



# *The 40-10*



## LEINSTER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

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## E D I T O R I A L

This is the third editorial to be penned while under Covid-19 restrictions and despite the success of the vaccination programme there does not seem to be much prospect of a return to normality in the near future. In this edition of 40-10 we have more content devoted to the history of the Regiment in the 19th Century than usual. This is partly by happy accident and partly by design.

We are fortunate to have recently been given access to a remarkable collection of family photos and papers that covers the life of the Regiment from 1872 to the disbandment in 1922. The Victorian era is often overlooked in favour of the Great War period which is better documented, more accessible and with which most of us have some connection through grandparents or other family. The typical Victorian military career included periods of home service followed by postings to one or other of the garrisons dotted around the Empire giving the average soldier opportunities for travel and experiences that he never would have had in civilian life. The experiences of the Victorian army, tempered by the sharp lessons of the South African War, produced the army, the good and the bad, that went to war in 1914. The fine body of men of the old British Expeditionary Force who marched up to Mons in August 1914 did so on the shoulders of their predecessors who slogged up the North West Frontier or across the South African veld. Their senior officers had usually learned their trade in these campaigns and it is always interesting while doing research to come across a lowly 2nd Lieutenant who you realise half a lifetime later becomes a distinguished General laden with honours. To understand how the army evolved to face its greatest test between 1914 and 1918, we need to look back at the experience of the Victorian army and what it learned not only from South Africa and earlier campaigns but also secondhand from the Franco-Prussian, Russo-Japanese and the Balkan Wars. Fortunately the digitisation of archives and the mass of published material now available in both print and digital format makes the study of this period at all levels more accessible than it has ever been. Please, when remembering the experience of great uncle John

in the mud at Wipers don't forget his grandfather with mutton chop whiskers tramping up the Grand Trunk Road in his scarlet tunic shouldering his Martini-Henry under the blazing Indian sun or in the steamy heat of the Caribbean.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of 40-10 and we look forward to being able to meet you in person again soon. Stay safe, stay well.

*Ian Lowe*

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### Front cover

16th (Irish) Division Memorial, Guillemont, Somme. On the occasion of our visit in 2016. There are similar memorials at Wytschaete in Belgium and to the 10th (Irish) Division at Valandovo, North Macedonia.

## Chairman's Address



To use a hackneyed phrase, we live in uncertain times. Yet there are good reasons for optimism. My generation has been remarkably lucky in the British Isles. We have been spared international conflict, we have generally benefited from sustained economic growth, rising standards of living and we were settling into a period of comfortable retirement. Then comes along a 'killer' pandemic: a scourge previously beyond most of our imaginations. Covid-19 has affected where we go, in what company, everything we do. Our world has changed, and we must embrace those changes. We are a gregarious species and whilst a period of enforced isolation may be beneficial in the short term, we generally benefit more from interaction.

On the plus side, I am greatly heartened by the influx of contributors on social media – a major beneficiary of conducting our lives virtually. Not only do we have more people using Facebook, but some of the posts have contained truly remarkable images and material. I wish I could say the same of Twitter, but that remains one too many forms of modern technology for me at the moment. Nevertheless, I am grateful to those who administer it and I do hope it is working well for the participants. I am getting there slowly, but until a year ago, I had never used WhatsApp, Zoom and all the other options. Now, they are a daily essential feature. I am also greatly encouraged by the increase in our membership. I should make the point that use of the website, Facebook and Twitter does not bestow 'membership' of the Association. Here I am talking to the converted because if you weren't a member you would not be reading this 40-10. There is something comforting in the knowledge that the postman is delivering more than the usual junk mail of pizzas, insurance and offers of 'exclusive' retirement homes. Do encourage others to get in touch with our Membership Secretary to become members. On that note, we warmly welcome contributors to the 40-10. Dare I point out, that if some of the fascinating social media posts were reserved for the 40-10, then perhaps the value of our magazine, and our membership, would increase in kind.

All our events up to and including August have had to be either cancelled or postponed. I am hanging on to the aspiration of holding our AGM in person this year, as opposed to completing the function either by correspondence or virtually. I am equally determined that this important event should be held in Ireland this year. Yet as I write, there is still 14 days of quarantine for all visitors to Ireland. That is a 'showstopper'. Having been through two enforced periods of isolation, it is totally unreasonable to expect people to volunteer for more segregation, especially away from the comforts of home. Let's hope developments justify a continuing relaxation of the restrictions and by 4th September we all feel sufficiently confident not only to travel, but also to interact in Birr – the home of the Leinsters.

Not so long after, we are planning to hold a lunch in London on the 23rd October in lieu of the one originally scheduled for the 12th June. We have chosen that date for its association with the events of the same month in 1918. The emphasis will be on renewing old acquaintances and making new ones. Sadly, it is inevitable that some loyal stalwarts will not be able to make it, more of which on the day. There will be no preceding presentation, but we cannot totally forsake such an opportunity to share information and so there will be a small 'handout' surrounding events around Ledeghem.

Then, we are into the Remembrance period and it is hoped that the Leinsters will be prominent at events everywhere around the world. That brings us into Christmas/New Year period and the dawn of 2022 – the centenary of the disbandment of The Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians). I wish I could say more of what is planned and who will be able to attend, but we are in the hands of the Combined Irish Regiments' Association who correctly are coordinating events. I know there is something in the making at Windsor, but you will appreciate that Royal diaries are not confirmed until much nearer the date. Whatever transpires, be sure that we will make the most of the occasion to honorably commemorate our forebearers.

We will get through this pandemic, but it will have irreversibly changed our world, what we do and how we do it. The Association has adapted accordingly and in spite of the restrictions it has continued to grow. As I have said previously, there is no substitute for gathering together and sharing in the commemoration of our antecedents. Let's embrace change and look forward to better times ahead. Finally, high on the positivity scale, David Ball and his mother are back home – more good news!

*Ich Dien*  
Mark Weldon

## A Leinster Family



William Howes, Recruit 1872.



William Howes, Trained Soldier 1874.

We were recently contacted by David Howes and his brother Bill, both of whom live in Canada, asking if we were interested in the story of their family connections to the Leinster Regiment. The story dates back to 1872 and is remarkable as it more than spans the life of the Leinsters and comes with supporting paperwork and photographs. There are lots of examples of multi-generational service but it is unusual to find one from the ranks that is quite so well documented. The story starts with this smart young man, William Robert Howes, who enlisted in the 100th Foot on the 11th October 1872 at Uxbridge. According to his Attestation Form he was 18 and born in Windsor, Berkshire. However he was actually only 16 and may have left home as a result of a family disagreement. The original family name was spelt “Howse” but somehow got changed in Army records to “Howes”.

There is a detailed description of the uniform and accoutrements of this period on page 91 of the Regimental history that conforms with what we see in the illustrations above: Glengarry cap with jacket coloured “brick dust red”, trousers which allegedly were

so stiff that they would stand up on their own. The shako, webbing and knapsack seen in the righthand picture again conform to the description which notes that the man had the option of having two flannel or three cotton shirts but had to provide his own tooth and hair brushes. The rifle was the Snider-Enfield with a triangular section bayonet. This weapon, the standard issue of its time, was a single shot breech loading rifle of .577inch calibre and must have packed quite a punch at both ends. It had an effective range of about 600 yards and a maximum range of 2000 yards. There were both long and short barrelled versions, the one illustrated seems to be the long barrelled type. By all accounts William was a crack shot, once scoring 9 consecutive bulls-eyes at a range of 800 yards. That sort of proficiency would have earned him extra pay as a “Marksman”.

The Victorian army was a roughly toughly place and the Regimental history gives us brief descriptions of some of the characters that William Howes would have rubbed shoulders with. There was Dan Butler, called by himself and others “The King of Ireland”, John



Bonet whose boots were too big to go in his knapsack, Jack Morgan who had a conviction for drunkenness for every month of his service and not forgetting Sergeant Eli Clarke “who gave six sons to the Regiment”.

William’s ascent up the ranks seems to have been steady and relatively rapid indicating that he was a

tunic was changed from brick red to the now familiar scarlet. In May 1874 the Regiment was ordered to Ireland, its first visit to that country in its current incarnation, where it spent the next two years based in Dublin but with companies distributed around the country. Having returned to England in June 1876 by October 1877 the Regiment was on the move again this



Sergeant William Howes 1877.



Colour Sergeant William Howes 1880.

committed and a good soldier. He was promoted Corporal in December 1874 and Lance Sergeant less than two years later, for peace time this would have represented rapid promotion and a mark of approval from his superiors. At the same time he extended his period of service from 5 to 12 years.

In 1873 as part of the army reforms of the period the 100th Regiment was linked with the 109th and allocated the common headquarters of Birr. At this time the Regiment was actually stationed in Portsmouth where a curious and tragic incident took place. A boxing tournament was arranged between the Regiment and the Royal Marines during which one of the competitors was killed. The civil authorities became involved and all the Officers concerned went on trial at Winchester Assizes. The charges are not recorded but all the accused were acquitted. It was around this time that the colour of the

time to India. During all these events Sergeant Howes seems to have continued in the steady advance of his career.

In those days it took about a month to travel by troopship from Portsmouth to Bombay. The Regimental history records the discomfort of the Officers on this particular journey so it can be assumed that the other ranks fared even worse. During their journey to their eventual station at Jullundur the Regiment met the 109th for the first meeting of the two units that would soon become the 1st and 2nd Battalions, the Leinster Regiment. It was during this meeting that the famous “Jhansi Table” passed from the 109th to the 100th. The precise circumstances are lost in the mists of time, some say it was a loan, others that it was purchased. Whatever the truth of the matter it remained a treasured

possession of the 100th/1st Battalion for the remainder of its existence. During the years that followed the Regiment moved between different locations but to the frustration of many missed out on taking part in the various frontier wars that were a regular feature of military life in India at that time.

Meanwhile William Howes' life and career continued its satisfactory progress. On the 4th December 1880 he was promoted to the rank of Colour Sergeant and two days later he married Lucy Aldridge, the daughter of a Divisional Inspector of Indian Police in Amritsar. The couple were to be married for 65 years and have 11 children.



Colour Sergeant William Howes 1882.  
His Colour Sergeants insignia is visible above his chevrons.

The 100th Regiment was to remain in India for 17 years, not an unusual length of time for the period. During this time there would have been a steady turnover of personnel as men reached the end of their term of engagement and went home to be replaced by fresh recruits from the depot. It is a sad fact that a combination of disease and climate would have also taken a steady toll on unit strength. These factors extended to soldiers families' and many wives and

children succumbed to diseases little understood at the time. The history tells us that the Regiment lost 88 men, women and children during one outbreak of "fever and cholera". To have raised a large family in these circumstances such as the Howes did was a remarkable achievement.

The years that the Regiment spent in India were largely uneventful from a military point of view. Occasional moves from one cantonment to another took place. In truth there was relatively little work to do and the Regimental history is full of accounts of sporting activities of one sort or another. In response to the heat, work would start at 5am and finish at 9am, there was then a rest period lasting until 4.30pm after which light



Colour Sergeant William Howes 1884.  
Dressed for a formal occasion.

work would be undertaken until the early evening. During the hottest months of the year the Regiment would move complete with families to one of the hill stations. The most notable event that took place during this time was on the 1st July 1881 when the 100th Prince of Wales's Canadian Regiment officially became the 1st Battalion, The Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians) The Regiment/Battalion was successful in various shooting and sporting events at this



time and apparently had a reputation for the quality of its mineral water, a curious accomplishment for an Irish unit in a notoriously hard drinking army.

In keeping with a relatively leisurely pace of life further promotion came slowly to William Howes and in early 1891 he was appointed Quarter-Master Sergeant and a few months later he was appointed Regimental Sergeant-Major. This was the highest rank available to an enlisted man, there was only one RSM per battalion and the appointment was an indication of the respect that he had acquired from his superiors during his service.

The Battalion finally left India at the end of 1894 bound for Ireland and arrived at Cobh on the 13th January 1895 in a snowstorm, quite a shock after the heat of India. The Battalion was first stationed in Tipperary and later Birr and Dublin. In March 1896 William Howes, who by this time had completed his engagement of 21 years, received his commission to the rank of Honorary Lieutenant & Quarter Master of the 5th Battalion the Leinster Regiment. The 5th Battalion was formerly known as The Royal Meath Militia and had its headquarters initially in Navan and later moved

to Drogheda. While this job could not be described as a sinecure it was the sort of position that was given to men who were approaching retirement and had earned a relatively quiet life. In 1907 William was promoted Captain and he retired from the army two years later after 37 years service. The 1911 Census gives us a snapshot of William's life after the army. He is listed as living in Quay Street, Skerries, Co Dublin with his daughters, Elsie aged 21, a teacher, Doris aged 12 and Millicent 10, Elsie was born in India and the two younger children were born in Ireland, there is no mention of their mother Lucy who must have been away from home on the date of the census. William describes himself as a "Captain, Retired List, Infantry".

Little did Captain William Howes know as he filled out his census form that in a few short years he would be donning uniform again to once more serve King and country.

*(The later service of William Howes and his family will be continued in the next edition of 40-10. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of David and Bill Howes in the preparation of this piece and their kind permission to reproduce the photographs.)*



NCO's of 1st Battalion Leinster Regiment - and their dogs - Circa 1880.

# The Story of 5234 Pte. William Cahill

## **Introduction.**

*This is the story of William Cahill a soldier in The Leinster Regiment as assembled over two decades by his great-grandson Michael Hegarty. It is representative of thousands of other stories of men who fought in the Great War and is not less poignant for that. It is told in Michael's own words and his journey of discovery is probably typical of many readers. What follows has been condensed from a much longer narrative that contains background detail that will already be familiar to readers and has been omitted for that reason. He dedicates the story to his wife Carol and to his family. (Editor)*

The story of William Cahill was originally going to be a quick dip into our family history when I was given a bronze commemorative medal with the name William Cahill inscribed on it. I learned that the medal which was known universally as the 'Death Penny' and was sent to my Great Grandmother shortly after the Great War to acknowledge the ultimate sacrifice of her husband. In my Great Grandmother's case the medal was contained in a waxed envelope and kept out of sight for many years, probably because it was a painful reminder of her loss. I was always curious about the bronze medal and asked family members how William Cahill came to be embroiled in the war to end all wars. There were stories about him being shot of the Somme in 1916 and that he was not in the trenches for very long before he met his end. I found the lack of information particularly frustrating as William was in the prime of life leaving behind a wife and three young children. There is an old photograph taken sometime after his death showing his widow and their children, dressed in their Sunday best, unsmiling and serious. The picture is sad because of the absence of the man of the house, his life cut short like countless others.

It is over one hundred years since William Cahill's death and with the passing of family members and with the passage of time there remain some gaps in our knowledge of Cahill's brief military service. However, with the support of a lot of people and organisations, based upon surviving sources of information reasonable conjecture can be made. More information may or may not come to light including that elusive photograph of the man himself.

William Cahill was baptised in Delvin, Co. Westmeath on 9th June 1881. He was one of nine children born to Margaret and Patrick Cahill. Patrick Cahill's profession is listed as a mason.

Little is known about William's early life or that of his siblings. From research his sister Catherine

emigrated to Australia sometime after the Great War and lived to a ripe old age. Brief contact with Catherine's family suggest that she spoke fondly of William, her older brother by eight years. According to the 1911 Census, William was married to Anne Cahill, who was nine years his junior. Anne is reputed to have been the related to a local character named James or 'Jim' Flanagan, it is believed that he served in the army during the Great War and was taken prisoner possibly during the the last German offensive in the spring of 1918. The couple lived in Delvin, Co Westmeath, with their three daughters, Margaret, Elizabeth and Kathleen. According to family lore William's elder brother Mick was a career soldier who may have served in India and South Africa.

Unfortunately, William Cahill's enlistment papers and service record were destroyed by fire during the Blitz. However what is known is that he enlisted in the Leinster regiment in Mullingar and was given the service number 5234. On volunteering William would have received a rudimentary medical examination by an army doctor and his personal details including next of kin would have been recorded. Private 5234 William Cahill would have been sent to undertake his basic training at Kilworth Camp, 7 miles from Fermoy. Lieutenant John Staniforth, a junior officer in the 7th Leinsters recalls in his diaries that the weather was terrible with lots of snow. Rifle drill, long marches, bayonet training and simulated attacks on the moors would have helped to mould these erstwhile civilians into soldiers. While there is little evidence to suggest that the men of the 7th Leinsters battalion found it difficult to adapt to army regulations and discipline, preventative action was taken to preserve order and discipline. On 17th March 1915, St Patrick's Day, Staniforth records that the pubs were ordered to close within a 30 thirty-mile radius of Fermoy for fear of encouraging drunkenness in the ranks.

The 16th (Irish) Division was largely established around John Redmond's National Volunteer movement which in turn had developed from the Home Rule movement and the political tensions of pre-war Ireland. The individual battalions were based on the existing Irish regimental structure and all the Irish infantry regiments were represented in its line up. The 7th Leinsters formed part of 47 Brigade alongside 6/Royal Irish Regiment, 6/Connaught Rangers and 7/Royal Irish Rifles. Each battalion would generally consist of 1000 men and approximately 30 officers. After 1916, increasing casualties and the difficulties of recruiting in Ireland resulted in the dilution of the number of native born Irishmen in the battalions.



For final training the division moved from Ireland to Blackdown barracks in Hampshire in early 1915 including live firing exercises and preparation for trench warfare. This type of training would have been supervised by soldiers and officers who had experience of fighting on the Western front. On 18th December 1915, the battalion with a strength of numbering approximately 1000 men crossed the English Channel escorted by Royal Navy ships to counter German submarine attack. They landed at Le Havre and proceeded to the Bethune area of France.

On Christmas Day 1915, Lt-Col Whitton records in the regimental history that the battalion sustained its first casualty. On arriving in France, the battalion's officers and non-commissioned officers would have spent some a brief time with experienced troops acclimatising to life on the front line in order to get an insight and understanding of the reality of the situation on the ground. Once the 'do's and don'ts of trench life were learned the 16th Irish and the 7th Leinsters began to take over parts of the line as a fully-fledged combat unit. During the winter of 1916 the battalion held part of the line in the Hulluch sector.

On 3rd September 1916, the 7th Leinster battalion went into their first full scale battle in an attempt to capture the French village of Guillemont, in the Somme area. The village which had been reduced to rubble in previous fighting and it had become a fortified German stronghold, the enemy making very effective use of cellars with enfilading machine gun fire. Guillemont was part of the long drawn out Somme campaign which began on 1st July and would the run its costly course until November 1916. Previous attempts to capture the village had proved unsuccessful and costly in lives.

During this battle, Lt John Holland a bombing officer from the regular 2nd Leinster battalion attached temporarily to the 7th would be awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in leading a bombing party into German trenches. History records that the 16th Division demonstrated an excellent fighting spirit securing the village where others before them had failed. In photographs taken shortly after the battle, troops of the 16th Irish are shown aboard shamrock adorned motor lorries looking relieved to have survived their ordeal, some showing captured trophies such as German helmets.

On the 9th September, the 16th Irish would be used in the battle of Ginchy another French village not too far from Guillemont. Casualties would be higher with many casualties from machine gun fire.

At the start of 1917, the battalion was manning the trenches beneath the Messines ridge in Belgium in the Spanhoekmolen sector. The winter of 1917 was extremely harsh with heavy snowfall that contrived to make the trench difficult to defend and uncomfortable to live in. Lt Col Whitton recounts that the troops were hard pressed to maintain their trenches and that the enemy continually interrupted improvement work by artillery fire. At 4am on 9th March, the enemy attacked in force across 'no-man's land'. Calling upon artillery support Whitton recalls that the Germans were repulsed, leaving 8 dead on the barbed wire and 2 injured in 'no man's land'. As a result of this action, 2nd Lt Dench received the Military Cross (MC) for his action and was commended by General Plummer and the 16th Irish division commander General Hickie. On 12th March, the 7th Leinster battalion was relieved from front line duties and moved to Fletre for month long



16th (Irish) Division troops returning from the Battle of Guillemont 3rd September 1916.

training. The battalion strength was recorded as 30 officers and 955 other ranks.

On 1st April 1917, the battalion was moved up to the front line and took up positions around the Polka farm area in the Vierstraat sector facing Petit Bois Wood in Belgium. They were close to the demolished village of Wyschaete atop the Messines ridge, the Germans became nervous of the build-up of British troops in the back areas and in an effort to disrupt these efforts, the German artillery continually engaged British artillery positions, targeting troop concentrations, stores dumps and known supply routes.

On 7th May, Lt Col Whitton records that a major bombardment of the German positions was underway with all calibre of guns. On 10th May, training for the battalion began in earnest when they received special training in a back area well behind the front line. This training included a quarter sized replica of the village of Wyschaete one of the key objectives of the attack. Planning for the forthcoming offensive was meticulous and guided by the very capable and some would say most competent British general Hubert Plummer, known affectionately by the troops as 'Daddy'. For the first time the 16th Irish division and the 36th Ulster division were deployed to work together in the capture the strongly fortified Wyschaete. Whitton recalls that a healthy rivalry developed between these erstwhile political foes as to who would capture the objective first. Antagonisms between North and South disappeared.

From 14th until 29th May, the battalion continued their training at Journy and Lt-Col Buckley returned to the battalion from sick leave. Buckley, suitably impressed by Maj Stannus' leadership in his absence, insisted that the honour of leading the battalion into battle should go to Stannus.

The reader should note that there is no confirmation on when Pte William Cahill arrived on the Western front and it may be that he did not deploy when the battalion was sent to France in December 1915. As men in the battalion were killed, wounded or sent back home, drafts of reinforcements were received on a regular basis from training depots as and when they were required to keep the unit up to fighting strength. On 21st May 1917, for example Lt Staniforth records that small drafts of between 20-30 men were being sent to the front in anticipation of another big push. On 1st June, the 7th Leinster battalion marched into Clare camp at Bailleul. A short time later the battalion was on the move again. At 2am on 7 June, the battalion were in their jump off trenches in front of Petit Bois ready to go 'over the top' at the command of their officer's whistles to assault the village of Wyschaete. Battalion records of the time show that the battalion was organised as follows:

A Company	Captain Farrell
B Company	Lt Lyon
C Company	Lt Stidson
D Company	Lt Robb

As with any assault of the enemy lines the troops would have carried their .303 Lee Enfield rifle, bayonet and extra ammunition. For some troops who were allotted the task of destroying German strongpoints and dug outs, they would have carried empty sandbags full of Mills bomb hand grenades and revolvers for personal protection. Entrenching equipment in the form of a short shovel, a waterproof groundsheet and a canteen of water were carried. In addition, all soldiers would have carried their gas masks and emergency iron rations consisting of hard tack biscuits, tea and corned beef. These rations were only to be opened on the orders of an officer. On the inside of their battledress all troops carried a large bandage and a small bottle of iodine in order to help them dress any wound and to prevent infection on the battlefield. In any attack the orders of the day were to maintain the momentum of the attack at all costs and soldiers were forbidden to halt and attend to an injured comrade. The injured would be left to tend to themselves if they could and were picked up by stretcher bearers. For several hours before 'zero hour' the 7th Leinster battalion manned their trenches in silence so as not to attract the attention of the Germans. It was a warm night and in the countdown to battle many men wondered if they would see sunset. Lt Col Whitton records that *'the padre made a tour of the line.... A hush seemed to settle over the front and for an hour before zero hour hardly a shot was fired, and for one the big guns were silent.'* Contemporary accounts tell that in the moments before the battle began Nightingales could be heard singing as dawn approached. In the minutes leading up to the attack when soldiers had to scale ladders to get out of their trench, a measure of army ration rum would have been issued by platoon leaders in order to steady nerves and stiffen resolve.

At precisely 3.10am on 7th June 1917, nineteen huge underground mines that had been prepared by tunnellers over many months were detonated under the German positions. The battalion had been instructed to brace themselves seconds before the explosions including two in front of them at Petit Bois. Nothing could have prepared them for what they saw that morning. The simultaneous explosions of these mines were compared to an earthquake and could even be heard as far away as Kent and London. Many German defenders were simply vaporised or died from concussion. Those who survived the blast were stupefied and too dazed to offer any serious resistance to the Irish onslaught.



Lt Lyon recalls that he and Lt Hamilton lead the battalion immediately after the mines were blown. However, the sheer force of the explosion which had thrown up hundreds of tons of earth made visibility extremely poor - no more than five yards and this initially led to some confusion in the attack. The overpowering stench of cordite made many of the attacking troops sick. However, despite the shock of witnessing this novel form of warfare, soldiers of the 7th Leinster battalion advanced under a well-rehearsed creeping artillery barrage designed to keep German heads down.

The enemy resistance crumbled quickly and soldiers from the German 4th Grenadier regiment and the 33rd Fusiliers began to surrender. Close on the heels of the Leinster's came the men of the Royal Engineers whose job it was to make safe any booby traps left behind by German defenders in bunkers and cellars beneath the village of Wyschaete. Twenty minutes after 'zero hour' the Leinster's captured their first objective. Lt Lyon considered this attack a 'cake walk' in that Leinster casualties were low, although he recalled that three men were reported missing probably killed in the mine crater shortly after the detonations. His colleague Lt Hamilton was injured in the attack by gunfire. Lt Col Whitton in his official post war history of the battalion states that 60 prisoners of war were taken, and between 80-100 enemy killed. In addition, four machine guns and 2 trench mortars were captured. For the 7th Battalion history records that eight officers were wounded in the attack, 15 other ranks killed and 92 wounded. Approximately 2000 yards of enemy territory was captured and this included the village of Wyschaete, now nothing more than red brick dust. An official photograph shows soldiers of the 16th (Irish) division, possibly a group of the 7th Leinster battalion walking through the ruins just hours after it had been captured.

Tragically, however, just after the attack began battalion headquarters received a direct hit from enemy artillery that wounded Maj Stannus and killed and injured several others. With the loss of Stannus who was to lead the attack, Captain Farrell and Lt Whitehead took control of the situation. Maj Stannus who was not the youngest of men later succumbed to his wounds and is buried at the Etaples Military Cemetery. Captain Farrell was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his leadership. Lt Col Whitton records that on the evening of 7th June, the battalion was relieved and went into divisional reserve behind the front line. He also recalls that success was celebrated with a drop of 'Black velvet'.

After the war a Celtic cross would be erected in the rebuilt village of Wyschaete as a means of commemorating the effort and sacrifice of men of the 16th (Irish) Division in 1917.

The battle of Messines was testament to the fact that



16th (Irish) Division troops moving through the ruins of Wyschaete after its capture.

with proper preparation, surprise and effective artillery support results could be achieved at reasonably little cost to men and material. This action at Messines took strategic high ground from a well dug in enemy in the Southern sector of the Ypres salient. Securing Messines ridge was seen by Haig and his general staff as being critical to the success of any future British operations in the salient. However, the failure to capitalise on the success of Messines by continuing the offensive in this area of operations allowed the Germans to take stock of the situation, re-evaluate their defensive strategy and reinforce quickly. Historians argue that after Messines the delay to continue the offensive in the Ypres salient by six weeks was a missed opportunity to strike a significant blow for which the British army and the likes of William Cahill would pay a high price in the months to come.

Following their involvement at Messines the 7th Leinsters were transferred from General Plummer's 5th Army group to General Gough's 2nd Army. The battalion was billeted behind the front line in the Belgium village of Eringhem. Lt Col Whitton records that on 26th June 1917, the battalion were reviewed by XIX Corps commander General Watts and General Pereira. During the following weeks in very good weather the battalion back under the command of Major Buckley and Major J D Maher continued to receive new drafts of men to replace losses. On 3rd July, battalion records state that a sports day was held where each company competed for prizes that were distributed by the 16th (Irish) Division's commander Maj-Gen Hickie.

After Messines the German high command was only too aware that the next hammer blow would fall upon the low ridges surrounding the ancient ruined town of Ypres. Since October 1914, the Germans had



The Celtic Cross dedicated to the men of the 16th (Irish) Division.

constructed a formidable system of defence in depth across the high ground. Pillboxes and roundhouses constructed of reinforced concrete and steel were numerous. The Germans having learned quickly that it was costly for them to man trenches that were subject to overwhelming and accurate artillery fire, decided to hold ground with maximum firepower with minimum men. These emplacements were quickly constructed and well sighted on high ground with interlocking machine gun fire designed to frustrate and break up an infantry attack. These structures that still litter the Flanders landscape were numerous and could survive all but the most direct hit by artillery took a terrible toll on attacking troops. From a British planners perspective any attack to dislodge the Germans from their commanding positions and break out of the Ypres salient would require meticulous planning, grim resolve and a degree of luck.

For William Cahill and his comrades in the 7th Leinster battalion the build up and preparations for the coming offensive could only be described as obvious and awesome. On a daily basis, vehicles, mule trains and small gauge rail wagons would bring up the big guns, stores and ammunition to the front. Hundreds of thousands of men from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada converged in the salient in anticipation of the attack. These preparations continued in view of the Germans holding the high ground to the East. According to the 7th Leinster war diaries, the battalion spent most of July preparing for

the offensive. The weather was mostly hot and dry but interspersed with thunder storms. The war diary for 28th/29th July records that a low pressure weather system was moving in from the Atlantic. In the meantime, the British artillery continued to pummel the German lines. This huge concentration of firepower could be heard across the Channel in Kent. Low lying agricultural land, with a high water table and criss crossed by drainage channels to avert flooding the incessant shellfire destroyed the drainage system. Shell holes simply filled with water. With the prospect of heavy rainfall, the signs for a swift and successful offensive did not bode well. The 7th Leinster war diary records that on Monday 30th July 1917, the battalion was camped in the open at Brandhoek, within marching distance of the front line. William Cahill and his contemporaries would have been aware that an attack was imminent judging by the constant and ferocious bombardment of the German lines.

The battalion war diary records that at 4.10am men of the 7th Leinsters were on the move from Brandhoek to a rallying point at 'Goldfish Chateau', just west of Ypres. The battalion was to be used in support of the main attack that day and could be called upon to move at short notice. The Passchendaele offensive began at 3.50am on Tuesday 31st July 1917, an hour before dawn. It opened with a massive artillery bombardment of the German front and support lines. William Cahill would undoubtedly have experienced the kaleidoscope of flashes on the horizon concentrating on the ridges to the East where dawn was breaking under grey clouds. Many men on seeing the artillery flashes and hearing the sound of the guns must have been anxious about what the day would bring. Lt Staniforth the young officer who was looking forward to the war remembers in dramatic fashion the events of that morning in a letter written to his parents later that day. He wrote his letter



The Third battle of Ypres - Passchendaele





Potijze Chateau first aid post with marked graves in the background taken shortly after the war.

from a damaged chateau several hours after the battle began. In the letters which were discovered by his family in an attic eighty years later he recalls how the 7th Leinsters with William Cahill in its ranks moved into the battle area in subdued silence. Just before 3.50am, the guns went silent for a moment. The troops around Staniforth checked their watches and watched the skyline in front of them. At zero hour, several small mines were detonated. There followed a ferocious artillery bombardment. He describes the sounds of every calibre of gun firing, the sound of machine gun fire and rifle fire. The sound of klaxons and low flying aeroplanes could also just be heard above the noise of the big guns. In the German lines, he describes rocket flares fired calling for artillery support from their own guns.

According to the Battalion war diary at about 9.15am, five and half hours after the fighting began, 500 men including William Cahill were issued with entrenching tools e.g. picks and shovels. It seems highly likely that the detachment of men from the battalion were required to dig trenches in order to bury telephone cables. As the British front line shifted slowly Eastwards that overcast morning, communication with the various command posts just behind the front line was critical for command and control. The battalion would also have been used to dig emergency trenches as the fighting moved East in order to counter a German counter attack.

Official histories of the battle for that day in the Potijze area, record that the 15th and 51st Scottish divisions were in the vanguard of the attack to take the Frezenberg ridge. Whilst the Scots pushed East of Potijze, the detachment of Leinsters were working in the

areas just behind the advance but still exposed to shell fire, gun fire and gas.

From their positions atop the ridges the Germans would have been able to pinpoint attacking formations and supporting units. Artillery would have been used to break up large formations of men, deny reinforcements and disrupt the momentum of the attack. German troops would then counter attack the depleted British attacking troops and recapture lost ground.

At sometime after 9.15am, Private 5234 William Cahill was killed with nine of his Leinster comrades. The war diary records that ten men were killed, 31 wounded and 2 listed as missing. Lt Col Whitton records that the working party were proceeding along the Potijze road when it came under heavy shrapnel fire. Company Sergeant Major Byrne of 'A' company was among those killed. Along with Cahill, Privates 5235 AE Naylor; 5249 Frederick Rolfe and 5230 George Ridley Leslie were listed as killed. The close sequence of the service numbers issued to them may well indicate that these men may have enlisted with Cahill and died together. The information held by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission indicates that Rolfe or Leslie were not Westmeath men.

What can be assumed is that as the fighting moved East and the area became a little quieter, Private Cahill and his nine fallen comrades would have been accorded a hasty funeral administered by the battalion priest, possibly a Father Wrafter. Whether the funeral was attended by other soldiers from the battalion is not known but it would have been conducted within the sight and sounds of the ensuing battle to the East. The



Potijze Chateau Lawn Cemetery as it is today looking towards Ypres.

funeral, albeit brief would have afforded some dignity to the dead and comfort to the living. Cahill was buried close to where he fell with a simple wooden cross showing his name, rank, number and regiment denoting where he was buried until a more permanent memorial could be erected. The grave would have been recorded as a map reference that would allow the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (formally the Imperial War Graves Commission) established in May 1917, to maintain the grave in perpetuity.

The final entry for the 7th Leinster battalion war diary for 31st July 1917, states that at 5pm, the working party returned to Goldfish Chateau, marching towards Ypres minus William Cahill and others. It had been a difficult and disappointing day for the British in many ways. More such days would follow. In the case of the 7th Leinster Battalion they would sustain many more casualties in August 1917, in another phase of the Passchendaele campaign during the Battle of Langemarck.

Within weeks of William's death his family would have been officially notified of his death. If he was in the habit of writing letters home or sending postcards these would have stopped abruptly giving his family and his widow Anne some cause for concern. The War Office now well practiced in the grim task of informing next of kin would have sent form B104-82B usually by post. The form would have included information on when he died and where he was buried. 5234 Private

Cahill of the 7th Leinster (Service) Battalion is buried in the Potijze Chateau Lawn Cemetery, on the outskirts of Ypres or (Ieper) in Flanders, Belgium.

William Cahill was by no means unique among the men who fought in the Great War. Little is known about his service in the British army and this is made more difficult by the fact that his service record was destroyed along with hundreds of thousands of other records during the London blitz. Unfortunately, no photographs of William Cahill or any letters or correspondence relating to him exist. His service record and letters or a photograph would have added another dimension and depth to this story. However, the 7th Leinster battalion war diary and other published material on the 16th Irish division does shed some light on the role of William Cahill's battalion. As time has gone by Ireland is also coming to terms with its role in the Great War and hopefully more information may come to light through local historical societies and archives. Some of the information contained in this story originates from stories heard from other family members who have passed away. What is offered here is a sketch of William Cahill's short service life based upon the evidence that is currently available. I hope that this is a fitting tribute to my Great Grandfather and provides his descendants with information that will allow future generations to remember him.

*Mike Hegarty*



## A Prince of the Realm and A Prince of Men

*This is a description of two meetings under very different circumstances between the author Capt. H A Howes MM and H.R.H. Edward, Prince of Wales. I have tried without success to identify the date of the first meeting, based on the location it could have been in 1916 or 1917, the text refers to a gap of 6 years between the two meetings making 1916 the more likely. The second meeting took place during the Prince of Wales's visit to the 1st Battalion in Madras in August 1922. The final paragraph makes an oblique reference to the Abdication Crisis of 1936 and the famous broadcast that the by then King Edward VIII made announcing his abdication. We are indebted to David and Bill Howes for making this memoir available to us. (Editor)*

In the early part of the first world war the line of fighting ran just northwest of the City of Ypres in Belgium. This line, commonly called the Wipers line, was really a spot of hell on earth. At some places, particularly near Hill 60 - where the mud was deep and very gooey and the opposing forces were only 50 feet apart, really too close for rifle shooting but just the right range for throwing turnips of which there was a great quantity. A rotten turnip falling out of the sky on an upturned face was rather unpleasant.

Here one evening it was the fortune of the writer, who was in an Irish regiment, to be on the ration detail, to bring up rations from the rear stores to the front lines. The ration party made their way slowly along a muddy ditch, on one side of which there was a duckboard walk, narrow and treacherous. A side slip from the duckboard usually meant immersion to the waist in a very sticky mess where one remained immobile until a friendly hand plucked one bodily from the "goo".

Rations delivered, the survivors of the party returned along the duckboard to the comparative peace of the rear echelon, and there they rested until the following night when darkness permitted them to go back on duty on the front line.

Returning one such evening, lit only by the flash of gunfire, I met on the broad walk a dapper young staff colonel, immaculately dressed with nice shiny riding boots and fawn coloured breeches, clean-shaven and smiling broadly. "Good evening Captain", said he. "Have you just come back from the front line?" Yes Sir, I said, "This is the ration party for my regiment". "It is also mine", said he, "I am its colonel in chief". It was then that I recognised H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. "What is it like up there?" said he, "I am on my way to visit the men there". "It's like h—l" said I, "but if you really want to see, follow the duckboard walk but be

careful to stay on it or you will get your shiny boots rather muddy, and when you see a star shell drop face down on the duckboard, as it will be followed by a burst of shrapnel. The enemy keep shelling this section all night". "Thank you Captain", said he. "Do you think I should go up?" "I think you would be a damn fool to try, Sir" I said. "Sometimes a tank comes to the line with supplies. Why not hitch a ride with one of these gas buggies?" "Oh no, said he, you have faced it tonight already and I would not ask you to do so again. I am not made of sugar you know, and a little mud will wash off easily. Good night". And so saying off he went along the duckboard - a most brave and cheerful young man.

On my return to the base camp an older staff officer, very disturbed when I told him I had met H.R.H. along the duckboard, said "I am responsible for him, but he slipped away from me about two hours ago". "Well" said I if he's lucky he'll reach battalion Headquarters in about one hour from now. You can communicate with them and see if he has arrived. Apart from desultory shelling it has been a quiet night and there is no indication of an attack in force". I stayed with him until he received news that H.R.H. had arrived safely at Battalion H.Q. and we could sleep peacefully.

This was my first meeting with H.R.H. and it pleased me very much because he was such a nice unassuming young fellow although he was heir to the throne of England.

Six years later my dear Irish Regiment had been moved to Southern India for garrison duty. Here late in August, H.R.H. arrived one day to represent his illustrious father in a tour of the British Empire. He had just come from a visit to North America. During the North American trip his hand had been shaken so fiercely so many times that it was bruised and sore, and in consequence when he greeted his friends in Madras he shook hands the Boy Scout way - with his left hand.

It was once more my tour of duty, and I was in charge of the Royal Guard over H.R.H.'s residence. Strict orders were given to all sentries that no one was to be allowed to enter the Royal quarters once H.R.H. had retired.

The second night of his visit his valet had been out visiting some friends and renewing the acquaintance of Mr Barleycorn. He returned back to his quarters - in the same building as H.R.H. - rather early in the morning. He reached the entrance but was there halted by a sentry with a fixed bayonet. Despite his protestations that his master needed him in the morning he was not allowed to enter, and to escape the threatening bayonet he took refuge in a clump of rhododendron bushes. Hearing the commotion I raced

for the scene, and here found a very frightened valet cowering in the bushes while Sentry Murphy was poking viciously with his bayoneted rifle in the general direction of the valet. H.R.H. heard the commotion too, and in his striped pyjamas and a robe came out to investigate. When he came out and learned that the sentry had intercepted a man trying to enter his sleeping place, he personally congratulated the sentry on his keen sense of duty and told the valet to sleep where he was in the bushes, and perhaps he would be allowed to return to duty when daylight arrived and he could be properly recognised. Thus saying he himself returned to his room and repose.

The next night a big reception was being held in the Club where all the V.I.P.'s would meet the Royal visitor. Of course the officers and their ladies attended.

In events such as these the guest of honour stands on a raised platform at one side of the room, while those to be presented line up along the side of the room in order of precedence, each man holding a card on which is inscribed his name that of his wife and his title or business. Then one by one the guests move slowly forward until they reach the first of the Aides des Camp to whom the card is presented. The A.D.C. reads from the card and passes it to the next A.D.C. who repeats. The guests meanwhile follow the card until it reaches the A.D.C. next in line to the Guest of Honour - in this case Royalty. When H.R.H. is ready to receive the approaching guests the A.D.C. announces the details from the card and the lady and her escort move forward. Here the lady curtsies and the gentleman steps forward and shakes hands with the Royal personage, if the guest of honour makes the first movement towards such action.

To this reception came my wife Margie and myself. We were pretty far back in the order of precedence, but eventually we arrived at the point where the Prince stood. As we advanced, instead of shaking hands, he put out his right hand and stopped our progression. Turning to Margie he said, "Your husband and I have met before. Some years ago I met him in the mud of Flanders and he told me in rather strident tones to 'get the heck up to the front lines if I wanted to see what he war was like', so I went up obediently and I found out that he was right - it was like h-ll". so now we are old friends and I could not let you pass without saying hello. Later on, Madam, when the dancing starts, may I have the pleasure of a dance with you?". And so saying he dropped his hand, Margie made her curtsy, and we passed on.

This was a demonstration of a remarkable memory and a wonderful display of human kindness. Margie was of course thrilled at the thought of dancing with the future King of Great Britain - which she later did, and I was pleased that he had remembered me even under such different circumstances.

It was small thoughtful acts like these that endeared him to his loyal subjects and to this day the officers and we of this beloved Irish Regiment, now disbanded, are his loyal loving subjects, and when in the course of a few years he placed his hand in the hand of God and went forward to the arms of 'the woman I love' we hope he found the love and peace he longed for. God bless him.

H A Howes

## Quartermaster's Stores

The following are available to purchase by mail order. Please email or post your order to Ian Lowe at: marfordms@icloud.com or at 42 Woodridge Avenue, Marford, Wrexham, LL12 8SS. Prices include 2nd class postage to UK & Irish addresses. Payment can be made by cheque drawn on a UK or Irish bank and sent to the address shown above. All items are subject to availability.

	£	€
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Lapel Pin Badge. (Suitable as a tie pin or Ladies brooch)	10	12
Ladies Scarf in Regimental colours. (Square 30" x 30", Polyester)	12	15

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**New!** Feather Hackle in Leinster Regiment colours.  
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*These are a special one off purchase and cannot be repeated so there is a strictly limited number available.*

(Not actual size)



## The Evolution of the Leinsters

In the Summer 2020 edition of 40-10 we traced the early roots of the Leinster Regiment through the story of the 100th and 109th Regiments of Foot, how the former had served in North America and had been disbanded in Canada in 1818. We traced the 109th from its earliest beginnings as a European regiment in the service of the East India Company through to its incorporation into the Imperial army in 1853. In this article we continue the story and will follow the fortunes of the two regiments through the point where they become battalions of the Leinster Regiment and up to the start of the South African or 2nd Boer War in 1899. As with the previous article we will follow each regiment or battalion in turn.

When we last met the 100th Regiment it was 1818 and they were being disbanded following the end of the Napoleonic and American Wars. The veterans were given the option of a grant of land in Canada or returning home to what was probably an uncertain future. We are told that about 300 opted to stay in Canada and take their chances as settlers. They were allocated land around the military settlement of Richmond, now a suburb of Ottawa. Richmond was the first of several similar settlements in Canada and part of the motivation for their establishment seems to have been the desire to establish loyal communities that would act as a bulwark against the ambitions of the Americans to incorporate these lands into the United States. It was also a convenient and cheap way of demobilising soldiers. The community was founded by Major George Thew Burke and many of its early inhabitants were Irish. It was named after the newly appointed Governor-General of Canada, the Duke of Richmond, who had the misfortune to die there in 1819 as a result of being bitten by a rabid fox. Officers were allocated 200 acres and other ranks 100 acres, a better prospect for many than returning to a potato patch in rural Ireland.

*This present day information plaque in Richmond summarises the military origins of the community however it somewhat confusingly refers to the 99th Regiment, this is in fact our 100th Regiment. In 1816, for reasons lost in the mists of time, the 100th Regiment was briefly renumbered 99th, its official designation being the 99th Regiment of Foot (Prince Regent's County of Dublin Regiment) By the time it was disbanded 2 years later it seems to have reverted to its earlier number of 100th. These hardy pioneers were provided with tools and a year's rations by the authorities but had to hack roadways and land to cultivate out of the wilderness. It was not an easy option.*



The story now jumps forward 40 years to 1858 during which time Britain was not involved in any European conflicts and in consequence the size of the standing army diminished. However between 1853 and 1859 Britain became involved in successively the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny; it was time to expand the army again. As part of this process permission was given in March 1858 to raise in Canada an infantry regiment to be numbered the 100th. The Regimental history tells us that it was recruited from the “hardy lumber men from the forests and river ways” of Upper Canada and notably from the district around Richmond. Included among these recruits was one Milo Bourke the son of Major George Bourke the original founder of the settlement. The Regimental history includes a lengthy account of the early days of the regiment written around 1924 by Henry Gorman. He is described as being then 85 years old and the last survivor of the original volunteers. Gorman gives us a vivid account of the raising of the new Regiment, its movement to England and its final training at Shorncliffe. A feature of barrack life during this period was the presence of the Royal City of Dublin Militia, also numbered the 100th. In order to prevent confusion the Dublins were obliged to give up their number leading to much ill feeling between the regiments and many brawls in and around the local ale houses. In December 1858 the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) visited the Regiment and presented its Colours. Early in May 1859 the Regiment was ordered to Gibraltar for garrison duties where they remained until 1863. Life on Gibraltar does not seem to have been too taxing as the history mainly tells us about

sporting events and the social round. An important event did occur on the 21st January 1860 when a letter was received stating that “Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to allow the officers of the 100th Regiment to wear the Prince of Wales’s Plume above their number on their forage caps in consideration of the corps being designated “The Prince of Wales’s Royal Canadian Regiment”, thus establishing some of the elements of the later full title of the Leinster Regiment. During this time the first Commanding Officer of the Regiment Col. Count de Rottenburg was succeeded by Major Alexander Dunn VC, late of the 11th Hussars, awarded his medal for his part in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. According to the Whitton’s history Major Dunn paid £10,000 for the position, an enormous sum at the time. This transaction gives us an insight into the system for purchasing commissions and positions in the Army which was abolished in 1871. With the exception of the Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers officers had to purchase each step up the career ladder, the price paid being determined according to rank and the prestige of the corps involved, the Cavalry and Guards regiments were more expensive than Line regiments. When an officer retired he sold his position to another who had the means and desire to buy. There was an approved scale of prices but in practice it was common for additional side deals to be done thus inflating the total cost. The purchaser received the salary appropriate to the rank which may be regarded as the “dividend” on his “investment”. In theory if an officer was killed in action he or his estate lost the investment although many exceptions seem to have been made. At the time of the Dunn/de Rottenburg transaction the going rates for commissions ranged from about £840 to be a Cornet in a cavalry regiment to £4,500 to be a Lieutenant-Colonel in a line regiment. From this we can guess that a hefty premium was paid for the honour of commanding the 100th Regiment.

In October 1863 the Regiment crossed the Mediterranean to take up a new posting in Malta where it remained for three years. Their time on the island included providing an unofficial guard for Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Italian patriot, who visited Malta and was not well received by the local population. The Regiment was also in Malta during a severe outbreak of cholera that caused many deaths. The number the regiment lost is not recorded but it is known that there were regimental burials on the neighbouring island of Gozo and that a memorial obelisk was raised near Floriana on the main island. In October 1866 the Regiment was on the move again, this time back “home” to Canada.

According to the Regimental history the move back to Canada was in response to “trouble” breaking out in 1866. This is probably a reference to the growing

friction between the Anglo-Scots settlers and the Metis in the Red River region of Manitoba. The Metis – an amalgam of the original French pioneers and the indigenous people – basically just wanted to be left alone to get on with their lives of hunting and trapping without interference from authorities of any sort. Eventually in 1870 a full scale military operation had to be launched to bring these awkward customers to heel but by that time the 100th were back in Britain. During its time in Canada the Regiment took part in the ceremonies associated with the formal creation of the Dominion of Canada on the 1st July 1867 from which point the country that we now recognise emerges.

In 1869 the Regiment returned to Britain and spent the years up to 1877 at various home stations. It apparently took 12 days to travel by steamer from Quebec to Glasgow compared to over two months plus a ship wreck that it had taken the original 100th to cross the Atlantic in 1805; a indication of the rate of technological progress in the intervening 64 years. At first it was stationed in Scotland before moving south to the area around Manchester. Unrest in the Northern industrial towns was still a recent memory and in the absence of a comprehensive police service it was thought necessary to station regular army units near potential flash points in case there was a need to come “to the aid of the civil power”. However the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 - 71 prompted a reappraisal of Britain’s defence requirements and some expansion and reorganisation of the army and in 1871 the Regiment moved south to Aldershot and later Portsmouth. In 1873, as part of the reorganisation mentioned above the Regiment was formally linked with the 109th Regiment and a common headquarters established at Birm. The idea was that one regiment would be at home providing training and reinforcement facilities while the other was overseas. In 1874 the Regiment moved from Portsmouth to Dublin before individual companies and detachments were distributed to serve in various country towns around Ireland. This would have been the first visit of the 100th Regiment in its present incarnation to Ireland and it is difficult to say how “Irish” it felt, we are told that at this time there was still a significant cadre of the original Canadian volunteers that had joined up in 1858.

The year 1877 saw the Regiment ordered to India for the first time where it was to remain until 1894 moving at intervals to different cantonments. Elements of the Regiment’s story at this time are described in the article “A Leinster Family” in this journal so we will not repeat them here. It is sufficient to say that the 17 years the Regiment spent in India was relatively uneventful except in one important respect. On the 1st July 1881 the earlier linking of the 100th and 109th Regiments was taken a stage further and they became the 1st and 2nd



Battalions, The Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians). This was part of the so called "Childers Reforms" so named after the Secretary of State for War, Hugh Childers, a cousin of Erskine Childers Sr. and a great-uncle of President Erskine Childers. The effect of the reforms was to produce the "County" and regional regimental system that was to serve the British Army well for over 100 years. At the time and as happens with most far reaching reforms where was much controversy and ill feeling caused by the disappearance of the old numbering system. The new look Leinster Regiment was not exempt particularly when there was the successfully resisted attempt to drop the "Royal Canadian" element from the title.

After the heat of India 1/Leinsters (as we will now call them) had to adjust to the cold and damp of Ireland where they remained in various locations including Birr and Dublin until April 1898 when they suddenly received orders to proceed to Halifax, Nova Scotia. There seems to have been two considerations prompting this move, the Spanish - American War, being fought out partially in Cuba, made it advisable to reinforce the garrison in the West Indies and an apparent Canadian sentiment for the repatriation of the "Royal Canadians". The latter was most eloquently expressed in a petition addressed to Queen Victoria and organised by a committee based in Ottawa. The petition, expressed in the most deferential and loyal terms, pointed out the deep Canadian roots of the old 100th and requested the restitution of the old style and titles of the Regiment and that its depot should be moved to Canada. The petition took the form of 225 identical sub-petitions and was, as we know, ultimately

unsuccessful as by this time Canada was well on the way to being a strong independent nation with a military style and tradition of its own. As the 1st Battalion arrived in Halifax the 2nd Battalion was about to leave for the West Indies and there occurred a unique event in the history of the Leinster Regiment; both battalions paraded together, an event that unfortunately does not appear to have been photographed. The Battalion's stay in Nova Scotia was not to last long as once again war clouds were gathering, this time in South Africa. At first it was thought that the Battalion was going direct to the Cape but in April 1900 it returned briefly to Britain and Aldershot where it was brought up to active service strength before setting sail for South Africa. It is now time to catch up with the adventures of the 109th Regiment or 2nd Battalion, The Leinster Regiment.

In the previous article we traced the 3rd Bombay (European) Regiment from its earliest days as part of the Bombay Army of the East India Company through to the start of the Indian Mutiny. This is not the place to give a detailed account of the background or course of the Indian Mutiny except to say that it had been long in the making and responsibility for the excesses of it should be shared by all sides. The immediate cause was the practice of greasing the paper twists that contained the powder and shot for the muzzle loading rifles with either cow or pig fat, the one abhorrent to Hindus, the other equally so to Muslims. The East India Company army was divided into three "Presidencies", Bengal, Madras and Bombay reflecting the regions where they recruited. At the start of the Mutiny the Company's army numbered about 270,000 regular troops of whom around 15% were "European". The soldiers of the Bengal Presidency who provided around 59% on the



Queen's Colour of 3rd Bombay Infantry Regiment (National Army Museum).

indigenous troops were thought the most likely to be disloyal. The 3rd Bombay Regiment was part of the 2nd Division of the Central India Field Force under the energetic command of Maj-Gen Sir Hugh Rose. The force the two divisions (in fact the “divisions” were little more than brigade strength) contained a mixture of European and Indian units drawn from the Madras and Bombay armies and were reinforced with troops provided by the Nazim of Hyderabad, one of the semi-independent Princely States, and numbered about 4500 men in total. The Force was tasked with the re-conquest and pacification of Central India. On the 1st October 1857 the 3rd Bombay Regiment left its base at Poona and started a 500+ mile march north-east to capture the rebel stronghold of Jhansi. Thereafter it was to continue its march with the objective of meeting up with the corresponding force coming from the north at the town of Calpee on the River Jumna. The brutality of this campaign is well illustrated by an incident that occurred while the Regiment was in the town of Sehore which had been held by the rebels but re-captured. The captured mutineers had been courtmartialled and 150 of them were condemned to be shot, a task which was carried out in a mass execution by a party drawn from the Regiment. However repulsive we find this action we should remember that the victims had been treated in accordance with the law and ethics of the time and that the soldiers directly involved had no real option but to follow orders. During the early months of 1858 the 3rd Europeans took part in a series of sieges of towns along the road to Jhansi. The weather was extremely hot and it was during this time that the uniform was changed from the traditional red serge and trousers to a more practical and comfortable khaki based uniform much to the relief of all concerned. Finally on the 21st March 1858 the Regiment caught sight of the formidable fortress of Jhansi. Before an assault could be attempted a rebel relief column of some 20,000 men appeared commanded by one of the most able of the mutineers commanders. Notwithstanding that the enemy forces facing the attackers now outnumbered them by about 10 to 1 the siege commenced and the relief force was defeated and dispersed. The final assault began on the 3rd April and took 4 days of savage often hand to hand fighting to complete. European women and children had been murdered in the town by the mutineers so there was a strong thirst for revenge on the part of the attackers. Rebel casualties were reckoned to have been about 5000 while the attackers lost 320 of whom 12 were from the 3rd Europeans. A survey of the casualties names show that many of them had Irish names. It was for his part in this action that Private Whirlpool was awarded the first Victoria Cross granted to the Regiment. Among the spoils of war taken by the 3rd Europeans was the massive Jhansi table that remained

a treasured possession of the Regiment for the rest of its existence and survives to this day as the boardroom table of the Royal Asiatic Society in London. Following the capture of Jhansi and the death of its ruler the campaign continued to move north and as far as the 3rd Europeans were concerned ended with the taking of Gwalior in June 1858. In recognition of the part it played in the campaign the Regiment was granted the battle honour of “Central India”.

As a result of the Mutiny it became apparent that root and branch reform of the administration of British India was necessary including the Army. Part of the plan was that the European regiments of the East India Company would become new units in the Imperial or Queen’s Army. This move was not well received by many of the men who considered that they had been ill used by the politicians (it was ever thus) and they refused to sign up to the new arrangement despite, according to legend, a liberal supply of free beer. In the end some 600 men opted to be discharged and to return home and their places were filled by men of the German Legion, a corps raised for service in the Crimean War. By this time the Regiment was stationed at Karachi and it was there that on the 30th July 1862 the 109th (Bombay Infantry) Regiment of Foot was officially born. At this time the Regiment was armed with the long barrelled muzzle loading Enfield rifle fitted with a triangular bayonet, NCO’s were equipped with a shorter version of the same weapon but fitted with a sword bayonet. The uniform briefly reverted to scarlet serge before finally settling on white for the hot season and scarlet and blue during the cooler months. The Regiment remained in Karachi for about 2 years before moving to Aden in November 1864.



Tunic Button  
109th Bombay Infantry.

At this time Aden was an isolated outpost of Empire with limited facilities and very few of the relative comforts on the Indian cantonments. The Imperial writ did not extend far inland where potentially hostile Arab tribes held sway and occasionally proved troublesome to the Aden garrison; not much different to conditions 100 years later. As a result two punitive expeditions were organised during the Regiments time there to bring the tribesmen of the interior to heel. Another scourge of tropical stations also occurred in the form of an outbreak of cholera which resulted in the deaths of over



100 men, women and children of the Regiment. While in Aden the Regiment received its first colour dually emblazoned with the honour “Central India”.

After 2 years in Aden the Regiment returned to India where it was to spend the next 10 years posted to a number of stations in both India and the region that we now call Pakistan. Whatever the station life seems to have been much the same, training, military exercises, sporting and social activities with occasional inspections and ceremonial events added in. The Regiment was not included in any of the various expeditions and frontier campaigns that were a feature of life in India at the time which must have been a cause of disappointment for many career minded men. Events in the wider world like the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and other European conflicts caused changes to equipment and tactics. One such change was the introduction of the first general issue breech loading rifle, the Snider-Enfield, in 1870 and the abolishment of the purchase of commissions in 1871. As the system of purchasing commissions had never applied to the East India Company's army it had little effect on the 109th Regiment. Of more relevance to the 109th and as previously described above was the linking in 1873 to the 100th Regiment. Finally in late 1877 the Regiment, by now armed with the famous Martini-Henry rifle sailed “home” to Britain for the first time, arriving in early January of 1878.

According to the Regimental history the 109th retained in its ranks a significant number of German speakers dating from the absorption of the German Legion back in India days. There was a regulation forbidding the speaking of German in the ranks although singing German songs was permitted. A number of German officers remained including the CO, Lt-Col A. Schmid, who had started his career in the Prussian Army. The History notes that the German contingent were “clean, smart, honest, sober and for the most part simple God fearing men” and that there was no difficulty, in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, when they came in contact with the French-Canadian elements of the old 100th. On the 1st July 1881, while stationed at Aldershot, the 109th Regiment (Bombay Infantry) formally became 2nd Battalion The Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians) As has been previously described these changes were not made without the usual controversy and difficulty that attends any loss of identity but from this point onwards we will refer to the 2nd Battalion rather than the 109th Regiment.

The 2nd Battalion remained in England until the summer of 1882 when it was suddenly ordered to Ireland. According the History this was an accident in the War Office arising from confusion between the “Leicester Regiment” and the “Leinster Regiment” - a

confusion that continues to occur to this day! Whatever the circumstances the 2nd Battalion arrived in Ireland, its new home, for the first time and during its 6 year stay gradually lost its earlier identities and became more Irish in character. Life in Ireland does not seem to have been too taxing, the Battalion was distributed around a number of town garrisons with the HQ and Depot being at Birr. When not on duty there seems to have been plenty of time to enjoy the sporting and social round. The Battalion returned to England in 1888 where it remained until 1894 now being armed for the first time with a magazine rifle, the Lee-Metford.

The remaining years of the century were spent in a series of moves to very different stations which illustrate the breath of the Army's responsibilities at the time. It also shows the opportunities for travel for the ordinary soldier that would never have been available to him in civilian life. The first move was in 1894 to Malta or to be precise the much smaller and frankly primitive satellite island of Gozo. The History claims that the authorities were afraid of what would happen if the “wild Irish” were let loose in the fleshpots of Valetta and Sliema and decided to confine the Regiment to Gozo where few such temptations existed. True or not it's a good story but perhaps not so if you were there at the time, as a soldier was heard to remark as he marched down to the quay to leave Gozo: “the back of me hand to you Gozo”. (*The writer has been to Gozo and can report that it is a small, quiet island of considerable charm if that is what you are looking for.*) Next stop was Bermuda which seems to have been both a welcome change and something of a culture shock, the differences between Bermuda and other places in the West Indies is commented on in terms that we would not use today. After Bermuda came a year in Halifax, Nova Scotia where the previously described brief meeting with the 1st Battalion took place. The change in climate must have been dramatic and once again the supposed reputation of the “wild Irish” preceded the arrival of the Battalion. However the move from the tropical islands to a cooler continental posting must have been welcome but was not to last for long. By mid 1895 the Battalion was moving once again to the West Indies, this time to Jamaica to be followed by a further move to Barbados in October 1898.

The Battalion was fated to remain in the West Indies throughout much of the South African War, probably much to the frustration of many, and it was not until 1901 that the Battalion had the opportunity to move to the Cape and another round of adventures. We will follow these in a future episode.

If this was a blank page, it would probably be a reasonable record of the News from Ireland for the past twelve months !

The Covid 19 pandemic has had a dreadful impact on activities across the island, with indoor and outdoor gatherings forbidden and travel restricted, firstly to within 5 kilometres, then within your own county, and only from late May has travel generally been permitted. Those controls wiped out commemorative events over Easter and forced a quite restricted Birr Vintage Week in August 2020, but full praise to the Birr organisers for putting together an excellent outdoor programme, considering the conditions.

Our main Annual General Meeting (AGM) alternates between Ireland and Britain and the 2021 AGM is due to be held in Ireland. It might normally have been held in early July to coincide with the RBL events in Islandbridge and the National Day of Commemoration in Collins Barracks, Dublin. However, both of those events have been curtailed yet again. Our Association will be represented by one member at the National Day of Commemoration, but unfortunately we will not have a representative to lay a Leinster wreath in Islandbridge.

The Birr Vintage Week in August this year, is not really an option for our AGM due to the continuing uncertainty about indoor events that month. We have therefore opted to postpone it to 4th September. The AGM will be held in Birr at a venue yet to be decided depending on where is available and what the Covid-19 regulations in operation at the time permit. Members will be notified of the details as soon as possible.

We expect to combine the AGM with a wreath laying visit to the memorial in Crinkill, followed by an informal lunch in The Thatch in Crinkill. We also hope to be able to arrange a visit to the Studholme Cross. For anyone attending these events, and who hasn't seen it, a visit to the Leinster Regiment Memorial Window in St. Brendan's Catholic Church, which is beside the Birr Library and Council Offices where we will be holding our AGM, is well worth a visit.

Unfortunately there will be no Annual Leinster Regiment Lecture in Birr this Summer, but we will still be holding the Joint Leinster Regiment Association/ Dublin Western Front Association meeting at 2.30pm on Saturday 20th November in the City of Dublin Library, 144 Pearce St., Dublin 2, DO2 DE68. We have yet to firm up on the actual lecturer. Any Volunteers?

November will also see our usual and expanding representation at a range of memorial events on, or around, Remembrance Sunday. At this stage, the known events are as follows:

- Dublin - St Patrick's Cathedral.
- Cork at War Memorial & St. Finbarr's Cathedral
- Limerick War Memorial
- Adare War Memorial
- Portlaoise War Memorial (4th Bn Leinster Regiment memorial)
- Clare War Memorial
- Athy War Memorial
- Mountmellick??

We will be in touch with members to finalise arrangements for these events in due course.

*Denis Kirby*



# ASSOCIATION NEWS

## Mr Harry Hogan

It is with regret that we inform you of the death on the 22nd April of Harry Hogan. Harry was the first Treasurer of the Association after it reformed and did a lot to establish the sound financial situation that the Association enjoys today. Before he retired he was a regular attendee and supporter of Association and CIROCA events. Harry served in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in West Germany and Kenya and remained a proud 'Skin' at heart and he was an active member of the London branch of the 'Skin's Regimental Association. We extend our sympathies to his wife Dee and all his family.

## Welcome

We welcome the following new members to the Association.

**Jez Ashton.** Jez is the grandson of Lt-Col Victor Haddick who is remembered as the "last Leinster" so called because he insisted on being badged as a Leinster while serving during the Second World War. His remarkable story was told in an article that appeared in "Soldier" magazine in 1950 and in a more recent edition of 40-10. Jez now lives in France.

**Michael Bevan.** Michael served as a regular officer in the Irish Guards where he was a contemporary of our President. Michael lives in Co Cork.

**James Delaney.** James's grandfather John and great uncles Thomas (Mick) and Richard Delaney all served in the Leinsters. James who lives in Ireland has been a regular contributor to the Facebook page.

**Catherine Gasparini** is the granddaughter of Lt-Col Valentine Farrell DSO MC. Valentine Farrell was one of three brothers who served variously in the 2nd and 7th Battalions. He was awarded the Military Cross for his part in the attack on Ginchy and the Distinguished Service Order for his leadership during the attack on Hill 63 in September 1918. Catherine lives in the UK

**Anthony Gilbert's** uncle 15330 Pte. Lewis Gilbert was a native of Herefordshire and previously served with the King's Shropshire Light Infantry before transferring to the 2nd Leinsters. Lewis died on the 5th September 1918 of wounds sustained during the attack on Hill 63. He was 20 years old and is buried in La Kreule Military Cemetery, Hazebrouck.

**David Howes** can trace his connections to the Regiment back to his great-grandfather William Howes who joined the 100th Regiment of Foot in 1872 and rose through the ranks. His son, David's grandfather Henry, also served in the Leinsters being awarded the Military Medal in 1917. There are further Leinster and Birr connections through David's grandmother's family. David lives in Canada which is entirely appropriate for the descendant of a veteran of the old 100th.

**Gerry Rogers.** Gerry is related to Lt-Col Francis Dugan who joined the 1st Battalion before the South African War and served with it as Adjutant in India, Ireland, South Africa, and Canada before going to France in December 1914. Francis's family came from Birr and his brother, Winston, also had a distinguished military career before serving as Governor of South Australia and the State of Victoria.

**Kevin Weldon.** Along with a good Irish name Kevin carries a family name well know to members of the Association as he is the elder brother of our Chairman and cousin of our President and therefore the grandson of the last Commanding Officer to lead the 2nd Battalion into battle. Kevin and his extended family live in New Zealand

You are all very welcome and we hope that you enjoy your membership and find it useful and that we are able to meet you on some future occasion.

# LEINSTER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

## The Committee and Post Holders

<b>President</b>	Sir Anthony Weldon Bt
<b>Vice-Presidents</b>	Mr David Ball Commandant Michael McGoona

## The Officers and Members of the General Committee

<b>Chairman</b>	Lt-Col Mark Weldon	markweldon@live.co.uk
<b>Vice-Chairman (Ireland)</b>	Mr Denis Kirby	denis@dpk.ie
<b>Vice-Chairman (GB)</b>	Sir Anthony Weldon Bt	Anthony.weldon@bene-factum.co.uk
<b>Association Treasurer</b>	Mr Ian Lowe	marfordms@icloud.com
<b>Association Secretary</b>	Mr David Ball	theleinsters.4010@gmail.com
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Mr Robert Templeman	bob.templeman@btinternet.com

## Officers of the Ireland Committee

<b>Chairman</b>	Mr Denis Kirby	denis@dpk.ie
<b>Members</b>	Mr Ray Hayden *	ray.hayden@anglewise.co.uk
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	Mr Derek Coulter	derekcoulter@eircom.net
	Mr Chris Brummell	chrisbrummell@gmail.com

\* Also members of the General Committee.

### Appeal to Members

May we remind you that all annual subscriptions became due on the 1st January, This currently stands at £20 for UK residents and €25 for Irish residents. If you have not paid your subscription, thank you, if you have not may we respectfully remind you that it is now due. Cheques in either currency may be sent to the Treasurer, Ian Lowe, 42 Woodridge Avenue, Marford, Wrexham, LL12 8SS. Many of you pay by standing order and direct debit which is greatly appreciated and simplifies the job of the Treasurer and Membership Secretary. If you would like to switch to this sort of arrangement, please contact us as above

You will have noticed that the running of the Association falls on a very small number of people, some of whom are fulfilling more than one role. This is an appeal to members to come forward as volunteers to help run your association and secure the future of what we aspire to do. The tasks are not onerous and the satisfaction of doing something worthwhile is considerable! If you are interested in becoming more involved with the running of the Association please contact Mark Weldon, Denis Kirby or David Ball in the first instance.

*Opinions expressed by contributors to this journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Association*

### Thanks

The editorial team would like to thank all those who have contributed towards producing this journal, without your assistance it would not happen. A special thanks to Laetitia Barnes of Afterhours Artwork for the layout and style of the journal.