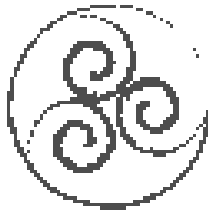


The 6th Connaught Rangers

BELFAST NATIONALISTS
AND THE GREAT WAR



6TH CONNAUGHT RANGERS
RESEARCH PROJECT
2008

Community Relations Council



This book has received financial support from the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council which aims to promote a pluralist society and encourage an acceptance and an understanding of cultural diversity.

Front cover: includes an image of a belt belonging to a Belfast member of the Irish National Volunteers. Photograph by Mal McCann, the *Irish News*.

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Robert and Margaret McKillen
Desi Brennan
Siobhán Deane
Cathal Donaghy



Photograph of some of the Steering committee at
Connaught Rangers Museum, Boyle, Co. Roscommon, September 2007

Back Row (left to right): Harry Donaghy, Dr Richard Grayson, Seán O Hare, Robert and
Margaret McKillen, Danny Tiernan (of the Connaught Rangers Museum),
Siobhán Deane and Desi Brennan

Front Row: Pat and Roisin O Donnell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The An Eochair/Clondara Historical and Cultural Group would like to extend their appreciation to all those who made this publication possible. We are delighted with the response from the community in West Belfast whose relatives give so freely of their time and made personal family albums and historical items available to the project.

The An Eochair/Clondara Historical and Cultural Group would like to extend a special thanks to the Community Relations Council for their support for the project both in terms of time and resources.

The project is indebted to Dr Richard Grayson, Head of Politics and Senior Lecturer in British and Irish Politics, Goldsmiths, University of London for his continued professional support and direction for the project. In addition we would like to thank the steering group of the project for their hard work in making the project possible.

We are also especially grateful to the current Lord Mayor of Belfast, Tom Hartley for his continued encouragement and support of the project and to the Belfast City Council for making available to us their premises for the launch of the project booklet.

The steering committee would like to thank Siobhán Deane and Seamus Colligan for their time and effort collecting the information for the publication.



Belfast Lord Mayor, Councillor Tom Hartley being presented with a framed display of a National Volunteer belt buckle by the Research Project members, 11 August 2008.

Photograph by Mal McCann, the *Irish News*.



Standing: Mary Jane O'Connor, Owen Conlon Jnr, 6th Bn,
Royal Irish Rifles. Seated: Owen Conlon Snr, 6th
Connaught Rangers, Margaret Conlon

In Memoriam: Our Irish Dead

*(suggested by yesterday's impressive parade and
Memorial Mass in St Peter's Pro-Cathedral)**

Oh, gallant dead who gave your lives for Ireland,
Great-hearted children of a valorous race,
With bowed and reverent heads, we pay you homage
Here at God's altar in this holy place.

The mothers' eyes shall burn with tears of sorrow,
And comrades thoughts shall travel o'er the waves
To devastated fields in France and Flanders,
Where nestle close your rough and unmarked graves

Never in any cause did great men battle
With love and loyalty to equal yours.
The world shall read the story of your offering,
And learn in truth how Ireland's name endures

*Source: Poem reproduced from an *Irish News* report in the post-war period





The Irish Brigade prepares for action,
the Battle of Fontenoy, 11th May 1745 – part of the long history
of the Irish soldier in foreign wars.

6TH CONNAUGHT RANGERS RESEARCH PROJECT

This publication is the result of work carried out by the 6th Connaught Rangers Research Project. It is by no means a contribution to the glorification of the senseless slaughter of the First World War.

It is not an exhaustive piece of research, rather a snap shot of young Nationalists who joined the 6th Connaught Rangers from the Falls and other areas of Belfast. We hope to continue the work of the project and would appreciate support from families, friends and any other interested parties in this complex and fascinating period of local history.



Cap badge of the
Connaught Rangers

INTRODUCTION

Harry Donaghy

The Research Project was initiated by members of the An Eochair Clondara Historical and Cultural Group which is based in Belfast. The Group has been involved in a number of shared/common history initiatives over a number of years, with various groups and organisations from across the sectarian divide, on a range of topics and themes.

The question of 'Irish Nationalists and the First World War' was a subject that the Group, whose members are from a republican background, had a keen interest in and wanted to develop further. Some members of the Group had family relatives who had enlisted, along with hundreds of others from the Falls Road area, in the Connaught Rangers Regiment at the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914.

It was understood by the Group that we would not have the resources to conduct a deep academic study of this period of history, but that it could be approached, through highlighting the human stories of some of the men involved. Many of these men were members of the Irish National Volunteers and were ardent supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party who, under the leadership of John Redmond and Joe Devlin, were campaigning for Home Rule for Ireland.

The Group agreed that in order to proceed with the Project other people should be encouraged to become involved as well. A letter from the Group outlining the aims of the Project and an appeal for information from other interested members of the general public was sent to the *Irish News*. An article was published by the paper on the 26th April, 2006. The main purpose of the article was to generate local interest in the research work, and through appeals to family members from the Falls Road area, we hoped to get as accurate an account as possible of these men and some of their stories.

The response from people and families exceeded our expectations. A meeting of those who came forward to help was held in the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre in Donegall Street in July 2006. A working group was formed at the meeting to take the project forward. It was decided that we would attempt to tell the stories of some of these men using photographs, documents, papers, medals and memorabilia relating to them. The research project members agreed that this would be the most appropriate way of looking again at this neglected part of Irish Nationalist history.

An application was submitted to the Community Relations Council to help facilitate the work of the group in gathering information and details relating to the research involved. That grant from C.R.C. enabled members to visit the Connaught Rangers museum in Boyle, Co. Roscommon, in early September 2007. The visiting group were able to view records and information at the museum, and were kindly assisted there by Danny Tiernan, who is a Committee Member of The Connaught Rangers Association, which is based in Boyle.

Also accompanying the group on the visit to Boyle was Dr. Richard Grayson, Senior Lecturer in British and Irish Politics, Goldsmiths, University of London. Members of the project had met Richard, who was a guest speaker at a seminar in West Belfast in June 2007, on men from the area who fought in World War One.

Richard's contribution to the work of the project has been invaluable, especially in relation to the war history of the 6th Battalion of the Connaught Rangers, of which many of the original volunteers from the Falls Road, would eventually become part.

Members of the research group have been meeting together on an ad-hoc basis since July 2006. All of those involved, who have been giving of their time and efforts in this project, have done so on a voluntary basis. Contact has been maintained with others who were unable to attend meetings but who continued to contribute and support the work of the project.

The endeavours of all those involved have brought the project to the stage where we are today with the launch of this publication that attempts to outline the reality and circumstances, prevalent at that time, and how events at home and abroad were to impact on the lives of men from that time.

BACKGROUND

Ireland at the time immediately prior to the start of the First World War had become a virtual armed camp over the question of Home Rule. The country stood on the brink of civil war between Irish Nationalists who were passionately for Home Rule and Irish Unionists who were equally as passionately against it. From 1912 onwards, when the Ulster Volunteer Force was formed and led by Sir Edward Carson and Sir James Craig, the 'Home Rule Crisis' had deepened significantly. Huge quantities of arms were imported from Europe by both the 'pro' and 'anti' Home Rule camps. Tens of thousands had joined the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish National Volunteers and were drilling with the imported arms, for the impending showdown that both armed camps believed was imminent.

The Falls Road, like the rest of the island at the time, was in a state of ferment and expectation. The inexorable drift into civil war seemed unstoppable.

Events in the Balkans in the summer of 1914 were to change this. For millions of people from across the continent, a cataclysm of unprecedented fury was about to engulf the nations and people of Europe and beyond.



BELFAST AND THE BRITISH ARMY BEFORE 1916

Jimmy McDermott

In January 1919, on the same day that the first Dáil met in Dublin, an ambush by Irish Volunteers sparked what came to be known variously as the Anglo-Irish War, the Tan War or the War of Independence. By 1922 this struggle was settled by a Treaty which created two separate administrations in Ireland after which republicans and the forces of the new Irish Free State fought a bitter Civil War. Within the Nationalist community throughout Ireland, as a result of the 1919–1922 War, attitudes hardened, and any contact with British armed forces came to be regarded as pernicious. Republicans especially tended to downplay the role any of their antecedents had played in any branch of the British armed forces.

The consequences of this were that a misconception took hold of public consciousness that service in the British Army was largely Protestant and unionist. There are of course many reasons for this. Members of the Ulster Volunteer Force (U.V.F.) did indeed join in large numbers in 1914. This was to show their loyalty to Britain and demonstrate their opposition to Home Rule. The 36th Ulster Division suffered terrible casualties on the Western Front and Unionists continue to commemorate their sacrifices to the present day. They have every right to do so but it is only in more recent years that leading republicans too have acknowledged the huge cost that soldiers from Ireland generally paid for their service in the Great War.

In recent years Lord Mayors of Belfast, Alex Maskey and Tom Hartley, of Sinn Féin have laid wreaths at the Cenotaph in the City Hall to the dead of the First World War and have engaged in various types of commemoration. In so doing, they are recognising the *realpolitik* of the Nationalist population's relationship with the British Army before 1916. There had, in fact, always been a long tradition of service in the British Forces among the Catholic population.

Let us take Belfast as an example. Despite the sectarian hostility endemic to the city British soldiers attracted admiration from both unionist and nationalist newspapers. There are many examples of obituaries lauding certain individuals' military careers but this case may help to illustrate the contemporary view. On Saturday 18th July 1914, the *Belfast Telegraph*, which at this time supported Sir Edward Carson and the U.V.F., carried a eulogy and photograph of a Catholic ex-sergeant. Without any trace of irony the article praises John Walsh's long service including his presence at the capture of Sevastopol in 1856, during the Crimean War. It goes on to mention the old soldier's funeral from St Paul's Church on the Falls Road and sent condolences to his family. Articles which were similar were common in the *Irish News*.

Many Belfast Nationalists who were strongly in favour of Home Rule saw no problem in joining the British Army. For example in Belfast in 1914 there were 3,250 members of

the Irish Volunteers. Before the outbreak of the Great War they were pledged to fight and die for Home Rule. Following John Redmond's advice to 'go as far as the firing line extends', by September 1914 over half of the 3,250 Irish Volunteers in Belfast had enlisted, with only 1,380 remaining in the Irish National Volunteers, as those now following Redmond had started calling themselves by February 1915. Another 200 formed the core of the anti-Redmond Irish Volunteers.¹

While there were always hardline republicans who took a dim view of anyone joining the British Army, very often individuals who enlisted in the British Army in the Great War came back to give service to the Republican cause. In Cork, Tom Barry is an obvious example, but Belfast also had many such ex-servicemen in the Republican ranks. One such individual was Sean Montgomery, who explains in his memoir of his time in the Irish Volunteers, 'drilling went on till the First World War started'. John Redmond made speeches in which he stated that 'the Irish Volunteers would defend Ireland from the Germans'. Joe Devlin, too, started recruiting for the formation of 16th and 10th Irish Divisions. Many good Irishmen believed that they were going to fight for the freedom of small nations including Ireland.

After the war Sean Montgomery recalls recrimination from some Belfast Republicans who had not joined the British Forces. When the Irish Volunteers regrouped 'the people were abused by those who should have known better'.²

In fact of course the boom and slump of an industrial economy such as Belfast's had always made the prospect of an army career attractive to both Protestants and Catholics. John Christie, a Protestant from the Shankill area, who was a bugler in the pre-war U.V.F.,



Joe Devlin, flanked by Hibernians at a pro-war rally, Belfast

would have been much the same age as Sean Montgomery when he joined the British Army for the Great War. His reasons for joining would have had much in common with his Catholic counterpart. John Christie worked in the Ulster Spinning Company on the Falls Road and he recalled 'I hated it. I hated it' It was an awful place to work in those days'. He didn't see military service as an act of patriotism so much as an 'escape route out ... of the mill ... for surely life holds more than the mill can offer'.³

The Army could indeed offer a steady wage, a pension, a uniform, travel, adventure, prestige and the prospect of promotion. In the period up to the Great War, the Irish Nationalist demand was for Home Rule not a republic. Most Nationalists changed their views dramatically in the aftermath of the Easter Rising. It was the ex-British soldier and Irish Volunteer Commander, Sir Maurice Moore, who foresaw most clearly the sea-change in Nationalist opinion about the British Army: 'a few unknown men shot in a barrack yard have embittered a whole nation'.⁴ The 'Khaki' election of December 1918 showed how prophetic Maurice Moore's words were. Sinn Féin completely obliterated the Irish Parliamentary Party and emerged with a mandate, as they believed, for complete Irish independence. Partly this was a consequence of Sinn Féin's strong opposition to the threatened imposition of conscription in Ireland. Many Irishmen who had joined the British Army for honourable motives found their actions were now out of favour. The survivors of the trenches often chose to stay mute about the 1914–1918 period and only slowly now can the experiences of Irish soldiers be fairly evaluated.

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THE CONNAUGHT RANGERS: A BRIEF OUTLINE

Seán O'Hare

On the 3rd of October 1793 the following notice appeared in the *Connaught Journal*:

God save the King

Whereas the Hon. Colonel de Burg is appointed by his majesty to raise a regiment immediately-and intends paying his respects in person to his friends in Connaught without delay-this is to give notice that houses of rendezvous will be opened in Galway, Portumna, etc., and great encouragement given to young men of good character who wish to serve our beloved Monarch under so distinguished an officer.

The notice went on to state that the Clanricarde standard would be on display for the occasion, and the regiment would be named the Connaught Rangers. This advert would lead to the deaths of thousands of young Irishmen in many foreign conflicts not of their country's making. At their formation, like so many Irish and Scottish highland regiments, the Rangers were deemed more expendable than their English counterparts, and were sent to far flung theatres of war for long periods. The old maxim being that the further the regimental home base was from Westminster the less fuss there would be about casualties.

The Connaught Rangers were to have a long and illustrious career in the service of the British Empire. The regiment won their first battle honours in the Peninsular Campaign 1808–1814, under the command of the Duke of Wellington, where they were to the fore in many of the major battles that took place there in the war with France. In 1834 the regiment was billeted on the Island of Corfu where they were presented with their new regimental colours. On the new colours were the battle honours from the Peninsular Campaign, North America, the West Indies and the Mediterranean before going on to serve in the Crimean war with Russia in 1854. It was due to their tenacity in the battles of Alma, Inkerman and Sebastopol that they gained the nickname the 'Devils Own'. Many of the men who were later to join the 6th Battalion at the outbreak of the First World War came from the streets around the Falls Road, which were named in commemoration of these and other Crimean war battles.

The formation of the Connaughts back in 1793 coincided with the first stirrings of Irish republicanism, sparked by the formation of the Society of United Irishmen in 1791, leading to the 1798 rebellion, and all that was to follow down to the present day.

On Christmas day of 1798, a year in which over thirty thousand had died in the uprising in Ireland, the Connaught Rangers sailed for India. The regiment later took part in the suppression of the Indian Mutiny in 1857. Ironically it was to be in India sixty three years

later that the conflicting ideals of militant republicanism and old style Nationalism would be confronted by members of the regiment.

In Jullundur barracks in June 1920 a group of Rangers angered by the actions of the British army in Ireland were to declare 'No longer shall we serve a British King' and raised the Irish tricolour over the barracks. When an appeal was made by their colonel for a return to duties, cajoling the rebels with the battle honours of the regiment, a voice from the ranks declared 'All these battle honours were for England but today is for Ireland and will be the greatest honour of all'. The mutiny would lead to the death of two mutineers, and the death by firing squad of Private James Daly aged 22, from County Westmeath. Many more of the rebels were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

In 1877 they were sent to South Africa where they fought in the Kaffir War, and in 1879, the Zulu War, where the 88th took part in the final defeat of Chief Chattaweo in Zululand.

At Molten in 1881 the regiment was renamed the 1st Battalion Connaught Rangers. The 2nd Battalion Connaught Rangers came from the 94th regiment of foot which was formed up in Scotland in September 1793. In the Boer War of 1899–1901 they again fought with distinction.

At the outbreak of the First World War the first battalion were sent from India to Europe

with the Lahore division. The second battalion left Dublin for Aldershot to join the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) The second battalion of the Connaught Rangers were virtually wiped out during the retreat from Mons where they held back the German advance while the B.E.F. regrouped. This carnage hardly merits a footnote among the countless tragedies of this most futile of wars.

With the onset of the 'the war to end all wars' four more reserve battalions of Connaught Rangers were raised. It was in the sixth reserve battalion that so many Belfast Nationalists enlisted, many of whom were members of the Irish National Volunteers. This is where the story of our grandfathers begins. For the lucky ones their hell was to last another four years.



Connaught Rangers at Jullundur barracks, India. Second right middle row, Pte. F. Jordan, from Lurgan, Co. Armagh

At the outbreak of the War the

majority of the men serving in the regiment would of course have come from the province of Connacht, though in the final years of the regiment's existence many of those who enlisted would be Nationalists from West Belfast.

On the Falls Road, indeed all over Ireland, they rallied to the call of their political leaders, John Redmond and Joe Devlin of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Their eagerness was fuelled as much by poverty as politics. Their hope was for 'the freedom of small nations' and a promised reward of Home Rule for Ireland.

On Easter Monday 1916, while the 6th Connaughts were being bled to death around what was left of the towns of Hulluch and Mazingarbe in Belgium, in Dublin a group of men in green uniforms assembled with arms, and declared the Irish Republic. The men of the Connaughts, like the majority of Irish people at the time, would have deemed the rising as futile. They believed that by their service in the War they would achieve far more for Ireland. All this was to change. Brutal measures against the insurgents by the British government would lead to a resurgence of militant republicanism and the death knell of Redmondism as the leading force of Irish Nationalism.

Near the village of Wytshaete in Belgium, where so many Rangers died, a celtic cross was erected by local people to the memory of the Irish soldiers who gave their lives there. A similar cross was erected in the village of Guillemont to Irish soldiers who died in its defence. The inscription reads, in Latin and Gaelic, 'To the Glory of God and the Honour of Ireland'.

As for the men who returned, there where no flag waving throngs to welcome them home to the new situation in Ireland. Their Home Rule politics had lost the argument to the republican cause.

Many survivors went home to a quiet life with their families. Many would later join the new army of the Irish Free State. A large number of ex-Rangers would also join the I.R.A. where their training and expertise were put to good use in the struggle for independence and in the defence of the Catholic ghettos of Belfast in the early 1920s. Tom Barry arguably the best military leader in the War of Independence had been a sergeant in the Connaught Rangers.

Whatever path each chose on returning home, we should remember them all with equal respect. I leave the last words to a songwriter, Father O'Neill of St. Peters parish Falls Road where many of those who enlisted in 1914 with the 6th Connaughts, were born:

T'was Britannia bade our wild geese fled that small nations might be free
But their lonely graves are by Suvlas waves or the shores of the great North Sea.

The Foggy Dew

On the 12th June 1922 at Windsor Castle the regiment was thanked by King George V for their services to the Empire, he accepted their colours for safe-keeping and disbanded the Connaught Rangers.

THE 6TH CONNAUGHT RANGERS AT WAR

Richard S. Grayson

THE POLITICS OF RECRUITMENT

The outbreak of war posed Nationalist leaders with a dilemma. The traditional dictum that 'England's danger is Ireland's opportunity' meant that Nationalists might have sought to undermine the British war effort. In fact, they did exactly the reverse. On 6 August 1914, two days after Britain entered the war, the *Irish News* reported the departure on the previous day of 600 British army reservists from the Irish Volunteers who were honouring their commitment to fight, and the Nationalist leadership soon went beyond simply ensuring that reservists did as they were obliged.

There were several reasons for Nationalists to volunteer. The army offered a way out of unemployment and poverty. The prospect of defending plucky little Catholic Belgium against German aggression was a stirring cause. Meanwhile, more than that, the political leadership of Nationalism saw an opportunity for Ireland to show that it could be trusted with Home Rule if it was willing to fight for the British Empire in its hour of need. That led initially to John Redmond's offer of the Irish Volunteers for the defence of Ireland, so that British troops could leave Ireland for the front. A reward for this attitude was the passage of Home Rule as law on 18 September, though its implementation was suspended for the duration of the war, and there would be special (though as yet undefined) provision for Ulster. Nationalists celebrated, although as the war dragged on, they would find it ever harder to use the promise of Home Rule at some point in the future to restrain more radical elements in their ranks.

However, both Volunteer groups were soon to join up. The 36th (Ulster) Division was formed for the Ulster Volunteer Force, and by mid-September Redmond was trying to arrange for a similar 'Irish Brigade' to be set up as an umbrella for the Irish Volunteers to join up. His speech at Woodenbridge, County Wicklow, on 20 September called on Irishmen to enlist. This led to a split in the Irish Volunteers. Across the whole island, approximately 93% of the Volunteers backed Redmond, although Eoin MacNeill controlled much of the official machinery and so Redmond's majority split to form the Irish National Volunteers.¹

Following the split, Redmond turned to ensuring that enough Volunteers joined the British army to make real the idea of an Irish Brigade, and he was successful in persuading Kitchener that the 16th (Irish) Division, specifically 47 Brigade within it, should form such a unit.² With a division containing three brigades and support troops, and each brigade containing four battalions of up to 1,000 men, there was space for as many as 4,000 in 47 Brigade. At a mass meeting in Belfast's Clonard Picture House on 25 October, Redmond turned up the heat on those considering joining up. How humiliated Irishmen



Joe Devlin wearing a sash of the exclusively Catholic Ancient Order Of Hibernians, a fraternal society founded in the United States where it claimed 100,000 members. He was a member the A.O.H. and locally they were in effect Devlin's political machine.

would feel, Redmond said, 'if when this war was over, they had to admit that their rights and liberties had been saved by the sacrifices of other men, while the Irishmen remained safe at home and took no risks.'³

A week and a half into November, Redmond's pressure was making an impact on the numbers of I.N.V. men enrolling. On 12 November, even the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* (usually as grudging about Nationalist recruitment efforts as the *Irish News* was about Unionist ones) admitted that 'during the week efforts have been made by some local Nationalists to get their men to join the army.' By that day, 300 had indicated their willingness to join up, and the first batch of sixty mustered at Berry Street's National Club, and then enlisted at Clifton Street. Among them were the Brennan brothers, Robert and Michael. Both staunch Nationalists, Michael would say in later years that he had joined up to fight for the freedom of small nations such as Belgium.⁴ A steady flow continued from the I.N.V. to Clifton Street (which was replaced in February 1915 as the Irish Brigade's recruiting office by 47 Mill Street).

As Nationalist recruits left Belfast, there were enthusiastic street scenes on 19 November when most (600) of the I.N.V. recruits departed for Fermoy. They were all initially attached to the 6th battalion of the Connaught Rangers, though many later went into the 7th Leinster Regiment, both battalions being part of 47 Brigade. Thousands watched as they marched behind 'pipers in Gaelic costume, flourishing banners emblazoned with the Red Hand of the O'Neill and distinctively Irish National devices and mottoes', singing tra-

ditional Irish military songs. As they reached the Great Northern Station, further Irish songs were sung, plus 'God Save the King' and the Belfast Celtic Football Club 'war song'. Joseph Devlin arrived at the station with them and bade farewell to each recruit individually on the train, which then set off for Dublin. There was no parade in Dublin, merely tea and cigarettes, but having taken another train to Fermoy, the men were greeted there by local bands who marched with them to the Volunteer Drill Hall. There they were met by, and paraded with, I.N.V.s from the surrounding area, who accompanied them to their camp.⁵ They would be there training for nearly a year when they departed to Aldershot in September 1915 for further training. This would prepare them for the five major battles in which they would take part: the Somme, Messines, Passchendaele, Cambrai, and the German Spring Offensive.

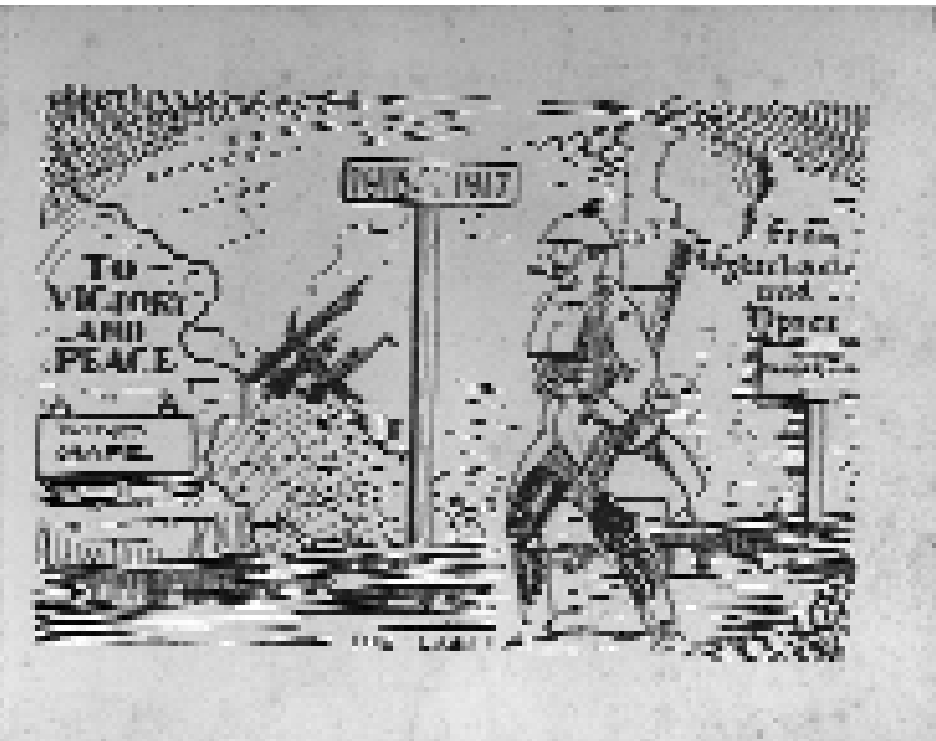


THE SOMME: GUILLEMONT AND GINCHY⁶

It was not until the autumn of 1915, when the war had been raging for well over a year, that Ireland's 'political' volunteer battalions began to arrive on the Western Front, first the 36th (Ulster) Division in October. The 6th Connaughts arrived at Le Havre early on 18 December 1915, with thirty-six officers and 952 other ranks. There is a common perception that men joined up in 1914, were sent to a trench, and stayed there for four years if they were lucky enough to survive. In fact, men were rarely on the frontline for more than a week, and from this time until September 1916, the battalion was periodically rotating

in and out of the trenches. While at the front, often around Béthune, they were engaged in a simple routine: repair trenches, survive German bombardment, and repair trenches again. Their first fatality came on 27 January 1915, after an artillery bombardment, while they faced an enemy advance for the first time. The 6th Connaughts' machine guns held the Germans off, but lost one man: Private John Lavery, born in Warrenpoint, County Down, but living and having enlisted in Belfast.⁷

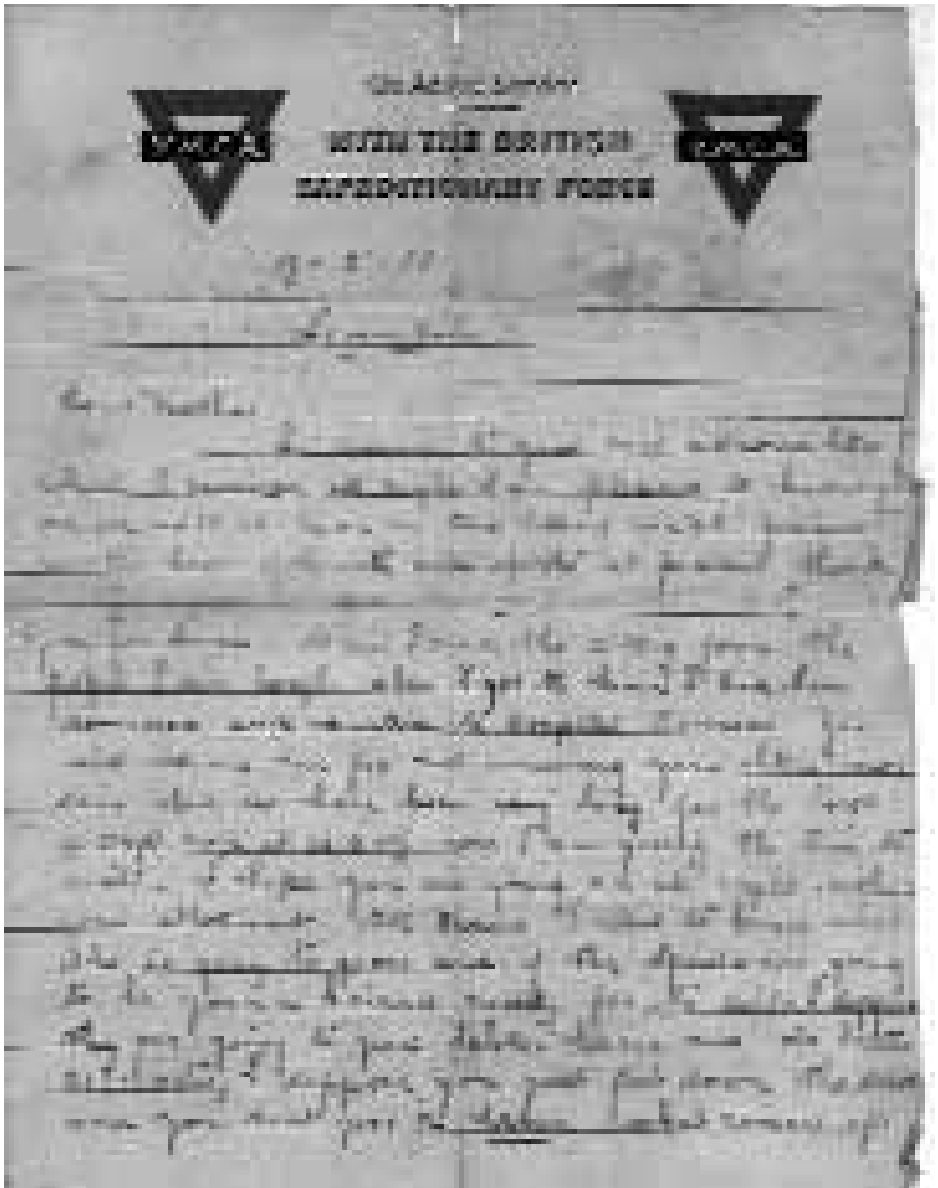
As the weather improved in the spring, the 6th Connaughts would have received news of the Easter Rising in Dublin, although there is no sign that Nationalists became Republicans overnight in the wake of either the rising or the British reaction to it. One member of the 6th Connaughts was very close at hand to the events. Michael Brennan, a staunch Nationalist, had joined the 6th Connaught Rangers after Redmond had called on



Christmas card sent by a 6th Bn. Connaught Ranger, Christmas 1917

Nationalists to enlist. Having been gassed and frostbitten in France, he was lying in a Dublin hospital bed when the I.R.A. took over the hospital, remaining in bed the whole time.⁸

Brennan was one of many Nationalists who had taken the view that they could advance their cause by fighting for the British rather than against them. They would have a chance to take their fight to the Germans on the Somme in September 1916. Planning for an offensive in the Somme area began at the end of 1915 as a way of making a decisive impact



Letter home from Sergeant J. Conlon

on overall German numbers. However, the aim of the offensive changed from February 1916 when the Germans launched their onslaught against the French at Verdun. From then on, the aim of the Somme Offensive, in which French troops would play only a relatively minor role, was to launch a diversionary attack that would ease pressure on the French who were being bled dry by wave on wave of German attack at Verdun. The British

army launched its attack on 1 July 1916, with the Ulster Division engaged in some of the heaviest fighting. On just that one day, across the Division, there were approximately 5,550 casualties (with as many as 2,000 dead) and 58,000 in the British army as a whole, around one-third of them dead.

For the 6th Connaughts, while the Somme battle was being prepared and initiated, there had been action mainly in the Loos sector. This period saw an effective raid on German lines on the night of 26/27 June in collaboration with the 7th Leinsters, and also witnessed acts of individual bravery. One was carried out by Private Patrick McKillen, an enlistee in the 6th Connaughts from the I.N.V. and a resident of Oranmore Street. On 27 July, McKillen 'continued to work his machine gun, single handed, under a heavy fire, after all the remainder of the section had been put out of action. Private McKillen stuck to his gun and held the position for 24 hours.'⁹

In September, 47 Brigade moved to the Somme area, close to the small village of Guillemont. On arriving in the area, the Connaughts faced the familiar routine of improving badly damaged trenches, and the Germans continued to inflict heavy casualties through shelling. On 2 September alone, the 6th Connaughts' B Company lost ten men killed, with a further thirty wounded.¹⁰ The next day, they did what they had come to the Somme to do.

At 5am on 3 September, the battalion drew up for the attack. The whole of 47 Brigade was temporarily attached to the 20th Division. The plan was for three successive waves of troops to take the village. C and D companies of the 6th Connaughts were to attack in the first wave. In the second and third waves, platoons of B Company would plug the gaps in C Company's lines, and platoons from A Company would do the same for D. At 8am, the Germans received the familiar warning of an imminent attack: a heavy bombardment from British lines. Yet some of the heavy trench mortars being used in the attack fell short with tragic results. Waiting in 'Rim Trench' the Connaughts' C Company endured not only retaliatory fire from the Germans but 'friendly fire' from the British lines. By 12 noon, as the bombardment continued, casualties numbered nearly two hundred.

With C Company in no fit state for the first attack troops intended for the second wave replaced them. Then, for three minutes, the Royal Field Artillery let go 'an intense barrage' of the German front. Unlike the bombardment in late June, this was successful. Advancing on the enemy, the Connaughts found opposition weak in some places, but on the right, there was heavier resistance, but 47 Brigade soon overcame that, before cleaning up pockets of resistance holed out in various areas.

Private Thomas Hughes of the 6th Connaughts (and a native of County Monaghan) was wounded in the initial attack, but had wounds dressed and returned to the firing line. Having done so, he spotted a German machine gun which was causing great damage. Hughes ran out ahead of his company, shot the gunner and captured the gun. He was wounded doing this but went on to bring back four prisoners. For these acts of 'most conspicuous bravery and determination' Hughes was awarded the battalion's only Victoria Cross of the war.¹¹

As a result of such bravery, the first three objectives had been reached before 1pm, and around 140 men of the 6th Connaughts joined an attack by other parts of the 16th Division on the final objective, the 'Sunken Road'. Meanwhile, the remainder of the bat-

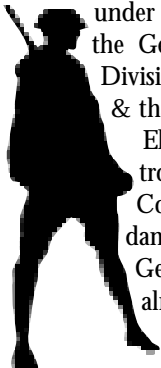
talion dug in with the 7th Leinsters to hold the territory gained until they were relieved the next day.

Among the dead officers was the 6th Connaughts' commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel J.S.M. Lenox-Conyngham. He was replaced on 6 September by Major Rowland Charles Feilding, an English convert to Catholicism, whose letters home to his wife provide an invaluable insight into details of the Connaughts. When Feilding took over, the 6th Connaughts had taken part in one of the few gains of the Somme campaign in the late summer months of 1916. But they had sustained heavy losses as had 47 Brigade as a whole. Of the 2,400 soldiers from the Brigade who took part, nearly half were injured in some way.¹² When Feilding joined the battalion as its CO he found 365 other ranks bivouacking at Carnoy 'amid a plague of flies'.

Of these, on 7 September, nearly 250 men and officers of the 6th Connaughts, and nearly 300 of the 7th Leinsters marched from Carnoy, where 47 Brigade had been resting briefly, towards the front. Before departing, the 6th Connaughts (and probably other Catholic soldiers in 47 Brigade), 'kneeling down in the ranks, all received General Absolution' from the division's Senior Chaplain.¹³ They now had a fresh objective: German trenches close to the village of Ginchy, as part of a wider attack on the village itself, with the rest of the 16th Division. There had already been one failed British attack on Ginchy on 6 September and it was clear that the Germans were well dug-in.

At 4.45pm on 9 September, there was an intensive bombardment of the German lines for two minutes. Yet again, just like at Guillemont, some shells fell short. Fortunately, many were duds, and casualties were lighter than on 3 September. However, with duds also falling on German lines, the impact of the bombardment was not nearly as great as planned. When British troops moved forward at 4.47pm, they found the Germans 'very little disturbed'. So in the first wave of the attack, the 6th Royal Irish Regiment and the 8th Munster Fusiliers were 'mown down by a devastating fire from machine guns'. The original plan had been for the 6th Connaughts plus one company of the 7th Leinsters and two from the 11th Hampshires, to follow behind the first attack, but with the Munsters so badly hit, their men had stopped advancing. A and B companies of the Connaughts realised what had happened and stayed in their trenches, but C and D companies plus the Leinsters and Hampshires did not. When there was a pause in the fighting, they judged that it was their turn to attack. They advanced, but had moved only a few yards before they came under heavy fire. Both officers were hit and the men could make no impact on the German lines. At 5.43pm a runner was sent back with a message for Divisional H.Q. saying, 'It appears that the trench opposite is full of Germans & that they were well prepared.'

Elsewhere, 48 Brigade was more successful. By 7.30pm they had taken control of the village. But the attack on Ginchy was disastrous for the Connaughts. The simple fact was that the bombardment had done too little damage to the German lines. The War Diary noted that those who saw the German trenches 'report that it had escaped our preliminary bombardment almost entirely and that it was thickly manned'. Feilding later revealed that this trench had been overlooked in the British bombardment. It was 'hidden and believed innocuous', and was expected to be the easy part of the



attack. For that reason it 'had been allocated to the tired and battered 47th Brigade.' Instead, it was 'a veritable hornets' nest'.¹⁴

By the evening of 9 September, the Connaughts had lost ten men during the day, with more than seventy others wounded. The battalion was withdrawn from the front the day after the attack, and spent the next ten days in billets before being moved by train north to the Bailleul area. For the 16th Division as a whole, their operations on the Somme had not been as futile as those of British soldiers in July. However, across the division, between 1 and 10 September, there were 4,090 killed, wounded or missing from 10,410 other ranks, and 240 from 435 officers. Of the 4,090 other ranks, 586 were confirmed killed and 846 were missing at the end of the month.¹⁵ At least 1,079 of those were later confirmed killed.¹⁶ It is appropriate that a divisional memorial now stands in Guillemont.

MESSINES

In the aftermath of the battle of the Somme, the prospect of defeating Germany with a decisive 'big push' seemed remote. Throughout the winter months most fighting ceased because the weather was so bad, with heavy snow and severe frosts. From the start of October to the end of January 1917, there were only twenty-three fatalities in the 6th Connaughts (fifteen of those in January). But after that bitter winter, thoughts turned to a new advance. Fighting resumed in February, with the 6th Connaughts involved in raids, but it was not until April that the battalion was focused on a new advance.

The action at Messines was a prelude to the Third Battles of Ypres, which was planned for late July. Possession of the Messines ridge gave the Germans a vantage point over the Ypres area, making unobserved troop movements difficult. Holding the ridge would theoretically give the allies such an advantage in a future attack. The preparation for Messines was markedly different to that for the Somme. The officers of 47 Brigade saw a model of the area at the end of April, and other ranks had even begun practice attacks late that month. From mid-May, 47 Brigade used observation posts on Kemmel Hill to gain a clear view of their target. There were also trips to the front line so that the battalion could familiarise itself with the precise nature of the trenches to be used both for assembling and 'jumping-off'. On the last day of May the entire battalion carried out a mock attack along the lines of the planned offensive. Such preparations are a clear sign of how quickly lessons from the Somme had been learned.



By the time battalions moved to the front for the attack in early June 1917, preparations were under way to ensure that the lessons of the Somme were learned. At 3.10am on the morning of 7 June, the massive Spanbroekmolen mine was exploded under German positions, and men of the Ulster Division attacked. The contrast with 1 July 1916 was marked. The men advanced behind a creeping artillery barrage (supported by carefully targeted machine gun fire) which moved forwards with the men, a tactic which had been perfected towards the end of the battle of the Somme. Each move forward in the barrage was of about one hundred yards. So the Germans did not have the warning period immediately after a barrage had stopped in which to regroup to defend against an attack. Indeed, the men were perilously close behind the barrage – just forty yards in some cases – but they were not hit by friendly fire as the calculations were spot on.¹⁷

The 16th Division lined up, to the left of the Ulster Division, with 47 Brigade on the right and 49 Brigade on the left, with 48 Brigade in reserve. In 47 Brigade, the first wave was provided by the 6th Royal Irish Regiment on the right and the 7th Leinsters on the left. The 6th Connaughts were designated as 'moppers up' to go in behind their comrades from 47 Brigade, the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers. Their target, as for the rest of the 16th (Irish) Division, was the capture of Wytschaete village. The first position was taken in little over half an hour, and the second largely by 5am, although the 7th Leinsters faced some stubborn machine gun fire. Just before reaching Wytschaete village, the Connaughts encountered a German 'strong point' which they 'rapidly overcame', capturing ninety-eight prisoners in the village itself.¹⁸ The 6th Connaughts lost just five men, with a further thirty-two wounded and two missing. There were clear advantages to mopping up, although even the 1st Royal Munster Fusiliers out in front of the Connaughts had also lost only five men that day.

PASSCHENDAELE AND CAMBRAI

Following Messines, the 6th Connaughts were soon in action again at the Third Battle of Ypres, at Passchendaele. Heavy rain stopped their advance on the first day of the battle, and they dug in for the first half of August, under almost continuous fire. Twenty-four men were lost in the 6th Connaughts between 2 and 11 August. Among them was Lance-Corporal Patrick McKillen of Oranmore Street in the Falls, who had in 1916 received the divisional certificate for gallantry.¹⁹

Another attack was set for 16 August, and became known as the battle of Langemarck. This attack would see the Ulster Division again in the middle (as at Messines) side-by-side with the 16th on their right. On the left of the 36th was the 48th Division. Within this battle order, 47 Brigade was a relief battalion. Both 48 and 49 Brigades had led for the 16th Division from 4.45am on 16 August. They incurred heavy losses though some ground had been temporarily gained. When 47 Brigade moved forward to relieve others of their division on the evening of 16 August any question of further advance was over, so the 6th Connaughts acted as stretcher-bearers. On the evening of 17 August, when the Brigade was relieved, they left third Ypres for good. In that first half of August, total casualties for the 6th Connaughts amounted to 249, of whom twenty-five were dead.

For the remainder of 1917, the 6th Connaughts' trenches whenever they were at the front were in a terrible condition.²⁰ When not in the trenches, they were training for a British attack at Cambrai, and by mid-November they were rehearsing on a replica of the German trenches. The aim at Cambrai was to break the Hindenburg Line, a formidable line of German defences built largely by Russian forced labour. It included a forward zone of around one kilometre in depth, which was relatively lightly manned in trenches. The aim of this zone was to slow down any British attack through skirmishing. That forward zone protected the main defensive lines consisting of wire up to one hundred yards in depth, concrete bunkers, deep trenches, and strong points for machine gunners.

The 16th Division was involved at Cambrai from the first, but away from the main front launching a subsidiary attack at Croiselles Heights. Its aim was to seize control of a 2,000 yard section of Tunnel Trench and Tunnel Support. The former, the target of the 6th Connaughts (the 7th Leinsters being in reserve), was about thirty feet underground, with ferro-concrete pill boxes at the top. The British had designated these Jove, Mars, Vulcan, Juno and Pluto. The first four were the targets of 16th Division.

At 6.20am on 20 November, a four minute barrage of the line began. One minute later, B Company of the 6th Connaughts leapt out of the British front line to make the 223 yard journey to Tunnel Trench. After bitter fighting the Connaughts secured their portion of Tunnel Trench, and then attacked Jove and Mars, gaining both 'after slight resistance'. German counter-attacks ensued and in one, Private Kieran White moved close to the area from which the Germans were throwing bombs, caught some of the bombs in mid-air, and threw them back before they had exploded. For this, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. With munitions running out after an hour in Tunnel Trench, the Connaughts were forced to withdraw from Jove and consolidate at Mars. But by 8.30am supplies of bombs were starting to arrive at the front, and the Connaughts consolidated their position before being relieved by the 7th Leinsters on the evening of 22 November, having lost thirty-four killed and 109 wounded.

Following Cambrai, there was a major reorganisation of the 16th Division. At the end of January 1918, five battalions were wound up. This allowed the division to be reconfigured, like the rest of the army, into brigades of three battalions each. The 6th Connaughts remained in 47 Brigade, now joined by the 2nd Leinsters and 1st Munsters.

THE GERMAN SPRING OFFENSIVE

In the Spring of 1918, the Germans nearly won the war. From late 1917 they had strengthened their forces on the Western Front as Tsarist Russia collapsed and the war in the east ended. On 21 March, they launched what is now known as the 'Spring Offensive', gaining forty miles of allied ground in their first thrust. Eventually, they came within fifty miles of Paris, putting the city within range of their artillery. Over three hundred shells were landed on the French capital.

The 6th Connaughts were among the first caught in the advance, alongside the 2nd Leinsters which contained some remnants of the 7th. At 4.30am on 21 March, a heavy German bombardment of 47 Brigade's positions began. The bombardment made commu-

nications between brigades and battalions exceptionally difficult.²¹ In the chaos, the 6th Connaughts advanced at 3.45pm at Ronssoy according to orders, without knowing that the order had actually been cancelled.

The Connaughts dug in overnight, but faced a heavy barrage again the next morning, 22 March. By this time it was becoming very difficult for Feilding to keep track of events elsewhere at the front with runners coming under heavy fire. When information did eventually reach battalion HQ it was often hours old. The Connaughts desperately tried to hold a line near to the road between Villers Faucon and Ste. Emilie, alongside battalions as diverse as the 1st Munsters, the 11th Hampshire Pioneers, the 13th Royal Sussex and 1st Hertfordshires.

For the Connaughts, steady retreat and hard fighting continued. Officer casualties had been heavy and by 5pm on 22 March Feilding was left in a command of a makeshift battalion comprised of 6th Connaughts, 1st Munsters, and 2nd Leinsters. Two men were lost through friendly fire on 23 March – an enemy aeroplane dropped a flare on the retreating soldiers which the British artillery mistook for one of its own markers and fired shrapnel on the target.

In the early hours of 27 March, word came that French reinforcements were about to pass through British lines to counter-attack the Germans. They did not, however arrive, and at daylight on 27 March, a large German force was spotted having broken through a gap between the Connaughts' position and the River Somme. By this time, enough men had regrouped for men to start to reorganise into their original battalions, and the 6th Connaughts fell back. They set up a new position from which machine gunners had a clear sight of the Germans. From this position, the Germans were held up for several hours, until fresh British troops began to force the Germans back. Here ended the Connaughts' involvement in the Spring Offensive, and the 2nd Leinsters were also back in billets by 30 March. Casualties had been heavy in the retreat. Ninety of the 6th Connaughts were killed, with over five hundred more wounded.

THE END OF THE 6TH CONNAUGHTS

When the battalion assembled at Aubigny on 31 March, just five other officers and 150 other ranks remained. As the army reorganised itself in the wake of the retreat, such a small battalion was an obvious one to be disbanded. That effectively happened on 13 April, when most of the officers and 281 men – numbers swelled by the return of the wounded – joined the 2nd Leinster Regiment, meeting former 47 Brigade comrades once in the 7th Leinsters, although that battalion was soon (on 23 April) transferred to 88 Brigade in 29th Division. A small body of headquarters officers and transport staff remained in the 6th Connaughts to form a Training Staff which was soon attached to America troops at Doudeauville. The small band of men remaining in the 6th Connaught Rangers Training Staff had much expertise to pass on to their new comrades, yet the Americans were all at the front from early July and the training staff became redundant. On 31 July 1918, the 6th Connaughts received the order that they were formally disbanded. In the entire war, at least 480 men of all ranks had lost their lives in the battalion.

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21. The 6th Connaughts and 47 Brigade war diaries for this time were lost or never made, but there are details of 47 Brigade's movements in the 2nd Leinsters' diary, and Feilding made a detailed note: National Archive, Kew, WO 95/1956, 16th Division General Staff War Diary.

**OFF TO
WAR:
NEWSPAPER
REPORTS
FROM THE
TIME**



Irish News

19th November 1914

BELFAST NATIONALISTS AND THE WAR

Send-Off to Members of the Irish Brigade

STIRRING SCENES

Unique & Memorable Gathering in St. Mary's Hall

MR JOSEPH DEVLIN, M.P.

Impressive & Vigorous Address to I.N.V. Soldiers

THE CAUSE OF THE ALLIES

A demonstration unique in the history of Nationalist Belfast took place last evening in St. Mary's Hall, when the members of the Irish National Volunteer Force, Belfast Regiment, who have joined the colours and leave this morning to enter upon their training at Fermoy, Co. Cork, were entrained under the auspices of the Irish Women's Council, Belfast. The hall, which has been the venue of so many notable gatherings and great meetings associated with the National cause, possesses traditions appealing to all who know and appreciate the part played by Belfast Nationalists in the fight for Irish Self-Government. The building, within whose walls some of the most important assemblages of the National character held in the city of Belfast have taken place, was on this occasion the scene of very significant and, indeed, impressive proceedings, eloquently indicative of the new order of things which has followed on the triumph of the Irish cause and the enactment of a measure of Home rule. Mr Joseph Devlin, M.P., who presided, and met, as he always does in West Belfast with a reception of thrilling enthusiasm, delivered a very striking and powerful address, and struck the keynote of the whole proceedings in this definition of Ireland's position in relation to the world war and his tribute to the valorous example shown by Belfast Nationalists.

The hall was very effectively adorned; and, appropriate to the occasion, the colours of the Allies were prominent in the decorative scheme. On the platform, the drapery comprised the green flag with harp emblem and the Union Jack intertwined, while around the balcony were suspended parti-coloured flags, including Imperial and Irish insignia, with a large Union Jack as the centre piece. Guards of the I.N.V. in uniform and with rifles and bayonets were in attendance, and gave the proper military touch to the general aspect of the proceedings. The flag of the Belfast Regiment, I.N.V. surrounded by a special guard of honour, was borne prominently on the platform, where the members of the Pipers' Band, in Gaelic costume, and with a Red Hand standard, added to the picturesque elements in the scene. The main body of the hall was occupied by long tables, at which eight hundred guests – the men who have joined the colours – were seated. They were as fine, smart, and sol-

dierly body of men as one could find anywhere, and commanded the admiration of the military men whose khaki uniforms distinguished them amongst the assemblage of representative citizens and prominent clergy on the platform.

MR. DEVLIN'S ADDRESS Belfast Nationalists' Example to All Ireland

Mr Joseph Devlin M.P., who was received with loud and prolonged cheering said – This function to-night is at once unique and significant. I am delighted to have the opportunity of saying a few words to my friends, comrades, and constituents on their departure to take up their training for service under the colours in the great war now being waged on the Continent. I have had occasion time and again in all my public associations with all the Nationalists and Catholics of our city to admire their spirit of self-sacrifice, their fight for principles which they hold dear, their courage and determination in face of difficulty and danger, and their unstinted and generous support of every good and great cause. (Cheers) I confess I never felt prouder of them, and I am deeply moved by the present manifestation of patriotic spirit exhibited by the 700 young men who have

PLUCKILY AND SPONTANEOUSLY RESPONDED TO THE CALL OF DUTY

in the nation's hour of difficulty and trial. (Cheers) Nationalist Belfast has always shown an example in translation into practical action the needs of the hour. You have never failed in any emergency or trial in the past. You have not failed on the present occasion. (Cheers) I have asked no man to volunteer as an individual; I have applied no pressure in any shape or form to any man associated with the National Volunteers in Belfast. (Hear, hear) I have merely pointed out the duty of the young men of Ireland in relation to the present war. I have told them that on the side of the Allies there lies justice, right, principle, and freedom. (Cheers) I have explained that Mr Redmond and the Irish Party have given pledges and assurances to the British democracy that if justice were given to Ireland, if her Legislature were restored, and if Irishmen were allowed to govern themselves in their own land, then Ireland would loyally act as a free partner in the confines of Empire, and by the Empire they would stand or fall. (Cheers) Well, we have seen the Home Rule Bill placed on the Statute Book. We have succeeded in making National Self Government the law of the land. The democracy of Great Britain has stood faithfully by us to the last. Are we in these circumstances to prove false to our promises, and recreant to our pledges and our solemn obligations? (Cries of 'No!') We stand for all practical purposes in the position of the Boers in South Africa. (Cheers) What a splendid example General Louis Botha and his brave followers are exhibiting at the present moment. No country fought more heroically for its right for the hearths and homes of the men of the Veldt than the South African Boer. But at the conclusion of the war, when a treaty of peace was signed and when the Boers were given their legislation constitution, they declared themselves

AS FREE AND LOYAL CITIZENS OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE,

and in the first war which has overtaken the British people since, they have come forward prepared to make every sacrifice and spill their blood in defence of their promises and pledges and the solemn rights guaranteed by the 'scrap of paper' which confers on them the title of free men. (Cheers) The Nationalists of Ireland sympathised with the Boers during the South African War because they felt convinced that they had justice on their side. (Hear, hear.) It was an unpopular stand for the Nationalists of Ireland to take at the time, and it was anything but in their interests to do so. But we never counted the cost where principle was involved, and, just as then we now range ourselves on the side of honour, truth, and principle. (Cheers) I am proud beyond measure at the fine example which the Belfast Nationalist Volunteers have given to Ireland: in conjunction with every Belfast man, I shall watch the career of this battalion of the Irish Brigade with feelings of pride, hope and confidence. (Hear, hear) I am satisfied they will sustain the splendid traditions not only of their city, but to their country and their race for valour, for honour, for chivalry, and, as units in an army stand for all we value highest in civilisation – religion and progress. I am satisfied that the young men of the National Volunteers of Belfast who have

SO COURAGEOUSLY VOLUNTEERED FOR ACTIVE SERVICE
AT THIS MOMENTOUS AND ARRESTING MOMENT

when the fate and future of human liberty are threatened, will emulate the example of their forefathers who fought with so much renown and fame in the Irish Brigade in the service of France in the very locality where the centre of the struggle is now being so gallantly defended by the army of the Allied forces. (Cheers) I salute the members of the present contingent on their departure in a spirit of pride and gratitude. I know they will prove worthy of their city and their friends, and, when the history of the present war comes to be written and viewed in the true perspective, the Nationalists of Belfast will ever regard with feelings of generous pride the fact that from the capital of the North of Ireland their brothers and comrades showed an illustration of patriotism and courage worthy to rank with the noble deeds and inspiring efforts of the men who made McCracken's city famous in the struggle for Irish liberty over a century ago. (Loud cheers) May every good fortune, success, and blessing attend the colours of the Irish National volunteers of Belfast, most of whom are from my own constituency of West Belfast, whose safe return, crowned with the laurels of glory worthily earned in the arena of a great conflict on behalf of a righteous cause, will bring joy to the hearts of all our fellow-citizens. (Loud cheers)

<p>Oglaigh na hEireann</p> <p>ENROL UNDER THE GREEN FLAG</p> <p>Safeguard your rights and liberties [the few left you]. Secure more. Help your Country to a place among the nations. Give her a national Army to keep her there. Get a gun and do your part.</p> <p>JOIN THE IRISH VOLUNTEERS (President: EOIN MAC NEILL)</p>
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Anti-recruitment poster by Eoin MacNeill's
Irish Volunteers

Irish News

20th November 1914

OFF TO FERMOY

Belfast Recruits for Irish Brigade

WONDERFUL SCENES

Crowds of Thousands Witness the Departure

The departure of six hundred men of the Irish National Volunteers – the first contingent from Belfast – to Fermoy for their training, after joining the colours, was attended by quite remarkable scenes yesterday morning. Probably the spectacle was such as has never been witnessed in the streets of Belfast before. Headed by pipers in Gaelic costume, flourishing banners emblazoned with the Red Hand of the O'Neill and distinctively Irish National devices and mottoes, the men marched through Belfast with their khaki-clad officer to the inspiring airs that are inseparably associated with Irish traditions and Ireland's age-long fight for freedom. 'O'Donnell Abu' and 'Clare's Dragoons' resounded in Royal Avenue and Donegall Place as the men swung through the centre of the city to entrain at the Great Northern Railway station on their long journey southwards. For the present all the men are attached to that famous corps the Connaught Rangers, but it is possible that some may be later on attached to one or other of the equally noted regiments constituting the modern Irish Brigade which is entering into existence, with every recruit full of the desire to emulate the deeds performed on the plains of Belgium and France by that other history-making Irish Brigade two hundred years ago.

Belfast Nationalists have given a fine lead in this critical and momentous period, and it was fitting that such public enthusiasm as was witnessed yesterday should attend the sending off of the first body of brave and stalwart men from this city to swell the ranks of the Irish Brigade. That they will do credit to the community which they represent and bring honour to their city could not be doubted by any person who was present at yesterday's wonderful demonstration and observed the demeanour and bearing of the new soldiers. Though as yet unprovided with uniforms, they presented the smart appearance and marched with the regularity which betokened experience of the drill instructor, while they were manly, well-set-up types drawn from varying grades of society, but all possessing the qualities which come within the true definition of the term 'soldierly.' There was no lavish display of bunting such as marked the departure of other contingents of troops from the city, but if anything was lacking in externals of this particular kind, nothing could exceed the effectiveness of the manifestation of public feeling attendant on the event.

From Henry Place, the entrance to the Victoria Barracks, all the way to the Great Northern Railway Station through the centre of the city – a distance of about a mile – thousands and thousands of people were congregated, at some points with such density as to necessitate

the suspension of traffic. For hours they waited the opportunity of seeing the men march past, and giving them a parting cheer, but though the time of waiting was long the multitude of onlookers increased instead of diminishing, and when at last the music of the pipes and a roll of cheering heralded the approach of the advance guard the streets were packed all the way, and every window had its bunch of onlookers.

The men, who had assembled in the barracks at 7 a.m. and breakfasted there, were later on paraded in the square and sized off into companies by the officers of the Connaught Rangers in attendance, with the assistance of the local Volunteer officer. Having been formed into companies, the men were provided with the first part of their equipment – namely, greatcoats, and about half-past ten o'clock marched off to the railway station. They were under the command of Major Buler, Lieutenant Wickham, and Lieutenant Telford (Connaught Rangers) with some seven or eight non-commissioned officer of that corps, and were accompanied by five bands – the Clann Uladh Pipers' Band, the O'Neill Pipers' Band, the Mandeville Flute Band, and the National Volunteer Bugle Band.

The scenes along the route to the railway station were very striking, the deep fringe of onlookers stretching the entire distance, while cheer after cheer and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs marked the progress of the men who marched along to the martial and stirring music of Irish National airs. It was a rare spectacle for the average citizen and created quite a sensation, the music of the bands causing people to flock from all points to add to the crowd already thronged along the streets. The railway station was completely surrounded by an immense crowd and even the tops of the adjoining sheds were crowded. Immense enthusiasm greeted the arrival at the terminus of Mr. Joseph Devlin, M.P., almost simultaneously with the first batch of the men, but the general public were restricted to Glengall Street and Great Victoria Street, the precincts of the station being guarded by a body of Royal Irish Rifles, while there was also a force of police in attendance under District-Inspector Redmond. A great number, however, of those most intimately connected with the men were admitted and soon the main platform from which the train was to start was crowded from end to end. Mr Samuel Young the veteran M.P. was amongst those present, while the Right Rev. Mgr. O'Doherty, P.P. V.F, Omagh; Rev. T. McCotter, Adm., St Joseph's; Rev. A. Greaven. B.A., C.C., St Paul's; Rev. H Murray C.C., St. Mary's; and Rev. John McLaverty. C.C., St. Patrick's, the military chaplain in Belfast, were also noticed on the platform, in addition to a very large gathering of public representatives and other prominent citizens.

While the men were entraining the bands played 'God Save Ireland' and 'A Nation Once Again', and 'God Save the King' was sung, while a vigorous rendering of the Belfast Celtic 'war song' also echoed through the station. Before the departure of the train many touching scenes of parting were witnessed, the relatives of the men handing them little gifts, which mostly took the form of rosaries and religious emblems, while cigarettes, sweets, newspapers, etc., were lavishly distributed through the packed carriages constituting the long troop train. Mr Joseph Devlin, M.P., who was cheered to the echo, made his way along the train and took a personal farewell with every individual recruit. Ultimately the final

words of command were given, the officers swung into their compartments and to the strains of 'God Save Ireland' and another prolonged cheer the train steamed off, every window framing a crowd of eager and lively faces.

THE MEN REACH FERMOY

Cheered to Quarters by Crowd With Bands

Our Cork Correspondent wires last night:

The news that six hundred of the National Volunteers from Belfast were to arrive in Fermoy to-night spread like wildfire throughout the town, with the consequent result that a demonstration of enthusiastic young men and women assembled at the railway station to accord their Northern friends a right royal reception. The Cross Street National Band, the Barrack Hill Band, and the Pipers' Band turned out from their respective quarters and marched to the Volunteer Drill Hall, from which, after a short time, the several bands, accompanied by the local Volunteers, paraded the town and thence to the station. There could not have been less than 2,000 persons present, and these waited patiently for the arrival of the train which steamed in at 9.20. The men were received by General Miles and Brigadier-General Pickard, the Chairman and members of the Urban Council, officers of the Volunteers, and Rev. M. O'Connell, chaplain of the Brigade, and within a short time the Belfast men were formed up in companies.

THE MEN SHOWED THEY WERE WELL DRILLED

They looked fit, and immediately made themselves quite at home. On their march through the station premises the local Volunteers formed a guard of honour, the immense crowd cheering, whilst the soldiers sang 'It's a long way to Tipperary'. The men were accompanied by the three bands into the new barrack square where a most enthusiastic scene took place with bands playing and the Volunteers cheering, whilst the men of the Royal Irish and Connaught Rangers joined in the reception. General Miles was delighted at the appearance of the men, who, he is sure, will be a credit to the army. The men had everything prepared for them on their arrival and took up their quarters as if they were stationed there all their lives.

THE ARRIVAL AT DUBLIN

The Press Association says:

Five hundred National Volunteers who left Belfast yesterday morning to join the army passed through Dublin yesterday afternoon. They were met by friends at Kingsbridge Station, where tea and cigarettes were provided. The men then proceeded by special train to Fermoy.

Irish Times

20th November 1914

THE NEW ARMY

Belfast Nationalists Enlist

SCENE AT THE RAILWAY STATION

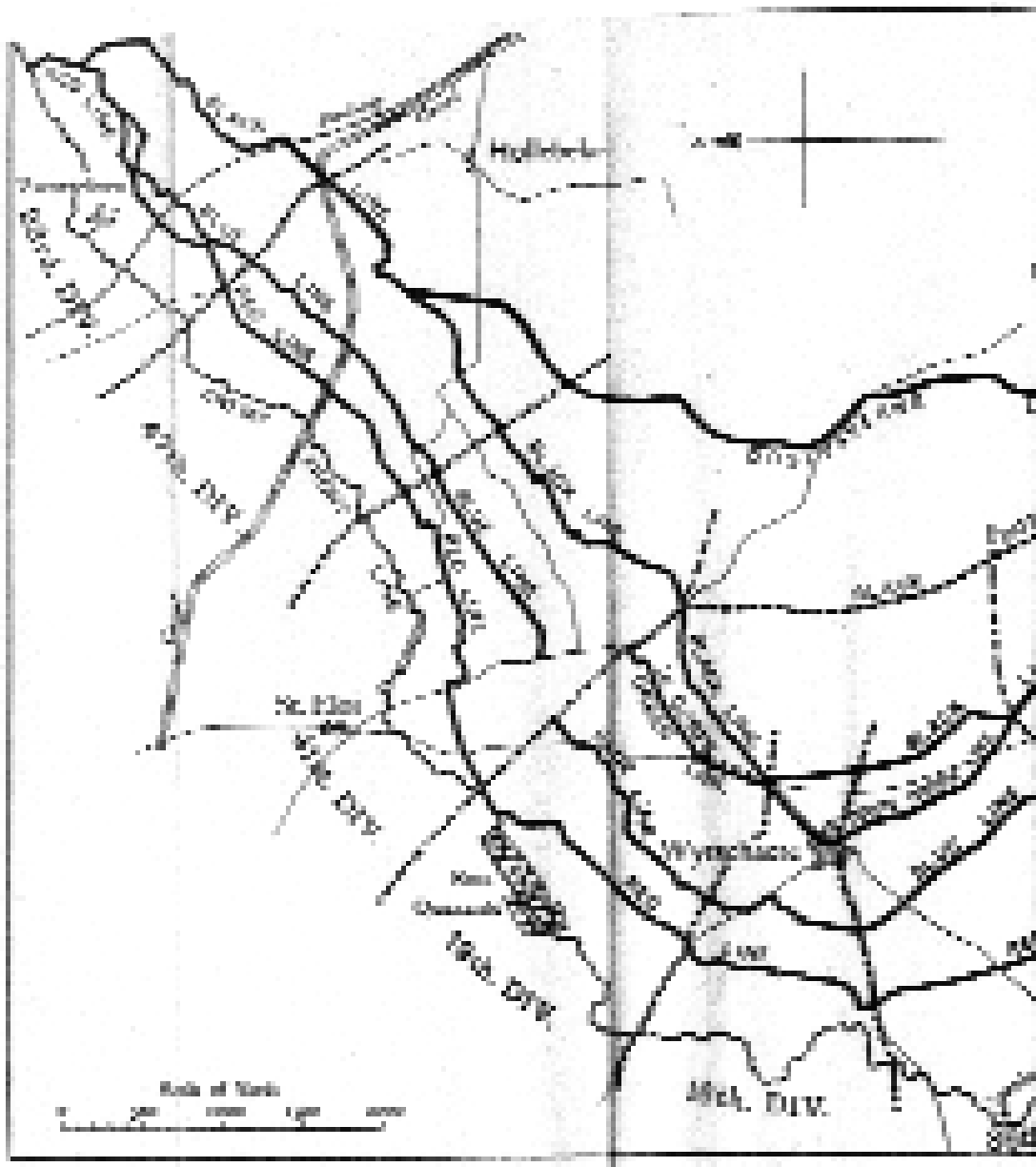
Over 500 Belfast Nationalist Volunteers, who enlisted in the Irish Brigade of the NEW ARMY left Belfast this morning for Fermoy Co Cork. Where they will undergo their training.

REMARKABLE SCENES were witnessed as the men were leaving the Victoria Barracks for the Great Northern Railway Station. Hundreds of their friends and relations had congregated in Clifton Street, and after Cheering the men for several minutes sang Rule Britannia, the Wearing of The Green and A Nation Once Again.

The bands in attendance were, Clann Uladh, O'Neill Pipers, Volunteer Buglers, St Malachy's, Hibernian Temperance, and Mandeville Fife and Drum and they paraded the Square in turn to the strains of A Nation Once Again, The Wearing of the Green, and other Nationalist airs, with Tipperary by way of variety. The men appeared to be in the best of spirits and during a lull in the music gave vent to their exuberance of feeling by lustily declaring in chorused unison that Belfast Celtic will be there. Headed by the Clann Ulladh Pipers playing God Save Ireland, the recruits left the Barracks at 10.20, and their progress through the City was accomplished with some difficulty by reason of the eagerness of the crowds in waiting to join the ranks. Mill girls were present in their hundreds, and made the air lively with their cheering and singing. The march via Clifton Street, Donegall St, and Royal Avenue and the gathering of the Nationalist Volunteers not unnaturally attracted a great deal of public attention, while there was not a little curiosity as to the character of the turnout. Another crowd assembled at the Railway Station which was guarded by a detachment of Royal Irish Rifles. So great was the crowd that it was only with difficulty the men pushed their way into the Station which they entered by the Glengall Street side, and it was almost an hour before the train, due to leave at 11.00 cleared from the Station. There was an animated scene on the platform, to which the Pipers were admitted.

Mr J Devlin, M.P. was present, and went from carriage to carriage taking a personal leave taking of every man. Alderman Moore, Coucillor Mc Entee, Dr Blewitt, Mr Martin J Bourke, and a number of Roman Catholic clergymen and other prominent Belfast Nationalists were also in attendance. The train steamed out at 11.40 amid heavy cheering.

The men will be attached to some of the New Battalions of the Connaught Rangers, Leinster Regiment and the Royal Irish Regiment. Major Bowlby traveled from Fermoy to take charge of the party, and was accompanied by Lieutenants Telford and Wickham, and by a number of non-commissioned Officers. Colonel the Hon. Arthur Hill Trevor superintended the departure arrangements at the Station.



The Battle of MESSINES

Camp boundaries.....

Divisions' frontlines.....

COLOURS

11. Austrians
12. " " " "
13. " " " "
14. " " " "

REGIMENTS

1. 1st
2. 2nd
3. 3rd
4. 4th
5. 5th
6. 6th
7. 7th
8. 8th
9. 9th
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96. 96th
97. 97th
98. 98th
99. 99th
100. 100th

Scale: 1:50,000



FAMILY STORIES



Connaught Cemetery, northern France. Source: www.cwgc.org

MICHAEL AND ROBERT BRENNAN

Siobhán Brennan Deane

Michael Brennan and his brother Robert were the two youngest surviving children of Joseph and Kate Brennan who lived in the Carrickhill district of Belfast. This nationalist family had lived in the city since the 1850s. There were nine children but only two, Michael and Robert, enlisted to serve in the British army and to fight in the Great War. Joining together at Clifton Street Hall on 12th November 1914 they were ordered to serve with the Connaught Rangers; their service numbers were 2496 and 2497.

Of the two brothers Robert, a married man with two young children, was the eldest by three years. Michael, my grandfather, was aged 19. It was not until 1921 that he met and married my grandmother, Mary Catherine Quinn from the Sailortown area of Belfast. It was always known in the family that granda had fought in World War One but it was a topic that was not talked about often. Like others of his generation and nationalist background, such discussions were usually between those who had shared the experience; family were to be protected from the more gory details of warfare. In more recent years when the matter was discussed amongst his children and grandchildren there was a certain realisation and quiet pride in the fact that Michael had fought in the only regiment of the British Army known to have mutinied against how Britain treated its Irish subjects*. There was even greater pride in the fact that Michael actually refused his war medals, returning them to the War Office in London in 1923. The more the family learned about his time in the Great War the more they realised that he was a man of some principle.



Michael Brennan

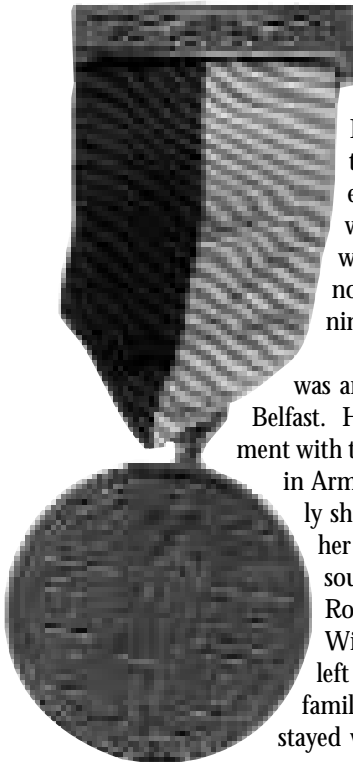
The exact reasons why Michael and his brother joined the army in 1914 is lost to time, his death in 1979 preceded the enquiring minds of his grandchildren who now regret that they did not have a chance to ask more. But this lack of first hand knowledge does not mean we cannot make certain informed assumptions. His actions over 90 years ago can be assessed with the benefit of hindsight and using contemporary sources such as local newspapers, the War Office Index Cards and Medal Rolls as well as the Connaught Rangers War Diaries, an insight in to his motives and experiences can be derived.

According to the local Belfast Newspaper the *Irish News* dated November 13th 1914, seventy members of the Irish National Volunteer Force had enlisted the day before at recruiting headquarters in Belfast. This is the same day and place that Robert and Michael Brennan had joined up. Michael had once stated that he was 'fighting for the freedom of Catholic Belgium and other small nations', the same motives that the Irish Volunteers under the guidance of Redmond had proclaimed. Seven days after enlisting, the brothers, together with friends and neighbours, attended mass at St Patrick's chapel. They then assembled and marched through cheering Belfast crowds to the Great Northern Railway Station and the train to Fermoy, Co. Cork.

In 1915 after basic training the volunteers transferred to Aldershot in England. It was soon after this that the two brothers parted company. Robert was found to have a slight heart complaint and was transferred back to Ireland as part of the 4th Connaught Rangers. This was the unit that would provide provisions and back up services for the Connaught Rangers at the front line, and Robert was stationed at Bere Island, Co. Cork. Due to ill health he was discharged from the army in June 1916, but this was not the end of his fighting career, it was really only the beginning. This time his enemy would be British, not German.

Robert Brennan joined the Irish Republican Army and was an Officer in Charge of C Company, Carrickhill Brigade, Belfast. He was never caught, arrested or interned for this involvement with the I.R.A. but indirectly, his wife Mary was. She spent time in Armagh Gaol, the women's prison. After a search of the family shop she was found to have two loaded revolvers hidden in her clothing, these belonged to two I.R.A. men who had sought refuge at the premises during a curfew in July 1922. Robert was reputedly on active service with Dan Breen in the Wicklow Mountains at the time of his wife's arrest and it was left to family and neighbours to look after the couple's young family. The youngest child, Robert Kevin, being so small, stayed with his mother in Armagh Gaol and took his first steps there. Robert Brennan died in 1973 and is buried near the Republican Plot in Milltown Cemetery.

Michael Brennan's war journey was a different one. He was allocated to the 6th Battalion of the Connaught



'Black and Tan' medal, awarded in 1966 to volunteers on the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising



Robert Brennan and family

Rangers and on 17th December 1915, along with 36 officers, 940 other men, 56 horses and mules, 4 machine guns, 17 vehicles and 10 bicycles, he set foot on French soil for the first time. His destination was eventually to be the front line trenches.

The first injury for the 6th Connaught Rangers happened on 15th January 1916 and the first deaths in the regiment occurred at the end of that same month, with four killed. But it was not German gunfire that would have a direct effect on Michael Brennan in these early days, it was the French weather. The War Diary for March 1916 tells that,

the casualties during the period 1st-10th were 10 killed, 31 wounded and about 50 men sent to hospital suffering from exposure. Though our men were not severely tested under fire during this period they bore the extreme hardships of almost continuous fatigues through trenches in many places knee deep in mud and the long

nights standing in that mud during cold wet and almost arctic weather with great fortitude and endurance.

Michael Brennan was more than likely one of these fifty men that suffered from exposure. It is known that about this time he was evacuated to a hospital in Dublin with gas poisoning and frostbite on his feet. It was whilst he was recuperating here that the 1916 Uprising took place and the ward in which he lay was taken over by the I.R.A. He was arrested by one of the rebel force whilst he lay ill and when asked many years later by his

Ministry of Home Affairs, Northern Ireland.

no. 1303/203.

MINUTE SHEET.

Mary Henry Brennan.

Arrested at 6.30.

A J. [unclear] report. This woman,
has her [unclear], one [unclear]
[unclear], [unclear] in the [unclear].

There were two men in the house
at the time, E. [unclear] [unclear], [unclear]
[unclear]. [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
[unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear] [unclear]
[unclear] [unclear] [unclear]

Arrested in [unclear] [unclear], on
May 24, 1916.

Preventive [unclear] by D. J. [unclear]
[unclear] of the [unclear] [unclear] 1916, 20/6

Mary Brennan's arrest sheet

daughter Kathleen, 'What did you do daddy?' he replied, 'There was nothing I could do so I just lay in bed until it was all over.' Michael was later transferred back to Belfast to recuperate with his family and eventually he returned to France. He was promoted to Corporal.

On 21st March 1918 the 6th Connaught Rangers were caught up in the middle of the great German offensive and suffered heavy casualties. Charles A. Brett, a junior officer with the 6th and a native of Co. Antrim commented about this day many years later in his 'Recollections':

Of the 650 odd men in the Battalion about 30 survived, mostly transport drivers and Battalion Headquarters staff, and even they had to fight hard. Most of the men were killed, very few were taken prisoner ... Happily Colonel Fielding survived, but the 6th Battalion as such ceased to exist.

Michael was one of these survivors. It is known that he saw his best friend killed and even though he was ordered to do so by a superior officer, he never shot a man who was trying to surrender. In later life Michael was traumatised by these events, suffering from what we now know as 'shellshock'. On one occasion whilst working at the family grocery shop he cut his hand with a knife, the sight of his own blood sent him into a panic frightening his children who witnessed the event. It was left to his wife Kitty to soothe him 'like a wee child' and to settle him.

On 13th April 1918 the 6th Connaught Rangers battalion was reduced to a training cadre and eventually it was amalgamated with the Leinster Regiment. Michael was transferred to the 2nd Leinsters and was discharged from service on 19th May 1919, two weeks before his 24th birthday.

But this was not the end of the story regarding Michael's involvement in the War. According to the official Medal Rolls of 1919 he was eligible to three medals, the 1915 Star, the Victory Medal and the British War Medal. However, it is noted in these same documents that the Star was received back in the War Office in 1923, partial confirmation of the family story that Michael returned his medals. Whether these were returned directly on receipt in Belfast in protest at the War in general or as a reaction to the Belfast pogroms and the 1922 division of Ireland in particular, has not been ascertained. It is felt by some in the family that the latter reason would have been the deciding factor in any decision he had made. Michael and his wife had been the victims of the new Northern Ireland auxiliary police force, the 'B' Specials, who had ransacked their shop and home, robbing them. Also the aims for which Michael had strived when he initially joined the British army in 1914 had proved futile. Ireland had not achieved Home Rule and was in fact partitioned. He was heard to say in later years that, 'there's nothing wrong with the British people, it is just their politicians that you can't trust.'

The medal that Michael Brennan took utmost pride in was the one he received as captain of Alton United football team of Carrickhill who won the F.A.I. Cup in 1923. This Belfast amateur side beat the foremost club in Ireland at that time, Shelbourne United, at a match at Dalymount Park on St Patrick's Day that year.

Michael died in 1979 and is buried in Milltown Cemetery, Belfast.

*Note: Connaught Rangers Mutiny in India, 1920

When news of the Anglo-Irish War, especially of the behaviour of the Black and Tans and the Auxiliary Division (paramilitary reinforcements of the Royal Irish Constabulary from England), reached the veterans of the st Btn at Jullundur, India, the mutiny began. On 28 June 1920, five men from C Company refused to take orders from their officers, declaring their intent not to serve the King until the British forces left Ireland. The Union Flag at Jullundur, in the Punjab, was replaced by the flag of the Irish Republic.

Within three days, the mutiny was ended and the mutineers taken to prison camp at Dagshai. At Solan, rumours began in the Rangers detachment there that the prisoners had been executed. Under the command of Private James Daly, about 70 Rangers joined the mutiny and attacked the armoury. The guard successfully defended it: Privates Sears and Smyth were shot dead while other mutineers were taken prisoner. In all, about 400 men had joined the mutiny, of whom eighty-eight were court martialled. Fourteen men were sentenced to death and the rest given up to 15 years in gaol, other than a few who were acquitted. Thirteen of the men sentenced to die had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. The defendants were apparently unaware that they could have had a defence counsel.

21-year-old Daly was shot by a firing squad in Dagshai prison on November 2, 1920, and was therefore the last member of British Forces to be executed for mutiny. Pte. Sears and Pte. Smyth were buried at Solan; Daly and John Miranda (who died in prison) were buried at the Dagshai graveyard (until 1970). Jim Daly was eventually awarded the Victory & General Service Medals for his active service in WW1. (Source: www.oste.eu/the_connaught_rangers_en.)



Pro-war recruitment postcard

THE CONLON FAMILY

Cathal Donaghy

Had it not been for the sectarian riots of 1914 Owen and James Conlon may have finished their apprenticeships as mechanical engineers in Combe Barbour's Engineering Works. Like their father before them, Owen Conlon senior, they had worked in the Howard Street premises that ran between the nationalist Falls Road and the Unionist Shankhill Road.

The sectarian hatred and tension of this time were politely glossed over in letter to Charles O'Hara, a relative of the Conlon family and a co-worker at Combe Barbour Ltd, when he applied for a reference from his former employers in 1938. The letter states that 'During the time he was with us we found him steady and attentive to his duties and he gave entire satisfaction. He left our employment through circumstances

over which he had no control.'

Like many other working class Catholics at

this time, finding employment was difficult for the Conlons. Many families endured great hardship and deprivation and many breadwinners were forced to emigrate or join the British Army. The army attracted many of the 'laid off' Catholics because it offered them a wage to provide for their families. Enlistment was not based on loyalty to the crown, but survival.

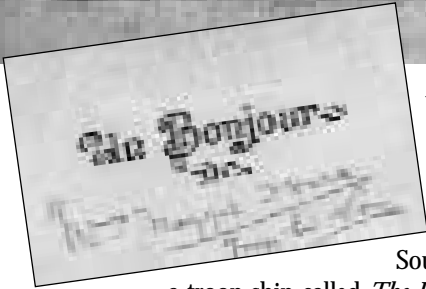
Home Rule was promised to nationalists during recruit-



Owen Conlon, June 1915 (last photograph) prior to sailing on the *River Clyde* to Mudros, then from Mudros on *The Patridge* (5th Aug. 1915) to 'Watson's Pier', Anzac Cove on 6th Aug. then to Chunuk Bair.



Owen Conlon's memorial card



ment and many refused to join any of the six county regiments preferring to enlist in an 'Irish' regiment. Owen Conlon senior joined the 6th Connaught Rangers in Galway, as did his sons, James and Owen junior. Owen senior and James (the latter promoted to sergeant) were sent to France. Owen senior returned home after the

war unharmed.

Owen junior was transferred to the Royal Irish Rifles and was sent to the Curragh Camp in Co. Kildare and after two weeks training he boarded a ship in Dublin bound for Southampton. After a further two days he boarded a troop ship called *The Partridge* which sailed to Mudros in Malta. On the 5th August 1915 *The Partridge* sailed toward the Gallipoli Peninsula where the R.I.R.



Combe Barbour workers: Sergeant James Conlon C.R is front row, third from left

disembarked by means of 'lighters' (small barges) at Watson's Pier, Anzac Cove, there they set up under bivouacs in Shrapnel Gully.

Owen Conlon junior age 20, became just another casualty on 10th August 1915 in the Battle of Sari Bair. For 259 days, from April 1915 to January 1916, 500,000 men were landed on Gallipoli, 300,000 of them became casualties, making Gallipoli just another British fiasco in a war full of them.

Owen's mother Margaret tried to find news of her youngest son from the British Red Cross Society in Dublin but to no avail. It was not until January 1917 that she was told that, Rifleman Owen Conlon 10931 6th Bn., Royal Irish Rifles, was killed in action on 10th August 1915 in the Battle of Sari Bair, Gallipoli and that no remains were found. I discovered in 2002 that Owen Conlon is commemorated with honour on the Helles Memorial in Turkey.

Owen's death was difficult enough but there was then a double blow to my grandmother. In 1918 James Conlon of the 6th Connaught Rangers was wounded on the hand and after treatment in a French field hospital he returned to his unit but suffered mustard gas poisoning. He was discharged from the army on 15th May 1918 being 'No longer physically fit for War Service'. He died in Belfast two weeks later. James Conlon is buried in a family grave in Milltown Cemetery.

The Conlon brothers like many nationalist families went to war on a promise of Home Rule but when they returned they discovered that they had been deceived by the British Government. Many in the nationalist community have never accepted the rationale that forced family members into joining the British Army, while some unionists appear to have airbrushed from history the sacrifice made by those from nationalist areas who fought and died in this war. Ninety years they are remembered with honour and pride by their families and many others.



Sgt. James Conlon, 2583, Connaught Rangers
Pte. Owen Conlon, 10931, 6th Bn. Royal Irish
Rifles (seated). 1915



Charles O'Hara's reference from Combe Barbour Ltd, August 1938

TOMMY 'TOPPER' DEVLIN

Bobby Devlin

My father Tommy 'Topper' Devlin was a Connaught Ranger during the Great War. He fought on the Somme in 1916 and was wounded twice. He also did stints in the Pioneer Corps and the Royal Irish Fusiliers.

He was one of the many Irish Volunteers duped into joining the British Army on a promise that Ireland would achieve Home Rule. They were urged to do this by the Irish Parliamentary Party leaders John Redmond and Joe Devlin.

Being a Falls Road man he, like many returning soldiers joined the Irish Republican Army and served through the War for Irish Independence.

At the turn of the century my father was chased out of Harland and Wolff in Belfast where he had worked as a fitter. Like many other Catholics he ended up in Glasgow where he found employment in John Brown's ship yard. It was in Glasgow that he found his great love. No, not my mother, it was Glasgow Celtic! In 1914 when the bugle sounded he returned to Belfast joining the Irish Volunteers.

Topper was born at 59 Balmer St. in 1891. The family moved to 46 Lady St. In 1924 he married Annie Lillis of 32 Conway St. Her father was a career soldier, Sergeant Major Patrick Lillis who served in the Great War with the Royal Enniskillen



Tommy 'Topper' Devlin

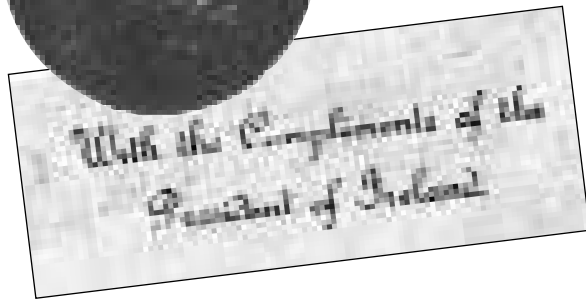
Fusiliers. Dads had an older brother, my Uncle Johnny who was in the Indian Army and died during the Great flu epidemic at the end of the war.

After a sojourn in Beechmount Parade the Devlin finally settled at 80 Conway St. My parents' last abode was Rosnaree right on the Shaws Road.

Just before he died in 1977 I used to sit and yarn with him about that period 1914– 1922. I remember asking him about the Raglan Street ambush. He laughed aloud when he described the claims of so many men that took part in this event which had gone down in Falls Road history. If that had been the case then it would have been worse than 'Custer's Last Stand.'

I have a treasury of memories about my Da, Topper Devlin. A tough, lovable wee man of great integrity. I can still see him there on his favourite chair with his hearing aid at the ready. The only time he switched it off was when Annie Devlin starting giving off.

His wee grin is forever in my thoughts.





Sergeant Paddy O'Hare (right) and a veteran of eighteen years service until the disbandment of the Connaught Rangers. His final medals were returned unclaimed. When he returned to Belfast his two elder sons had joined the I.R.A., most of his nine children were to do likewise. By the outbreak of the Second World War one of his sons, two of his daughters and a grandson were in prison for Republican activity.

He is pictured with Billy Wilkie (left), a Protestant war veteran from the Falls Road, taken outside the Bee Hive Bar, c. 1930

OUR LADY OF VICTORIES
PRAY FOR US



REV. GEORGE PYE CLENAGHAN

Ruairi Mac Leanachain

George recorded some events from his wonderful and very full life shortly after his eightieth birthday and thus much of the information below comes from that account. He was inspired to record the events after an encouraging prayer from a journalist friend of his in New Zealand which read:

So I prayed for the Canon,
And strange was the form that it took,
Dear God when you are sending him blessings,
Will you make Father George write a book.

George was born on the 10th February 1889 in Glenavy and was named after the local parish priest, father George Pye PP. He entered St Malachy's College in September 1900 and these early days he recalled fondly –

Young people can now tell us all the distinguishing characteristics of the various jets that fly around every day. And who will find it difficult to believe that in the early years of the century, I joined a crowd of people who lined the side walks of Clifton Street, one Saturday afternoon, waiting to see one of the wonders of the age – a man was due to appear riding what – a free wheel bicycle! This was the big step forward from the old fixed wheel bicycle, and indeed, the free wheel was for a long time afterwards regarded as 'sissy' by our athletic young men of the time.

The cycling track at St Malachy's College was 'out of bounds' for the free wheel up to about 1906. Up to that time in our elementary school days, we had been accustomed to the priest coming on horseback, or driving in his 'gig' or trap. When he visited our school regularly, how we envied the boy who got the order from the teacher to leave lessons to go out and hold the priest's horse.



Rev. George Pye Clenaghan

George Clenaghan entered the Class of First Theology in Maynooth in September 1909 and he was ordained in Maynooth College for the Diocese of Down and Connor on 22nd June 1913. He was appointed shortly afterwards to his Curacy of Glenravel.

He was a member of the Royal Army Chaplains Department where he acted as Chaplain to a Scottish Regiment, the 5th Division, where he was with the Royal Irish Rifles and the 10th Division where he served with the Royal Irish Rifles and the Connaught Rangers during the 1914–1918 War. He was a witness to many of the horrors of the First World War at first hand in Egypt, Palestine and France although he came through the period suffering no physical injuries himself. In the Army Chaplains Department the ordained chaplains held relative ranks from Captain to Colonel. His words below describe some of his experiences during the war.

I was chaplain in the First World War and after a few months posted in York, I was posted to Egypt in 1916. After a month in Alexandria I was posted to the 5th Division of the Royal Irish Fusiliers who were in the Sinai Desert. When I joined them, they were about 50 kilometres from the Suez Canal, guarding the making of a railway crossing across the desert, which eventually reached Jerusalem. This railway followed the old caravan route from the canal to Palestine, and at times we must have been in contact with the footsteps of the Holy Family in their journey to and from Egypt.

At Christmas 1916 I was chaplain with a Scots division, out in the Sinai Desert. We had arrived at El Arish a few days previously, following the Turks who were on retreat towards Palestine. El Arish was marked on maps, and we took it for granted it was some sort of a town which would relieve the monotony of the desert, over which we had come for 100km, from Suez Canal, and had seen only a few palm trees on the way, but we found El Arish to be only a few deserted mud huts.

On Christmas morning I said mass for the main body of the troops early, and then started off on horse-back, with my 'mass kit' to say mass for the detachment of troops of the K.O.S.B's on outpost duty. I found about 60 men awaiting my arrival, but discovered that no provision had been made to prepare an altar, as no table or even ammunition boxes were available, so I announced to their evident disappointment that we could only substitute the Rosary. A young soldier approached me and suggested that they might be able to build an altar by using their packs, which they were all carrying. So I told them to go ahead and soon they had a make-shift altar ready. There was a strong wind blowing, and when I began to vest for mass, I had the greatest difficulty in getting on the vestments, so I hesitated again and told them of the difficulty and danger of saying a mass under these conditions. Again my young soldier, who was from the Curragh, came up to me and suggested that if they all gathered close around me, perhaps I could manage. So again I said that it was worth trying, and I found that they could make things safe.

When I blessed myself to begin mass, they all knelt down as usual, so I had to explain that they must keep standing if we were to have mass. So there within fifty miles of Bethlehem, we had mass under those conditions, and the sang Christmas hymns, with their thoughts no doubt like their own, recalling Christmases at home in Ireland and Scotland.

Surely that Christmas mass, so near Bethlehem, has remained a memory not only to me, but to all those who not only helped me, but insisted in overcoming the difficulties that I could not deal with. That Christmas mass on the sand dunes near the Palestine border is one of my treasured memories, after nearly sixty years, and I'm sure is also a memory for any of those soldiers who may be still alive, and who overcame the difficulties that were beyond me to deal with, in order to have that mass.

I had not the experience of being with the Scots when they entered Jerusalem in November 1917 as diphtheria sent me into hospital in Cairo. After the Battle of Gaza, when I left hospital at Christmas, I was sent to Alexandria to recuperate. My post with the Scots had been filled, so I was sent, after two weeks convalescence, to the 10th Irish Division who were about 20 miles north of Jerusalem at the time. There were six catholic chaplains with the various regiments of the Division, and I was allotted to the Connaught Rangers and the Royal Irish Rifles.

When the war ended in 1918, Canon George was thankful for having had the privilege of bringing the mass and the sacraments to the battlefields. He had survived without a scratch and was deeply grateful for the graces he received. He returned home to take up pastoral duties and for almost 30 years served as a curate, mostly in large parishes.

The *Irish News* articles of February 1928 note the Rev. George Clenaghan, CC St. Paul's, former chaplain to the 10th Irish Division, attending functions in the YMCA and St. Mary's Hall, Belfast, respectively, in aid of funds for the 16th Irish Division Ex-Servicemen's Association where it was attended by a Major General Sir W. B. Hickie. The 16th Irish Division was raised largely from members of John Redmond's Irish National Volunteers on the outbreak of the First World War. The West Belfast MP Joe Devlin recruited some three thousand troops from the Falls area of Belfast alone.

Irish News 11th February 1928
Irish Division Members of New Association addressed by
Major General Hickie

... Rev. George Clenaghan, C.C. St Paul's, who had served as Chaplain with the 10th Division, said ex-servicemen were being helped by other associations whose primary objects were not the assistance of the ex-soldier. He thought the latter should have a call on the country at large and upon the Government (applause). He considered such an organisation as that which they had formed was very necessary for the welfare of those who had served during the war, and would have his assistance and support.

Irish News 12th February 1928
On this day Old Soldiers meet at reunion
of National Volunteers in Belfast

The members of the Sixteenth Division Association, who were present in large numbers with members of the tenth and twenty ninth divisions, were addressed last night in the YCMA by Major-General Sir William Hickie, KBE, General Hickey is

President of the association, and in welcoming him, Captain C.J. McManus who presided, said he hoped their association would become affiliated with the British Legion.

The secretary, Lieutenant Burns, said no one suffered more from the effects of the Great War than the Irish soldier. Due to political disturbances, the poor ex-serviceman was left out in the cold and today his condition was deplorable. However, General Hickie, who led his men in war, would use his influence and ability to help them now in peace.

Rev. George Clenaghan, CC, St Pauls, who had served as Chaplain with the 10th Division, said ex-servicemen were being helped by other associations whose primary objects were not the assistance of the ex-soldier. Votes of thanks to General Hickie and to Sir Frederick Money Penny were passed with enthusiasm.

Eventually Canon George was given his own parish and appointed a Canon of the diocesan cathedral. He remained PP in Loughguile, Co. Antrim for about 30 years. He died aged 92 in 1981 after 68 years as a priest and is buried in Loughguile cemetery.

PATRICK DONNELLY

Harry Donaghy

Patrick Donnelly was born on the 21st of March 1892 at number 10 Inkerman Street just off the Falls Road. He left school at 12 years of age to begin work in Grieves' Mill. In his early teens he then went to work with his father Joseph in the building trade. Paddy was an ardent supporter of the Irish Parliamentary Party and its local M.P. Joe Devlin. In 1912 he joined the Irish National Volunteers, and along with thousands of others, he attended the rallies and meetings organised by the I.I.P. in support of Home Rule.



In the summer of 1914 as the prospect of War in Europe was becoming ever more real he heard the call from John Redmond and the leadership of the I.I.P. that the Volunteers should enlist in the British Army as a means of achieving Home Rule for Ireland. When War was finally declared, on the 4th August 1914, Paddy, along with hundreds of others from that part of Belfast, enlisted with the Connaught Rangers at the R.I.C. Barracks in Divis Street, which was one of many recruiting stations across Belfast.

His younger brother Tom enlisted at the same time, and almost a year later on the 7th August 1915, Tom was killed in action at Gallipoli serving with the Royal Irish Fusiliers. During the course of the War Paddy saw action on the Western Front, Mesopotamia and Palestine and was wounded on two occasions during his service.



Pte Patrick Donnelly (left), 6th Connaught Rangers, with two comrades in Cairo, Egypt, post-war.

Paddy could be called one of the lucky ones. He survived while many of those he knew and were dear to him did not. As a result of his War service when he was demobbed in 1919 he got a job as a stoker in Belfast Gas Works. He was one of the very few Catholics to be employed in what was believed to be one of the many deeply sectarianised industries of the time.

Like many of those who had survived and returned home he spoke only rarely about his experiences. He did refer on occasions to his brother Tom whose grave was so far away on the shores of the Dardanelles and regretted that no one from the family would be able to visit. He also spoke with fondness about the two brothers of his wife Elizabeth, both of whom he knew well before the War. Johnny and Dominic Adams, from Varna Street, were killed within a week of one another in May 1915 on the Western Front. Johnny was serving with the 1st Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles and Dominic was serving with the 2nd Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

Paddy Donnelly's story is probably a fair reflection of many other stories of men from that generation and time. It is only recently that opportunities to tell some of these stories have become possible for those who came after them. Many wish to look again with compassion and understanding at the realities and circumstances that their forebears lived in and experienced.



Postcard sent by a Connaught Ranger to his family in Belfast, Christmas 1917

IRELAND'S MEMORIAL RECORDS 1914-1918

McKILLEN NEAL. Reg. No. 3573.
Rank, Private, 6th Royal Irish Fusiliers;
died at sea, September 22, 1917; born
Glasgow.

McKILLEN, PATRICK. Reg. No. 7994.
Rank, Lance-Corporal, Connaught Rangers,
6th Batt.; died of wounds, France, August
7, 1917; born Belfast, Co. Antrim.

McKILLOP, JOHN. Reg. No. 177676.
Rank, Gunner, Royal Field Artillery; died,
Salonica, September 10, 1917; born Cook.

McKILLOP, THOMAS. Reg. No. 7187.
Rank, Private, Connaught Rangers, 2nd
Batt.; died, France, June 30, 1916; born
St. Mark's, Dublin.

McKILLOP, THOMAS. Reg. No. 30430.
Rank, Rifleman, Royal Irish Rifles, 17th
Batt.; killed in action, France, September
24, 1918; born Clonmarn, Co. Antrim.

McKILLOPS, BERNARD. Reg. No. 8840.
Rank, Rifleman, Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Batt.;
died of wounds, France, November 16, 1914;
born Castlehill, Co. Antrim.

McKIM, WILLIAM D. Canadian Field
Artillery; died of wounds, hospital, Novem-
ber 19, 1917.

McKINIM, JAMUS. Reg. No. M2/193481.
Rank, Private, Royal Army Service Corps;
died, home, October 22, 1916; born New-
townards, Co. Down.

McKINIM, NOBILIC M. Reg. No. 27688.
Rank, Private, 5th Royal Innshilling Fus-
iliers; killed in action, France, August 8,
1917; born Sarsfield, Co. Tyrone.

McKINLAY, THOMAS. Reg. No. 28117.
Rank, Private, Royal Innshilling Fusiliers,
11th Batt.; killed in action, France, Novem-
ber 30, 1917; born Clondernon, Co.
Derry.

McKINLAY, WILLIAM. Reg. No. 12676.
Rank, Private, Highland Light Infantry, 10th
Batt.; killed in action, France, September
29, 1917; born Lurgan, Co. Armagh.

McKINLAY, WILLIAM ATKINSON.
Reg. No. 16248. Rank, Private, 5th Royal
Irish Fusiliers; killed in action, Gallipoli,
August 9, 1915; born Glasgow, Northshire.

McKINLEY, ANTHONY. Reg. No. 27128.
Rank, Private, 2th Royal Irish Fusiliers;
died of wounds, France, September 9, 1917;
born Glasgow.

McKINLEY, ARCHIBALD. Reg. No.
12676. Rank, Rifleman, Royal Irish Rifles,
17th Batt.; killed in action, France, July 4,
1916; born Dunsodney, Co. Down.

McKINLEY, DAVID. Reg. No. 217.
Rank, Rifleman, 8th Royal Irish Rifles;
killed in action, France, July 2, 1916; born
Peardown, Co. Armagh.

McKINLEY, EDWARD. Reg. No. 167139.
Rank, Pioneer, Royal Engineers, Labour
Batt.; died, home, November 30, 1916;
born Lurgan, Co. Armagh.

PATRICK MCKILLEN

Robert McKillen

Patrick McKillen was born in 1885 at 27 Malcolmson Street, Springfield Road, Belfast. He was the fifth of six children who all attended St Paul's primary school in nearby Cavendish Street. In 1899 Patrick's parents John and Catherine McKillen moved with their young family to 60 Oranmore Street where Patrick grew up enjoying a very happy childhood. In his youth he was a keen cyclist in Clonard Cycling Club and was an avid whist player.

Prior to enlistment Patrick was employed as a fireman in the firm of Messrs. William Ross and Co. Clonard Mills, Belfast (known locally as Ross's Mill). He became engaged to Mary McCann of Dunmore St. Dunmore Street ran back to back with Oranmore Street. They would have known each other since childhood.

Patrick enlisted in the 6th Battalion of the Connaught Rangers Regiment which was then formed at Kilworth Camp in September 1916. His regimental number was 2394. He served in D Company. By the end of November 1915, after prolonged training, the 6th Connaught Rangers was in a state of readiness. On December 17th, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel J.S.M. Lenox-Conyngham, the 6th proceeded by rail, via Farnborough, to Southampton for embarkation to Le Harve. On arrival at Le Harve on the 18th the strength of the 6th was 36 officer and 952 other ranks. That night they left for Hesdigneul near Bethune and arrived on the 19th. After training and trench parties around Hesdigneul the battalion moved up to the trenches on 26th January 1916. They were positioned to the left of Loos in the Puis No. 4 sector.

The Connaught Rangers were involved in many of the major battles which later became known as the battle of the Somme. One of these was the great offensive of 16th July along the line Pozieres-Foucaucourt when all 17 British and French divisions suffered a very heavy loss of life. Patrick McKillen was awarded a certificate of gallantry for the single-handed holding of his position until relieved. The Irish News newspaper carried the following report on 19th August 1916:



Patrick McKillen

Single Handed

Belfast INV man who held position 24hrs with machine gun.

Private Patrick McKillen, machine gun section, Connaught Rangers, whose parents reside at 60 Oranmore Street, Belfast, has been presented with a parchment certificate signed by Major General W.B. Hickie, Commanding 16th Irish Division, which reads as follows:- 'I have read with much pleasure the reports of your Regimental Commander and Brigade Commander regarding your gallant conduct and devotion to duty in the field on July 27th 1916, and have ordered you name and deed to be entered in the records of the Irish Division.' The Commanding Officer of the Battalion, in a letter, says that private McKillen continued to work his machine gun single handed, under a heavy fire. After all the remainder of the section had been put out of action private McKillen stuck to his gun and held the position for 24 hrs. He was a member of D Company. Belfast regiment. Irish National Volunteers.

On 3rd September 1916 the 6th Connaught Rangers captured Guillemont Village with an inspired and courageous attack.

The charge of the IRISH TROOPS through GUILLEMONT on Sept 3 rd was one of the most astonishing feats of the war. They stormed the first, second, third German lines, sweeping all resistance away. They were men uplifted, out of themselves, 'fey' as the Scots would call it.

So GUILLEMONT was taken and held, not only by great gunfires, but by men inspired with some spirit beyond their ordinary courage. And one day these troops will carry the name upon their colours, so that the World may remember.

Philip Gibb – *Battles of the Somme*

The troops taking part in the attack on Guillemont were the 7th Brigade (Irish) including the following regiments – 6th Connaught Rangers, 7th Leinsters, 6th Royal Irish and the 8th Munsters. The attack was led by the 6th Connaught Rangers commanded by Col. J.S.M. Lenox-Conyngham. The 6th took heavy casualties during the battle of Passchendaele July–November 1917.

From the Regimental History of the Connaught Rangers

August 5th 1917

A, B, and C companies were on the reverse slope of Frexenber Ridge while D company was on the forward slope in full view of the enemy. Two enemy aircraft flew low over the front lines and were followed by heavy and accurate shelling at noon. The rain was so heavy and mud so bad that the Lewis guns and rifles would not fire.

It was about this stage that enemy grenades were thrown into Patrick's trench and he was fatally injured. Family oral tradition says he died of his wounds the next day but he died on the 7th and on the 6th the Battalion had been rested so it more than likely that he was injured on the 5th and died on the 7th.



Brandhoek New Military Cemetery, Ieper (Ypres), Belgium. Source: www.cwgc.org

Very heavy shelling between 9pm and 11pm and again at midnight when the Battalion was relieved. During August 6th, 7th and 8th, the 6th Battalion Connaught Rangers rested.

Patrick lies at rest in Brandhoek New Military Cemetery, Ieper (Ypres), West Vlaanderen, Belgium.



Owen Conlon junior

HOW TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE 6TH CONNAUGHT RANGERS

Richard S. Grayson

PUBLICATIONS

There are several books which tell the story of the 6th Connaught Rangers in different ways. The most detailed is the official history: H.F.N. Jourdain and Edward Fraser, *The Connaught Rangers: Vol. III*, (1928). This is out of print and can only be found in a few libraries, although it is very largely based on the battalion war diaries (see 'National Archives' below) which can be seen easily. Another out of print book, but more widely available in libraries and second-hand, is Terence Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers: The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War* (1992). There are over 10,000 words on the battalion (twice the amount of material in my section in this booklet) in my forthcoming book, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (2009).

A new edition of Rowland Feilding's letters is *War Letters to a Wife: France and Flanders, 1915–1919* (1929, 2001 edn.). The memoirs of another officer with the 6th Connaughts, Charles Brett, were published by the Somme Association in 2007: *Charles Brett MC: an Irish soldier with the Connaught Rangers in World War I*.

An interesting chapter is: John Morrissey, 'A Lost Heritage: The Connaught Rangers and Multivocal Irishness', in Mark McCarthy, ed., *Ireland's Heritage: Critical Perspectives on Memory and Identity* (2005), pp. 71– 87.

The battalion is covered in passing in Tom Johnstone, *Orange, Green and Khaki: The Story of the Irish Regiments in the Great War, 1914–18*, (Dublin, 1992), and Steven Moore, *The Irish on the Somme: A Battlefield Guide to the Irish Regiments in the Great War and the Monuments in their Memory* (2005).

The most detailed guide to the cemeteries on the Western Front has for many years been *Before Endeavours Fade: Guide to the Battlefields of the First World War* by Rose E.B. Coombs. First published in 1976, it is regularly updated. A more specific guide of relevance to the 6th Connaughts is Michael Stedman, *Battleground Europe: Guillemont* (1998).

ONLINE RECORDS

www.ancestry.co.uk has records from the National Archives in Kew of soldiers who were awarded (or applied for) a pension between 1914 and 1920, plus the service records which survived the London Blitz in 1940 (around 25 per cent of records). Individuals can be searched for, but there is a charge for viewing the original records. The site also contains all medal rolls from 1914–18 (see also ‘National Archives’ below), so it is likely that all soldiers will be somewhere on this site.

www.cwgc.org.uk contains the records of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and is the best place to start for a dead soldier.

CD-ROMS

Soldiers Died in the Great War and *Officers Died in the Great War* are published by the Naval and Military Press on CD-Rom (www.naval-military-press.com)

The soldiers’ wills kept in the National Archives in Dublin are being produced on CD-Rom by Eneclann, based in Dublin (www.eneclann.ie)

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The main resources documenting the day-to-day activities of the 6th Connaught Rangers at the battalion, brigade and divisional war diaries at the National Archives in Kew. The key files are:

WO 95/1970: 6th Connaught Rangers

WO 95/1969: 47 Brigade

WO 95/1955: 16th Division, December 1915 to April 1917

WO 95/1956: 16th Division, May 1917 to April 1918

WO 158/416: 16th Division Operations, 7– 9 June 1917

It is not necessary to visit Kew to see all of these, as both WO 95/1970 and WP 95/1969 are available (for a charge) on line at:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/war-diaries.asp

Meanwhile, the medal roll of all individuals who received service and/or gallantry medals can be viewed and (for a charge) downloaded at:

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/medals.asp

These rolls can also be viewed via www.ancestry.co.uk (see ‘Online Records’ above).

Other medal rolls, only in hard copy at Kew, are the regimental lists, in which individuals are listed largely alphabetically. Officers are listed in WO 329/2255, with other ranks on:

WO 329/1688

WO 329/1689

WO 329/1690

WO 329/1691

Many individuals in the battalion also appear on the medal rolls of the Leinster Regiment:

WO 329/1699

WO 329/1700

WO 329/1701

WO 329/1702

WO 329/2815

If you do not have access to the internet, you can write for guidance to:

The National Archives

Kew

Richmond

Surrey

TW9 4DU

or telephone on: 020 8876 3444

NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers are hard to use without exact dates, but all Belfast newspapers are available in the Belfast Newspaper Library, the British Newspaper Library in Colindale, and the National Library in Dublin. The Belfast Newspaper Library allows both photocopying and the taking of photographs with a digital camera for personal use.

BELFAST ENLISTEES IN THE 6TH CONNAUGHT RANGERS 1914–1918

The list on the following pages contains names of those men who are, because of their regimental number, believed to have enlisted in the 6th Connaughts in Belfast, mainly in November 1914 to March 1915. It was compiled from the Connaught Rangers regimental medal rolls at the National Archives in Kew and the *Soldiers Died in the Great War* listings.

The column headed 'END OF SERVICE' contains a reference to how the soldier came to leave their role in the ranks. The column to the right, head 'DATE' indicates the date that came into effect.

The abbreviations which explain the 'end of service' describe the following:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 392 iii (c) | Discharged under King's Regulations (1912) Paragraph 392 within three months of enlistment considered unfit for service |
| 392 iii (cc) | Discharged under King's Regulations (1912) Paragraph 392 with more than three months service but considered unfit for further military service |
| 392 xvi | Discharged under King's Regulations (1912) Paragraph 392 no longer physically fit for service |
| 392 xxv | Discharged under King's Regulations (1912) Paragraph 392 his service being no longer required |
| Class Z | Transferred to Class Z of the Army Reserve. Men in this Class were demobilize but were obliged to return to the army if recalled. This Reserve was established at the end of 1918 in case Germany did not honour the armistice and a later peace treaty, and was abolished in March 1920. |
| Commission | Became an officer in the CR (Connaught Rangers) or other regiment. |
| Deserted | A man who left his unit without permission. It should be noted that those who deserted while away from the front were often treated leniently. |
| Died | Died (usually of illness or old age) while in the army, but not in a way connected to military action. |
| KIA | Killed in Action |

SER. NO.	RANK	NAME	AWARD	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE	END OF SERVICE	DATE
2230	Private	McCann, Daniel				Class Z	15/06/1919
2235	Private	McLaughlin, Michael				Class Z	19/06/1919
2241	Sergeant	Goodwin, James		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	16/08/1917
2248	Private	Mallon, Thomas		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	04/03/1916
2256	Private	McKeown, Joseph		Belfast	Belfast	Died	14/05/1917
2259	Private	Kelly, Michael				392 iii (cc)	26/03/1915
2261	Private	McBrinn, Joseph Hugh				Class Z	19/03/1919
2269	Private	O'Connor, Patrick				392 iii (cc)	26/03/1915
2270	Sergeant	McGuigan, John				Discharged and commissioned in CR	30/10/1917
2272	Private	Devlin, Patrick	MM			Class Z	18/02/1919
2276	Private	McKenna, Patrick				Class Z	01/03/1919
2279	Colour Sergeant	Nulty, James				Commission in CR	26/06/1917
2281	Sergeant	Pollock, James Joseph	MM			Class Z	13/05/1919
2293	Sergeant	Kearney, James	MM			Promoted to commission in Inniskillings	29/01/1918
2294	Private	Cawley, William				Deserted	05/03/1917
2314	Private	Logan, John		Carrickfergus, Co Antrim	Belfast	KIA	05/03/1916
2324	Private	McMurrough, William Leo				Unclear	

SER. NO.	RANK	NAME	AWARD	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE	END OF SERVICE	DATE
2328	Private	McKenna, John Henry		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	07/06/1917
2329	Private	Runaghan, John		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	28/03/1916
2332	Private	Conway, John					
2333	Private	Magill, Isaac Patrick					
2334	Private	Donnelly, Michael				Class Z	10/04/1919
2336	Private	Fogarty, Robert James				Class Z	09/05/1919
2337	Private	Drain, John		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	09/09/1916
2339	Private	Prenter, Thomas Patrick				Class Z	24/02/1919
2341	Private	Healy, Michael Patrick		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	04/05/1916
2346	Private	Thompson, George				Discharged on demob	31/03/1920
2350	Private	Downey, Richard				392 xvi	07/02/1918
2352	Private	Hanna, Joseph				Class Z	20/02/1919
2358	Private	Alexander, Samuel		Glasgow	Belfast	KIA	16/08/1917
2361	Private	Hughes, John				Deserted	08/12/1916
2363	Corporal	Reilly, Frank				392 xvi	24/04/1919
2364	Private	Canavan, James		Belfast	Belfast	Died	02/03/1916
2367	Colour Sergeant	Hyland, James Patrick				Promoted to commission	12/01/1916
2368	Private	Lyons, John		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	04/05/1916
2369	Private	O'Toole, Peter				Class Z	20/03/1919

SER. NO.	RANK	NAME	AWARD	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE	END OF SERVICE	DATE
2370	Private	McKinley, Richard				Class Z	04/03/1919
2371	Private	Runaghan, Alexander				392 xvi	17/06/1918
2372	Private	Dempsey, Patrick Joseph				Class Z	15/02/1919
2381	Private	Smyth, William John				Deserted	14/09/1918
2384	Sergeant	Tully, James				392 iii (cc)	26/03/1915
2386	Private	McKinney, Felix		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	05/03/1916
2387	Private	Goodall, John				392 iii (cc)	12/05/1915
2392	Private	Hillman, John				Class Z	19/03/1919
2394	Private	McKillen, Patrick		Belfast	Belfast	Died	07/08/1917
2395	Sergeant	Cush, John				Class Z	29/02/1919
2402	Private	Bloomer, Andrew		Belfast	Belfast	Died	21/03/1918
2408	Private	McGinney, Patrick		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	03/09/1916
2411	Private	Burns, John		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	25/03/1916
2417	Private	Shannon, William John				392 xvi	28/08/1918
2420	Private	Neeson, Patrick				Class Z	08/03/1919
2423	Private	McGrath, William				392 xvi	16/05/1919
2425	Private	Harte, Thomas				Deserted	01/11/1916
2426	Private	Smith, Terence				Deserted	17/12/1916
2428	Private	O'Neill, Thomas				Deserted	22/04/1916
2429	Sergeant	Millar, William				Commission in 3 CR	30/07/1918

SER. NO.	RANK	NAME	AWARD	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE	END OF SERVICE	DATE
2430	Private	Maynes, Henry				Class Z	19/03/1919
2431	Private	Toner, Michael Joseph	MM				
2432	Private	McErlane, John J				Class Z	15/03/1919
2436	Private	Prenter, James				392 xvi	24/04/1917
2437	Private	McKernon, John		Crumlin, Co. Antrim	Whitewell, Co. Antrim	Died	9/04/1916
2442	Private	Lavery, John		Warren Point, Co. Down	Belfast	KIA	27/01/1916
2445	Private	Oprey, Peter Joseph	MM			Deserted	23/02/1918
2453	Private	Parkinson, Joseph				Class Z	25/02/1919
2457	Private	Kennedy, Michael		Ballynahill,	Queen's County	KIA	08/04/1916
2458	Private	Henry, Daniel				Class Z	23/02/1920
2459	Lance Corporal	Hughes, John James				392 xvi	14/03/1918
2462	Private	Kavanagh, George				392 xxv	07/01/1919
2463	Corporal	Liddy, Joseph				Deserted	12/12/1917
2464	Sergeant	Conway, James				392 xvi	06/06/1916
2465	Private	Cassidy, John				392 xvi	24/05/1918
2466	Private	Magee, Hugh					
2470	Private	McAuley, John				Class Z	17/04/1919

SER. NO.	RANK	NAME	AWARD	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE	END OF SERVICE	DATE
2474	Private	O'Hare, Edward				392 xvi	28/12/1916
2475	Sergeant	Shannon, John Patrick				Class Z	14/06/1919
2476	Private	Moore, Thomas Francis				Class Z	15/03/1919
2477	Corporal	Seary, Brian					
2481	Private	Sherrie, James				Deserted	02/10/1917
2483	Acting Sergeant	Lawson, Joseph				392 xxv	09/01/1919
2486	Sergeant	Hackett, Augustine		Dublin	Belfast	KIA	19/02/1917
2487	WO Cl 2	McKeown, John	MM			Class Z	19/03/1919
2488	Private	Hunt, Edward		London	London	KIA	08/01/1917
2490	Private	Shannon, Patrick		Belfast	Belfast	Died	06/06/1916
2492	Private	Doherty, Joseph				Class Z	20/03/1919
2494	Private	Davey, Maurice Joseph				392 xvi	15/04/1918
2495	Private	Maginness, James				Class Z	27/03/1919
2496	Lance Corporal	Brennan, Robert				392 xvi	08/05/1916
2497	Corporal	Brennan, Michael				Class Z	09/05/1919
2499	Private	Larmour, Thomas				392 xvi	19/02/1918
2500	Private	Blake, John Patrick				Class Z	20/02/1919
2502	Private	McIlvenny, Robert		Belfast	Belfast	Died	09/10/1918

SER. NO.	RANK	NAME	AWARD	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE	END OF SERVICE	DATE
2506	Private	Meenan, Bernard					14/06/1918
2507	Private	Kinney, Charles				Class Z	09/05/1919
2512	Private	Duff, Daniel	Belfast	Belfast		KIA	14/10/1918
2513	Private	Nugent, Michael John				Class Z	23/02/1919
2516	Private	Napier, James				Class Z	08/05/1919
2518	Private	Murphy, Alexander				392 xvi	04/01/1916
2521	Private	O'Neill, Thomas				Class Z	20/02/1919
2522	Sergeant	Crowley, Patrick				Class Z	03/03/1919
2525	Private	Campbell, Patrick				392 xvi	10/06/1918
2529	Private	Walsh, Joseph				Class Z	15/03/1919
2529	Private	Sweeney, Michael				392 xvi	11/01/1919
2530	Private	McGreevy, Hugh				Class Z	09/05/1919
2536	Private	Digney, Charles					
2539	Private	Ferron, James				Deserted	24/10/1917
2542	Private	Campton, James				392 iii(c)	08/01/1915
2547	Private	Magee, James				392 iii(c)	09/02/1915
2549	Private	Straney, Hugh				Class Z	20/03/1919
2552	Private	McGuckian, Henry				Class Z	31/03/1919
2558	Private	Malone, Joseph				392 xvi	20/12/1917
2564	Private	English, Thomas	Belfast	Belfast		KIA	03/08/1917

SER. NO.	RANK	NAME	AWARD	PLACE OF BIRTH	RESIDENCE	END OF SERVICE	DATE
2569	Private	Skillen, John				392 xvi	05/08/1916
2572	Corporal	Connolly, Thomas James					
2574	Private	Connolly, James					
2576	Private	McIlroy, Patrick				392 xvi	12/06/1917
2579	Private	Kane, John		Belfast	Belfast	KIA	12/01/1917
2580	Private	Small, John				392 xvi	09/06/1916
2583	Sergeant	Conlon, James				392 xvi	15/05/1918
2585	Sergeant	McNally, James				Deserted	01/10/1917
2591	Corporal	McCann, James		Belfast	Belfast	Died	22/09/1916
2592	Corporal	Turley, James				392 xvi	11/06/1917
2593	Private	O'Hare, Owen				392 xvi	28/05/1917
2594	Sergeant	Leetle, Michael	MM			392 xvi	28/08/1918
2595	Private	McDermott, Patrick				392 xvi	18/01/1917
2605	Private	Hockney, Albert				Class Z	02/03/1919

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www.historyfromheadstones.com



Members of the West Belfast I.R.A. units on Hannahstown Hill August 1921. Many who had fought on the Western Front were now among their ranks.