parish, Dublin, and prior to enlistment on 28 March 1889 in Dublin, he was a clerk. In the edition of *The Police Gazette* on 27 June 1899, Private Evans is reported to have been absent without leave from The Curragh since 19 June, while in the later edition on 17 October 1899, he was again absent from The Curragh since 24 September.

The 1st Battalion left for South Africa on 10 November 1899, and Romer and Mainwaring's history of the 2nd Battalion in the War confirms that 3266 Private Evans was wounded at Pieter's Hill on 27 February 1900, the engagement which helped to relieve Ladysmith on the following day.

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 3266 Private JR Evans was awarded one clasp on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the relief of Ladysmith. However it is curious (and likely a mistake) that he was not also awarded a clasp for Tugela Heights for which those who fought at Pieter's Hill typically qualified.

2nd Lt William Harold Goodwin

According to notices of Army appointments in the *Army and Navy Gazette*, WH Goodwin joined the regular Army as 2nd Lieutenant, Royal Dublin Fusiliers (RDF), in February 1900. Earlier he had been in the Regiment's 4th Battalion. He was apparently promoted to Lieutenant within the Fusiliers on 9 November 1901. His subsequent assignments are recorded in the following Gazette editions:

- 11 January 1902: RDF 2nd Lt (now Lt) WH Goodwin seconded for service with the Army Service Corps (ASC). The effective date of 1 August [1901] was included in the notice;
- 8 February 1902: RDF 2nd Lt (now Lt) WH Goodwin transferred on probation as 2nd Lt to ASC;
- 17 May 1902: RDF Lt WH Goodwin transferred as 2nd Lt to ASC.

On 14 June 1902, the Gazette reported that his promotion to Lieutenant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers had been cancelled on the basis that he had transferred to ASC before he was promoted.

Nevertheless his death on 8 July 1902 is described in the Gazette of Saturday, 12 July, as follows:

“Lieut. William Harold Goodwin, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, attached to the Army Service Corps, died in Pretoria on Tuesday last of pneumonia...”

Among other sources, Watt states that on his death at the age of 22, Lt Goodwin, 1st Battalion, RDF, was a probationer in the 38th Company of the ASC. According to the War Medal and Award Roll of the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, dated 15 August 1901, 2nd Lt WH Goodwin was awarded Cape Colony, Orange Free State and Transvaal clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal. Similarly, he earned the 1901 and 1902 clasps on his King's South Africa Medal from the 1st Battalion Roll dated 7 November 1903.

The only record which fails to mention the Royal Dublin Fusiliers is the Record of Deceased Officers' Effects which identifies him as Lt WH Goodwin, ASC, and indicates that he died intestate. However this reference may merely reflect his most recent posting.

It is curious that the name of 2nd Lt Goodwin is omitted from the Arch when as late as November 1903, he was regarded by the Regiment as an officer of the 1st Battalion for the purposes of the

Medal Roll. Moreover service elsewhere did not disqualify deceased Regimental officers from being recognised on the Arch. The name of another 1st Battalion officer, namely Captain and Brevet Major JAE MacBean, is inscribed on the Arch, even though he was killed in action at Nooitgedacht on 13 December 1900 while a staff officer of the 6th Infantry Brigade.

The final point to note is that the War ended on 31 May 1902 which means that 2nd Lt Goodwin served in the Regiment for all but two weeks of the War. Even if he had been definitively transferred to the ASC at the time of his death (which is disputed by Watt), the failure to recognise his sacrifice on the Arch seems unjustified.

3245 Private J Grigg

The Ambleside Memorial in KwaZulu-Natal (pictured earlier) includes the name of Private J Grigg, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Watt confirms that this man died of his wounds at Colenso and adds that his number was 3245. His death is also recorded in All Saints Church in Ladysmith.

However the name of 3245 Private J Gregg, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, is consistently used in reports of his wounding at Colenso in the Natal Field Force Casualty Record and in a published War Office list of wounded. Similarly the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects indicates that 3235 Private J Gregg, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died on 15 December 1899. The accompanying information indicates that he was born in Birmingham, and prior to enlistment on 28 February 1889, he was a tube drawer by trade. His mother (Ellen), sisters (Catherine, Ellen and Margaret) and brothers (Thomas and Jonathan) were his next-of-kin. However no other record gives his number as 3235.

It is not thought that the surname 'Gregg' is correct. Based on 1901 and 1911 Census results for Birmingham, it appears likely that 'Grigg' is the correct surname and that he had Irish connections. In the 1901 Census, an Ellen Grigg, a 53 year old widow, was living with her 19 year old daughter, Ellen, at 28 Bordesley Street, Birmingham. The elder Ellen Grigg, a silver polisher, was born in Ireland. In the 1911 Census, Ellen Grigg, a 63 year old widow, was living at 5 Ashley Terrace, Ashley Street, Birmingham, with her married 35 year old son, Thomas, and (presumably his) daughters, Catherine and Ellen, aged 11 and 9 respectively. Ellen, a polisher in a spoon factory, was born in Castlebar, Co Mayo. No viable results were obtained for an Ellen Gregg in Birmingham in either the 1901 or 1911 Census.

Moreover the surname Grigg is corroborated in the War Medal and Award Roll where it is reported that 3285 Private J Grigg, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was deceased and that he was awarded the Relief of Ladysmith clasp on his Queen's South Africa Medal. Again no other record corroborates his number as 3285. Notwithstanding this inconsistency, the overwhelming evidence is that Private J Grigg, 1st Battalion, died at the Battle of Colenso on 15 December 1899.

4499 Sergeant J Hanrahan

Based on information in the Natal Field Force Casualty Roll, 4499 Sergeant J Hanrahan, 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died of his wounds in Pietermaritzburg on 2 July 1900. Unlike many other cases, all record sources are in broad agreement about these details. However the

books of both Watt and Romer and Mainwaring describe his death as suicide caused by a gunshot to the skull, with Watt adding that he lies buried in Fort Napier Military Cemetery in Pietermaritzburg.

The Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects indicates that Sergeant Hanrahan was born in Kilrush (Co Clare). Prior to enlistment in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 5 August 1892, he was a clerk. His next-of-kin was his father, Michael. Watt adds that he was a Catholic.

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Sergeant Hanrahan was only awarded one clasp on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the Battle of Talana. He is not among the group of 20 Fusilier Sergeants photographed in Romer and Mainwaring's book after the Battle of Colenso. He was also not awarded clasps for the successful Battle of Tugela Heights and the relief of Ladysmith (in late February 1900) which might suggest that he was not then medically fit to serve. However no record has been located indicating that he was ill, wounded or captured during this time.

6020 Private James Hennessy

The South African Field Force Casualty Roll records that 6020 Private J Hennessy, 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died of disease in Bloemfontein on 12 May 1900. A later *Cork Examiner* report of 23 July 1900 gave his cause of death as enteric. Watt adds that Private Hennessy was with the 3rd Mounted Infantry and that he is remembered on a monument at President Avenue, Bloemfontein. The information below suggests that he was actually in the 1st Battalion of the Regiment, not the 2nd Battalion as indicated above.

His Attestation Record states that 6020 Private James Hennessy enlisted in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in Dublin on 18 January 1897, aged 23^{1/2}. A few days later he joined the 1st Battalion of the Regiment in Portsmouth. James Hennessy was born in Clonegal, Co Carlow, and was a Catholic. Before enlistment he was a groom. His next-of-kin were identified as his father, Henry, and his brothers, Henry and Thomas, all living at Mullinacuff, Co Wicklow. James was appointed a Lance-Corporal on 10 January 1898, but his Record does not include any information on his War service or subsequent death.

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 6020 Private James Hennessy, 1st Battalion, was awarded Relief of Kimberley (15 February 1900), Paardeberg (18-27 February 1900) and Driefontein (10 March 1900) clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal. It appears that he served with the 3rd Mounted Infantry and never participated in the Regiment's attempts to relieve Ladysmith. No doubt his earlier life as a groom facilitated Private Hennessy's transfer to the mounted infantry.

2879 Private John Hoey

2879	PTE	HOEY	J	R DUBLIN FUSILIE RS,1	DOW	COLENZO.+UK	28- 02- 190 0	UK,SOUTHAMPTOM, NETLEY	W15-12- 1899.A35.\$RC.#638
------	-----	------	---	--------------------------------	-----	-------------	------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------------

As indicated in the table above, Watt (page 198) indicates that 2879 Private J Hoey, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died on 28 February 1900 in the UK from wounds sustained by him at the Battle of Colenso on 15 December 1899. He is buried in the grounds of the former Netley Hospital (near Southampton). He was a Catholic aged 35 when he died.

The death of 2897 (sic) Pte J Hoey, 1st Battalion, on 28 February 1900 at Netley is confirmed in Philip Lecane's 2002 article. Moreover, the death of John Hoey, aged 35, was officially registered in the first three months of 1900 for South Stoneham, Hampshire, which is the district in which the Hospital was located. Earlier, *The Warder and Dublin Evening Mail* dated 13 January 1900 had published a report from Cape Town which indicated that Private J Hoey, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was seriously ill.

The Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects confirms that 2879 Private John Hoey, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Netley on 28 February 1900. He was born in Sligo, and prior to his enlistment in the Dublin Fusiliers on 26 January 1888, he was a groom by trade. His next-of-kin was his cousin, John (no surname given). The Record suggests that he had been admitted to Netley Hospital on 5 January 1900.

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 4879 Private J Hoey, 1st Battalion, was awarded two clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the successful Battle of Tugela Heights and the relief of Ladysmith. Firstly the 4879 number may be incorrect as it has not been corroborated by any other source. But the award of the Tugela Heights clasp is also a mistake as he was not there. The error may possibly be explained by his date of death at Netley closely coinciding with the date of this Battle.

6879 Private John Hudson

All available records are consistent in confirming the death from disease of 6879 Private Hudson, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, in Kimberley on 28 October 1900. Watt and a published War Office report in the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* dated 31 October 1900 define the cause of death as dysentery. Watt adds that he was a Catholic.

In the War Medal and Award Roll, 6879 Private J Hudson, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was awarded a clasp for Cape Colony service and is recorded as having died on 28 October 1900. A manuscript tick on his record suggests that he was originally with the 1st Battalion but was then attached to the 5th Battalion of the Fusiliers.

According to the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects, 6897 Private J Hudson, 5th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was born in Kildare. Prior to enlistment on 31 October 1899 (a few days before the 1st Battalion left The Curragh for South Africa), he was a baker. The quoted number of 6897 seems to be a transcription error as it has not been corroborated by any other record.

A number of databases place 6879 Private F or FJ Hudson in the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. However all or most of these seem to rely on the South African Field Force Casualty Record of his death which may not be reliable. Confirmation of his association with the 1st Battalion was provided in the War Office statement of casualties published on 31 October 1900.

6881 Private Charles Jordan

The available records indicate that 6881 Private C Jordan, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died from disease in Kimberley on 21 December 1900. Watt and a published War Office report in the *Irish News and Belfast Morning News* on 29 December 1900 give the cause of death as dysentery.

Unusually two Attestation Papers for Private Jordan survive. He first enlisted at the age of 18 in the 5th Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 17 July 1899. He was a Catholic whose birthplace was in St Laurence O'Toole Parish in Dublin. He was a labourer by trade and lived at 34 Augustine Street, Dublin. He then enlisted in the Regiment again in Naas on 3 November 1899 (a few days before the 1st Battalion left The Curragh for South Africa) providing very similar details. His next-of-kin are identified as his father (Luke), mother (Anne) and elder brother (Aloysius) of 34 Augustine Street, Dublin. Although it is not explicitly stated, he appears to have enlisted in the 1st Battalion as the officer accepting him is from that Battalion.

In the War Medal and Award Roll, 6881 Private C Jordan, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was awarded a clasp for Cape Colony activity and is recorded as having died on 21 December 1900. A manuscript tick on his record suggests that he was previously with the 1st Battalion but was then attached to the 5th Battalion of the Fusiliers.

According to the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects, 6881 Private C Jordan, 5th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was born in Dublin. His next-of-kin were identified as his mother, Annie, and brothers, Aloysius and Joseph.

The South Africa Field Force Casualty Roll identifies 6881 Private C Jordan as belonging to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Given the information in the preceding paragraphs, this seems to be an error. Confirmation of his association with the 1st Battalion was provided in the published War Office statement of casualties on 29 December 1900.

3122 Private John Kearns

Most sources are in agreement that 3122 Private J Kearns, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died in Pietermaritzburg on 13 September 1901. A War Office statement published in the *Dublin Daily Express* five days later identifies pneumonia as the cause of death. According to Watt, he is buried in Fort Napier Military Cemetery in Pietermaritzburg.

The Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects indicates that 3122 Private John Kearns was born in Dublin and that his occupation was a labourer. He originally enlisted in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 11 October 1888 and rejoined the Fusiliers on 9 October 1899. His next-of-kin were listed as his widow, Jane, and a sister, also called Jane. Watt adds that he was a Catholic.

In the War Medal and Award Roll, 3122 Private J Kearns, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was awarded five clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the Battle of Tugela Heights, the relief of Ladysmith and successful operations in Cape Colony, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

4651 Corporal Timothy Lawton

Most sources agree that 4651 Corporal T Lawton, 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died of disease at Witbank (east of Pretoria) on 22 April 1902. A War Office statement published in the *Dublin Daily Express* three days later gives his first name as Timothy and identifies enteric as the cause of death. According to Watt, he is buried in Middelburg MP (the Transvaal) having been exhumed from his original grave at Brugspruit (near Witbank).

His Militia Attestation Record indicates that he was born in St Patrick's Parish in Cork and lived at St Mary's Avenue, Dillon's Cross, Cork. He was a Catholic labourer aged 17½ when he enlisted in the 3rd Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers, on 18 December 1891. A year later on 20 December 1892, he joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. According to the Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects, his next-of-kin were his parents, William and Nora.

The War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers indicates that he was awarded six clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for engagements at Talana, Tugela Heights, the relief of Ladysmith, Laing's Nek, Orange Free State and the Transvaal. He also won King's South Africa Medals for service in 1901 and 1902 off the 2nd Battalion Roll. The latter record indicates that he transferred to the 1st Battalion on 20 January 1902 at the time that the 2nd Battalion departed for Aden. The South African Field Force Casualty Roll alone indicates that he previously served with the 3rd Mounted Infantry, but this has not been confirmed.

5808 Pte M McDonnell

5808	PTE	McDONN ELL	M	R DUBLIN FUSILIE RS,1	DOW	UK,NETLEY HOSP	20- 10- 190 0	UK,SOUTHAMPTON, NETLEY	A21.SRC.#652
------	-----	---------------	---	--------------------------------	-----	----------------	------------------------	---------------------------	--------------

As indicated in the above table, Watt (page 276) states that 5808 Private M McDonnell, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died of his wounds at Netley Hospital near Southampton on 20 October 1900 and is buried in its grounds. He was aged 21 and a Catholic when he died. Many of these details are contained in Philip Lecane's 2002 article, although it gives McDonnell's number as 3492.

The Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects confirms the death of 5808 Private M McDonnell, 1st Battalion, at Netley. He was born in Dublin and enlisted on 7 September 1896. His next-of-kin

were identified as his mother, Sarah, and brother, Thomas. Moreover the civil death records in the final three months of 1900 for South Stoneham, Southampton, where the Hospital was formerly situated, includes the death of Miles McDonnell, aged 21.

The War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers indicates that 5808 Private M McDonnell, 2nd Battalion, was invalided in April 1900 and awarded three clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the successful engagements at Talana and Tugela Heights and for the relief of Ladysmith. Support for the invalidity diagnosis in April 1900 is provided by Biggins, but no known source identifies that he was wounded in the War.

Having regard to his presence at Talana where the 2nd Battalion were involved, it must be concluded that he was with that Battalion for the early part of the War. It is not known when he transferred to the 1st Battalion.

4503 Private Patrick Moran

The Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects indicates that 4503 Private P Moran, 4th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Netley Hospital near Southampton on 16 June 1902. Two cousins (Eliza Brady and Mary Montgomery) were identified as his next-of-kin. Watt adds that he was a 36 year old Catholic when he died.

Lecane has confirmed that 4503 Pte P Moran, 4th Battalion, died at Netley on 16 June 1902. Moreover, the civil death records for the second quarter of 1902 in South Stoneham, Southampton, where the Hospital was formerly situated, includes the death of Patrick Moran, aged 36.

No definite information has been located on his birthplace, occupation or date of enlistment, but his number 4503 suggests that he enlisted in the second half of 1892.

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 4503 Private J Moran, 4th Battalion (attached to its 2nd Battalion), was invalided in April 1900 and received two clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for Tugela Heights and the relief of Ladysmith.

No known record includes him among a list of wounded during the War, but the *Dublin Daily Express* of 25 April 1902 identified him as dangerously ill with pneumonia at Wynberg on 22 April.

3640 Private P Murray

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 3640 Private P Murray accidentally drowned at Colenso on 12 March 1900. His service merited one clasp on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the relief of Ladysmith. Further documentary evidence about his service does not apparently survive. However having regard to his number, it is believed that he enlisted in the Regiment in about May 1890.

Many records place him in the 2nd Battalion. However as he did not earn clasps for Talana or Tugela Heights, it seems more likely that he was with the majority of the 1st Battalion who were

deployed protecting the lines of communication to the rear, while the main British force attempted to breach the Boer defences along the River Tugela in late 1899/early 1900. Typically those in the rear only received the Relief of Ladysmith clasp.

The *Dublin Evening Mail* of 15 March 1900 published a War Office bulletin to the effect that Privates P Leary and P Murray, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, were drowned whilst bathing at Colenso on 12 March 1900. It is unexplained why the name of Private P Leary is listed on the Fusiliers' Arch among the 1st Battalion deaths while that of Private Murray is omitted.

However the accompanying photograph of the metal cross over Private Murray's grave in Cloustan Military Cemetery at Colenso can be viewed at www.kznpr.co.za. Watt adds that he was originally interred in the Cloustan Old Town Cemetery before being re-interred at his current resting place.



3152 Private Peter O'Dwyer

Many documentary sources say that 3152 Private P O'Dwyer, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died at Potchefstroom (south-west of Johannesburg) on 16 March 1902. This was indicated for instance in a War Office statement reported in the *Belfast Newsletter* of 22 March 1902 which also identified the cause of death as enteric. According to Watt, he is remembered on a memorial at Olien Park, Potchefstroom.

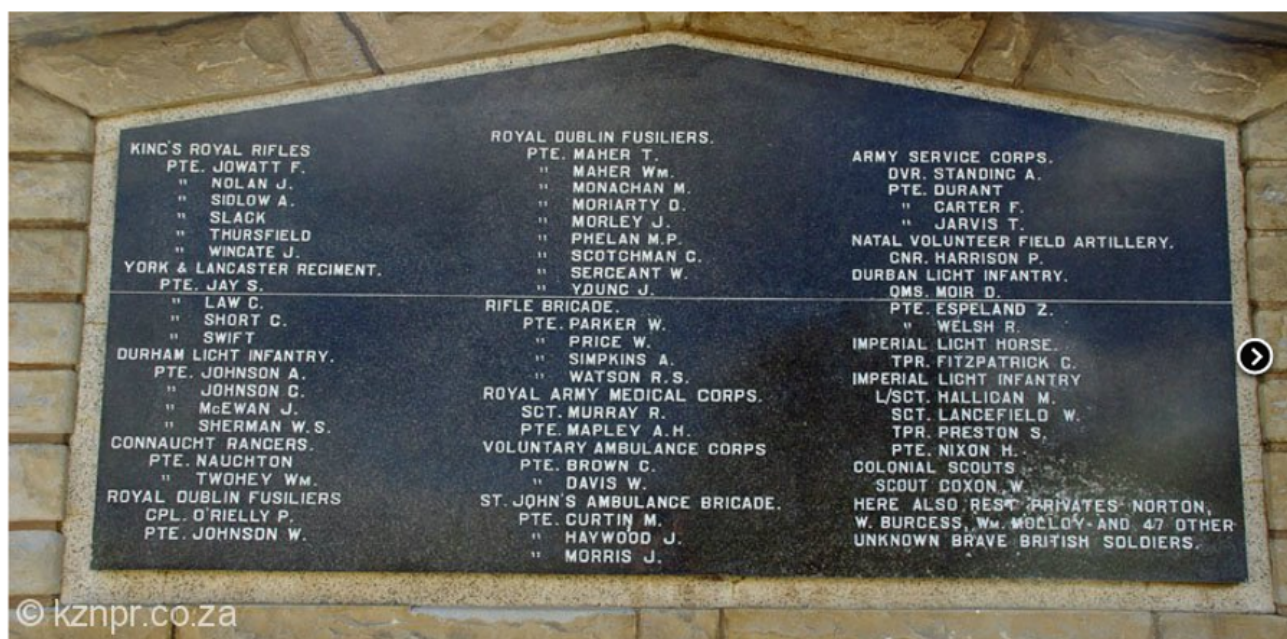
The Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects indicates that Private Peter O'Dwyer, 1st Battalion, was born in Arklow and was a porter before his enlistment on 17 November 1888. His next-of-kin was identified as his mother, Jane. However this Record alone states that he died on 15 March 1902 at Rooikraal (north-east of Johannesburg).

According to the War Medal and Award Roll for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, he was awarded five clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal for the engagements relating to Tugela Heights, the relief of Ladysmith, Laing's Nek, Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

6216 Private William Sergeant

There is broad agreement that 6216 Private W Sergeant, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, died of dysentery at Frere on 6 January 1900. Some sources suggest that he was in the 2nd Battalion, but the documentary evidence favours his being with the 1st Battalion. According to Watt, he was buried

locally, later exhumed and re-interred in the Estcourt Garden of Remembrance. His name appears on a memorial at that location as indicated in the following photograph from www.kznpr.co.za. The names of the other listed Dublin Fusiliers are inscribed on the Fusiliers' Arch in Dublin.



According to the War Medal and Award Roll, 6216 Private W Sergeant, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was awarded one clasp (Relief of Ladysmith) on his Queen's South Africa Medal.

His surviving Attestation Record indicates that William Sergeant, a labourer aged 18 years and two months, from Shankhill (sic), Belfast, Co Antrim, enlisted in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers at Hamilton (Scotland) on 9 December 1897. He joined the Regiment at Aldershot on the following day. He had previously served in the militia (4th Battalion, Highland Light Infantry). His designated next-of-kin was his mother (Sarah), 24 Townsend Street, off Faulds (sic) Road, Belfast. He was a member of the Church of England.

3567 Private Thomas Twohig

While some sources differ as to his rank and battalion, the documentary records seem to favour 3567 Private T Twohig, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. There is broad agreement that he died of disease in Bloemfontein on 20 May 1900. A *London Evening Standard* report of 1 October 1900 specified enteric as the cause of his death. Watt adds that he is remembered on a memorial at President Avenue, Bloemfontein.

The Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects indicates that 3567 Private Thomas Twohig, 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was born in Blarney (Co Cork). Prior to enlistment on 25 February 1890, he was a labourer. His nominated next-of-kin was his father, Thomas.

Unusually for a member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, the War Medal and Award Roll specifies that 3567 Pte T Twohig, 1st Battalion, earned Relief of Kimberley, Paardeberg and Driefontein clasps on his Queen's South Africa Medal while serving with the 2nd Mounted Infantry.

Appendix C

Bibliography and Acknowledgements

Military Records

Attestation Papers for Militia and Soldiers of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and other Service and related Records (www.ancestry.co.uk, www.findmypast.ie and www.fold3.com)

Burial Records for Netley Hospital, Southampton (www.findmypast.ie).

Burial Register for Aldershot Military Burial Ground (www.findmypast.ie).

Record of Deceased Officers' Effects (www.fold3.com).

Record of Deceased Soldiers' Effects (www.fold3.com).

Roll of Individuals entitled to the Queen's and King's South Africa Medals and Clasps (www.ancestry.co.uk).

Royal Dublin Fusilier Service Numbers Information (<http://armyservicenumbers.blogspot.ie/2009/06/royal-dublin-fusiliers-1st-2nd.html>).

Royal Dublin Fusilier Grave and Monument Photographs of the Author and of Mr Hugh Bland (www.kznpr.co.za).

Transcriptions of Natal Field Force Casualty Roll and South African Field Force Casualty Roll in the Anglo-Boer War (www.ancestry.co.uk, www.angloboerwar.com and www.findmypast.ie).

Census, Birth, Marriage and Death Records

Great Britain – Birth Records, HM's General Register Office (www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.ie).

Great Britain – Censuses for 1881 and 1891, UK National Archives (www.ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.ie).

Ireland – Censuses for 1901 and 1911 (www.census.nationalarchives.ie).

Ireland – Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths (www.irishgenealogy.ie).

Books and Periodicals

Amery LS (Editor), *The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902*, 7 volumes, London, Sampson Low, Marston and Company Limited, 1900-1909.

Biggins, David J, *Talana: Account and Medal Roll for the Queen's South Africa Medal, 1899-1902*, Honiton, Token Publishing Ltd, 2012.

Lecane, Philip, 'They are not forgotten: Memorials to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, Part 4', *The Blue Cap*, Volume 9 (September 2002), pages 19-21: www.greatwar.ie.

Romer, Major CF, and Mainwaring, Major AE, *The Second Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the South Africa War*, Uckfield, The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2011 (originally published in 1908).

Torlage, Gilbert, and Watt, Steve, *A Guide to the Anglo-Boer War Sites of KwaZulu-Natal*, Pinetown, 30° South Publishers (Pty) Ltd, 2014.

Watt, Steve, *In Memoriam: Roll of Honour Imperial Forces, Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902*, Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 2000.

Wylly, Colonel HC, CB, *Neill's 'Blue Caps', Volume II, 1826-1914*, Uckfield, The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2005 (originally published in 1924).

Newspapers

www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk.

www.findmypast.ie.

www.thegazette.co.uk.

Acknowledgements

Dr Eugene Campher, Parys, Orange Free State (formerly of Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal) introduced me to the late Steve Watt's impressive book. Steve's extensive research has provided the basis for identifying in this article the names of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers omitted from the Fusiliers' Arch in Dublin.

Permission has been kindly given by Steve Watt's publisher, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, for the use of images from his book, *In Memoriam*, in this research article. Mr Hugh Bland also kindly gave permission for the use of two images from www.kznpr.co.za.

Approval was also given by www.fold3.com for the use of two of their images on a non-commercial basis in this research article.



The Journey of the Machine Gunner (Following His Footsteps)

John O'Brien

**(Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and Machine Gun Corps Old
Comrades Association)**

Background and Introduction

I am the 3rd generation bearing the name, John O'Brien, within my family. The following story is an account of the journey which my grandfather took in 1919 with the Machine Gun Corps (MGC) in the North West Frontier to Waziristan (then in India and now in north-west Pakistan).

In 1984 when I had returned from an overseas mission in South Lebanon with the Irish Defence Forces as part of UNIFIL, I had reported to the Command Training Depot (East) as a student on the light infantry support weapons instructors course. During a conversation with my father, also John O'Brien, we were discussing the details of the course I was on. I explained that I was a student on a weapons course and the weapon we were learning about at that time was the general purpose machine gun (GPMG) in the sustained fire roll. To my surprise, my father responded by saying: "*Sure, your grandfather was a machine gunner in the War*". Therein started my journey to research John Patrick O'Brien, formerly of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Machine Gun Corps. Trying to gain information at that point was virtually impossible, and so, much like everyone else in my position, family stories became invaluable to my research and helped to guide me on my initial path. The information I managed to gather came from family members who knew John Patrick and proved to be of great importance to my journey of research.

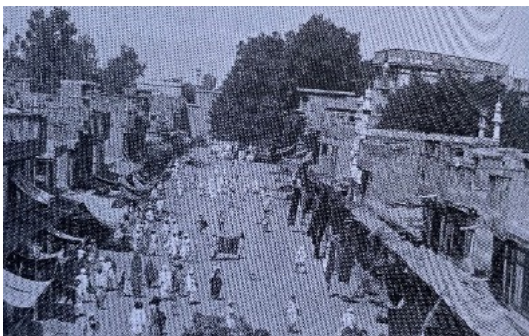
My grandfather, John Patrick, was a career soldier and served throughout WW1, which he miraculously survived. Post WW1, he was posted back to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers for discharge. However this was not an end to his story, but rather a continuation. Shortly following his discharge from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, he was offered a short term contract to serve as a Machine Gunner in the campaign in India. He enlisted on 7 August 1919. The importance of this decision for both the MGC and for my grandfather will become clear as the story unfolds.



**Pte John Patrick
O'Brien MGC
(right), probably in
Peshawar**

The operation in Waziristan was an element of the Third Afghan War, fought after WW1. Britain was already within occupied India and was bearing the brunt of the cost of a World War. Most of India's experienced troops were still overseas, and Britain was at work demobilising her army. Afghanistan did not have autonomy in her foreign affairs; Britain reigned in that quarter. The son of the assassinated Amir Habibullah Khan, Amanullah Khan, had taken control of Afghanistan. The Amir, Amanullah, had requested Viscount Chelmsford, Viceroy of India, to grant autonomy to Afghanistan. Upon refusal of his request, the Amir declared a jihad against Britain. Tribesmen blocked a detachment of Khyber Rifles (locally recruited from the Afridi Tribe and responsible for the security of the Khyber Pass – they were later disbanded) near the Landi Kotal border garrison and killed a plethora of civilian workers. Afghan regular troops poured across the border, seizing key locations including the site of water supply which heavily impacted the garrison at Landi Kotal. Meanwhile, the Afghans established more defensive positions at Bagh. The situation was ruthlessly unstable, and war was declared on Afghanistan by the British. Afghan regulars also crossed the border at Chitral and seized Arnawai. They also traversed into Waziristan and were aided in this venture by the tribesmen. These tribesmen aligned with the Afghans and launched attacks on the British, hoping to stoke an uprising in India against the British. Britain retaliated and launched attacks on the Afghans and tribesmen.

The terrain of the North West Frontier is mountainous and separates central Afghanistan from the plains of India. The area is tribal, with various clans inhabiting it. The clan or tribe advisory or leader is called the Malik, but despite this, they are often shown little loyalty from the members of the tribes. Fighters belonging to the tribes are, to a large extent, their own lords. Mid-battle were they to decide that there was no advantage to be gained, they would slip away and return to the village. Other reasons to depart the battle could also include the lack of fertile land within the area. The villagers were dependant on crops to trade and consume, and thus, the harvesting of crops was often given precedence over a battle with little meaning. It is worth noting that to misunderstand the tribes would be to one's detriment, because the tribes, especially the Mahsuds and Wazirs, were ferocious fighters, particularly when their land was being invaded. In the tribal areas, passing caravans often became easy prey to the tribesmen with their wares and goods taken. This was one of the common methods of sustenance for the tribes; to be a marauder was an honourable trade for a tribesman.



Peshawar City, 1919

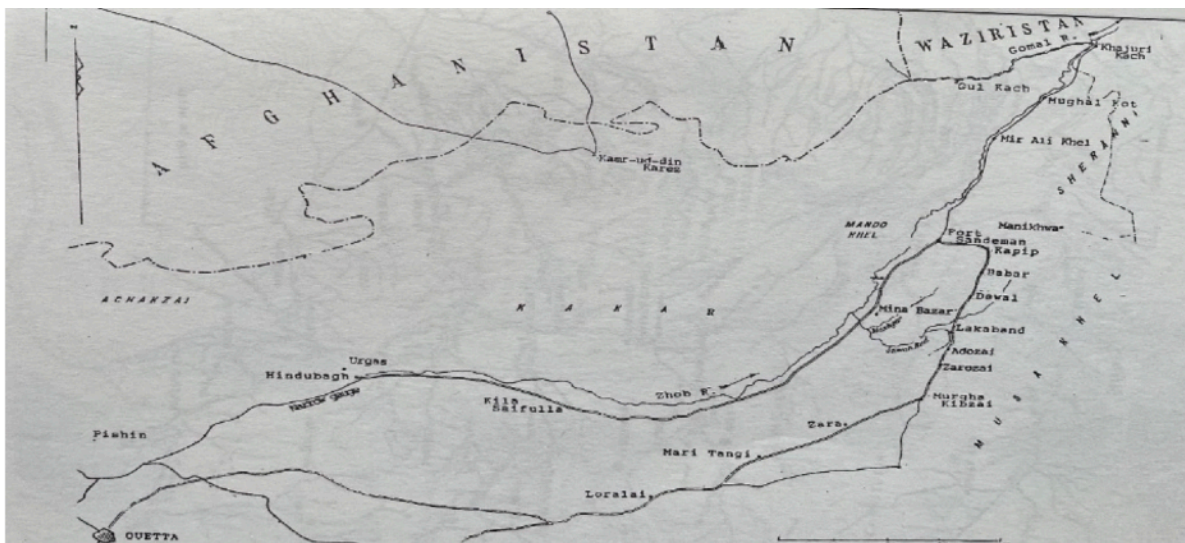


Piquet, 1919

The Afghan Amir hoped to convince the tribes to form a cohesive fighting unit with Afghan support, but tribal differences and loyalties prohibited that. When the Afghan regulars crossed into Waziristan with the local tribe, the Wazirs, they incited mass desertions North and South on the part of the locally recruited Militias, who fled the scene taking rifles and ammunition with

them. Peshawar was India's most northern city with a British main base situated there. To the north lay Kabul through the Khyber Pass (Khaibar) which was the logical point of attack to gain access to the plains of India, where the invaders hoped to capitalise on the unrest there and agitate the locals against the British. The second attack route was through the Peiwar Khotal pass which routed Kabul to the Kurrum valley. I hasten to continue further into the main theatres at this point, but I will briefly mention the invasions, including: Chitray (May-July 1919), The Khyber Pass (6-12 May), the occupation of Dakka (13 May-8 August), operations against Afridis and Mohmands (13 May-13 September), operations in Baluchistan and operations in the Zhob. These were actions fought before my grandfather arrived to the sphere of operations but will prove vital in forming the reason for him being there.

'The core of the Frontier problem was Waziristan': Chenevix Trench, The Frontier Scouts



Waziristan Territory, North West Frontier, 1919-1921

Major General (Sir) Andrew Skeen was a veteran of WW1, a 3rd Infantry Brigade commander in India, and also commander of the Defence and Security force (DEFSEC). DEFSEC replaced the Khyber Rifles and were responsible for the lines of communication between Landi Kotal and Dakka Plain, where forward troops were based. Skeen was an instrumental tool in providing the innovative tactics seen on the North West Frontier. However by his own account, the realisation was forced upon him during these engagements that many of his troops were inexperienced in frontier warfare. He also recognised the mistakes of the previous operation in the passes. The scope of this operation was through passageways sculpted by rocky mountains on either side, leaving Skeen, to all intents and purposes, in a narrow valley. Often, locally recruited troops deserted *en masse*, taking their modern rifles and vast quantities of ammunition with them, and a knowledge of tactics employed by the British force. A huge element of trust was lost in Skeen's troops, and he was often proven correct in battle when some of those troops withdrew at vital stages of the fight. During the summer time, temperatures were often around 40 degrees Celsius, and the winter was categorised by blizzards and densely snowy conditions. Troops were forced to adapt to the

weather and terrain where there were sometimes no roads; just tracks carved by caravan traffic, feet, mules and horses. The main forms of armament were rifles and later, Lewis guns, with their only overhead cover provided by outdated aircraft without two-way radio communications. This made it incredibly difficult to communicate imperative pieces of information, for example, any spotted enemy positions or proposed bombing locations. Spotting the enemy was difficult due to their sand-coloured clothing which served to camouflage them with the land. Most of their weapons were muzzle loaded, but with the mass desertions came modern rifles which harboured increased sniping ranges.

Tactics to secure the axis of advance included the vital concept of the piquet. This entailed a number of troops patrolling ahead of the main body to establish a covering fire-base on key sites to provide 360 degree defence. Further along the track, more piquets were developed with some acting as permanent posts which had to be reinforced and resupplied frequently. This caused a long tail behind the main force with reducing numbers of troops the further they penetrated. Moving supplies and troops with their limited supply of low calibre field guns involved numerous pack animals that also needed to be catered for. Main battles were encountered along the route to gain high ground from the enemy or to deny them key terrain, with frequent sniping and ambushes. Troops were in a constant state of alert, which undeniably took its toll on their mental and physical states. Most movements usually resulted in a fire fight which inflicted heavy casualties on both sides. This constant fire engagement was not sustainable, particularly for the tribal sides. To avoid contact with the enemy, Skeen decided to move his troops at night which was a major risk. This risk was one which prevailed, succeeding in shocking the enemy with occupation before they had the chance to process it. The Mahsuds (tribe) proved to be aggressive, committed and ruthless fighters who imposed heavy casualties on the British. They employed fire and manoeuvre tactics which caught the British by surprise. The desertions of the British-employed local militia which ensued marked success for the Mahsuds and their method of tactical prowess. Although the outcome for Skeen was a positive one, largely due to his innovative tactical approach which set an incentive for future battles, the mistakes that he made and the tactics he *didn't* employ invoked the realisation that would transform the nature of frontier warfare.

In the autumn of 1920, Major General WS Leslie gathered a force in order to penetrate the tribal area of the Wana Wazirs. To reiterate, the Wana Wazirs had raided posts and fled with British Lee Enfield rifles and vast quantities of ammunition. Remuneration on behalf of the tribes was warranted for damage and other incidents of disruption. The threat of crops being destroyed and villages being bombed if they failed to comply with these compensatory terms was not heeded by the tribal sides. Luckily for the Wana Wazirs, they were always forewarned when bombing was going to take place, and cover could be taken in local caves. The British force comprised two Infantry Brigades, two 4-guns mountain batteries (No 6 British) armed with 3.7 inch guns, and Number 15 (Indian) armed with 2.75 inch mountain guns, two pioneer battalions, 14th Field Company, 2nd Madras sappers and miners, an RAF squadron and 4/3rd Gurkhas who were with Major General Skeen's force and were experienced operational troops. Included were a British Battalion, a unit of heavy machine guns and a machine gun company (reactivated 6th). These were vital additions to Leslie's repertoire implemented after Skeen's previous realisation following the operation in the

passes, where he was missing a British Battalion and a Machine Gun element within his force. This was a clear statement that seasoned troops would now complete the campaign. My grandfather, John Patrick, was a member of the Machine Gun Company that changed the face of operations. The Brigade formed up at Jandola, and the Wana Wazirs were summoned to a Jirga at Murtaza where the Government's terms were laid out:

- A. fine of 40,000 Rupees;
- B. the surrender of 250 modern tribal rifles;
- C. the surrender of all Government arms and equipment.

If this was not forthcoming, the Brigade would proceed to Wana which was the capital of the Wazirs. The Wazirs did not comply with these terms and failed to present themselves. The Wazirs depended on the Mahsuds to intervene and support them in a pact against the British, but the Mahsuds were angered by the Wazirs for previous incitement which cost Mahsud lives. Instead, they gave assurances that they would not attack the British force (see map) despite the fact that the route the Brigade would take would be on or near Mahsud territory.



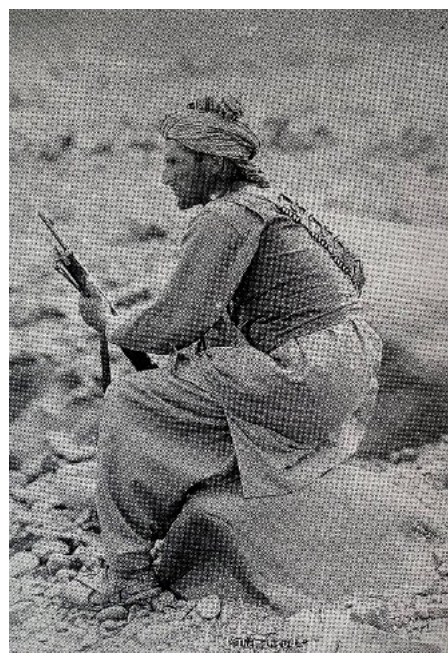
The route that Major General Leslie would take from Jandola to Wana, 1920

As previously mentioned, John Patrick had re-enlisted after demobilisation in 1919 on a short term contract with the Machine Gun Corps. He had a wealth of experience having previously been a machine gunner with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. He had survived the horror that was Mousetrapp Farm, a battle infamous with his unit, the 2nd Battalion. This unit was attacked with chlorine gas by the Germans at the 2nd battle of Ypres. Following this, John Patrick was

recruited to the Machine Gun Corps in December 1915 and posted to the 10th Company 4 Division at Maily Maillet in northern France. He quickly went into action on the Somme at the battle of Albert. He would return to Ypres at the battle of Passchendaele, and despite the odds, he would survive the War. John Patrick encompassed the exact requirement of the Machine Gun Corps in the 3rd Afghan War, being a highly experienced machine gunner and career soldier. As a result, he went to ply his well-honed skills with the newly reactivated 6th Company. From 7 August 1919 he was back in uniform and in training with his new unit. On 24 October 1919, they set sail and arrived in Bombay on 14 November 1919 to the overwhelming heat of India. There, they began their long journey north by train and mechanised transport to the main base in Peshawar. Acclimatisation would be paramount at this stage and warm weather kit was issued. Training would commence right away. Vickers would be carried along mountain tracks on pack mules, and so training was vital in getting the guns into action from the mules. Positioning of the gun crews while on the march was also to be practised. Timing was imperative, and troops needed to be effective in the least amount of time necessary to engage the enemy. The extreme heat or extreme cold depending on the time of year which dominated the narrow rocky paths made it impossible to manhandle the gun over prolonged distances and extreme gradients. Frontier warfare was a new art-form of combat. These men were the troops that Major General Leslie required: battle hardened, disciplined and expert on their respective weapon systems. One thing was certain; he would not repeat the mistakes made by Major General Skeen who failed to utilise the Machine Gun Corps and British infantry, along with Gurkhas and Indian troops. At this stage, Major General Leslie was sending out a clear message of intent.

***“One may liken the Mahsud to a wolf, The Wazirs to a panther. Both are splendid creatures: the panther is slyer, sleeker and has more grace; the wolf pack is more purposeful, more united and much more dangerous”*: Sir Olaf Caroe, The Pathans**

The Brigade formed up at Jandola, and not trusting the Mahsuds, Major General Leslie chose to avoid a route through Mahsud territory and, instead, route through Shahur beginning on 12 November 1920. It was a safe option; he was well armed, with well-trained troops who harboured a reputation which preceded them. He had sent his message to the Wana Wazirs: comply or face the wrath of his force. Progress here was similar to other operations with a high state of alert for sniping, ambush or full scale assault. Major General Leslie's tactics and methods undoubtedly paid off. He traversed the Shahur Tangi without incident which was highly unusual. They proceeded to the old fort at Sarwekai which was approximately half the distance to Wana. It took until 18 November 1920 to get there which marked an intense six days for the troops. To their surprise, the old fort was



Mahsud Fighter, 1919

occupied by Mahsuds who kept their promise not to attack the force. The Mahsuds however had also alerted a force of Wana Wazirs, led by Abdul Raziq, in a typical display of shifting loyalties. In seeing the expansive force with which they were faced, the Wazirs took off. Leslie set up a base camp for the next month at the fort previously occupied by local militia. Rest and resupply were important, but he also gave a buffer time to the Wana Wazirs to reconsider their actions. The Maliks persuaded the Wana Wazirs to hand over the required rupees and arms. By 15 December, 24,000 rupees with 51 Government rifles and 87 tribal rifles were handed over. This came far below the required amount and was viewed as a stalling tactic. As a result, Leslie proceeded towards Wana.

The first action was encountered after a night march by 4/3rd Gurkhas, supported by mountain guns and two sections of Machine Guns. Like that of Major General Skeen earlier in the campaign, the night march caught the Wazirs off guard, but it evidently did not debilitate them, as they proceeded to attack the troops. The gun crews would have been on alert, with Vickers carried on pack mules, but the attention and previous training afforded to this aspect of getting the guns into action was practiced to perfection, meaning that they could achieve efficiency within the absolute minimum time. I believe the supporting fire from the 4 Vickers machine guns (2 per section) came into action and engaged the Wana Wazirs by suppressing fire, which resulted in their win due to their superior fire-power. On contact with the Wazirs, the gunner would have immediately arranged the tripod into an ideal position with cover and crest clearance facing the enemy. The loader would simultaneously get the gun into action, placing it onto the tripod. Already seated was the gunner, scanning ahead for targets while the loader fed the belts, ready for the first burst. Ammunition carriers readied the supply while the range finder accurately estimated his scope. Information from each member was relayed to the NCO i/c to give orders for target selection, range to the gunner and type of fire. Four Vickers machine guns are a formidable force of fire raking enemy positions with up to 500 RPM, a muzzle velocity of 2,440 ft. per sec and a maximum range of more than 2,000 yards. Enemy rifle men on the receiving end of this incoming effective fire would have had no choice but to seek cover and subsequently be deprived of firing back. This allowed the Gurkhas to manoeuvre and attack the Wazirs. The efficiency of this process proved the importance of having battle hardened troops. Due to their expertise, the action of engaging targets operated like a well-oiled machine. This was precisely what Major General Leslie desired in his troops and the fundamental reason that my grandfather was recruited back into the Machine Gun Corps.



Kukri held by my cousin, Mark O'Brien

It was here that I believe an aspect of the story which has become family folklore took place. John Patrick was given a Kukri knife (pictured above) by one of the Gurkhas, and I have reason to believe that this exchange happened in appreciation for my grandfather saving his life. The Kukri was passed on to my cousin, Mark O'Brien, by his father Edward (son of John Patrick) before his death. Edward recounted this story to Mark, and my own father, along with my uncles, Kevin and Michael, have passed the story to me. The Kukri currently resides with Mark at his home in London.

Wana was occupied on 22 December by the force. The dilemma facing Major General Leslie was now to garrison Wana where the locals had paid their debt. The tribes were mostly nomadic and did not recognise borders, and they were equally at home across the border in Afghanistan as in Waziristan. It was decided to occupy Wana with a garrison until 1921 with the force, but the machine gun sections were withdrawn back to Peshawar. Resupply was now a major task which took place over a two-phased affair with the journey split in two. The strain on the troops was perfectly summarised by the Commander in Chief:

“The occupation of such a country as Waziristan is a severe strain on the troops who have to face arduous and dangerous duties daily. The scorching heat of summer and the bitter winter demands a very high standard of endurance of all troops employed upon protective duties, whether on permanent piquets or on road protection.”

My grandfather was garrisoned in India until 1922, after which he returned home and enlisted in the Irish National Army. The North West Frontier continued to be contentious, but it was decided to develop the area with a road network to facilitate motor transport. A sense of structure was created in the area through employment and rule of law. Due to the nature of the tribal members as marauders, caravans travelling through their land were easy pickings for reliable income, and this continued through to 1937. In 1947, everything changed when British India was partitioned and Pakistan as a country was created; Waziristan became Pakistan's responsibility.



John Patrick O'Brien enjoying refreshment, possibly on leave in Peshawar or Rawalpindi

Like most of his colleagues in WW1, my grandfather did not speak much about his wartime experience outside the company of his fellow comrades in the Old Comrades Association when they would come together. It is important to note that at the time of writing, no official history of the Machine Gun Corps in this campaign has been recorded. This story is not an official historical reference; it is my own research and an account which I have compiled to remember and honour the warrior, John Patrick O'Brien. This is only one part of his expansive story which will be continued.



My Grandfather's India General Service Medal (Waziristan Clasp) on display in my home



John Patrick O'Brien at home

Sources

4 Division, 10 Infantry Brigade, Royal Dublin Fusiliers 2nd Battalion War Diary, WO95/14181/4.

4 Division, 10 Infantry Brigade, Brigade Machine Gun Company and Brigade Trench Mortar Battery, WO95/1485.

4 Division, Divisional Troops Machine Gun Corps, 4th Battalion, WO95/1472/1.

Operations in Waziristan 1919-20 (General Staff, Army Headquarters, India, 1923).

The Third Afghan War 1919 Official Account (General Staff Branch, Army Headquarters, India).

Tom Burke MBE, *The 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the Tragedy of Mouse Trap Farm, April and May 1915*, Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association, 2005.

James Green, *Frontier Assault: The North Staffordshire Regiment in the Third Afghan War 1919*, 2019.

Patrick Hogarty, *'The Old Toughs' from Milton to Mons and the Western Front 1911-1918: A Brief History of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion*, 2001.

Lieutenant-Colonel GS Hutchinson DSO MC, *Machine Guns - Their History and Tactical Employment (Being also a History of the Machine Gun Corps 1916-1922)*, The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2009.

Brian Robson, *Crisis on the Frontier: The Third Afghan War and the Campaign in Waziristan 1919-1920*, Spellmount Ltd., 2004.

Graham Sacker, *The Suicide Club: Machine Gun Corps Companies and Battalions - Their Formation, Records & Operations*, Promenade Publications, 2001.

General Sir Andrew Skeen, *Passing It On: Short Talks on Tribal Fighting on the North-West Frontier of India, 1897-1920*, a Naval & Military Press Ltd reprint (originally published in 1932).

Colonel HC Wyllly CB, *Crown and Company 1911-1922: The Historical Records of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers*, a Naval & Military Press Ltd reprint (originally published in 1923).

Testimonials from John, Michael and Kevin O'Brien, sons of John Patrick O'Brien.

Medal Index Cards and further research by Seán Ryan, RDFA.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my uncle Kevin who planted the seed for this story. To my 'second-in-command' as ever (Seán Ryan). *This account was edited by Ellen O'Brien.*

Members of the Royal Irish Constabulary who served in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in World War 1

John F Sheehan



How or why did Irish Policemen volunteer to serve in World War 1? It started with the establishment of the Irish Guards which was founded in April 1900 after Her Majesty the Queen ordered on 5 April that an Irish Regiment of Foot Guards, called The Irish Guards, be established to commemorate the bravery of the Irish Regiments who fought in the Second South African (Anglo-Boer) War. In 1901, the Government agreed to circulate the recruiting leaflet through the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). This connection between the RIC and the Irish Guards deepened in 1906 when, following an enquiry into the employment of ex-soldiers of the Irish Guards, arrangements were made that the RIC take reservists of the Regiment. This was capped at 900 in the Force at any one time and not more than 100 each year. It was an ideal way of finding employment for the former soldiers of this Regiment.

The outbreak of the First World War saw eligible reservists being called up in August 1914. The first draft of these men (of which there were 41) departed on 15 December 1914, the second batch of 38 men on 30 December 1914, the third of 38 on 13 January 1915, the fourth of 114 on 27 January 1915 and the fifth of 39 on 11 February 1915. Each detachment received an enthusiastic send-off from Dublin, and on a number of occasions they were accompanied by the bands of the RIC and the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP). Auld Lang Syne, The Girl I Left Behind and other rousing tunes were played en route from the RIC Depot in the Phoenix Park to the North Wall where the men boarded the ships to Britain. They were cheered by large numbers of admirers and an RIC guard of honour. Sir Neville Chamberlain, the RIC Inspector General, addressed the men prior to departure, expressed confidence that this would be a victorious campaign and wished them a safe return. Other

batches of detachments of volunteers were escorted to Parkgate Street where they mounted motor cars and departed for Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire).

Approximately 2,000 serving RIC members applied to enlist in the Army following a circular issued by Sir Neville Chamberlain on 14 November 1914 in which the Government permitted 200 men from the RIC to join the Irish Guards for the period of the War. Eligible men were those between the ages of 20 and 55 who had been recommended by their officers as being suitable as regards physique, health, intelligence, character, etc. The selection of candidates was conducted by ballot supervised by Sir Neville Chamberlain. Men were also free to join other regiments. One of the reasons why there were so many applicants was that RIC morale was low for a variety of reasons, including low pay and the prospect of Home Rule.

Of the 757 RIC men who served, 176 were killed or recorded as missing (presumed dead) during the course of the War. 48 of those who served joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, and 16 of them were among the killed and missing. Of the total RIC members who joined there were 723 constables and 34 officers made up of one county inspector and 33 district inspectors.

By the end of the War, 22 RIC men had been awarded the Military Medal, two had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, one the Military Cross and 41 gained commissions. 192 were wounded, and 20 men became prisoners of war. No member who served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers was killed in 1914. In 1915, one member was killed, but like all regiments, the larger number of deaths was in 1916/17 while two more were killed in 1918. In total, the 757 RIC members served in about 50 different British Army regiments, the majority of course serving in the Irish Guards.

Interestingly whilst a number of DMP policemen enlisted in the Army for the duration of the War and lost their lives, no serving DMP man joined the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. However, a DMP clerk named David Palmer was one of two brothers killed while serving with the Dubs.

On the cessation of hostilities on 11 November 1918, the majority relinquished their service in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the other regiments and returned to the force as policemen. The 1918 General Election, together with the Easter Rising and the meeting of the First Dáil on 21 January 1919, brought about significant changes for the RIC, but that is for another day.

In the accompanying **Appendix**, I have set out the list of RIC men who served with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers during the War, together with appropriate information on whether they were wounded (W) or killed (K). A small number of those listed as killed lost their lives while serving in other regiments.

Sources

Herlihy, Jim, *The Royal Irish Constabulary*, Four Courts Press, 1997.

The Irish War Memorial Records at <http://imr.inflandersfields.be/search.html>.

Wylly, Colonel HC, CB, *Neill's 'Blue Caps', Volume III, 1914-1922*, Uckfield, The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2006 (originally published in 1923).

Commonwealth War Graves Commission at www.cwgc.org.

Constabulary Gazettes) both available at the
Constabulary Lists, 1914 to 1919 inclusive) National Library of Ireland.

Medal Index Cards (available on various subscription services).

The Irish Times Supplement 'The Somme 100 years on' at www.irishtimes.com/archive.

Appendix: List of RIC Members who served with Royal Dublin Fusiliers in WW1 and were killed

Last Name	First Name(s)	K/W	Date of Death	Place of Remembrance of Death
Barry	Henry	W		
Barry	Patrick J			
Blayney	William			
Burke	Stephen	W		
Cahill	Thomas Lawrence	K	26.03.1918	Pozieres Memorial, Panel 79 and 80
Canavan	James	W		
Carey	Michael			
Carroll	Joseph JT	W		
Conlon	James J			
Considine	Simon			
Cowan	William			
Crawley	Lawrence C	K	13.11.1916	Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 16C
Cullen	Gerard	W		
Dolan	John P	W		
Durr	Thomas F	W		
Finnerty	Michael	K	27.05.1917	N68, Kemmel Chateau Military Cemetery
Fleming	James J	K	28.05.1917	II AA35, La Laiterie Military Cemetery
Gaffney	Michael	K	21.08.1915	Panel 186 to 192, Helles Memorial
Glennon	William	K	12.10.1916	Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 16C
Gouley	Michael			
Graves	Gordon	K	21.03.1918	Pozieres Memorial, Panel 79 and 80
Griffin	John			
Howley	Richard James	K	13.11.1916	Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 16C
Keating	John P	W		
Kelly	Michael	W		
Kilcline	James J			
Mansfield	John Edward	W		
Marshall	Bernard			
Martin	Michael	W		
McCormack	John Joseph	K	08.02.1917	I M1, Queen's Cemetery, Bucquoy
McDonagh	Thomas J	W		
Megan	Lawrence C	K	13.11.1916	VII B5, Ancre British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel
Mehegan	Daniel J	K	21.03.1818	Pozieres Memorial, Panel 79 and 80
Molloy	Joseph Patrick	M		
Moran	John			
Murdon	John	K	13.11.1916	Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 16C
Murphy	Nicholas	K	11.10.1916	IV P2, Euston Road Cemetery
Murphy	Edward			
Nolan	Michael	W		
O'Keeffe	William	K	16.04.1917	Bay 9, Arras Memorial
Ovington	Anthony	K	13.11.1916	Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 16C
Priest	Thomas	K	11.02.1917	VII F50, Ancre British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel
Rogers	James Joseph	W		
Sheehan	William			
Sherlock	William Lennon	W		
Spain	Patrick T	K	13.11.1916	Thiepval Memorial, Pier and Face 16C
Waldron	Patrick	W		
White	David John	K	13.11.1916	I H6, Queen's Cemetery, Bucquoy

The Falkiner Family: A Trilogy of Tragedy

Ninian Falkiner

Frederick Falkiner MC, Officer Training Corps (St Columba's College), Royal Dublin Fusiliers (7th Battalion), Royal Irish Rifles (17th Battalion) & Royal Flying Corps (57th Squadron) (1895-1917)

Frederick Ewen Baldwin Falkiner (known as 'Eric'), the eldest son of Henry, a solicitor, and Euphemia Falkiner (née McEwen), was born on 16 July 1895 at Greenogue, Terenure, Dublin. He was educated in St Stephen's Green School, St Columba's College and Trinity College Dublin.

In 1909, Eric entered St Columba's College in Rathfarnham where he was academically sound, became a prefect and played on the school rugby team. While there, he was a member of the Officer Training Corps achieving the rank of sergeant.

In Autumn 1913, he entered Trinity College Dublin to study law and was apprenticed to his uncle, Richard Falkiner in Suffolk Street.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Eric enlisted in 'D' Company, 7th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, on 16 September 1914. 'D' Company was a 'Pals' Company and was famously made up of Leinster rugby players. By this time, his father was deceased, and his mother, Euphemia, bravely said that she would be ashamed if he had not volunteered. His uncle 'would not stand in his way'.

Nine months of training followed, initially at The Curragh, where 'D' Company was permitted to elect two commissioned officers and their non-commissioned officers. While some applied for a commission, Eric had no wish to be an officer. He first wanted to learn about soldiering and was placed in the Machine Gun Section and made a Lance-Corporal.

In late April 1915, the 7th Battalion departed from the Royal Barracks (now Collins Barracks, Dublin) and marched to the docks through the cheering crowds. Eric had asked his mother not to join the throng.

At Aldershot, the 7th Battalion joined the 30th Brigade, 10th (Irish) Division, which became part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, then already on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey. There since April 1915, the Force had been contained by the Turkish Army at the southern end of the Peninsula.



The 10th (Irish) Division was dispatched to help re-launch the troubled Gallipoli campaign, and on 7 August 1915, it secured a bridgehead at Suvla Bay and advanced on 'Chocolate Hill'. Eric wrote home later:

"The 7th Battn got it pretty hot ... I had a tidy week of it from the landing and saw enough of Turkey land and shrapnel to do me for some time ...we were in the trenches for six days before we were relieved."

Eric was evacuated on 12 August with dysentery which he attributed to 'a tin of bad bully [beef]'. However this may have saved his life, because on 16 August and in the days after, 'D' Company suffered severe losses in fierce fighting on Kiritch Ridge.

On 29 September, the 10th Division was evacuated from the Suvla bridgehead and sent to Salonika. In December, the 7th Battalion fought in the Battle of Kosturino in the mountains of southern Serbia against the advancing Bulgarian forces. The Battalion made a fighting retreat back to Salonika. Again Eric wrote: "MGs [machineguns] in firing line for 18 days without relief...". He was later awarded the King of Italy's Bronze Medal for Valour for 'saving the machine guns.' "We got them away over the rocks and a regular obstacle course", he said. Eric had a lot of respect for the Bulgarian enemy.

From December 1915 to July 1916, Eric was in the Salonika redoubt as a sergeant instructor in the Army Machine Gun School. Tired of "instructing youths in the wiles and antics of MGs", he applied, without much enthusiasm, for a commission and was accepted.

He attended the officer training school in Fermoy, Co Cork, which he considered "worse than Salonika". He added "I have applied for the Dublins" but found "the 7th Dubs full up". He was assigned as 2nd Lieutenant to the 17th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles which he joined on the Western Front in March 1917.

In the action to take Messines Ridge on 7 June 1917, Eric captured under fire a German concrete machine gun position. The citation for the Military Cross that he received for this gallantry reads:

"This officer was left single-handed, nevertheless, with the greatest pluck and gallantry he killed two of the enemy and captured the gun and about thirty prisoners."

In July 1917, Eric was finally given permission to join as 2nd Lieutenant the Royal Flying Corps. He received the standard fortnight's training for an observer. He wrote to his uncle:

"I had another crazy Irishman as my pilot, who does the wildest stunts others are scared to do... I saw the earth on top, below on each side and behind all at once, however we landed perfectly. I got out and got rid of my breakfast. Love to Aunt Alice. Yours as usual FEBF."

After a period of leave in London, Eric joined the 57th Squadron near Douai in northern France in early August 1917. The job of observer was to photograph over enemy lines, identifying enemy artillery, movements and trench systems. An observer equally defended

the plane with a machine gun from attack by German fighter aircraft determined to prevent reconnaissance.

At 5.30 a.m. on 21 August, Eric and his pilot, Lieutenant Cecil Barry, another Irishman from Kanturk, Co Cork, took off in their DH4 aircraft on reconnaissance duty over enemy lines in the Roulers-Menin area, near Ypres in Belgium. The German pilot who brought them down at 7.45 a.m. was very likely Lieutenant Ernst Udet of the Richthofen Squadron. The two Irishmen were initially reported to be missing in action.

In early October a message, confirming the death of Second Lieutenant Eric Falkiner, was dropped by a German pilot over British lines. Cecil Barry and Eric are buried side by side in graves I AA 19 and 20 respectively in Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium. The 1914-1915 Star, British and Victory medals were later awarded in recognition of Eric's War service.

George Falkiner, Officer Training Corps (Blundell's School, Devon), Prize Cadetship (Royal Military College, Sandhurst) and Royal Dublin Fusiliers (2nd Battalion) (1897-1917)

George Stride Falkiner was born in the family home in Terenure on 6 September 1897. He was the second son of Henry and Euphemia Falkiner.

Educated in St Stephen's Green School and Blundell's School in Devon, he was successful academically and in sport. His headmaster wrote: "*I believe he will make a most excellent officer.*"

He entered the Royal Military College with a prize cadetship in February 1916 and was commissioned in October of that year. "*With luck I ought to get the Dublins ... who have recently been strafed a bit in France*", and so was delighted to be gazetted to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on the Ypres Salient.

He joined the Battalion on Christmas Day, 1916. Many weeks of mud, cold, sickness, snow, patrolling, drudgery and companionship followed. He wrote to his mother:

"The most jumpy business I had was patrolling, which I can tell you is no joke in the snow, with lights going up all the time....Comfy here except Fritz, Schultz and Hans get very festive and have to be kept under control by some of our friends in the rear."



For most of February 1917, he was at the 2nd Army Central School of Instruction for some advanced training. At this time, he was able to meet up with his brother, Eric, who was only

half a mile away. George was keen that Eric be transferred to the 2nd Battalion, perhaps through the remarkable Major Jack Hunt, second-in-command of the Battalion, who had been the Instructor Sergeant of the Officer Training Corps at St Columba's College when Eric was there.

On 27 May, George led a successful reconnaissance raid on the German lines prior to the Battle for Messines Ridge. For this action, he was awarded a Parchment Certificate for gallant conduct by General Hicks, 16th (Irish) Division. Wounded, but not badly, "*on a very dark night in somebody else's line*", he returned two days later to the Battalion for the coming assault to secure the Ridge.

On 7 June at 3.10 a.m., the Battle for Messines Ridge started with the destruction, by underground mines, of the German trench system. An advance of five miles was secured, opening the way to a further offensive. A day later, he wrote that he was "*fit and well & bucked with life in general... sleeping in shell holes & smoking Boche cigars.*" He also got hold of a Zeiss field glass.

The 2nd Battalion was next taken out of the line for training for the August offensive which, it was anticipated, would bring about a decisive breaking of the German Army. He also attended the XI Corps School for practical training in trench mortars, but it wasn't to his taste. On 1 July, he was back with the Battalion. He was home in Dublin on leave in mid-July and returned to the Front soon after.

There follow extracts from the War Diary of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, for the period 2 to 16 August 1917 during the Third Battle of Ypres, also known as Passchendaele:

"2nd to 4/8/17 Front Line Trenches. Battalion HQ FREZENBERG. The Battalion had to pass through very heavy enemy Barrage when going up to the trenches. For an hour and half the men had to shelter in shell holes"

"5/8/17 Battalion in Front Line Trenches. During the whole tour the enemy's Artillery was very active, and caused several casualties. Enemy's Aeroplanes were also very active."

"7/8/17 Battalion relieved by 7th Royal Irish Rifles. About midnight the enemy put over a large quantity of mustard gas, Phosgene. They continued sending over the gas ... the Battalion suffering heavy casualties in officers and men."

"Billets. 8th to 13/8/17 The majority of the officers N.C.O's and men being affected by the Gas..."

"Billets. 14/8/17. On the evening of 14th instant the Battalion moved up from [a rest camp] ... and relieved the 1st Munsters in the Front Line."

"Dispositions of 2/RDF at ZERO [on 16 August 1917]

'A' Company 2/RDF in rear of leading wave of the 7th R.I.R.

'B' Company 2/RDF in rear of leading wave of 9th RDF

'C' Company 2/RDF in Trenches in vicinity of FREZENBERG REDOUBT."

"15 minutes before Zero [4.45 a.m.] the enemy put down a heavy Barrage on the Assembly position which caused heavy casualties. 'B' Company (Capt. L.C. Byrne) moved forward in Rear of 9th RDF ... This Company was wiped out before reaching its objectives by enemy Machine Gun and Artillery Fire, only Two Officers and 3 Other Ranks surviving. 'A' Company (Capt. W.I. Black. MC) moved forward in rear of 7th R.I.R. ... all the officers with 'A' Company had become casualties ... the remainder of the Company (consisting of an N.C.O. and 6 Other Ranks) were compelled to fall back..."

2nd Lieutenant Falkiner was one of the three platoon leaders who, with Captain Black, had gone forward through a heavy barrage. 2nd Lieutenant Alexander and Captain Black were badly wounded. 2nd Lieutenant Stewart was killed. Many other ranks fell. Falkiner was now in command of the depleted Company. He went forward from shell hole to shell hole leading the men, but was killed by rifle or machine gun fire thirty yards from his own line. Another account, by a stretcher bearer, says that he was hit over the heart with a piece of shrapnel and died a few minutes afterwards. He was aged just 19.

By 17 August 1917, the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers had been decimated.

While George's body was never found, his death is commemorated on Panel 144 to 145 of the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium. George's War service earned the British and Victory medals.

George's commanding officer wrote to his mother in Terenure as follows:

"All we know is that he led his men forward in a very gallant manner, after his Company Commander had been badly wounded. If he had only been spared, he had a great career before him."

Euphemia Falkiner BA, Eric and George's Mother (1870-1922)



Every November in the Unitarian Church on St Stephen's Green, the Falkiner family gathers to remember the sacrifices of Eric and George in August 1917 and the impact of their deaths on their family and on their mother, Euphemia, in particular. Euphemia (pictured above) died just five years later in 1922 at the early age of 52. She is buried with her husband in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin (Grave Section 79, Laurel Walk), and Eric and George's deaths are also remembered on the family headstone (photograph above).

This is the text of the address I gave about the grief of Euphemia and many thousands of other grief-stricken mothers at the remembrance ceremony in the Unitarian Church three years ago on 11 November 2018:

"THE GRIEF OF MOTHERS

In mid-August 1917, Euphemia Falkiner, widowed in 1906, was on a seaside holiday with friends, and some of her family, in Greystones, County Wicklow. It had been an anxious summer. Her two sons, Eric and George, had fought at the Battle of Messines in June 1917, and now both were preparing for a new offensive. The older son, Eric, had fought at Gallipoli, and in Macedonia, and, at Messines, had won the Military Cross. By early August, he was an observer-gunner with the Royal Flying Corps at the front in France. His younger brother, George, had been commissioned into the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and had been at the front since December 1916, except for one short leave home a few weeks before in July.

On Saturday 22 August 1917, their mother received a telegram from the War Office in London, informing her that George was 'missing in action'. Immediately she hurried back from Greystones to her home in Terenure. Two days later, she was informed that Eric, also, was 'missing in action'. On the same day, she was told that George was dead. After very difficult weeks of waiting and waiting, it was confirmed, by the German Air Force, that Eric too was dead.

Letters of condolence began arriving in great numbers. Between August 1917 and January 1918, Euphemia Falkiner received over 200 letters from relatives, friends and serving soldiers, expressing sympathy and grief. Some of the letters were from people she did not know, people who had similarly been bereaved. Unfortunately none of the letters she wrote in reply have survived, though we know that she answered every letter that was sent to her. She was a woman of intelligence, strong character and Christian faith. In accordance with much of the sentiment of those times, there were constant references to 'King and Country', 'The Cause of Freedom' and 'Pride in our Heroes'. But there were also references to 'This Terrible War', 'This Cruel War' and 'The Loss of our Brave Young Men'.

Here are a few sentences from the letters: "It all seems so useless, all this suffering & sorrow everywhere". "Will this war and sorrow never end? It is just one person after another who is struck ...". And "... all the trouble & anguish this war has caused, the very best of our boys and children have been sacrificed for the successful termination of this awful war".

Most of the letters were from women, and most of these were from other mothers, some of whom had also lost sons in the War. In one letter we read: "Poor Mrs Henry's two sons are also killed, and her third son – the only one left – is in the midst of the present advance." In another letter, "He is my constant thought night and day ... he is our only boy. I know that God knows best and that he never errs". This son, "our only boy", was later killed.

Two of the letters are of particular interest here in the Unitarian Church: one is from Mrs Annie Kidd, whose son William Kidd was killed in 1918; and there is also a letter from Mrs MD Varian, whose relative Walter Varian, was killed, also in 1918. The names Kidd and Varian, together with the two Falkiner boys, are on the War memorials in this Church, as is the name of WW Fitzgerald.

I suspect that Euphemia Falkiner never recovered from the loss of her two older sons. She died in 1922 aged 52. These few words today, in this Church, are in memory of all the bereaved mothers in the tragedy of 1914-18."

Sources and Acknowledgements

Falkiner Family Documents, Photographs and Information.

War Diary, 2nd Royal Dublin Fusiliers, WO 95/1974 (London: The National Archives, 1 October 1916 to 30 April 1919).

Falkiner Gravestone Photograph by Seán Ryan.

www.cwgc.org.

www.findmypast.ie.

www.irishgenealogy.ie.