

# The Old Tough

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



**Issue 8: Autumn 2022**

## Editorial

Welcome to the Autumn edition of The Old Tough!

This has been a busy year for the Association as we commemorated in this Centenary Year the disbandment of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and five other Irish Regiments in 1922. While the long days of a wonderful Summer may be behind us, there is still plenty to look forward to for the remainder of the year. Details of upcoming events for Association members, together with other news items, are contained in the Dubs' News article which starts on page 2 of this newsletter.

As well as participating in some upcoming events, we hope that you enjoy this edition of The Old Tough. Features include:

- a biography of Private Peter Lynch 6484, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, whose portrait was recently presented to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive;
- an account by member, Paul Kennedy, of the guided tour to WW1 battlefields in Belgium and northern France (including Mons, Le Cateau and Ypres) that he and his wife took part in last May, and
- a poem, 'The Warrior', by Ellen O'Brien in tribute to her great-grandfather, John Patrick O'Brien 8816, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who survived the gas attacks around Mouse Trap Farm in April/May 1915 and who later served in the Machine Gun Corps (16664/7807838). He is buried in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin.

As ever, we look forward to receiving your suggestions and contributions to future editions at [rdfa1918@gmail.com](mailto:rdfa1918@gmail.com).

### The Editorial Committee

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

## Dubs' News

### National Library of Ireland Seminar, 17 September 2022

This NLI Seminar on the theme, *Left in the Lurch: Irish WW1 Ex-Servicemen and Women in Post-War Ireland*, proved to be a lively and interesting event. Our Association President, Tom Burke, was one of the principal organisers. The speakers and topics discussed were as follows:

- Dr Pat McCarthy, DCU, on *The Twilight Years – The Irish Regiments 1919-1922*;
- Mr Arthur Cagney, NUI Maynooth, on *Ex-British Soldiers in the National Army during the Irish Civil War*;
- Dr Emmanuel Destaney, Sorbonne University, on *Great War Veterans, the Foundation of Dáil Éireann and the Search for National Recognition*;
- Mr Tom Burke MBE, RDFA President, on *'All his failings are a result of war service': The Quest of WW1 Irish Ex-Service Personnel for Help*;
- Dr Fionnuala Walsh, UCD, on *'The world we had known had vanished': Irish Women's Experiences in the Aftermath of the Great War*.

About 50 people (including almost 20 members of the Association) attended this ticketed event. It is intended to publish a review of the Seminar's proceedings in the next Blue Cap.

### Other Recent Activities

The Association was represented at a Remembrance Service in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, on 28 August. See the accompanying photograph of attendees at the Memorial Wall beside St John's Castle which remembers 1,100 Waterford men and women who died in the War.

Arising from the death of Queen Elizabeth II on 8 September, the Association expressed its condolences to the British Embassy on her passing. Her legacy includes an outstanding contribution to reconciliation on the island of Ireland in recent years.



Association representatives attended the Annual Dinner of the Irish Guards in Dublin on 1 October. The theme of the Dinner was the disbandment of the Irish Regiments in 1922. The accompanying

photograph includes the Irish Guards' mascot, an Irish wolfhound, and the Irish Guards and Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association's Standards.

On Sunday, 16 October, the Committee of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association accepted an invitation from the Kilkenny War Memorial Committee to visit various locations in the City which commemorate the loss of over 800 Kilkenny lives during WW1. The number of impressive memorials which now exist for visitors to Kilkenny is a legacy of the Decade of Commemorations. A detailed report on the visit will be included in the next edition of The Blue Cap.



### Events for November/December 2022

Upcoming events for Association members include:

- the Military Ball in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Santry, on the evening of Saturday, 5 November;
- the Royal Irish Regiment's Annual Service of Remembrance in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast, on Sunday, 6 November at 3 pm, which will particularly honour in this Centenary Year those in the disbanded Irish Regiments who lost their lives during WW1. Members have also been invited to a reception in the Royal Ulster Rifles Museum in Bedford Street at 1 pm before the Service;
- a Commemoration Ceremony organised by Woodenbridge Village Development Association at the Woodenbridge WW1 Memorial Park, Co Wicklow, also on Sunday, 6 November, at 2 pm;
- a walking tour of Killester Garden Village on Saturday, 12 November, which will be led by members of the Killester WW1 Memorial Campaign. Meet at the Legion Hall at 12 noon. This village of 289 homes was built for WW1 veterans (including Dublin Fusiliers) after the War;
- the Annual General Meeting and Annual Dinner of the Association on Friday, 2 December, in the Freemasons' Hall, 17 Molesworth Street, Dublin 2. The AGM will start at 7 pm sharp followed by Dinner at 8 pm. Details about both events will be emailed or posted to members shortly.

We hope that members can attend one or more of these events. No prior notification of attendance is necessary (other than for the Military Ball and our Annual Dinner which are ticketed events). We're hoping for a large attendance at our AGM/Annual Dinner. This is the first Dinner that we have been able to hold since December 2019. Please put these dates into your diaries!

### The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and Social Media

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association (RDFA) has embraced social media through its Facebook and Twitter platforms. The 'pages' are run by a dedicated social media team of Association

members consisting of Jon Toohey, John O'Brien and Anthony Barnes. The pages are intertwined and reach out to nearly 2,000 'friends' or like minded people who engage with the platforms. The pages consist of photographs, stories and remembrance, and most activity is in a newsletter format. The Association itself uses social media to keep interested people informed of events and publications. Both pages are interactive, and members are encouraged to participate and share their stories or the experiences of their relatives in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. There are a number of features we use, such as the ability to download membership forms, and tags through which certain stories can be accessed easily. We are recognised on both platforms as the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association. Check us out; join in. We'd love to hear from you. Our Facebook and Twitter addresses are <https://www.facebook.com/RoyalDublinFusiliersAssociation/> and [www.twitter.com/@RoyalDubsFus](http://www.twitter.com/@RoyalDubsFus) respectively.



### Association Website ([www.greatwar.ie](http://www.greatwar.ie))

For over 12 months, some users of our website have experienced security alerts when trying to download certain Association documents uploaded to the site. This has been frustrating for both members and researchers in general.

Thankfully this problem has been resolved, and recent editions of our Blue Cap journals and Old Tough newsletters have now been added to the site. We hope that you will take the opportunity in the coming weeks to re-acquaint yourselves with the range and quality of historical material that is available on [www.greatwar.ie](http://www.greatwar.ie).

### Michael McGovern RIP

It is with sadness that we report the peaceful death of Michael McGovern (pictured) in St Vincent's University Hospital on 27 July last. Michael was a longstanding member of the Association. He is survived by his seven children, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, 14 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



(Courtesy of Philip Lecane)

An anecdote of Michael's was reproduced in our recent Centenary Booklet on the History of the Dubs. He relayed an exchange between a father and son as they were watching a GAA match some years ago:

"Come on the Dubs!" shouted the son.

"They're not the Dubs" said the father. "The Dubs fought in the First World War".

May he rest in peace.

## Private Peter Lynch 6484, Royal Dublin Fusiliers

By Paul Appleby

A portrait of Private Peter Lynch 6484, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, is the latest addition to the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive. It was presented on 4 October last by the Military Archives which had originally been given custody of the portrait by a descendant of Private Lynch. The accompanying photograph records its handover by Corporal Joey McDermott, Military Archives, to Linda Hickey, Assistant Archivist, Dublin City Archive, in the presence of Captain (Retired) Seamus Greene of the Association.



The earliest definitive public record of Peter's life has been located in the 1901 Census Return where his mother, Mary, then a widow aged 40, Peter, a van driver aged 19, and Lizzie, a trader aged 17, occupied a three roomed dwelling at 3 Mason's Market, Dublin.

(This address is now subsumed into the ILAC Centre in Dublin City Centre). Only these three family members are mentioned in his soldier's will dated 20 November 1915, in which he wished to bestow his property and effects on his mother, Mary Lynch, or if she be deceased, on his sister, Mrs Lizzie O'Connor, 55B Corporation Buildings, Railway Street, Dublin. In the event, it was his sister, Elizabeth, of 20 James's Street, Dublin, who received his medals and inherited the pay and other funds owing to him after his death in March 1918.

Peter Lynch, a carman (deliveryman), initially joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 9 May 1905. On enlistment, he declared that he was born in St Michael's Parish, Dublin, and was 23 years old. On 21 June 1908, he committed to joining the Army Reserve (Special Reservists) for the unexpired term of his militia service and attended for required training in the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion mostly in Maryborough (Portlaoise) over the following years. He was re-engaged on 15 July 1910 and again on 28 July 1914, at which time his qualification was listed as a grenadier.

To compensate for the initial losses of the Dubs' 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion at Le Cateau in August 1914, Peter Lynch was assigned to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and arrived in France on 23 October 1914. Peter suffered a severe gunshot wound to the chest six months later on 25 April 1915. This date coincides with the unsuccessful attack by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion on St Julien during the Second Battle of Ypres/leper. He was withdrawn to hospital in Rouen before being sent to Graylingwell War Hospital, Chichester, where he stayed for more than six weeks. His diagnosed condition was haemothorax or blood on his lungs. After release from hospital, he appears to have spent four months on home duties, initially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Depot before being assigned back to the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion and posted to Sittingbourne in Kent.

By 6 November 1915, he had been transferred to the Dubs' 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion. Peter briefly saw service in Gallipoli as part of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, before the Battalion was withdrawn to Egypt on 1 January 1916 for recuperation after the rigours of Gallipoli. He returned with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion to France on 19 March 1916. The date of his will (details above) suggests that it was written shortly after his arrival in Gallipoli.

Peter was again wounded in action on 31 May 1917 suffering a gunshot wound to his face. The Battalion War Diary suggests that this occurred at Monchy-Le-Preux near Arras in northern France as the Battalion suffered 18 casualties that day, seven of whom were killed. At that time, the Battalion was deployed in the front line improving trenches and laying telegraph wires at night, which was dangerous work resulting in regular casualties. Medical records suggest that Peter's facial wound particularly affected his right eye. While he apparently recovered sufficiently to return to his unit three weeks later, he was granted ten days' home leave in early July 1917. However he returned late from leave and was shackled for five days as punishment. He also forfeited five days' pay.

His military record suggests that Peter regularly fell foul of Army discipline. In June 1910, he was absent for short periods on two occasions and lost his Lance Corporal stripe. In June 1913, he failed to comply with an order and was confined to barracks for seven days as a result. On 2 January 1915 in France, he was again confined to barracks for seven days for disregarding orders in approaching enemy lines on the previous day. While with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion in mid-August 1915 after his first wounds, he was absent from duty for a week. When he returned on 20 August, he was given a week's detention and forfeited 13 days' pay. The final episode on his disciplinary record before the incident in July 1917 (outlined above) took place in January 1916 in Egypt, when he was deducted three days' pay for negligently losing his iron ration.

Private Peter Lynch 6484, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, was one of many Dubs killed in action in late March 1918 during the German Spring Offensive known as Operation Michael. He was then aged 34. Although he has no known grave, he is remembered on the Pozières Memorial in the Somme Department of northern France. The 1914 Star, British War and Victory Medals were later awarded in recognition of his service.



## Le Cateau Revisited, May 2022

By Paul Kennedy

I couldn't believe my eyes when it landed on my desktop! An e-mail offering a tour of the Mons and Le Cateau battlefield sites where, in the latter case, the rearguard action of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers helped protect the retreating British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in the early days of World War 1 in August 1914.

I had been researching my grandad's British Army experience (*Blue Cap, Volume 25, December 2021*) and had visited a number of websites in the process. As a consequence, I was inundated with emails from these sites. This one though, from [classicbattlefieldtours.com](http://classicbattlefieldtours.com), was welcome!

It was for a three-night, four-day tour (5 - 8 May 2022) following the BEF in the opening weeks of the War on the Western Front and exploring the iconic engagements at Mons, Le Cateau and the First Battle of Ypres.

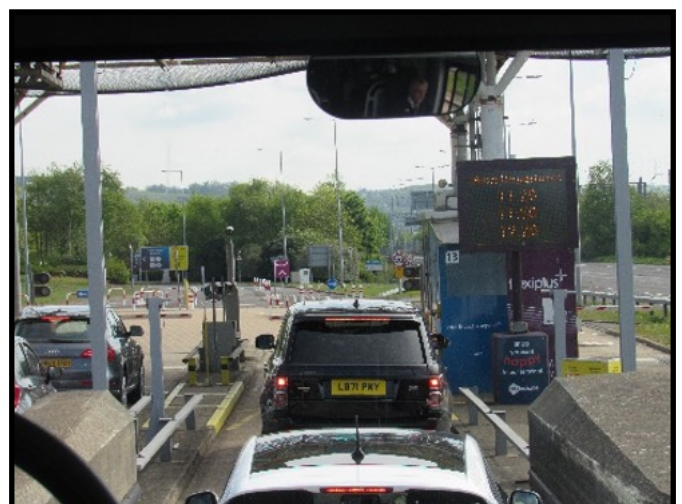
It was pricey, by current standards, but there was no demurring. This was an opportunity to walk in my grandad's footsteps, see the sights he saw and soak up the atmosphere he experienced at the time. The tour was being led by a military historian, Mr Dan Hill, and Dr Spencer Jones, a professor in Armed Forces and War Studies at Wolverhampton University. They proved to be excellent guides.

The first hurdle to cross was to get to London where the tour commenced. My wife and I flew over the night before and stayed in a hotel overlooking the notified meeting point.

### Day One

The following morning, to our surprise and delight, we found ourselves loads of space as two of just 17 fellow travellers in a 52-seater coach. We set off for Folkestone for the Eurotunnel channel crossing to Calais and, before we knew it, we were in France.

We commenced the tour with a long journey from Calais to Casteau, a village north of the Belgian town of Mons, to explore the actions in the days and hours leading up to the Battle of Mons. Our focus was on the opening skirmish of the War between British and German troops, now commemorated by The First Shot Memorial in the village.



We ended our day with a quick visit to Mons itself where, by chance, it was the first day of a weekend beer festival. Not wishing to offend the locals, we joined them for a welcome beer in the town square before retiring to our hotel for a shower and evening meal.



## Day Two

We set off early for the Nimy Salient where we explored the engagement along the Mons-Condé Canal which was the site of some of the most famous actions of the Great War. We also explored the story of incredible acts of individual bravery that day, particularly that of Lieutenant Maurice Dease (who was born in Coole, Co Westmeath in 1889) and Private Sidney Godley of the Royal Fusiliers.

Both were members of a machine-gun company that covered the retreat of their Battalion across a railway bridge (pictured in the background) during the afternoon of 23 August 1914. Although wounded, Lieutenant Dease maintained fire until succumbing to his wounds. Private Godley took over the machine gun until he too was wounded and taken prisoner but not before he had dismantled the gun mechanism and thrown it into the Canal. Both were awarded the first two Victoria Crosses of the Great War, Lieutenant Dease posthumously.



It was then back to the town square of Mons for lunch, before we headed south to spend the afternoon studying the rearguard actions around Audregnies in which the BEF fought desperately against enormous odds.

We ended our day with a visit to the stunning St Symphorien Military Cemetery (pictured). This was established by the German Army after the Battle of Mons to hold the war dead of both sides - 284 German and 229 Commonwealth soldiers, of whom 105 remain unidentified. It commemorates the first and last casualties of the Great War, and it's here that Lieutenant Dease is buried.



## Day Three

The focus for today was the actions of the BEF immediately following the Battle of Mons. Traversing the imposing Forêt De Mormal via the Roman road, we spent the morning following Douglas Haig's Corps as they fought delaying actions at Landrecies and Etreux, with mixed success.



Heading west, we visited the spot where Horace Smith-Dorrien's Corps would 'stand and fight' in an incredibly high-risk battle on plains to the west of the town of Le Cateau. Dr Jones explained how the Royal Dublin Fusiliers were at the forefront of the battle and succeeded in holding back the Germans. However, a general order to fall back that afternoon didn't reach some on the front line causing parts of Smith-Dorrien's Corps (including 'Dublins' and Warwickshires) to be left behind.

In the small hours of 27 August, surrounded and with no prospect of fighting their way out, they were taken prisoner. Walking the battlefield, now a field of maize (pictured right), was poignant as I imagined the scene and what my grandad was thinking. Thankfully, he survived the battle but would spend the rest of the War in a German POW camp.

After lunch in the lovely town of Le Cateau, we explored the battle in detail with Mr Hill and Dr Jones, following which we visited Le Cateau Military Cemetery located close by the battlefield site (pictured). I took the opportunity to place a wooden cross at the memorial in memory of the RDF soldiers buried there. I had written on the cross *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n'anam dílis (May their gentle souls rest on the right hand of God)*.

We ended our day with a visit to the medieval town of St Quentin, through which an exhausted BEF passed following the battle. We continued westwards to our hotel in the beautiful town of Diksmuide, the perfect place for a cold Belgian beer and an evening meal.

## Day Four

Our final morning on the battlefields was spent exploring the First Battle of Ypres in and around the small village of Gheluvelt. It was here in October 1914 that the BEF finally held the German advance on Ypres and set the scene for what was to become the 'race to the sea' and eventually the formation of the 'Western Front'.

We visited the Hoge Crater (pictured), where the British Army bored one of several tunnels under



German lines, packed them with explosives and set off an explosion that caused many German casualties. The Hooze Crater is now a pond in the peaceful park which surrounds it. We visited the Hooze Crater Cemetery close by, which was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, and where 5,916 Commonwealth soldiers are remembered.

Our tour ended beneath the world-famous Menin Gate which today holds the names of over 55,000 British and Commonwealth servicemen who fell in the battles around Ypres and have no known grave. After lunch in Ypres, we returned to Calais for our Eurotunnel trip back to London to end our tour. It was then a case of us making our way to Gatwick for our flight home.



It was an exhausting trip but worth every penny and every minute. I got to walk in my grandad's footsteps and walk among the headstones of those of his comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice. We must never forget the price they paid.

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## **Annual General Meeting 2022**

The Association's Annual General Meeting will take place on 2 December next. The business of the Meeting will include:

- consideration of the Secretary's report on the Association's annual activities;
- consideration of the Treasurer's financial accounts for the preceding financial year;
- the election of Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and the Association's other trustees;
- deciding on the membership subscription for 2023.

The draft agenda, resolutions and papers for the Meeting will be finalised and circulated in mid-November. Any member who wishes to propose a resolution at the Meeting must give written notice of its terms to the Secretary at [rdfa1918@gmail.com](mailto:rdfa1918@gmail.com) no later than Friday, 4 November next.

## THE WARRIOR

Celebrations, commemorations, centenaries and services.

The laying of a wreath, the sounding of a trumpet,  
the swift and solemn salute.

The deafening roar of voice over voice,  
arguing the significance, or lack thereof.

I try to drown it out and focus on a singular sound, and follow.

Who are we remembering?

The sound brings me to the western front in 1915, with the Dublins.

I hear the clipping of combat boots, the distant shout of a command,  
a not-so-distant gunshot, the rapid heart-beat of a young man so very far from home.

Despite the camaraderie among men and the glorified heroic fantasies,  
he has forgotten how to sleep; he is always alert.

The noises of the battlefield torture each fibre of his sanity.

He has conquered the enemy, he has fought for some notion of glory,  
and despite his survival, a part of him lies dead in the trenches

I cannot fathom the things he has seen,  
the memories etched which can never be erased regardless of desperate attempts.

Barely a boy, sent to the slaughter  
with an objective which becomes blurred to the point of depression.

A poppy, blowing in the wind, tickled by the ghostly echoes of aching cries.

Who are we remembering?

A father, a son, a brother, a grandfather.

A man among another and another.

A life ever-altered; a family ever-transformed.

I remember him, and his trauma.

We lay the wreath, and sound The Last Post, and we salute him.

Because, if it were not for him, I would not be.

A victim of the times.

I watch you follow in his footsteps with honour and dignity.

The footsteps of a warrior, the echoes of a ghost

Ellen O'Brien

Dedicated to John Patrick O'Brien



## Handover of Decade of Centenaries Photographs

By John F Sheehan

On 30 September 2022, Commandant Daniel Ayiotis, the Officer-In-Charge of the Military Archives in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin, accepted on behalf of the Defence Forces the 27,000 photographs of Patrick Hugh Lynch, Oliver Breen and Danny Tiernan documenting the various Decade of Centenaries Commemorative Events of recent years. Pictured below is Patrick Hugh Lynch speaking at the handover.

This remarkable repository of historical photographs will be available to view in due course. Our Association features many times in them.



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*Spectamur Agendo*  
(We are judged by our deeds)