

The Story of Lieutenant Robert Stanton

6th Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Robert Stanton was the first son born to Mr. and Mrs. John A. Stanton. He was born in Cork in 1886, two years after they were married. He attended school at the prestigious Cork Christian Brothers CBC. He was a bright young lad and in 1903 he followed his father's footsteps and went to Trinity College, Dublin to study Law. He graduated in 1907 at the age of twenty-one, and obtained the Trinity Gold Medal which was only awarded to honours graduates. Upon his graduation, Robert returned to Cork and worked in his father's law practice. The first day Robert walked into his father's office to practice as a solicitor must have been a proud day indeed for his father. Robert worked with his father for five years and rose to the position of senior partner in the firm.

Robert was now twenty-six years of age. He met a local girl, and after a brief courtship, they wanted to get married. His father did not approve of the marriage, as it was rumoured that the girl had a family history of TB, and therefore, in the eyes of Robert's father, John A, "Such a marriage would not be sound from a health point of view".⁽¹⁾ At least that was the excuse he gave for his discontentment with the marriage. Robert respected his father's wishes and never married. In 1912, respect for one's father was put above all else. As a footnote to this particular part of the story, the young lady whom Robert wanted to marry, never married either. She died in Cork in 1986 at the age of ninety-two.

As a result of this disagreement with his father, Robert moved to Clones, Co. Monaghan, where he worked as a Solicitor from 1912 to 1914. The Great War broke out on the 4th August 1914, and with it came a fever of excitement and adventure, which spread among the young elite professional classes of Dublin; a fever which disguised all its horror behind a veil of youthful excitement and innocence. Like most elite universities in the British Isles at the time, Trinity College had an Officer Training Corps, OTC. According to Trinity College records, between the 4th August 1914 and March 1915, Trinity OTC had supplied 350 junior officers to the new armies.⁽²⁾ Robert Stanton was a member of this corps. On the 16th September 1914, with war being only five weeks old, Robert received his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant into the 6th Battalion of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

The 6th Battalion of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers were

attached to the 30th Brigade of the 10th (Irish) Division. This division was one of the New Army Divisions, which was comprised of volunteers who joined up the Service Battalions of the regular Irish regiments. The 30th Brigade were sent to the Curragh for preliminary training. The training that Robert was to receive could not have prepared him, or any of his chums, for what they were about to encounter. Towards the end of April and early May of 1915, the 10th (Irish) Division assembled in Basingstoke for more concentrated training in the art of survival and killing.

At the end of May 1915 the 10th (Irish) Division took part in the traditional end of training march past. Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener and the Divisional Commander, General Mahon, took the salute.

According to the divisional historian, Major Bryan Cooper, "the Dublin Fusiliers wanted to march past to the tune of St. Patrick's Day, much to the annoyance of the Irish Guards and the Connaught Rangers".

On the 27th of June 1915, the 10th (Irish) Division received its orders to "hold itself in readiness for service in the Dardanelles".⁽³⁾

On the 5th July 1915, the 10th (Irish) Division set sail from Devonport in the south of England. As they set sail, some of the men in the ranks sang "God Save Ireland".⁽⁴⁾ Bad planning had resulted in the Division losing some of its fighting units before it had even set sail. It called at Malta and Alexandria before arriving at the island of Mudros in the Aegean Sea.

The Dublin Fusiliers had already been involved in heavy fighting in April at Cape Helles, at the mouth of the Dardanelles. This is where the famous collier ship, *The River Clyde*, landed the Dublins and Munsters on the beaches at Cape Helles. The slaughter that followed this landing is another sad story in this whole tragedy. Stalemate resulted from the tragedy at Cape Helles, the powers-that-be commanding these men decided to land elsewhere on the peninsula. Suvla Bay was the place chosen. The objective of the 10th (Irish) Division was to take a hilly ground overlooking the bay, called Kiretch-Tepe-Sirt. Part of this high ground was known as Chocolate Hill and Green Hill. On the morning of the 7th August 1915, amidst total confusion, the 6th Battalion of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers, in which Lieut. Robert Stanton was a serving officer, landed on the beaches of Suvla Bay. Their commander was a man

named Brigadier General Hill. It was said that he was ill at the time of the landing, and had to be replaced by a General Hammersly.⁽³⁾ A certain amount of the Kiretch had been taken at great human cost the night before, by the 11th Manchester Regiment. At 1.30 p.m. the Munster's were the first of the Irish to advance up the slopes of the Kiretch, followed by the 6th Dublin's.

The tragic events on this day are described in great detail by Major Bryan Cooper, the Divisional historian who was there.⁽³⁾ At the end of that day, i.e. the 7th August, when the roll call was taken, Lieutenant Robert Stanton was reported wounded and missing. In fact he was dead. Robert was twenty-nine years of age when he died on that famous charge against the Turks by the Dubs on the slopes of Kiretch-Tepe-Sirt. His body was never recovered. On the 16th of August, Robert's father, John A. received a telegram from the Secretary of The War Office. It stated the following message.

J. Stanton, 47 South Mall, Cork.

Deeply regret to inform you that 2nd Lieut R. Stanton, 6th Dublin Fusiliers is reported wounded and missing, believed killed in action between the 7th and 10th August. Lord Kitchener expresses his sympathy.⁽⁴⁾

On the 19th of August, three days later, Robert's father received another telegram, this time from Buckingham Palace. It stated the following message.

To J. Stanton Esq, 47 South Mall Cork.

The King and Queen deeply regret the loss you and the army have sustained by the reported death of 2nd Lieut R. Stanton in the service of his country. Their Majesties truly sympathise with you in your sorrow.⁽⁵⁾

The envelope in which the telegram came to John A. and Kate had the words "No charge for delivery" stamped on the back. How kind it was of his employers to think of that. The effect of Robert's death on the Stanton family, particularly his father, John A. was shattering.

The fact that the telegram from the war office stated the words "wounded and missing believed killed in action" suggested to John A. and Kate that there might have been a chance of Robert being alive . . . that he may even have been a prisoner-of-war in Turkey.

John A. made enquiries about the welfare of Robert, but there is no record of whom these enquiries were made through. However, the last hopes John A. and Kate had about their son being a prisoner-of-war were shattered, when, on the 26th January 1916, they received yet another telegram from the War Office, from a Major General F. S. Robb. It was one of those

standard reply letters one receives from faceless civil servants who process the names contained in such letters, as if they were processing sheep. Robert was just a name. It stated the following.

Sir,

I am directed to inform you that a reply has now been received to the Enquiry Form relative to 2nd Lt R. Stanton, 6th Royal Dublin Fus, sent to Turkey on your behalf. The reply has come from the American Embassy in Constantinople. It is regretted that it is to the effect that this officer has not been made a Prisoner-of-War. I have the honour to be your obedient servant, F. S. Robb, Major General, Military Secretary.⁽⁶⁾

One must wonder, had it not been for the terrible wastage of such a valuable generation of bright professional young Irishmen, what contribution would they have made to the future development of their country.

May Robert and all his comrades who fell at Suvla Bay in August 1915 rest in peace.

Article by TOM BURKE

The name of Lieutenant Robert Stanton appears in the following publications.

Our Heroes – A supplement to the magazine Irish Life, dated 26th of November 1915.

Neill's "Blue Caps." The history of the 1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Officer's Roll of honour, page 165.

The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli by Major Bryan Cooper. First published in 1918, currently published by Irish Academic Press.

Lieutenant Stanton's name, along with many more of his Irish comrades, is inscribed on the Helles Memorial, near the Helles lighthouse, on the Gallipoli peninsula. This memorial is dedicated to those men who were never found for proper burial.

A Memorial Plaque with the names of Catholic Officers and men who died in the Great War is mounted on a wall in Haddington Road Catholic Church. Lieutenant Stanton's name is listed thereon.

Along with his younger brother, Captain George Stanton, Robert is mentioned on the Memorial Wall at Trinity College, Dublin.

References

- ⁽¹⁾ Recollections of Robert Stanton, who is the grandson of John A. and Kate, and grandnephew of Lieut Robert Stanton, killed in action at the Dardanelles.
- ⁽²⁾ Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War. By Dr. Terrence Denman. Published by Irish Academic Press, 1992.
- ⁽³⁾ The 10th (Irish) Division in Gallipoli. By Major Bryan Cooper. First published in 1919. Later published by Irish Academic Press, 1993.
- ⁽⁴⁾ A telegraph from The War Office, dated the 16th of August 1915, addressed to Mr. J. Stanton, informing him that his son, Lieut Robert Stanton was reported wounded and missing between 7th and 10th of August.
- ⁽⁵⁾ A telegram from Buckingham palace, dated the 19th of August 1915, addressed to Mr. J. Stanton, expressing regrets from their Majesties, on the reported death of Lieut Robert Stanton.
- ⁽⁶⁾ A telegram from The War Office, dated the 26th of January 1916, addressed to Mr. J. Stanton, stating that their enquiries through the American Embassy in Constantinople had been unsuccessful in tracing Lieut Robert Stanton as a prisoner-of-war.

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The story of his uncle, Lieut Robert Stanton is presented in the first issue of our journal written by Tom Burke.

6 Money. At our last meeting in the Civic Museum we collected £150. Many thanks. This will go towards administration cost.

7 Brian Moroney has put some ideas down on paper for the social calendar of our Association.

A Christmas get together.

Consider a musical evening with songs and music from the period 1914/1918. Brian suggest we think along the lines of "The Good Old Days".

Consider membership cards resembling a Dubs Pay Book and serial number.

Plan a slide show and talk using photos of old Dublin. Perhaps use the Phoenix Park Center.

Offer honorary membership to some people.

8 Any person who has not completed a membership application form please do so as it helps keep records up to date. Annual membership fee is £5. Cheques made payable to "The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association". Send the form and cheque to The Secretary, The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association., The Dublin Civic Museum, 58 South William St. D2... Application forms will be available at the final lecture on the 8th of March.

9 Correspondence. See attached letters from An Taoiseach Mr John Bruton and An Uachtarán Mrs Mary Robinson.

The name of Lieutenant Robert Stanton is remembered in the following publications.

- 1 Our Heroes - A supplement to the magazine Irish Life dated 26th of November 1915.
- 2 Neill's "Blue Caps" .The history of the 1st battalion The Royal Dublibn Fusiliers. Officer's Roll of Honour. Page 165.
- 3 The Tenth (Irish) Division in Gallipoli By Major Bryan Cooper first published in 1918,currently published by Irish Academic Press.
- 4 Lieutenant Stanton's name, along with many more of his Irish comrades, is inscribed on the Helles Memorial near the Helles light house on the Galipili peninsula .This memorial was dedicated to those men who were never found for proper burial.
- 5 A Memorial Plaque with the names of Catholic Officers and men who died in the Great War is mounted on a wall in Hadington Road Catholic Church Lieutenant Stanton's name is listed.
- 6 Along with his younger brother Captain George Stanton, Robert is mentioned on the Memorial Wall at Trinity College Dublin.

References.

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- 2 Ireland's Unknown Soldiers. The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War. By Dr Terrence Denman. Published by Irish Academic Press 1992.
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8 Publications on the history of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers in possession of Johnathan Maguire.

1. The Regimental records of the 1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers 1841 to 1904 by Lt. Col. S.G.Bird .
2. The Regimental records of the 1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers 1642 to 1842 by Col G.J. Harcourt.
3. Services of the 102nd regiment of Foot. By Col . Railies.
4. Historical records of the Madras European Regiment. By Maj . J.G.S. Neill
5. Services of the Madras European Regiment during the Burmese War. By Lieut Butler
6. The Pals at Suvla . by Hanna.
7. A pocket history of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. By Sgt . Maj . C V Brumby .Also titled as Recruits History.
8. Crown and Company.The History of the 2nd Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers.Vol 1 by Maj. A.E. Maingwaring, Vol 2 by Col. H. C. Wylly.
9. The 2nd Battalion of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers in the South African War. by Maj Rumer and Maj. A. E. Maingwaring.
10. Historical records of the 103rd Royal Bombay Fusiliers.
11. Records of H.M's 1st Regiment of Bombay European Inf.Fusiliers.
12. Neills Blue Caps Vol 1 and 2 by Col H. C. Wylly.The history of the 1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Every year on the first Sunday in June, The Royal Irish Regiments Association hold a commemorative parade to the Cenotaph, to remember ALL Irishmen who died in both World Wars. The parade is led by a piper to the Cenotaph. our Association has been invited to attend this years' ceremony. Anybody wishing to attend can contact: Mr. Brendan Mac Donagh, in London. Tel. 0044 181 7890540. This might be a nice opportunity to show off the Dubs blazer badges.

Visits

Mr. Eddie Lendrum from the Somme Association is arranging a visit to Gallipoli this summer. Anybody wishing to go with Eddie can contact him at the Somme Association in Belfast. Tel. 08012327 61600.

As an Association, it would be nice if we were to plan a visit to the Somme Heritage in Newtownards. it would entail hiring a bus, travelling to the heritage Centre, getting a tour of the Centre, lunch at the Centre, and returning to Dublin. This trip could be arranged for some time in June or July.

In the minutes, reference was made to a remembrance service for Major Willie Redmond, of the 6th Bat. R.I. Reg. Anyone wishing to attend this service can avail of the following contact in Belgium.

Mr. Erwin Ureel,
Schierveldstrade 110-112,
8880 Roeselare, Belgium.
Tel. 0032 51 205500.

A group tour of the buildings at Island Bridge can be arranged. If members think of other interesting local places our Association could visit, please let us know. No doubt an eventual trip to the Somme would be nice.

NEWS ITEMS

The current exhibition at the Dublin Civic Museum will finish around the end of March. The Office of Public Works and The Phoenix Park Visitors Centre have kindly made available their facilities to present our exhibition in the Centre. It is a beautiful spot, the room being ideal for the exhibition. The Centre has a restaurant, audio visual centre/lecture theatre and excellent car parking facilities. Should we wish, we can use the audio visual centre to present lectures and any audio visual material we may come across about the Great War.

There was one little hitch to this project. The Office of Public Works, who is responsible for the Park Centre, had no secure display cabinets. The National Museum in Kildare Street have offered us the use of twelve glass/wooden coin display cabinets. they will however require painting, so anyone with a good hand for painting will be welcomed.

The Board of Works are glad to have us use the exhibition room at the Centre, and have offered us the use of the Centre for several months. A different group of people will now be able to see the exhibition . . . mostly families out for a Sunday stroll in the Park.

Please tell all your friends and relatives about our move. We hope to be in the park at the beginning of April. perhaps we could celebrate this opening event in some way. Suggestions will be welcome. In the meantime, why don't you pay a visit to the Phoenix Park Centre, and view the new Dubs exhibition centre for yourself.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association has been granted Honorary Corporate Membership of The Somme Association. In turn, The Somme Association is a member of the RDF Assoc.

Anybody who is interested in joining another Association, namely The Gallipoli Association, can do so by applying for membership to the following address.

The Membership Secretary,
Mr. Norman Pollitt,
9 Garnet Court, Marlow-on-Thames,
Bucks SL7 2AN, England.

Schull Books, Ballydehob, Co. Cork, Tel. 028 37317, have informed us that they will issue a discount of 10% to any member of The RDF Assoc. who wishes to purchase the history of the 1st Battalion, i.e. "Neill's Blue Caps".

Mr. Robert Stanton, nephew of Lieut Robert Stanton, 6th Battalion RDF, KIA Suvla Bay, August 1915, tells us that there is a commemorative plaque to some of the Dubs who fell at Suvla, on the wall of Haddington Road Church. The plaque is in need of some minor repair. Robert is looking for a spare retired pair of hands to help him restore this memorial plaque. Please contact Robert at Tel. 2691 320.

Publications on the history of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers in possession of Johnathan Maguire

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AIMS OF THE ASSOCIATION

Promote a Permanent Museum

A working Committee made up of Tom Burke, Brian Moroney, Sean Connolly, Nick Broughal, Johnathan Maguire and Paddy Hogarty, recently had a meeting with one of the curators of the new National Museum in Collins Barracks. Sean Connelly arranged the meeting, the purpose of which was to present a case to the national Museum for the inclusion of a permanent display to all the disbanded Irish regiments, particularly The Royal Dublin Fusiliers, in the new Museum. The meeting was friendly, and the response from the curator was positive in every respect. There may be a section of the new museum dedicated to the disbanded Irish Regiments, however, as yet, no commitment in terms of space has been allocated to the Dubs, or indeed, any other Regiment. The theme of this military section in the new Museum will be one which represents the human aspects of Irish Soldiering down through the ages, and not specifically to military hardware. The Museum wants to present a balanced view of the period 1914–1918, and is keen to be seen to do so. They value any assistance we can offer them in obtaining this ideal.

The group was brought on a tour of the new Museum, and shown the proposed site for the military section. The curator also stressed that the Museum will be very positive in its approach to organisations such as The RDF Assoc. The curator told us that we would be more than welcome, indeed encouraged, to hold meetings, lectures, exhibitions and seminars in the new Museum. These facilities will not be available until 1998/99. The committee agreed with the curator that we should present a report to the Museum, outlining our plans and ambitions for our association's input to the Museum, both in the short and long term. This report is at present being prepared.

Provide Historical Research

Many people have expressed an interest in learning the mechanics of researching a relative who may have been in the Dubs. Johnathan Maguire will present a paper on this subject soon. Dates, time and venue for this talk, are to be arranged. Johnathan has many rare books relating to the history of the Dubs. He can be contacted at Portadown 0801762 81225.

Mr. Peter Simkins, Senior Research Historian at The Imperial War Museum in London, has agreed to help members of The RDF Assoc. on any historical research they are engaged on. Peter states, "We will be happy to offer advice on sources and research to any members of

the Association, and they will of course be welcome in turn to look at relevant material in the Museum's collection. It is, however, not possible for us to undertake detailed long-term research for them".

Mr. Peter Simkins can be contacted at The Imperial War Museum, at 0044 171 416 5350.

Encourage Teachers to bring School Children

Paddy Hogarty has been looking after this part of the project. We have written to thirty-three Secondary Schools in the Dublin area, specifically targeting the Transition year and leaving Cert students. Apart from a few leaving Cert. students of Austin Fennessey, who attended a previous lecture, to date, not one school has come back and expressed an interest in viewing the exhibition. One school, who was not written to, namely The Wilson's Hospital, from Westmeath, will attend the exhibition and a talk given by Paddy.

Publish a Journal

This is the first issue of our Journal. it is your Journal, so if you would like to present any ideas, notices, comments, or indeed publish any research work on past members of the Dubs, please feel free to do so. The Journal will be an ideal way of communicating to other members of the association what areas of history you are interested in. It would be nice if each issue had an article about the Dubs, so if you want to write about your father or grandfather, start writing. In keeping with tradition, the following is an extract from "Neill's Blue Caps".

Battalion Magazine

Early in 1922, the desirability of issuing a Battalion magazine was brought forward, and the Commanding Officer asked Capt. A. L. Elsworth, M.B.E. to assume the duties of Editor. The magazine was first issued in the month of February 1922, and was called "The Blue Cap". It was decided to make an issue monthly, and to distribute it among past and present "Blue Caps", thereby maintaining the traditional esprit de corps of the "Blue Caps". Unfortunately, after the issue of three numbers, the order for disbandment came along and terminated what was already proving to be a valuable asset to the battalion.

Ironically, issue four of "The Blue Cap" is being published in March 1997, seventy-five years later.

Participate in formal Remembrance Ceremonies

Each November, on remembrance Sunday, a service is held in St. Patrick's Cathedral. It would be nice if a member of our Association was to parade the Old Comrades Association Colour at this service. Arrangements would have to be made with the Dean of St. Patrick's and The British Legion.