The Old Tough

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

Issue 16: Spring 2026

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of our newsletter *The Old Tough.*

Following our AGM in December we welcomed two new members to the committee Derek Fox and Ian Chambers and we are delighted to welcome back Sally Keogh. This year marks our thirtieth anniversary and we have several day trips and remembrance events planned. Please take a look at our Calendar of Events and hopefully we will see you at some of these events throughout the year.

Our first event was a very successful trip to the Somme Heritage Museum in Newtownards which you can read about in this edition of the newsletter.

Also in March several RDF members attended a book launch in the Fingal County Council offices in Swords. The book *'In Far Foreign Fields'* by Dr. Bernard Kelly and the Fingal Great War Association came about as a desire to remember those connected with Fingal and the wider north county Dublin area who died in the First World War. The aim was to identify and commemorate as many as possible and ensure their legacy is recognised. Many of the names listed in the book were soldiers from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. The book was published by Fingal Heritage Office and a copy was given to all those who attended the launch. It is available in all libraries in the Fingal area.

Our forthcoming events for April will begin with our annual Mass in City Quay Church on 17th April at 7pm for deceased members and family of the association. This was postponed from November due to bad weather. We hope many of our members will be able to attend. Also in April there are two events to commemorate Anzac day, full details are on the calendar of events.

A possible trip is planned later in the year to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the erection of the Celtic Crosses to the Irishmen who fought and died at Guillemont and Wijtschate and a visit to Verdun which was the precursor to the battle of the Somme. This is in the planning but with the fluctuating price of fuel the cost for a bus has to be finalised. Further information will be available in due course.

As this is our anniversary year our association president Tom Burke has written an article on the history of the revived Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and Brian Moroney, Chairman has written of the continuing of the RDFA mission. Also included are articles by Philip Lecane, Thomas Murphy, John O'Brien and John F Sheehan. We hope you find this edition of *The Old Tough* interesting.

As always we welcome contributions from members for future editions of the newsletter or our annual journal *The Blue Cap.*

Articles and correspondence can be sent to: rdfa1918@gmail.com

Dubs' News

Looking back – by Tom Burke.

'He was killed at a place called Lee Catoo, he was only twenty years of age', so said Jack Smith, a long-time resident of Abbeyfield in the British ex-servicemen's housing estate of Killester. I was born and reared on Killester Avenue which leads into the estate. As a child, I played in the fields near the British Legion Hall and remember some of the old servicemen who lived with their families in the beautiful bungalows nearby. It was some time in late 1994 that I asked one of the local shopkeepers did they know of any locals who had a relative who served in the First World War. I had read Terry Denman's brilliant book, *Ireland's Unknown Soldier*s published in 1992. Being aware of Killester's history, I wondered were any veterans or relatives still alive.

The shopkeeper told me that one of her elderly customers, a man named Jack Smith might be of help. I called to see Jack at his home and he told me about his young uncle, the twenty-year-old Lance Corporal John Boland of the 2nd RDF who was killed in the place Jack called Lee Catoo or (Le Cateau) in late August 1914. Jack took out a shoe box that contained a medal, a photo of the young Pte. Boland and a letter John had written to his mother from Milton Barracks at Gravesend before he set off for France with the 2nd RDF. John lived at Russell Street near Croke Park. I sat with Jack long into the night recording John Boland's life as a messenger boy around Dublin's Dorset Street and of his death near Le Cateau. I knew nothing of John Boland and little of the thousands of his comrades and countrymen who died in that terrible conflict of the First World War.

I eventually wrote up John's story and approached Noel Carrol, RIP, of Dublin Corporation asking would he be interested in placing John's story in an exhibition in Dublin. Noel's reply was positive and he suggested I approach Dr Mary Clarke, Dublin City Archivist at the Dublin Civic Museum in South William Street.

I had one story from a shoe box; my exhibition needed more. I wrote to Terry Denman in 1995 and he gave me the name of Michael Grant, who ran the Irish branch of The Western Front Association. Michael put me in touch with some members of the Medal Society of Ireland who agreed to present their collection of First World War medals and memorabilia in the exhibition. I was, and still am, very grateful for their work and contribution to the project; particularly David Buckley who continues to display his collection of RDF memorabilia at our annual event at the National Museum of Ireland.

The exhibition was opened in Dublin's Civic Museum on the 9 November 1996. At the opening was the then Tánaiste Dick Spring TD who had travelled from Ostend that day; the British Ambassador Veronica Sutherland, Kevin Myers of The Irish Times, Dr Mary Clarke, Dublin City Archivist and John Fitzgerald, Dublin City Manager. It was perhaps the first exhibition in Dublin of its kind and because of the political sensitivity of the subject, in many ways it was a brave and enlightened decision by Dublin City Council to take a leap into the unknown and offer the Civic Museum. One must remember the year was 1996, and telling the story of British soldiers in Dublin was not yet publicly or politically comfortable. The Provisional IRA ceasefire had been declared in August 1994 and the political atmosphere was still uncertain. I congratulate and thank Dr Mary Clarke, Noel Carrol and Dublin City Council for their foresight in agreeing to facilitate this project in a spirt of reconciliation.

The main objective of the exhibition was to create an awareness in Dublin of the tens of thousands of Irish men and women who took part in the First World War and indeed their families who had

suffered as a consequence in the years that followed. Apart from a few, such as Kevin Myers, Vivian Igoe, Michael Lee of RTE, the historian Jane Leonard, the late Dr David Fitzpatrick of Trinity College Dublin and indeed the pioneers who started The Royal Munster Fusiliers Association some years previous, the story of the Irish men and women in the First World War was largely forgotten in the Republic of Ireland. The exhibition proved a great success. It simply presented a human story and allowed the public to make their own minds up on the context. There was a very favourable public response as recorded in the several visitor books. The exhibition ended in the spring of 1997.

In keeping with our objective of researching, presenting and preserving the history of the Irish soldiers of the Great War, over the past thirty years or so, the following are just some of the events presented by the RDFA between 1997 and 2018:

- Following on from the success of the 1996/ 1997 exhibition, the RDFA presented a more professional exhibition in the Civic Museum in Dublin opened by President Mary McAleese in November 1998. She went on to open the Irish Peace Park in Messines with HM Queen Elizabeth II and King Albert of Belgium. James Ockendon, the son of Sgt. James Ockendon VC, travelled from Portsmouth to attend the opening of the exhibition. He carried his father's Victoria Cross in his coat pocket. Exhibitions were presented throughout Ireland such as Ardgillan Castle, Skerries; The Phoenix Park Visitor Centre, thanks to Margaret McGurk. In Northern Ireland such as the Ebrington Centre in Derry / Londonderry. In Passchendaele in Flanders with the Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum, Armagh. Thanks must go to Amanda Moreno the curator of the Faughs museum. I would also like to congratulate Lar Joye of The National Museum of Ireland for his work on including the story of Irish soldiers in the First World War in the Soldiers and Chiefs Exhibition. The RDFA had a small input to the exhibition.

- Public lectures arranged by the RDFA with an average attendance of seventy to eighty people were given by eminent historians such as Prof Peter Simkins of the Imperial War Museum, Dr Richard Holmes, RMA Sandhurst, Dr Pat Mc Carthy, Military History Society of Ireland, Dr John Horne of Trinity College Dublin, Dr Myles Dungan of RTE / UCD and Dr David Murphy of Maynooth University, Thomas Pakenham and the wonderful Martin Middlebrook, Dr John Bourne, University of Birmingham.

- Visits to the battlefields of France, Flanders, Salonica and Gallipoli were also arranged by the RDFA. Over the years, Brian did trojan work in planning and running these historic tours with often up to fifty-five people on tour; all of which went off successfully thanks to his efforts and humorous personality. My special thanks go to a Flemish man named Erwin Ureel, for his great help over the years in presenting the story of the Irish soldiers in Flanders through exhibitions and tour guides of the region. I would also like to mention Mrs Trees Vanneste from Wijtschate who was also a great friend of the RDFA.

- An annual dinner with attendances of up to 150 members and friends brilliantly run for many years by Brian and his wife Theresa.

- Publication of an annual journal tiled *The Blue Cap;* all of which can be seen on our website at www.greatwar.ie.

- The creation of a website at www.greatwar.ie Thousands of enquiries came to the site each year from people all over the world requesting information on family members who had

served in the RDF. Some of these enquirers became members of the Association and donated material to our archive. A grant issued by the Taoiseach's (Bertie Ahern) Office, funded the creation of the website. Many thanks to Sean Connolly for initiating this project and running the website for many years. Let us remember Sean's wife Jo which passed away on 25 April 2014.

- In an act of remembrance of the First World War, The British Department of Communities and Local Government announced in August 2013, a campaign to honour all Victoria Cross recipients. Commemoration paving stones would be laid in or as close to the birth place of Victoria Cross recipients over the four-year period 2014 to 2018. In 2016, Brian Moroney, Seamus Greene and Tom Burke attended the unveiling of a paving stone to Sgt. Bob Downie VC in his native Glasgow. In 2017, Seamus Greene represented the RDFA at the stone unveiling ceremony in Portsmouth in honour of Sgt. James Ockendon VC. At both these ceremonies, Seamus proudly paraded the RDFA Standard. In November 2018, Sean Connolly represented the RDFA at the stone unveiling ceremony at Newquay in Cornwall in honour of Sgt. Horace Curtis VC.

- To commemorate the centenary of the German gas attack on the lines of the 16th (Irish) Division at Hulluch in late April 1916, the RDFA in co-operation with Dublin City Council presented a one – day seminar on 16 April 2016 at the Council Chamber in the City Hall, Dublin. A booklet on the gas attack was produced. Speakers were Kevin Myers, Ronan McGreevy, Philip Lecane, Dr Elaine Byrne, Ms Carol Hope, Ms Anne- Sophie Douchin and Sebastian Barry who, with great passion, read from his book *A Long Long Way*. Michael James Ford and Bairbre Ni Chaoimh recited some poems. Francie Devine and Luke Cheevers sang a couple of songs and Seamus Green recited the Act of Remembrance.

- A stained-glass window commemorating the RDF and 16th (Irish) Division was placed in the Garrison Chapel in Cathal Brugha Barracks, Dublin. Our thanks go to Fr Eoin Thynne CF who became Head Chaplain of the Defence Forces in 2005 for granting permission for this memorial.

- We contributed to several radio and TV documentaries on Ireland and the First World War.

- A First World War Day at the National Museum at Collins Barrack at which the Association presented exhibitions, research advisory workshops and lectures.

- Through our participation in Remembrance Services in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain, we have made a contribution to the Irish Peace Process by what President Mary McAleese once described as building bridges. Our work was acknowledged with a public reception hosted by the then Taoiseach Bertie Ahern at Dublin Castle in. April 2001. We came a long way from worrying about adverse political action to our activities in 1996 to a public acknowledgement of that work by an Irish Taoiseach in Dublin Castle.

- In May 2017, Dr Mary Clarke and Ellen Murphy of Dublin City Library and Archive and the RDFA, presented a seminar titled 'Messines Peace Park: Its contribution to Irish-British reconciliation' at The Council Chamber, City Hall, Dame Street. The speakers were, Bertie Ahern, Barbara Walshe of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Dr Chris McGimpsey, Ulster Unionist Party, Dr Alasdair McDonnell, SDLP, Tom Burke and the Lord

Mayor of Dublin Brendan Carr, who formally opened the seminar. Paddy Harte Junior read the Peace Pledge of the Irish Peace Park in Messines to formally close the seminar.

- On 10 October 2018, Philip Lecane, a member of the RDFA Committee, produced a day of events at Dun Laoghaire to commemorate the centenary of the sinking of the *RMS Leinster.* It was a mammoth task that Philip undertook, but his energy to complete the project, which was a wonderful success, came from the passion he had to tell the world of this tragic event. Let us remember Kate his beloved wife who passed away on 28 November 2020.

- Perhaps our greatest achievement in my opinion, was the creation of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Archive in Dublin City Library and Archive in Pearse Street, Dublin. This archive, available to all, holds all the stories and memories that were once hidden away in the attic in shoe boxes and biscuit tins. The Monica Roberts Collection is a particular gem.

All this magnificent work and much more was a collective effort that could not have happened without the RDFA committee of Sean Connolly whose wisdom and advice were invaluable. Brian Moroney and his wife Theresa who ran our tours and annual dinner with such professionalism and humour. Philip Lecane who co-ordinated and almost single-handed ran the commemorations of the *RMS Leinster* and edited *The Blue Cap*. Capt. (Retd) Seamus Greene who so proudly and smartly carried our Standard at a multitude of events at home and abroad. The late Pat Hogarty who ran the 'post office' for many years. Nick Broughall who recorded the minutes of our meetings in Sean's house and Jack Sinclair who gave his time when need for the odd jobs. These were the men who ran The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association during my time as Chairman. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their dedication and service to the cause. I resigned my position as Chairman of the RDFA in August 2018. I think twenty-two years at the helm was long enough. It was at the train station in Le Cateau where the 2nd RDF began and ended their war, I told the folks on an association tour of my decision. It was a poignant place to end my journey too. It was an amazing journey in my life; I had no idea what would follow after meeting Jack Smith all those years ago. I met some incredible people and made some wonderful lasting friendships on that journey. I thank my wife Michele, my sons Carl and Jamie and daughter Rachel for putting up with me for all those years.
Going forward, our association is now in the very capable hands of our Chairman, Brian Moroney and a new committee to continue on the work of discovering, presenting and preserving the history of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.
Like young Boland, I'll be ready for the call when needed.

Spectamur Agendo.

Tom Burke
President
The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association.

19 February 2026



Members of the RDFA Committee at a reception in Dublin City Hall by invitation of the Lord Mayor of Dublin Councillor Dermot Lacey in 2002. Back row from left to right: Brian Moroney, Pat Hogarty (RIP), Pat Cummins (RIP), Lord Mayor Dermot Lacey, Nick Broughall (RIP), Philip Lecane. Kneeling in front row left to right: Tom Burke, Sean Connolly and Seamus Greene.

Continuing the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association mission
Brian Moroney

When, in 2003, Tom Burke told his committee that the Dublin Civic Museum was closing for refurbishment, we were somewhat concerned as to what the future might hold. After all, we regarded the museum as our spiritual home. The place where we held our first exhibition, the place where we opened the door to a resurgence of a certain period of our National History which sadly had lain dormant for so long. The exhibition that started a flow of interest, information and enthusiasm that continues to this day. It provided a focal point for talks and meetings that started in1996 and by 2001 saw the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association take centre stage at a special reception hosted by the Taoiseach of the day for our benefit. But concerned then as we might have been we knew just what it was we had to do. That is to continue our mission of remembrance, recollection and reconciliation. Tell the story of the Irish Soldier in the British Army, the trials and tribulations of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers in War and Peace. No blame no shame, the truth plain and unvarnished, for who are we to judge? We tell the story, we visit the sites, we write the articles, we give the lectures, but, most of all, we remember them, those forgotten men and their families who earned their rightful place in our history.

To continue with our mission, we have developed excellent working relationships with such as Dublin City Council, who host our archives in Pearse Street, with the National Museum who now host an annual open day on our behalf, and this year welcomed our colleagues from the other Disbanded Irish Regiments. We work alongside other historical societies and groups who have a story to tell. At home and abroad we represent the Association, and its values, in League with other nations who were involved in the Great War. You will find our standard on parade in Ireland, the UK and on all parts of the Western Front, Gallipoli and Salonika, anywhere the Great War is Commemorated. 30 Years ago, we took our first steps forward, we began a march that saw our word spread first by word of mouth then by conventional media, radio and TV and now we use all social electronic media available to us. We have a mission to adhere to, we have a past that must not be forgotten, we have a story to tell. The future lies before us and it is up to us to make our next 30 years as fruitful and informative as it can be for the Association and its member.

Spectamur Agendo.

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Calendar of Events 2026
Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association

March 21st	Visit to Somme Museum at the Somme Heritage Centre, Newtownards
March 24th	Book Launch "Far Foreign Fields" Fingal's Great War Dead. By Dr. Bernard Kelly 7pm in the County Hall, Main Street, Swords, Co. Dublin.
April 17th	Annual Mass in City Quay Church at 7pm for deceased members and family of the association. Following the Mass, we will get together for refreshments.
April 22nd	Re-dedication at Loos
April 23rd	Re-dedication at Bapaume
April 25th	Anzac Dawn Service, Grangegorman Military Cemetery 6am
April 25th	Anzac Evening Service at St. Ann's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin 2 at 7pm
May 23rd	Visit to Cavan County Museum – First World War Trench Experience re-opened in July 2025 after extensive renovations.
June 5th	Visit to Curragh Camp Museum including trenches
June 14th	Combined Irish Regiments Parade at the Cenotaph in London.
July 11th	RBL Annual Commemoration at the Irish National War Memorial Gardens, islandbridge 12 noon.
July 12th	National Day of Commemoration at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham. 11am

Dates to be advised:

RDFA open day at the National Museum, Collins Barracks
RDFA presentation at the Dublin Festival of History (8 th October 6pm)
AGM & Christmas Lunch.

Your expression of interest for the day trip to the Cavan County Museum and the Curragh Camp Museum should be emailed to Suzanne O'Neill at: oldpound1@gmail.com

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Somme Museum Trip 2026

John F Sheehan





On Saturday 21st March as part of our 30th anniversary commemorative events we returned to the Somme Museum in Newtownards, Co. Down 30 years after our first visit.The Somme Heritage Museum opened in 1994 reflecting on the 10th & 16th Irish & 36th Ulster Divisions. The 10th Division was the first unit raised by Lord Kitchener and it first saw action in Sulva Bay Gallipoli in 1915. The 16th Division attracted many from the Irish National Volunteers mostly Roman Catholics. The Division distinguished itself with the capture of Guillemont and Ginchy during the battle of the Somme in 1916 suffering 4000 causalities.

The 36th mostly Ulster Protestant Unionist Volunteers was raised to oppose Home Rule. They lost 5,000 men in the first two days of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.

It was a lovely sunny day, we met at Connolly Station for the 8.50am train to Belfast, 30 members travelled, one person joining the train at Drogheda and John O'Brien drove to Newtownards. We arrived at 11am in Grand Central Station and boarded our coach for Newtownards. Our first stop was the Clandeboye Golf Club where we had a light lunch. We departed for the museum at 1pm. We were warmly welcomed by Carol and Clare. Carol is the daughter of our friend Ted who spent many years at the Somme Centre in France. She was delighted to be re acquainted with many of the original members who she had met many times over the years.

We divided into two groups and thank you to our guides Austin and Tommy who gave us an excellent and informative tour. There was an exhibition of photographs from the Western Front taken by Fr. Brown when he was chaplain to the Irish Guards. They captured the daily lives of soldiers and the battlefields in France.

As you make your way through the museum you experience life in the First World War culminating in a walk through the First World War trenches. This gives you an insight into the hardship endured by the soldiers. Surrounded by the noise of the tremendous barrage you can look across 'No Man's Land'. The battle of the Somme is recreated in an audio-visual presentation.



At the end of our tour I on behalf of the RDFA presented Carol with a bound copy of our publication A Brief History of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

We arrived back at Central Station in plenty of time for our 5pm train. Thank you to all the members who attended our first trip this year and also thank you to those who organised the day.



The Royal Dublin Fusiliers and their connection to soccer in Ireland

Thomas Murphy



Regimental Football Team, 1st Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers, winners of the Egyptian Football Shield, Cairo, 2nd March, 1907

1st Battalion Football Team 1907

The modern history of Soccer began with the 1863 formation of The Football Association in England, which standardised rules after centuries of varied "folk football" games. Originating from ancient, chaotic ball-kicking games, they evolved into the popular football we now know as soccer which becoming a global phenomenon by the early 20th century, culminating in the first FIFA World Cup in 1930.

Soccer early Origins (Ancient – 1800s)

- Ancient Roots: Forms of kicking games existed over 2,000 years ago in China, Greece, and Rome.
- Medieval Football: In England, often violent, was town-wide,, matches were played in large open spaces
- The FA (Football Association) was established in 1863 in London to create a unified set of rules.

The first FA Cup was held in 1871-1872. The first league formed by 1888. The game of soccer travelled around due to the size of the British empire. There is evidence of different versions of soccer played in Ireland as far back as the 1500s. The game (soccer) as it is currently known, only arrived in Ireland in the late 1800s. However, its popularity around the country grew rapidly, particularly amongst the urban working classes. This was due to factors such as regularised working weeks, improved transport and the simplicity of the game to play and organise, unlike many other sports, such as rugby and soccer and cricket gained a large following in garrison towns in Ireland, Like Cork, Galway, Sligo, Waterford, Kildare. Matches would attract a large crowd,

usually hoping to see the Army lose to the locals. soccer clubs were founded around the country by all manner of groups, from pubs, companies, churches, local areas or groups of friends.

The Royal Dublin Fusiliers were pivotal in introducing soccer to Ireland in the late 19th century, playing matches against local teams to foster community relations. Based in Dublin, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers regiment's team was highly competitive, winning the Irish Military Championship in 1915–16 and a league title in 1912–13. As a British Army unit, the regiment played a major role in the spread of soccer throughout Ireland, with early exhibition matches often held in Phoenix Park. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers football team won the 1915–16 Irish Military Championship. The 1st Battalion won a league title in the 1912–1913 season. While popular, the sport was often considered a "garrison game" by local nationalists due to its association with the British Army. Two of the first exhibition soccer matches to occur in Ireland were between military teams in the Phoenix Park. Many civilian clubs formed in the late 19th century included local soldiers. Military teams were also entered into the Irish Cup in the 1890s. At an official meeting of the Irish Football Association in 1900, the army were officially thanked for their hand in popularising the game. The 1st Battalion won a league title in the 1912–1913 season. The 2nd Battalion Teams: By 1911, the 2nd Battalion maintained several organised squads, including a 1st XI, 2nd XI, and an Enlisted Boys Football Team. The "Pals" and Rugby Ties: The 7th Battalion's "D Company" (the Dublin Pals) was notably composed of many professional rugby and soccer players and recruits from the Irish Rugby Football Union Volunteers. The Royal Dublin Fusiliers football team were crowned Irish Military Champions in 1915-16. However, as the growth of soccer in Ireland was so linked with the British Army, it was derided as a 'garrison game' in Nationalist circles.
Moreover, there were huge tensions between civilians and the military when it came to soccer. Members of civilian teams campaigned for the military's exclusion from competitions, partly because they had an unfair advantage as soldiers had ample time to train. It was also deemed wrong for civilians to provide a trophy for presentation to the military. When a Munster team created for an exhibition match against Leinster in 1904 was predominantly made up of soldiers, it was reported to have 'disheartened the locals' and turned them to watching rugby instead.
As the Nationalist, and later Republican, movement grew in Ireland, certain areas of the country rejected both the British Army and the pastimes that they engaged in. During the first world war a number of young soccer players volunteered to serve and fight in this war such as the following:

Private Edward Brierley: of the 8th Battalion, RDF
Fred Morrow was only 17 when he enlisted
Jack Lowry Oscar Linkson
John Doran.
Harry Willits 10th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers.
Private Frank Larkin was only 22 when he died just before Christmas 1915.
Lieutenant T.W.G. Johnson.
Herbert Charles Crozier ("Tod"). 1st battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. (wounded, recipient of the Military Cross) Later promoted to Major.
Harold Sloan

One man who returned from the War and then joined Bohemian F.C. was the legendary Ernie Crawford. Born in Belfast in 1891 Ernie was perhaps best known for his endeavours on the Rugby pitch. He starred for Malone in Belfast and later Lansdowne Rugby Club and won 30 caps for Ireland, fifteen of them as Captain. He would later be named President of the IRFU. His obituary in the Irish Times listed him as one of the greatest rugby full-backs of all time, he was honoured for his contribution to sport by the French government and even featured on a Tongan stamp celebrating rugby icons.

The 7th Battalion also featured a large number of Trinity College graduates, as well as many Rugby players encouraged to join by President of the Irish Rugby Football Union, F.H. Browning, a number of those who joined would end up dead on the beaches of Gallipoli. Browning later died after encountering the Volunteers on return from manoeuvres at Mount Street Bridge during Easter 1916.

Private Joseph Irons, on guard duty at the Viceregal Lodge during Easter 1916 he later served duty in the Dardanelles campaign. Irons was born in England and was considered one of the best full-backs in Irish football, he worked on the staff of the Viceregal Lodge (now Áras an Uachtaráin) before being called up to the army from the reserve on the outbreak of War. Other soccer players are the following

Private A. McEwan, Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Private P. O'Connor, Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Private A.P. Hunter, Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Private J. Donovan, Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Sergeant Harry Willitts, Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Major Emmet Dalton, Royal Dublin Fusiliers. On returning to Dublin Dalton became IRA Head of Intelligence during the War of Independence and later a Major-General in the Free State Army.

Lieutenant Robert Tighe, 5th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers

Private William Woodman, 7th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers and his brother Private Albert Woodman, Royal Engineers.

Overall Approximately 1,500 professional players from Ireland and the UK were killed in action.



1st ROYAL DUBLIN FUSILIERS' REGIMENTAL TEAM

Back Row—Private Keogh, Corporal Byrne, Private Carroll, Private Whittington, Private Harwood, Private Lanier, Private Dowdall.
Second Row—Private Oliver, Captain Crozier (wounded), Lieut.-Colonel Dowling (wounded), Lieut. L. O'Keefe (wounded), Private Hare (killed).
Front Row—Bandsman Whitham, Lance-Corporal G. Gough. The trophy in the centre is the 5th Division Gymkhana Cup.

Storm damage to V Beach Cemetery, Gallipoli
Philip Lecane

On 25 April 1915, men from the 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers (“The Blue Caps”), the 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers, two companies of the 2nd Battalion Hampshire Regiment and other contingents fought their way ashore on V Beach, Gallipoli. Casualties are buried in V Beach Cemetery, yards from where the landing took place. Among those buried in the cemetery are “The Blue Caps” commanding officer Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Rooth, their chaplain Father William Finn (the first British chaplain to be killed in action in WW1) and brothers Sam and Jack Mallaghan from Newry.

RDFA member Michael Robson has brought to our attention a notice on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWWC) website. Dated 16 February 2026, the CWGC notice says that V Beach Cemetery suffered significant structure damage in recent storms. “There is damage to the entrance plot containing special memorials which do not mark specific known burials. The cemetery is closed to the public and will remain closed until we can assess the damage and make the cemetery safe. More storms are expected in the area so this could take some time. Further updates will be provided as more information becomes available.” While most of the damage appears to have occurred to the entrance gate and walls of the cemetery, damage has also occurred to some of the Special Memorials to Royal Dublin Fusiliers. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) website, "CWGC will always try to mark the site of a casualty's grave, but it is not always possible, often because the precise location within a churchyard is unknown. In this situation, a Special Memorial with the superscription 'Buried elsewhere within this cemetery' may be used. Special Memorials which do not mark an actual grave are placed so that they cannot be mistaken for such e.g. Around the edge of a cemetery at a different alignment from marked graves.”According to Michael Robson "the most disturbed of the special memorials are in the first row of B section."



The damaged memorials are:

- B.1 Holtom William, Private, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- B.2 Hook Edmond D. Lance Corporal, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- B.3 Howard Michael, Private, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- B.4 Howe G. Seaman, HMS Cornwallis, Royal Navy
- B.5 Hyde F.T.M. MiD, Able Seaman, HMS Lord Nelson, Royal Navy
- B.6 Johnson Thomas, Private, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- B.7 Joyce Thomas, Private, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- B.8 Keeffe William, Private, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- B.9 Kenny, Joseph, Private, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers

- B.10 Kelly Lawrence, Private, 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- B.11 Kelly Michael, Private 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers

The Royal Navy men were killed rowing the Dubs ashore in ship's boats. Able Seaman Hyde was mentioned in despatches. According to Michael Robson, "the restoration work will be very extensive, and it seems to me that this will inevitably involve wider disturbance of the other memorials in B section. It may even be necessary to move them further away from the southern wall and the sea's high-water mark. I'll keep you informed if I learn anything further." Our grateful thanks to Michael and to Australian Journalist Bill Sellars who kindly allowed us to use his photos. Bill lives on the Gallipoli peninsula.



The 110th Anniversary of The Battle of Mousetrap Farm.

Part 1.

John O'Brien

Back when I first became aware of my grandfather's service in the Great War with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, I was always intrigued by the fact that he survived the gas attack and the assault by the German armies that would decimate the 'Dubs' at Mousetrap Farm in April and May 1915. When I first visited the place years ago it just left me with a feeling - I need to go back there to find out what happened, where the 'Dubs' suffered appalling casualties? Where did the German attacks come from? Each visit thereafter left me feeling with a void, a kind of calling, which was ever present in my mind. I needed to answer my questions once and for all; hence our visit to Mousetrap Farm in May 2025.

My grandfather and his brother Michael were part of the two machine gun teams that were with the 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, commonly known as the 'Old Toughs'. He (my grandfather) was not with the 'Old Contemptibles,' but he was one of them. He was not posted to the western front until the 9th of February 1915 as he was not of age to serve there prior to this date. He would join his unit at Saint Yves where they were dug in facing the front line, during the famous Christmas truce period in 1914. Here he would stay until 24/25 May 1915 when the German attack would happen. The Old Toughs marched the six miles (10 Kilometers) to bolster the defence at Mousetrap Farm. Mousetrap had originally been called Shelltrap Farm, but due to its demoralising description and the connotations it elicited, the higher command decided to change its name in the interest of morale. I can only assume based on tactical emplacement of the guns that it had a part to play as to why both Michael and John (my grandfather) survived the attack



(Sean and Tom at Saint Yves)

Over the years, Tom Burke, and I have been in contact through various events and projects related to the 'Dubs' on the western front. Tom had written extensively about it, and had a vast knowledge of Mousetrap Farm, I had often wondered if our paths would ever meet at this place. Sean Ryan, my companion on numerous trips and events had also harboured the same thoughts. Down through the years we had given some talks on Mousetrap Farm, trying to get the message across of the violent event that took place there, and almost every trip would lead to a visit without ever gaining access to the actual farm itself as it's a closed family working farm. Inside the closure is a memorial to Sgt William Malone 2nd Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers who fell at Mousetrap. By chance in 2024 we finally got permission to enter the farm. There was an uncanny feeling to it, strange, and I suppose it left me wondering about the trench positions along with a lot of other unanswered questions. Sean and I had gone to the cemetery beyond Mousetrap Farm to the key terrain to get a view from the front lines from a German perspective and it gave an understanding of more of the jigsaw puzzle that was coming together



(Sean and I at Mousetrap Farm with Sgt Malone's memorial.)

When I answered a phone call from Tom Burke, he reminded me that the 110th anniversary of Mousetrap Farm was approaching and his offer of a trip to Ypres was instantly accepted with enthusiasm. I immediately rang Sean Ryan and informed him to which he answered, 'have you booked the flights and the car yet'? Just the answer I was expecting. Over the coming weeks, a few meetings took place in our RDFA Dublin HQ in Pearse Street Library to set our expectations, make plans, and organise the trip. Tentatively I broached the subject of walking the ground where I suspected the 'Dubs' were and Tom informed me that, of course we would, as he also has the 1915 trench maps of the ground showing the trench positions around Mousetrap Farm. We would go there first and finally fulfil my quest. Leaving that meeting in Pearse Street Library, I did not walk to the LUAS, I guess I just floated with excitement and expectation.

Over the next few weeks we organised the trip, informed the committee and members of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association of our intended event and advertise it to all. An open invitation was posted on various platforms with the timings and dates of our tour. A lifelong friend and comrade of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association Mr Erwin Ureel would take the lead on advertising on the

Ypres side as he lives locally. We would arrive on Friday and go straight to Mousetrap Farm to begin our search. The three of us had a pleasant flight to Brussels and a nice drive to Ypres to get accommodation and a light snack.

The main event/ceremony would take on the Sunday. Sean, Tom and I would give a short presentation on our personal relationship with the tragedy that was Mousetrap Farm. I wanted to know where the attack took place when I was making my presentation to the assembled group. The event would be held in the main yard of the farm, thanks to Erwin and the family who own the farm, who for privacy reasons, their name remains with the author, gave us full permission to hold the event on the day.

With great anticipation, we headed to Mousetrap Farm on the Friday. We walked the ground, then Tom opened the maps and the orientation began. Tom had given a briefing of the battle area, and I remember thinking that a lifetime of navigating skills of Irish border roads with a half inch to one mile map in the dark in north Monaghan during the troubles would be tested today. Tom knew his stuff - always one step ahead with his knowledge, but between the three of us applying map reading skills we felt confident that we identified the trench system of the ‘Dubs’ in April and May 1915. It was a strange feeling to finally walk the same ground that our grandparents fought on 110 years ago. A lasting memory for me was when Sean Ryan asked us, ‘where are they buried’? and I replied pointing to the ploughed field and said, ‘in there Sean, they are still there. Sean would later write





(Tom and I setting out the trench maps.)

The 2nd Battalion
Royal Dublin Fusiliers
Fought here in 1915
They are still Here. (Sean Ryan)

Sunday morning and the preparation for the day’s event had arrived. After breakfast, it was time to pack the kit and load up the car. One thought that stayed with me was that, here we were, packing belts, boots, and suits, looking up at the clear blue sky where, 110 years ago, our relatives packed their belts, boots and Combat Equipment Fighting Order (CEFO) to go to Mousetrap Farm. That irony never goes away. When we arrived, there was already a crowd assembled. Erwin was the organising maestro or Serjeant Major, lining up the order of march, introducing, welcoming, and relaying all the ceremonial information to everyone. We took the lead with me in the centre, Sean on the left, and Tom on the right. We got the off to march the road that leads into the farm. There





was a strong wind, and it took all my strength to control the standard. It must have been an impressive sight to see us with Erwin's Irish Wolfhound leading the main party ably led by his granddaughter, Frenn. As we got closer, I heard Sean shout out as the pipe band (Field Marshall Haig's own Pipes and Drum's) played, 'we're back lads' and Tom shouted, 'C'mon the Dubs,' What a proud moment.

Erwin acted as MC and gave a background talk on the history of Mousetrap Farm, introducing the speakers who came from the local area, both civilian and Military. Sean spoke first about his own relatives who fought there and I spoke next. I was proud that as I spoke, I could point to the area that the 'Dubs' held, thanks to Tom, and spoke about the Croix de Guerre that my grandfather was awarded by the King of Belgium. Tom gave a brief history of the RDF, their connection to the area





and the bonds that have been established over the years with Erwin and the Heymen family. Lieselot Deprez, Secretary Passchendaele Society 1917 and Military representative Captain Commander Jùrgen Sinnesael also spoke of the thanks from the local people for our relatives.

During the ceremony we paraded the Standard of The Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association. Later that evening we paraded the standard at the Menin Gate. The last post was played at the farm, and it certainly pulled on the strings of emotions. Many thanks to the people of Flanders for their welcomed attendance in remembering the Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the other Regiments with support units of the 10th Brigade who also fought at Mousetrap Farm.



The three of us facing where the ‘Dubs’ were attacked from, the clouds on the day resembled the gas, we will always remember them.

Spectamur Agendo.

The search for a forgotten Royal Dublin Fusilier
Philip Lecane

Some time ago, Seán Downes, Librarian in Dun Laoghaire Library Service, discovered that he has a relative, about whom he was previously unaware, who was killed serving with the Dubs. His search led him to twenty-nine-year-old John Clery, 21526, 'D' Company, 9th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. His research inspired him to mount a very successful exhibition which has travelled to a number of libraries and resulted in very positive feedback from the general public. The exhibition tells the story of John Clery and his comrades in the 9th Battalion, as well as the effects of the First World War on Ireland. Recently the exhibition visited Deansgrange Library.
On Monday 12 January 2026, in the RDFA's first event of the year, John O'Brien and Seán Ryan displayed the association's standard at the exhibition in Deansgrange Library. John travelled from Monaghan for the event. There to welcome the standard bearers were Seán Downes and his mother Marie Byrne, relative of John Clery. Seán Downes has promised to write an article for the association's journal, The Blue Cap, on his search for John Clery and his creation of the exhibition. As they always are, our Standard Bearers John O'Brien and Seán Ryan were a credit to the RDFA, living up to the Dubs motto:

Spectamur Agendo. We are known by Our Deeds. Well done Lads!



SEAN DOWNES AND MARIE BYRNE



LEFT TO RIGHT JOHN O BRIEN, SEAN DOWNES AND SEAN RYAN



We were very sad to learn of the death of Michael Pegum, a member of our association from its early days. Born in England to Irish parents, he studied medicine at Trinity College, Dublin and became a surgeon at the Meath and Adelaide Hospitals and later at Tallaght Hospital. On retiring, he began recording war memorials on the Island of Ireland. People from different parts of the island sent Michael information and photographs of war memorials in their localities. In June 2004 he launched the website www.irishwarmemorials.ie The website now records 1,522 memorials with 42,910 names. It has received visits from 71 countries. The Irish War Memorials Project Facebook page has more than 2,600 followers.

In 2015, his book Our Fallen Members: *The War Casualties of the Kildare Street and Dublin University Clubs* was published. Our friends in the Western Front Association (Dublin Branch) told us that Michael was also an active member of their branch. Our condolences to Michael's wife Colette, children Fiona, Andrew, Caroline and John and to his extended family. As he ensured that so many others were remembered, so we now remember Michael.

Spectamur Agendo.



Spectamur Agendo

(We are known by our deeds)

The Editorial Committee

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

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