

The Old Tough

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



Issue 12: Spring 2024

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of *The Old Tough* newsletter.

It has been a remarkably busy few months for the Association with our Open Day on 9 March last and the planning for our excursions to Kildare (in May), Liverpool (in July), Cork (in August) and the Somme (in September). The Dubs' News article in this Old Tough reports on the success of our Open Day, outlines a forthcoming lecture by member John O'Brien on the Machine Gun Corps in WW1 and gives an update on our plans for the Kildare, Liverpool, Cork and Somme trips. We hope that you will manage to join us on at least one of these excursions. If you have not been on one previously, be assured that you will find them both informative and enjoyable.

In this edition of *The Old Tough*, we highlight an isolated WW1 memorial in the Vale of Clara deep in the Wicklow countryside on which three local men are remembered, two of them Dubs. This beautiful location will undoubtedly be a stop on a future Association excursion to Co Wicklow.

Other features in this edition of the newsletter include:

- news about the recent launch of an online map of some 360 British Army barracks which were present on the island of Ireland at some time between 1690 to 1921. Initial details about this island-wide research project were included in the Autumn 2023 *Old Tough*;
- a fundraising lecture about the disbandment of the six Irish Regiments in 1922, the proceeds of which will help the families of British ex-servicemen living in Ireland, and
- a listing of the remembrance events scheduled for the next five months or so in which the Association plans to participate. Members are encouraged to attend as many as possible in their local areas.

We hope that you will find these articles informative. We continue to encourage members to give us feedback on the articles in *The Old Tough* and on the general work of the Association. Suggestions and contributions from members for future editions of this newsletter or our annual journal, *The Blue Cap*, are also always welcome. All such communications can be sent to rdfa1918@gmail.com.

The Editorial Committee

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

Dubs' News

RDFA Open Day, 9 March 2024

In cooperation with the National Museum of Ireland, the Association held an Open Day in Collins Barracks, Dublin, on Saturday, 9 March 2024. The event included:

- a talk by our President, Tom Burke MBE, on the challenges faced by the soldiers who returned to Ireland after WW1;
- the premiere of a documentary on the ongoing research by members, John O'Brien and Seán Ryan, which is locating the graves of former Dublin Fusiliers in Mount Jerome Cemetery, Dublin. Close to 100 Fusilier graves have been identified to date;
- a display of Dublin Fusilier artefacts and memorabilia by member, David Buckley (see the accompanying photo – courtesy of Paul Appleby);
- an advice desk by member, Thomas Murphy, for attendees who were seeking information on the WW1 service of their relatives.



We were pleased that about 200 people attended the Open Day. All attendees enjoyed Tom's talk and the documentary premiere. The music afterwards brought the day to a memorable close.

A new brochure on the Association and its role was circulated to interested attendees that day, and copies of our recent publications were also on display. The new brochure is now on the Association's website, www.greatwar.ie.

Tangible outcomes of the Open Day included the recruitment of some new members to the Association and sales of our Brief History of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers (which was published in 2022 to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the disbandment of the Regiment).

Overall, we were very pleased with the success of the Open Day and envisage that it will become an annual event.

Presentation on the Machine Gun Corps in WW1, 20 April 2024 (Saturday)

Under the auspices of the Western Front Association, member John O'Brien will deliver a talk about the Machine Gun Corps in WW1 on Saturday, 20 April next, at 2 pm in Pearse Street Library, Dublin 2. John is also a member of the Machine Gun Corps Association, as his grandfather, Private John Patrick O'Brien, served with the Dublin Fusiliers in WW1 before transferring to the Machine Gun Corps. John's talk will cover the following topics:

- the establishment and deployment of the Machine Gun Corps in WW1;
- its relationship with the disbanded Irish Regiments;
- the Vickers Machine Gun;
- the theory of small arms fire, weapons platforms and crews, and
- the career of Machine Gunner Private John Patrick O'Brien.

Members are encouraged to support John by attending his interesting lecture.

Day Trip to Co Kildare, 10 May 2024 (Friday)

Our Membership Secretary, Suzanne O'Neill, is finalising the arrangements for our day trip to Athy, The Curragh and Naas in Co Kildare on Friday, 10 May 2024. Kildare was one of four counties designated as the recruitment area for the Royal Dublin Fusiliers from 1881, and we will be visiting areas of regimental interest there including:

- the WW1 memorial in the Old St Michael's Cemetery, Athy, which contains the names of 55 Dublin Fusiliers associated with Kildare who died in the War. As part of the remembrance ceremony for these men, member Adrian Fingleton will talk about Private Patrick Mulhall, who served with the Dublin Fusiliers and the Machine Gun Corps during the War and whose death is remembered on the memorial;
- the Curragh Military Museum where we will be given a guided tour by Colonel Des Healy. Among the items of interest there are artefacts relating to Private Frank Kelly, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was killed in action in October 1916 on the Somme;

- the Clock Tower and Entrance Arch of the former Depot of the Dublin Fusiliers in Naas, where local historian Gerald McCarthy will give us a talk on the history of the Barracks in the town;
- Saint David's Church in Naas which contains memorials to former Dublin Fusilier officers. Here, Stephanie Jones will talk to us about Saint David's, those who are remembered therein and the parish's role in supporting the educational and religious needs of the families of those Fusiliers who belonged to the Church of Ireland or the Church of England whilst based in Naas.

Approximate timings for each location are 9.30 am (Athy), 11.30 am (The Curragh), 2.30 pm (Naas Depot) and 3.30 pm (Saint David's Church). It is envisaged that most attendees will arrive by train to Athy and depart by train from Sallins (outside Naas). A hired bus will ferry members between Athy Station and Sallins and all intermediate points, for which there will be a small charge. Anyone opting to drive to Athy will park at the Station and avail of the hired bus for the day's events. The bus will return to Athy Station at the end of the day. Members will organise their own rail travel to Athy and from Sallins.

To date, over 20 members have confirmed their interest in the day trip, and Suzanne will relay the final details (including cost) to these members in late April. If you wish to join the trip and have not yet notified an interest, please contact Suzanne at oldpound1@gmail.com as soon as possible.

Trip to Liverpool, 2-5 July 2024 (Tuesday to Friday)

Member George Jones is making progress in arranging our planned four-day/three-night members' trip to Liverpool on the above dates to visit locations of WW1 and general interest. The planned stops include:

- the Museum of Liverpool (for a history of the City and the King's Liverpool Regiment);
- the Maritime Museum which includes a section on the sinking of *RMS Lusitania* off Co Cork in May 1915 (see the photo of one of *Lusitania*'s four propellers on the following page – courtesy of <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/>);
- the Anglican Cathedral (which contains various regimental standards and WW1 memorials);
- the memorial to Noel Chavasse, a medical doctor and the only WW1 soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross and bar;
- the Royal Naval Association Memorial and Club (the 10th Battalion of the Dublin Fusiliers served with the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division for a time during WW1), and
- the Bombed Out Church (containing an Irish Famine Memorial and a sculpture recalling the Christmas Truce of 1914 in which the Dubs participated).

Travel will be by coach and ferry to and from Dublin City. Four days of travel, three nights' accommodation, breakfasts and evening meals will cost about €675 per person sharing. A €165 supplement will apply for those availing of a single room.

So far, about 20 members have expressed an interest in the Liverpool trip, and George will contact them in the coming weeks about costs and arrangements as plans are finalised. If you wish to join

the trip and have not yet indicated your interest, please contact George at george@cdcltd.net as soon as possible.



Day Trip to Cork, 15 August 2024 (Thursday)

Member John Sheehan has commenced planning a day trip to Cork to include visits to Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral to see its WW1 memorials and the Museum in Collins Barracks. A provisional date of Thursday, 15 August, has been set for the trip. It is envisaged that members will travel to and from Cork by train and that a hired bus will ferry people to the various sights around Cork City. John will be in touch with members when the arrangements have been settled.

Trip to the Somme, 9-14 September 2024 (Monday to Saturday)

Our Chairman, Brian Moroney, has made substantial progress in developing the itinerary for our September trip to the Somme Battlefield. This year, we are travelling overland (ferry and coach) in both directions via the Dublin/Holyhead and Hull/Port of Rotterdam services. We will be based in Mouscron in Belgium for three nights (Tuesday to Thursday) and will overnight on the Hull/Port of Rotterdam ferry on the outward and return legs (Monday and Friday nights).

Four full days of sightseeing are envisaged taking in the length of the Somme Battlefield, visiting a dozen locations from 'Funky Villas' (Foncquevilliers) in the north to the lost village of 'Fay' in the south. Areas of Irish interest to be visited include Thiepval, the Ulster Tower, Ginchy and Guillemont.

The estimated price is €1,240 which will include the cost of all ferry crossings, bed, breakfast and dinner on both legs of the Hull/Port of Rotterdam ferry and in our 4-star hotel in Mouscron, three days lunches as we tour the Somme Battlefield and entrance fees to sites that may have a visitors' cover charge. A single room supplement of €190 will apply. Refreshments, additional meals or ferry upgrades will be at people's own expense as is our normal procedure. The Irish driver of our luxury coach will also act as our travel coordinator.

If you have not previously expressed an interest in this trip and now wish to do so, please contact Brian at brianmoroney55@gmail.com as soon as possible. Brian will keep those going on the trip updated on developments over the coming months.

Privates Christopher Meegan and William Murray, Royal Dublin Fusiliers**Paul Appleby**

Just off the R755 road between Laragh and Rathdrum in Co Wicklow stands the Catholic Church at Clara Vale. This chapel of ease within the Parish of Rathdrum was built around 1799 and is situated beyond a narrow six arched bridge over the Avonmore River. This single carriageway bridge, dating from about 1680, is thought to be the oldest bridge in Wicklow. The Church's idyllic location has made it a popular wedding venue.

After walking with friends in a nearby forest last year, we returned to the Church for a picnic lunch and were surprised to find in its grounds a memorial to three local men who lost their lives in the Great War (see the following photograph – courtesy of the author). Although no attestation records survive for the two Dubs who are remembered there, my research has uncovered some information on the men involved.

**Private Christopher Meegan 17729**

Despite Army records and this memorial indicating that Christopher's birth year was 1895, his official birth record states that Christopher 'Magan' was born in Ballyhad on 1 January 1892. His parents' first names were Edward (a labourer) and Mary (née Kavanagh). In the 1911 Census, Christopher Meegan is recorded as an 18 year old general labourer living in the townland of Ballyhad Lower, close to the Church at Clara Vale.

After enlisting at Arklow, Christopher's first War experience was in Gallipoli on 16 October 1915, most likely as part of reinforcements to the Dubs' 1st Battalion. In his short period of service there, he was wounded in both legs and suffered illness. On 29 January 1916 in an article about soldiers' leave, *The Wicklow People* reported that Private C Meegan, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, had returned home to Rathdrum due to his wounds and sickness.

After returning to active duty, Christopher was with the Dubs' 9th Battalion in mid-1916. Unfortunately he died of his wounds on 16 September 1916 in Rouen, west of Paris, some distance from the Somme front line. Another six Dubs of the 8th and 9th Battalions also died in Rouen between 12 and 16 September. The dates suggest that these men were part of the successful assault by both Battalions on Ginchy on 9 September which claimed the lives of over 150 Dubs (including Lieutenant Tom Kettle, the noted barrister, poet and Irish Volunteer). The 1915 Star, Victory and British War medals were later awarded in recognition of Christopher's War service.

The inscription over Christopher's grave (reference B.19.7) in St Sever Cemetery, Rouen, reads as follows: "FAREWELL DEAR CHRISTY SWEET WAS YOUR NAME IN LIFE WE LOVED YOU IN DEATH THE SAME".

Private William Murray 27974

Although Army records and the above memorial give William's birth year as 1891, the official birth record states that William 'Murry' was born on 30 November 1890 at Ballyhad, Rathdrum. His parents' first names were John (a farmer) and Kate (née Richardson).

It is known that William enlisted in the Dubs at Naas. In his soldier's will dated 22 October 1917, he nominates his sister, Kate, of 'Ballyhead', Rathdrum, as the beneficiary of his estate if he died. At the time, William was in 'E' Company of the Dubs' 3rd Battalion, and he may have been about to depart for the Western Front.

It was as a member of the 6th Battalion that William was killed on 8 October 1918, just five weeks before the War ended. In attacks that day on German positions near Villers-Outréaux in northern France, at least 14 Dublin Fusiliers were killed. These 14 men are buried in the nearby Beaulieu British Cemetery, about 20 kms south-west of Le Cateau. The Victory and British War medals were later awarded in recognition of William's War service.

The inscription on his grave (reference C.6) in the Cemetery reads as follows: "MAY HIS SOUL AND THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD REST IN PEACE. AMEN"

Sources

WW1 War Diaries of the 1st, 6th and 9th Battalions, Royal Dublin Fusiliers (UK National Archives)

<https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/>

<https://www.cwgc.org/>

<https://www.findmypast.ie/>

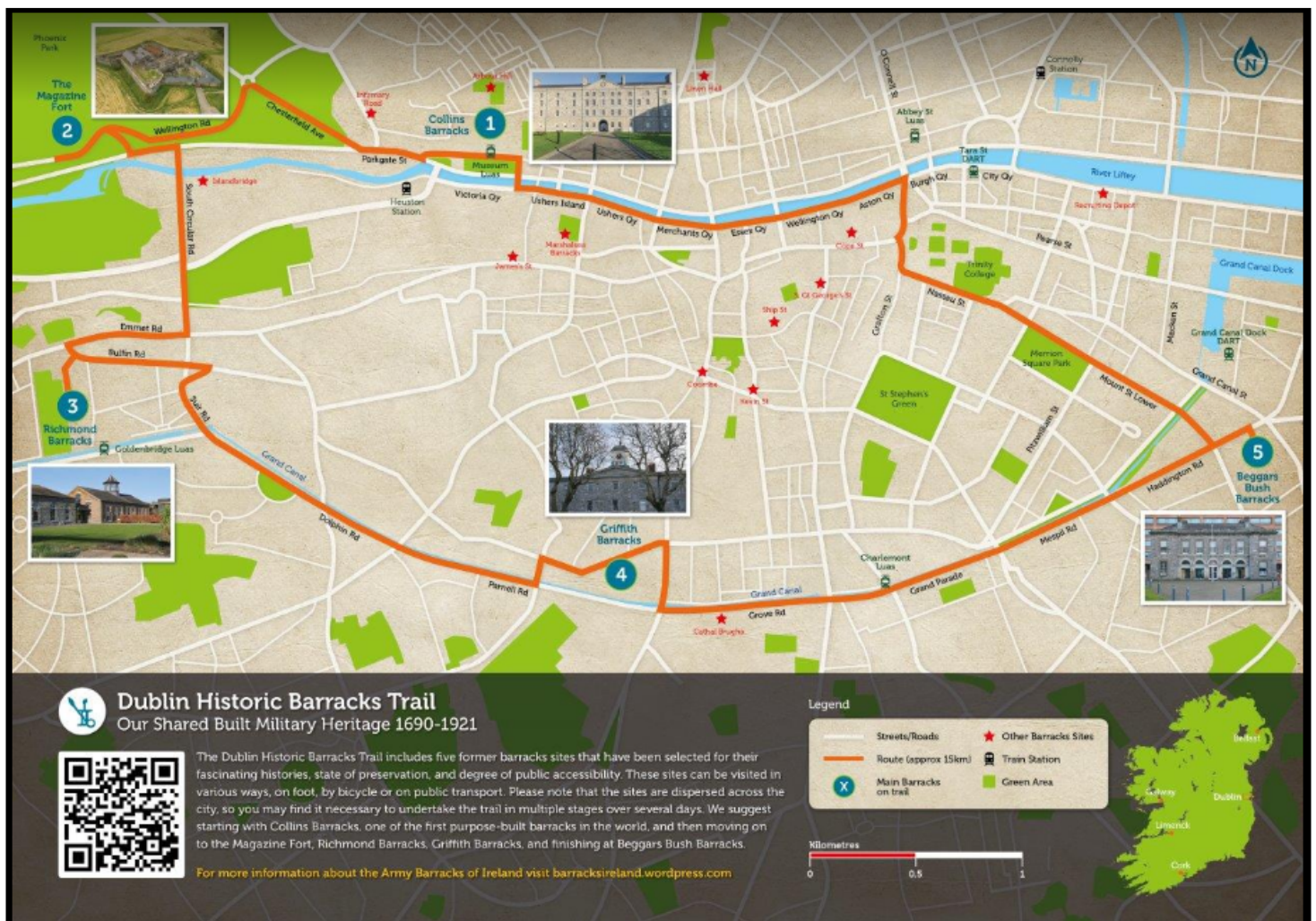
<https://www.fold3.com/>

<https://www.irishgenealogy.ie/en/>

www.census.nationalarchives.ie

- the Dublin Historic Barracks Trail which features Collins Barracks, the Magazine Fort, Richmond Barracks, Griffith Barracks and Beggars Bush Barracks;
- the Ireland West Historic Barracks Trail which includes Enniskillen Castle, Main Street West and Rock Barracks (both in Ballyshannon), Green Fort (Sligo), Ballina, Castlebar and Westport;
- the North Ulster Historic Barracks Trail which features Ebrington Barracks (Derry/Londonderry), Culmore (at the mouth of the River Foyle in Co Derry), Greencastle Fort, Lenan Head Fort, Dunree Fort and Ned’s Point Fort (all in Co Donegal with the latter three located on the eastern side of Lough Swilly).

A brochure is being produced on each Trail. The Dublin and North Ulster Trail brochures are already available. An extract from the Dublin brochure showing the featured five barrack locations follows.



A minority of the barrack locations on these Trails are not generally open to the public at present (e.g., the Magazine Fort in Dublin). In other cases, only a small number of the original buildings remain. This applies in Westport where just the former barrack hospital and four officers’ houses survive as residential dwellings.

The project team welcomes feedback from the general public on the information placed on its website. A contact form for this purpose is available there.

Lecture on the Disbandment of the Irish Regiments in 1922

The Republic of Ireland/Northern Ireland Region of the UK's Armed Forces charity, the Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA), is holding a fundraising lecture on the above topic at the Masonic Hall, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2, on Monday, 29 April 2024, at 11 am. The entry fee is €25 per person. If you are interested in attending, please email the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association at rdfa1918@gmail.com for a copy of the SSAFA application form, and we will send it to you. A completed form and associated €25 cheque must be returned to SSAFA no later than 24 April next, in order to attend the lecture.

The lecture will be given by Sir Anthony Weldon Bt, a former member of the Irish Guards, the current President of the Leinster Regiment Association and a member of the Combined Irish Regiments' Association. In November 2022, he made the address in Windsor at the Centenary Service to commemorate the handing over of the Colours of the disbanded Irish Regiments to King George V in 1922. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and the other disbanded regimental associations were represented at this Service.

In his talk, Sir Anthony will cover the lead up to the Regiments' disbandment, highlight their key historical records and discuss the military legacy lost, the way it affected those who were serving in the Regiments and the sort of reception they returned to in their communities. These issues, Sir Anthony will say, were complex and emotionally charged. He will note that today the disbanded regiments have active associations which were reflected in an incredibly well attended Commemoration Service in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, on the actual Centenary of 12 June 2022. At this year's Annual Remembrance Parade for Irish soldiers at the Cenotaph in London, Sir Anthony will lay a wreath on behalf of all the disbanded Irish regimental associations.

SSAFA is a charity which is registered in Ireland with the Charities Regulator (no 20006082), and it cares for the welfare of those living in Ireland with past service in the British Forces and of their families. In 2023, the Republic of Ireland Branch dealt with more than 1,500 cases/visits and disbursed about €425,000 from the ex-service benevolent funds. Money raised from this lecture will help to continue the Association's work in the State.

It will be of interest to members that a distant relative of Sir Anthony's was Captain George Anthony Weldon, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was the first British officer to die in the Anglo-Boer War at the Battle of Talana on 20 October 1899. Captain Weldon is remembered on the Fusiliers' Arch in Dublin and in Saint David's Church in Naas.

Remembrance Events, April to August 2024

Various remembrance events for the fallen of WW1 and other conflicts take place annually. Other events of remembrance are held from time to time. The following list indicates the known public remembrance events for the next five months, and the Association expects to be involved in some capacity in most of these. An asterisk (*) beside a date below signifies that the RDFA Standard is scheduled to be present for the event.

Date/Time	Event	Place
21 April, 4.30 pm*	ANZAC Forces Remembrance	Kilkenny City Peace Park
25 April, 6.30 am	ANZAC Day	Grangegorman Military Cemetery, Dublin 7
25 April, evening	Service of Remembrance	Saint Ann’s Church, Dawson Street, Dublin 2
16 June, 10.30 am*	Combined Irish Regiments Annual Parade	Whitehall, London
30 June, 8 pm*	Last Post Ceremony	Menin Gate, Ypres/leper, Belgium
1 July, 4.30 pm*	Somme Commemoration	Ginchy Cross, Guillemont, France
2 July, 8 pm*	Last Post Ceremony	Menin Gate, Ypres/leper, Belgium
13 July, noon*	Somme Commemoration	War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge, Dublin 7
14 July, 11 am	National Day of Commemoration	Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin 7 (to be confirmed)
18 August, 3 pm*	WW1 Commemoration and Wreath-Laying	Dungarvan Castle, Co Waterford

As the year proceeds, this list of remembrance events will be updated and extended in future editions of *The Old Tough*. Members are encouraged to attend as many as possible in their local areas.



Spectamur Agendo
(We are judged by our deeds)