



# The 40-10



## LEINSTER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

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# LEINSTER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

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### From the Editor

You will notice that this edition of 40-10 is delivered in a polythene envelope and is printed on a lighter weight paper than usual. These changes are the result of a recent sharp increase in postal charges. It used to cost £1.85 to send a journal, 2nd class, to an inland address, this has now increased to £2.40. In consequence we have looked for ways to reduce the weight of the total package in order to come within a lower weight band. This has been achieved by moving to a polythene packet, lighter than a paper based envelope while offering improved protection, and using a lighter grade of paper. Making these changes has enabled us to potentially save 85p per copy in postage. We are trying to source a recyclable envelope at a realistic cost for future editions. We would welcome any feedback relating to these changes or indeed any other aspects of the journal. If you would prefer to receive your journal in electronic format please contact the Editor at marfordms@icloud.com.

**Front Cover.** The front cover shows the memorial, in Portlaoise, to The Leinster's 4th Battalion, the Queen's County Militia. It records the names of 177 Officers and men who served in the Battalion and died during the Great War. The 4th Battalion never served at the front and most of the men listed died whilst serving with other Leinster battalions.

The memorial was designed by the architect Thomas Scully and is built using Co Carlow limestone. It was unveiled in November 1928 by Lord Castletown, a former Commanding Officer of the Battalion (*See left-hand insert*) It was moved from its original site (*See right-hand insert*) to its present location and renovated in 2001. An additional plaque remembering all Irish men and women who have died in wars and in service with the UN was added at that time.

The Memorial is now the scene of Portlaoise's Act of Remembrance on Armistice Day.

*(Photo: With thanks to Roger Hamilton)*

**Back Cover.** One of the 122 Leinster soldiers who died in the action at Pr emesques on the 20th October 1914 that have no named grave. This grave is one of a number of Leinster burials from this action found in Canadian No 2 Cemetery at Neuville-Saint-Vaast. This cemetery is near the Canadian Memorial on Vimy Ridge, and is about 40 miles from Pr emesques. The names of the missing are recorded on the Berk's Corner Memorial to the Missing at Ploegsteert in Belgium.

## From the President



When asked to write the introduction to this edition of 40-10, I did wonder what have I got to say given that last year was such a memorable one with the Centenary for all the disbanded Irish Regiments and our other associated events.

But I quickly realised that things haven't stood still, and we continue to move forward and to thrive - mainly thanks to key members both in Ireland and the UK.

As reported in the previous edition, our 2023 lunch in London was well attended. Then in August, I had the great pleasure to visit Birr for the first time. My initial Irish based AGM was a particularly special meeting as we said goodbye to our retiring Irish Chairman Denis Kirby. I was proud to represent you all in expressing our thanks for the remarkable work he has done for the Association over quite a few years and to present him with a set of Leinster engraved glasses as a token of our appreciation. I am sure Denis will make good use of them. The Irish Committee also made a generous presentation as their personal thanks. Ray Hayden also stood down as the Secretary of the Ireland Committee, our thanks go to him as well for a job really well done - particularly on the media front where he continues to act on our behalf. In their places, the new Chairman Junior O'Callaghan - already well-known to many of us, and Damian Delaney as Secretary, were both unanimously elected. Again, it was a privilege to be on hand to officially, and personally, welcome them as well as two new members of the Committee - Simon McAuliffe and Michael Fitzsimons. Ireland is, of course, the Leinster's homeland and it's good to know that we are in safe hands there with our Irish Committee working actively on the Association's behalf. In fact, I believe that one of our strengths is that we are well represented with dedicated Committees and members both sides of the Irish Sea.

After the business of the AGM was over, military historian and author Gerry White gave an excellent lecture on Collins Barracks in Cork and its Leinster Regiment connections - which were many and fascinating. When showing contemporary WW1 photographs Gerry talked movingly of the Leinster



soldiers in the pictures, all of whom were somebody's son, sibling, husband or boyfriend. Many never to return to their homeland of Ireland. This was all the more poignant as our next stop was to lay the wreaths on our Memorial at Crinkhill – where, through the gates of our old barracks, walked over 6,000 recruits during the Great War – some of whose faces we might well have seen not long before in Gerry's photographs.

Thus, it seemed appropriate, before giving *The Exhortation and The Dedication*, to recite the remaining and often-unused verses of Lawrence Binyon's poem For the Fallen. I will repeat here just one of those verses because it connects so aptly Jerry's lecture to the Crinkill Memorial that commemorates the sacrifice of so many soldiers of the Leinster Regiment.

*They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;  
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;  
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;  
They sleep beyond Ireland's foam.*

(N.B. You will note I have slightly adapted it to suit the occasion.)

Afterwards, there was a well-attended and very convivial lunch at the Thatch. Again it was great for me to meet and get to know so many more Irish members and to have fascinating discussions on Irish military history and our regiment in particular. During my Birr trip, I was really pleased to visit the Library where the Leinster Regiment Exhibition was part of the town's Vintage week. It was good to see Regimental memorabilia displayed prominently and available for easy viewing by the public. My thanks to the staff at the Library for their assistance.

The plans for 2024 are for the exhibition to be repeated again in Vintage Week. Junior, Tony Hayden

and the Committee are eager to build up next year's display and would welcome the loan of as many items as possible. (Please contact them direct.) As an added attraction, Junior hopes that a large and important display of medals will be lent by a private collector; and there are also plans for an official opening of our exhibition on the Friday prior to Vintage Week. So please help him and his Committee make next year's exhibition really special.

It is important to dovetail our events so that it is as convenient and economical as possible for our Members to attend. Next year, our AGM will be in London. Because the King's Birthday Parade (Trooping of the Colour – incidentally the Colour being Trooped is that of the 2nd Battalion Irish Guards) has been moved to June 15th, the knock-on effect is that the annual Combined Irish Regiments' Cenotaph Parade will now be on Sunday June 16th. Thus we have re-scheduled our AGM and lunch for Saturday June 15th. I look forward to seeing you there.

Finally, I must re-iterate my collective thanks to all those who work in various capacities for the greater good of the Association and our worldwide Leinster family – I haven't got enough space to mention you all individually but your contributions help to perpetuate the distinguished memory and reputation of our Regimental forebears. They would be as proud of you as I am.

Thank you

*Ich Dien*  
Anthony Weldon

## 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 made payable to 'The Leinster Regiment Association' and sent to the address shown above or by bank transfer. Please contact the Treasurer for details. All items are subject to availability.

	£	€
Cap Badge. (Reproduction)	5	6
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
Regimental Tie. (Silk)	15	18
Poppy Lapel Badge with Regimental Crest. (Poppy is approx 1.5" high)	15	18
Feather Hackle in Leinster Regiment colours. (Hackle is approx 5" high)	10	12



	£	€
Lapel Badge with Colours and the dates 1881-1922 .	10	12

This badge has been specially produced to commemorate the centenary of the laying up of the Colours in 1922. The size is 1.5" x 0.5" (Approx).

One of the pleasures and pitfalls of researching the past is the discovery of other stories that may be relevant to the original purpose but are also likely to sidetrack the researcher. It often takes considerable willpower to avoid following these side alleys, no matter how interesting they may seem, and stick to the original purpose of the research. What follows are the result of following leads incidental to the main purpose of the original research, in this case looking at Leinster Regiment casualties during 1915.

The first case involves 7770 Pte Peter Swift, 1st Leinsters. He is listed as being killed in action on the 4th May 1915, this places his death during the 2nd Battle of Ypres. At the time his battalion were in the line near Hooze, close to Ypres. However, he is buried in the Guard's Cemetery, Lesboeuufs, near Ginchy, in the middle of the Somme battlefield, rather than Ypres. He is included in the 1st Battalion casualties in Part 71 of "Soldiers Who Died", the official list of fatal casualties. Pte Swift was born in St Helens, Lancashire, and enlisted in Liverpool. He was a Bandsman, and the available records confirm his date of death. In addition, his Medal Index Card shows that he arrived in France in December 1914 at the same time as the rest of the 1st Battalion. The question is, if he was killed near Ypres during early May 1915 how does he come to be buried in the middle of the Somme Battlefield? Lesboeuufs was in German hands until it was captured by the Guard's Division during the Battle of Fleurs-Courcelette in September 1916. Pte. Swift's grave is the only burial of over 3,000 in this cemetery that dates



Guard's Cemetery. Lesboeuufs

from 1915 and the only Leinster. 1/Leinsters never served in the Somme sector and by September 1916 were in Macedonia. It is well documented that 2nd and 7th Leinsters did serve in the immediate area during 1916, and it is possible that Pte Swift had been transferred from the 1st to one of these but they were nowhere near the Somme in early May 1915. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) records his remains were found close to Ginchy Telegraph despite the fact that he had been reported killed 60 miles away and 16 months earlier. Is it a coincidence that the remains of 7693 Pte R F Attenborough, 1st Leicesters, were found close to where those of Pte Swift were reported to be found? The two men are now buried in adjoining graves. When the CWGC "Graves Registration Report Form" was compiled Pte Attenborough was first entered as a "Leinster", later changed to read "Leicester". His date of death is given as 15th September 1916, when 1st Leicesters, part of 6th Division, took part in the Battle of Fleurs - Courcelette. Is it possible that there is some mix up between Leinster and Leicester going on - not unknown? The matter has been raised with the CWGC but they have yet to respond.

It is clear that in this case some element of record keeping is incorrect, the question is which one?

The second mystery concerns 3551 Pte Patrick Burlace, 1st Leinsters. His date of death is recorded as the 15th August 1915, so he is one of the casualties of the fighting around Hooze during that period. He is remembered on the Menin Gate. The surprising thing is that when you turn up his entry on the CWGC register it gives his age as 16, it also records that, "his father, Pte Burlace also fell". If Patrick's age really was 16 it would make him the youngest Leinster known to have died. A father and son, both dying, however tragic is not unknown but still relatively unusual. Although no initials or regiment were given for Pte Burlace Sr., it was relatively simple to find him with an unusual surname. He turns out to be Pte Thomas Burlace, 1st Connaught Rangers, who died on the 9th December 1914 and is buried in Beuvry Communal Cemetery Extension. The Register gives his age as 50 and tells us that he was the husband of the late Mrs Mary Burlace. Parts 69 and 71 of "Soldiers Died" show that both father and son were born in Athlone, a town that straddles the provinces of Leinster and Connaught. Apart from the father and son tragedy we appear to have two deaths at either end of the age spectrum for active service.





Beuvry Communal Cemetery Extension

The debate about the youngest and oldest casualties of the Great War is an ongoing one and will probably never be definitively resolved. Too many lied about their age in order to join the great adventure and too many recruiting sergeants connived and falsified records for us ever to be able to be sure. However we can say with confidence that 16 and 50, if not unheard of, were towards the outer limits of the age range.

A search for the Burlace family in the 1911 Census shows them living in Athlone and listed as follows:-

<i>Thomas Burlace.</i>	Head of the house	38yoa	General Labourer
<i>Mary Burlace.</i>	Wife	48yoa	
<i>Patrick Burlace.</i>	Son	15yoa	Telegraph Messenger
<i>Thomas J Burlace.</i>	Son	13yoa	
<i>Mary Lyons.</i>	Step-Daughter	20yoa	Woollen Mill Worker
<i>Ann Lyons.</i>	Step-Daughter	19yoa	Woollen Mill Worker

All are listed as having been born in Co Weatmeath and are literate.

If these ages are correct it means that Thomas was about 41 rather than 50 when he died and Patrick a

more believable 19. Still quite young and old to die in battle, but more likely. Although telegraph boys started work young, it does not seem likely that Patrick would have been delivering telegrams at the age of about 12. On balance the Census ages seem the more believable.

In an attempt to confirm the ages we turned up the 1901 Census but could not find the family listed. This may indicate that their's was an army family who were posted away in 1901. Soldiers living in barracks are often listed only by their initials for census purposes and so can be quite difficult to find. It seems possible that Thomas Burlace was a regular soldier whose term of engagement expired sometime between 1901 and 1911 and either re-enlisted or was recalled as a reservist in 1914. As is so often the case, his son Patrick followed him into the service. In 1911 Thomas and Mary had been married for 16 years and the presence of two step-daughters called Lyons, suggests that this was Mary's second marriage. Did Thomas marry the widow of a colleague, a pretty common occurrence?

As is often the case, while we may find answers to some questions we are often left with further ones to ask. Mary Burlace died sometime between 1911 and around 1920 at a relatively young age. She had been widowed twice and lost her eldest son; what part did these bereavements play in her death?

## 7th Leinsters and the Battle of Messines

The Battle of Messines, which occurred between the 7th and 12th June 1917, is sometimes overlooked and less remembered than the other titanic struggles that occurred that year, both on the Western Front and further afield on the Eastern Front, the Balkans, Palestine and Italy. In this article we will concentrate on the Western Front and the important part that 7/Leinsters played in achieving one of the few unqualified successes of that year. The previous year, 1916, is best remembered for Verdun and the Somme, both enormously costly in terms of human life and war materials. An inter-allied conference was held in November 1916 at Chantilly to agree strategy for the coming year. It was recognised that the Germans had suffered at least as many losses during 1916 as the Allies but had less resources to draw on to repair those losses. Therefore it was agreed to keep the pressure on the Germans by launching a series of more or less simultaneous offensives, timed to prevent the Germans from being able to move resources from one front to another to meet developing threats. It was also recognised that the French Army was in a parlous state after the carnage of Verdun and that the British would need to shoulder a much larger share of the burden on the Western Front. It was further agreed that the Western Front would be the decisive front of the war



General Sir Herbert Plumer.

and that it should take priority for the allocation of resources. This agreement gave rise to the Arras offensive by the British and Empire forces and the so called “Nivelle” offensive by the French on the line of the river Aisne. The former was at best a qualified success, the latter a dismal failure giving rise to widespread mutinies in the French Army. At the same time the British were suffering mounting losses of shipping sunk by German U-boats operating from ports along the Channel coast. These losses resulted in shortages of basic food stuffs and the raw materials needed to manufacture war supplies. This threat was immediate and made obvious by rationing and empty shelves and resulted in political pressure on the Generals to provide a solution.

It was in response to these pressures and the need to draw the German’s attention away from the French that caused the British Commander in Chief, Field Marshal (FM) Sir Douglas Haig, to devise an offensive plan for the second half of 1917. It was to take place in the Belgian sector of the front and called for a breakout from just south of Ypres to Dixmude in the north. A preliminary objective would be the railway junction at Roulers, a key transport hub for the Germans. The ultimate objective would be the north sea coast and the ports of Zeebrugge, Ostend and others used by the U-boats. In order to achieve this objective it would first be necessary to clear the ridges and higher ground around Ypres held by the Germans since 1914/15. These notably included Messines and Passchendaele. The first step in this grand plan was to secure the right flank of the attack by capturing the ridge where lay the small towns of Wytschaete and Messines. Prime Minister David Lloyd-George, fearing another Somme type bloodbath, was skeptical but was won over to the scheme by the prospect of relieving the U-boat threat.

The task of capturing the Wytschaete - Messines position was given to Second Army, commanded by General Sir Herbert Plumer. As Great War generals go, Plumer is an attractive figure, short, thick set and sporting a walrus style moustache, he looks like a benign uncle; indeed his nickname was “Uncle”. He was a north country infantryman who had seen extensive and successful service in most of the late 19th century campaigns including South Africa. The hallmark of his operations was meticulous planning and preparation, a characteristic we see at Messines and in his later battles. His approach to battle planning is said to have influenced a young staff officer in one of his Corps, Capt. B L Montgomery, later to be renowned for his own methodical planning.

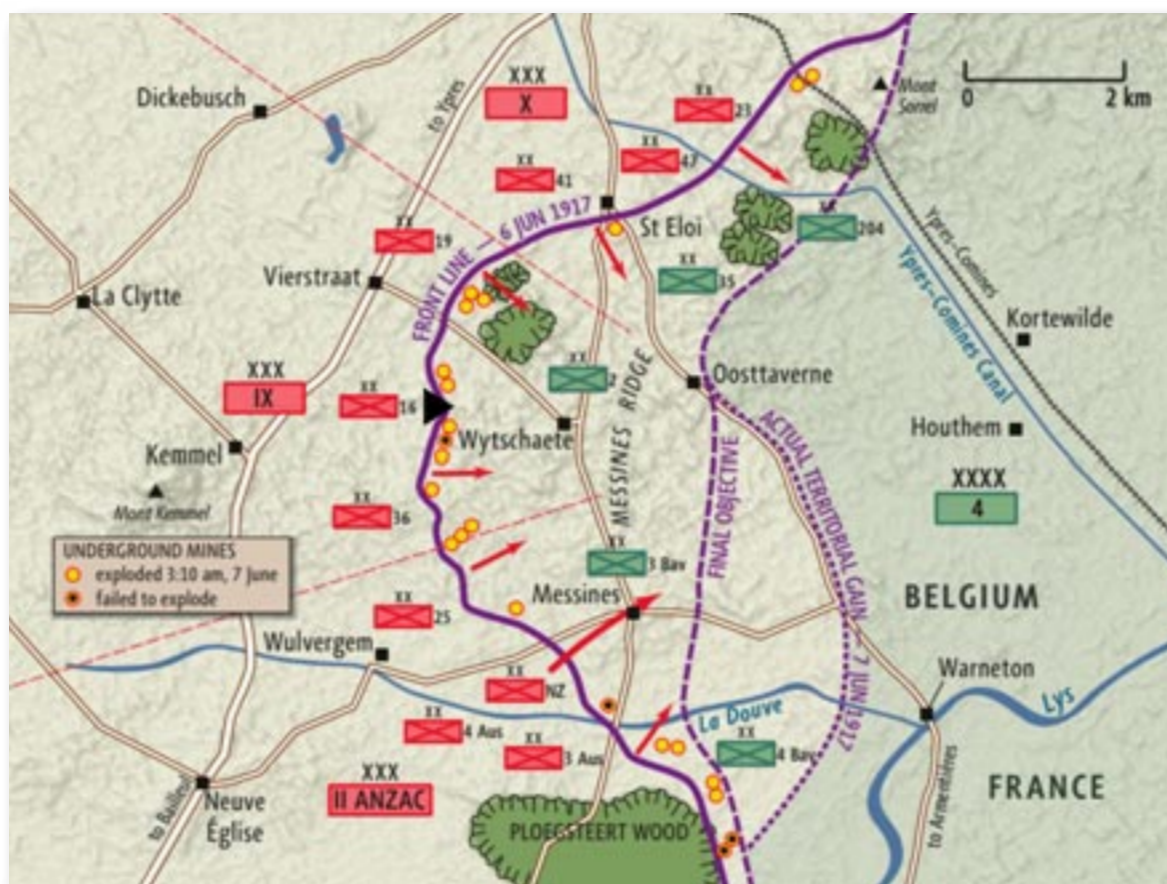
A key element in the planning of the assault was tunnelling 23 mines under the German lines. Work on this project had been going on for over a year and involved placing almost 500 tons of explosive under German positions from Hill 60 in the north to Ploegsteert in the south. All the statistics associated with the offensive were impressive, there were 2,266 artillery pieces arranged along the 10 mile front, 144,000 tons of ammunition had been stockpiled, 300 aircraft ensured local air superiority, 72 tanks were available. The attack would be made by three army corps from 2nd Army, each with three divisions “up” and one in reserve, one corps would be held in reserve while two others covered the northern flank where it intersected with the Belgian sector around Boesinghe. Extensive training had been carried out including the construction of a large-scale model of the battle area, studied by all ranks. Plumer’s plan laid down a clear objective, the capture of the German, Oosttaveerne Line and the associated high ground that ran roughly north from Messines towards Ypres. This objective was broken down into subsidiary stages with a precise timetable including timed “lifts” by the artillery barrage. All this was to be preceded by the detonation of the mines.

7/Leinsters were part of 47 Brigade, 16th (Irish) Division, a component of IX Corps. The Division was positioned in the centre of the line, flanked by 36th (Ulster) Division and 19th (Western) Division. Each four battalion brigade would attack on a two battalion front with two battalions in reserve and for the follow up. 7/Leinsters and 6/Royal Irish would lead for 47 Brigade with 7/Munsters and 6/Connaught Rangers in support. Zero hour was fixed for 03.10hrs on the 7th June 1917. By the time of Messines 7/Leinsters were an experienced battle-hardened battalion. They landed in France with the rest of their division in late 1915, serving initially in the Loos sector before moving to the Somme area and distinguishing themselves at Ginchy, Guillermont and other engagements of that campaign. They had arrived in the Ypres sector in late September 1916 and had gained plenty of local trench experience. The Regimental history makes an interesting point concerning the composition and character of the Battalion at this time. Whitton says that when the battalion first arrived in France it lacked the “spirit” of the Regiment, being composed and officered by men who had no previous experience of service in the Leinsters. As the original personnel changed as a result of casualties and other causes replacements were often men with previous Leinster experience who brought with them the ethos and traditions of the Regiment. By the time of Messines the Service Battalion was virtually indistinguishable from a regular one as regards “character”.

On the 3rd June, the officers of the Battalion held a grand dinner at the Hospice in Locre, a venue that was soon to enter the story of Ireland for quite different reasons. The guest list survives as a neatly typed list in the War Diary and includes 46 names showing, in many cases, their function and unit. The host was Lt-Col G A M Buckley DSO and the reader will notice many well-known names from 16th Div, including Maj W. Redmond MP, Royal Irish Regiment. You sense that towards the end of the list the typist gets a little bored and some strange characters make an appearance, e.g. “Spud Always 7th Leinster Regiment”, “J M Roche Vagrant. A CO tomorrow probably a 2/Lieut”, “Mack of the ‘orses, 7th Leinsters”[sic] You get the impression that a good time was had by all. Sadly for some it was the last convivial evening of their lives, “J M Roche Vagrant” was in reality Capt. James Patrick Roche MC, 47 Trench Mortar Battery, aged 29 from Monasterevan, Co Kildare, who was killed during the attack. The War Diary records that the Commanding Officer (Lt-Col Buckley) proposed a toast to the 16th Division coupled with Maj W Redmond MP. Major Redmond responded in what, the diarist speculates, was his last public speech as he too was to die during the attack.

As zero hour on the 7th June approached, 7/Leinster’s A and B Companies slipped into the trenches in front of Petit Bois and the village of Wytschaete, C and D Companies were close behind. The War Diary tells us that a thick pre-dawn mist descended on the low-lying terrain. At 03.10hrs, 19 mines exploded along the German front, the shock was felt as far away as London. Two mines failed to explode, one did so in 1955 as a result of being hit by lightning, the other, believed to be near Plogsteert, remains underground. The area into which 7/Leinsters advanced was between three mines, two on the edge of Petit Bois and one at Maedelstede Farm. It was imperative to quickly seize the craters formed by the exploding mines to prevent the Germans fortifying them once they had recovered from the initial shock of the detonations. No one knows how many Germans were killed by the mines but estimates range up to a scarcely believable 10,000. Many of the craters are still visible today, some used as ponds and the best known, at Spanbroekmolen, is landscaped as a memorial and known as the “Peace Pool”. The War Diary does not comment directly on the mine explosions but describes the difficulties of the attacking formations keeping direction because of poor visibility caused by a combination of mist, dust and debris thrown up by the mines and the artillery barrage. It also comments on the effect of the fumes from the explosions, causing men to be “violently ill”. The German front line was found to be practically empty but the support trenches were partially manned and the





The Battle of Messines, 7th June 1917. The black triangle indicates the approximate start position of 7/Leinsters

occupants were “bayoneted” – there is no mention of taking prisoners. Thereafter resistance stiffened as the Germans manned the many shell craters that dotted the ground. Visibility continued to be a problem and we now are told that some prisoners were taken from the 4th Guard Grenadier and 33rd Infantry Regiments. Despite some difficulties the first objective was reached on time, zero + 20 minutes, i.e. 03.30hrs. C and D Companies now moved through A and B although A Company provided Lewis Gun teams to help C Company overcome some determined German resistance. While overcoming some opposition the advance continued successfully and the Leinsters reached their final objective on time, zero + 1 hour, 40 minutes, i.e. 04.50hrs. At this point 1/Royal Munster Fusiliers passed through the Leinsters to continue the attack facing a heavy artillery barrage. The Diary comments that their formation was “splendidly kept”. Thus ended 7/Leinsters part in the Battle of Messines. About 18.00hrs, the Battalion moved back to their old front line trenches and became part of Brigade reserve. Casualties were light by the standards of the time, 8 Officers wounded, 15 Other Ranks killed and 92 wounded. In return, the Battalion took 60 prisoners, killed 80 - 100 Germans and captured a considerable quantity of war material. Overall it had been one of the best days of the war, so far, for the British, all objectives had been reached as planned at relatively modest cost in human life. Total Second Army casualties (killed,

wounded, missing) between 1st and 12th June, are given as 24,562, the German losses are reported as “about 23,000”. German casualty figures unlike British ones exclude lightly wounded and are thus not fully comparable.

The Leinsters casualty figures included an unusual incident. Very shortly after Zero Hour, an enemy shell had hit the entrance to Battalion HQ at Lunette Dugouts. This killed Capt. Roche, as described above, two artillery observation officers and four other ranks. It wounded Lt-Col T R A Stannus DSO, who was in command of the Battalion for the operation, vice Lt-Col Buckley, as well as the adjutant, Capt. E L L Acton MC. Lt-Col Stannus, the father of Dame Ninete de Valois, the famous ballerina and choreographer, later died of his wounds. Thus at a climatic moment, the Battalion was deprived of two of its most important executive officers. Capt. J A J Farrell, who was acting second-in-command, and also present in the dugout but was only shaken, assumed command. Another noteworthy casualty of the day was the Leinsters’ dinner guest of a few days before, Major Willie Redmond MP. He had insisted on going forward with his battalion, 6/Royal Irish Regiment, and had been wounded early in the attack. Although the wound was relatively slight, his age and general state of health told against him and he died at the convent in Locre, the venue of the dinner three days before. He is buried in the grounds of the



convent. His death was a further nail in the coffin of constitutional home rule for Ireland.

The legacy of Messines remains controversial to this day. Within the parameters of Plumer's original plan it was entirely successful. When the battle was closed down on the 12th June all objectives had been achieved and many exceeded. The obvious question then arises, why was the initial success not exploited with further advances? The British C-in-C, Sir Douglas Haig, is often criticised for not seizing the moment and pushing on towards Roulers and the coast. Instead Messines was closed down and a pause of six weeks occurred before the start, on the 31st July, of the next phase of the original plan. This is the 3rd Battle of Ypres, more popularly known as Passchendaele and as we know this descended into a bloody, muddy, sloggish match that yielded meagre returns for the resources applied. The simple fact of the matter is that there were insufficient resources available to prolong the Messines operation. There needed to be a pause to organise the next larger and more difficult phases of operations. It is perhaps valid to say that had more reserves been in place at the start of Messines more progress might have been made.

From an Irish perspective, Messines has a particular significance. It was the first time that the Irish Divisions, representing the two principal strands of the Irish political divide, went into action together. Some hoped that the shared experience and comradeship of war would carry over into peacetime and help solve the unresolved political tensions of Ireland. A vain hope as things turned out. It was also the first time that the two Irish Divisions had been used as complete units in a successful attack. It might be said that they "came of age" at Messines. It is fitting that one of the two divisional memorials to 16th (Irish) Division stands on the outskirts of Wytschaete while two more recent roadside markers indicate where the sectors of 16th and 36th Divisions met. What a pity that the spirit of co-operation created in the heat of battle could not be carried over into times of peace!

Sources: *The main sources used in the preparation of this article are the War Diary of 7th (Service) Battalion, The Leinster Regiment, held in The National Archives, Kew. Ref. WO95/1970. Also Vol II of the Regimental History by Lt-Col F E Whitton CMG.*

## Annual General Meeting held in Birr

This year it was the turn of Birr to host the Association's AGM which was held on the 12th August 2023. It was a significant occasion as both Denis Kirby and Tony Hayden had previously made it known that they wished to retire from their positions of Chairman - Ireland and Secretary - Ireland. Both had been in post for a number of years and had proved to be steady hands and wise heads when it came to promoting the Association's interests in Ireland. In addition Denis was also a Vice-Chairman of the General Committee.

The AGM was held in the Birr Theatre and Arts Centre, a charming period building close by the entrance to Birr Castle, laid out in the style of a traditional theatre. It was good to welcome our President, Sir Anthony Weldon, on his first visit to Birr. Sir Anthony had travelled from Spain for the occasion.

The day's proceedings started with the formal business of the AGM which followed the usual sort of agenda for these occasions. The reports from the various Officers of the Committee were submitted summarising the activities and positions of the Association. Bob Templeman, the Membership Secretary reported a membership of 209 with 104 UK and RoW members and 105 Ireland based. The Treasurer reported a



The President makes a presentation to Denis Kirby.  
*(Photo Simon McAuliffe)*

combined cash balance of £12,530 as at 31st December 2022 (£12,755, 2021) The Treasurer also reported on the production of the Association's journal, "40-10", and said that the intention was to continue to produce two editions per annum provided there was enough material to warrant it. He made a plea for more members to submit articles for publication.

For the reasons previously explained the "Election of Officers" agenda item was always going to be of more than usual significance this year. The majority of the previous committees stayed in post but Junior O'Callaghan was elected Chairman of the Regional Committee (Ireland) and Vice-Chairman of the General Committee in place of Denis Kirby. Damien Delaney was elected Secretary to the Regional Committee (Ireland) The latter appointment is particularly welcome as Damien represents a new, younger, generation of members. We also welcomed Simon McAuliffe and Michael Fitzsimmons to the Irish Regional Committee. After the close of the formal proceedings of the AGM the President made a presentation to Denis Kirby, to mark his retirement, of a pair of Galway Crystal tumblers inscribed with the Regimental crest. The President paid tribute to and thanked Denis for the service that he had rendered to the Association.

Following the AGM and presentation there was a talk given by Association member Gerry White on the Leinster Regiment's connections with Victoria Barracks, Cork. This event was open to the general public and was included in the programme for Birr Vintage Week. Gerry, a native of Cork, is a well-known speaker on Irish Military History and gave us a most interesting talk. He

traced the development of Cork as a military base through the ages and the extent of the Leinster Regiment's close connection with the city. He was able to embellish his talk with personal anecdotes recalling his own long connection that the barracks as a member the Irish Defence Forces.

After Gerry's talk the scene shifted rapidly to Crinkill via a brief visit to the Library to give the President the opportunity to see some of the Leinster artefacts on display there. The final formal part of the day was a wreath laying at the Regimental Memorial in Crinkill. We were delighted to welcome representatives of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers Association and the Connaught Rangers Association who joined us for the ceremony and later for an informal lunch at the Thatch.

To say that the Thatch was "buzzing" is a gross understatement as the road outside was acting as the starting line and pit area for a Soap Box Derby, another Vintage Week event. Nevertheless Des Noonan and his team rose to the occasion and fed and watered us in fine style. During lunch Sean Collopy made a further presentation to Denis Kirby of a medallion showing the Regimental badge. By now the afternoon was well advanced and it was time for people to make their way home after an eventful and enjoyable day. Special thanks are due to Junior and his whole team in Ireland for laying on a special occasion. We look forward to welcoming you to London on the 15th June 2024 for a return match: our AGM and lunch the Civil Service Club, Whitehall. Then on the following day, there is the Combined Irish Regiments Old Comrades Association parade at the Cenotaph: a full weekend - well worth the trip!



The President, Junior O'Callaghan and Denis Kirby prepare to lay a wreath at the Regimental Memorial in Crinkill.



## Well Worth a Visit

On a recent visit to the Arras area the opportunity was taken to visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission European headquarters and workshops at Beaurains, a town on the outskirts of Arras. From this complex of trim, modern, low-rise buildings that would not look out of place on a technology campus, come many of the elements that are used to create the well-known aesthetic of a Commonwealth War Cemetery.

these are shaped and inscribed using the latest stone-cutting machinery. It was explained how stone local to the area where it will be erected is sometimes used in preference to the traditional Portland stone for reasons of durability and aesthetics. The use of a dark grey limestone in parts of Ireland and Scotland are an example of this. The centre also produce a range of horizontal plaques in both stone and cast bronze for use



CWGC HQ and workshops, Beaurains

On entering the visitor is greeted by a display explaining the Commission's mission and the scope of its worldwide activities. Guided tours of the site are provided by enthusiastic young guides who are part of the permanent staff. These tours are provided free of charge. There is a large car and coach park and access is easy, there are no steps, stairs or other obstacles to getting about. There is a small shop area selling a range of books and CWGC themed merchandise but without any pressure to patronise it, a welcome change from some visitor attractions. The tour lasts around one hour and our guide was well informed and able to discuss matters of CWGC practice and policy outside the parameters of a guided tour.

This site produces the headstones for CWGC cemeteries all over the world and you are shown how

in areas where the traditional vertical headstone are not practical, for example, in earthquake zones or where the ground is unstable. There are on-site foundry and forge facilities where the metal work found in the cemeteries is made using traditional methods, quite a contrast to the high-tech approach elsewhere. The tour included an explanation of the origins and history of the CWGC and how it has developed over the years.

The horticultural side of the Commission's work is not neglected. Although the CWGC employs gangs of gardeners and maintenance staff throughout the world, it is organised and managed from Beaurains. This includes experimenting with new techniques as to how the Commission can reduce its carbon footprint and meet the challenges of changing climate. We were told that the Commission had recently conducted successful



The Royal Tank Regiment Memorial at Beaurains.  
The model is of a Matilda II infantry tank, the most common and successful British tank of the time

trials using robotic lawnmowers but had decided not to use them as a result of negative response from cemetery visitors who were fearful of them and liked to see and chat to real people during their visits. Supermarkets, banks and similar, please note! Although the Commission's horticultural nursery is also on this site it is not included in the tour, which is a pity. We have all admired the planting, colour and choice of species

used in the cemeteries and it would be good to see something of what happens "behind the scenes".

We were able to raise a specific Leinster related matter during our visit. The Leinster badge usually has a horizontal scroll bearing the words "The Leinster" beneath the feathers, crown and motto. The version that appears on CWGC headstones has a curved scroll that follows the contours of the rest of the design. This apparent discrepancy has been the subject of occasional debate. It turns out that the style of badge used is a result of practical manufacturing considerations rather than any oversight or mistake on the part of the CWGC.

This is an excellent visit and well worth an hour or so of your time if you are in the Arras area.

..... and while you're in the area, look out for this memorial, just down the road from CWGC HQ. It is a memorial to the men of the Royal Tank Regiment (RTR) who took part in the Arras Counter Attack of 21st May 1940. A reinforced British armoured brigade swept south around Arras and checked the progress of the German armoured columns moving towards the Channel coast. 4 and 7/RTR fought here, supported by infantry of the Durham Light Infantry, the Northumberland Fusiliers supported by Royal Artillery batteries. They stopped the onrush of 7th Panzer Div commanded by Maj-Gen E Rommel and came close to killing him, his ADC, standing beside him, died. This check to the German advance helped to give Lord Gort VC, GOC, BEF, time to organise the defence of and the withdrawal to Dunkirk. It is a largely ignored but significant episode of the 1940 campaign in northern France.

## Friendships Renewed

In the aftermath of the Great War many towns, regiments, and old comrades' associations adopted communities in the war-ravaged countries of Europe. The purpose of these adoptions was to help the communities involved recover and rebuild their lives from the devastation of war. The assistance provided included raising money, specific projects being sponsored or new facilities such as schools being built. The sponsored community usually had a close association with the sponsoring body by virtue of the latter having fought or being based there. These arrangements were entirely voluntary and most survived until the 1939-'45 war interrupted the relationships. Some persist to this day through twinning arrangements. What follows is an example of one of these adoptions and how it has been revived. It does not directly involve

the Leinster Regiment although it seems likely that veterans of the 1st and 6th Battalions, who served in the area, would have been involved.

Mavroplagia, or Karamudli as it was formerly known, is a small village in the Krusha Balkan hills of northern Greece. It overlooks the valley of the River Struma in one direction and towards Lake Doiran in another. Today it is close to the border with North Macedonia, formerly part of Yugoslavia, and also Bulgaria. During the Great War it served as a Head Quarters and supply depot, being close to the railhead that connected the front to the main supply base at Salonika. Despite its small size it became well known to the men and women of the British Salonika Force (BSF) that served in the area. After the war it was adopted by the BSF's old





Plaque presented by the SRA to the village in 1968

comrades' organisation, the Salonika Reunion Association (SRA). Like many similar arrangements the relationship was interrupted by the second war. In 1950 information was received by the SRA that the village, having suffered serious damage during the war and the subsequent Greek Civil War, was in dire need of assistance. The villagers identified the most pressing needs as the repair of the water supply followed by repairs to the Church and School. During the following years the SRA provided building materials, clothes, tools and even a loom to help the village get back on its feet. The SRA was formally wound up in 1968 as age and infirmity caught up with the members. At the time a plaque inscribed in English and Greek was presented to the village recording the connection with the SRA. This plaque now has pride of place in the display of local heritage included in the community hall, the former school house. In 1952, a visitor to Mavroplagia recorded the population as being:

*“249 people, among whom are 69 women, 23 of them widows; 67 youths under 21, 61 children under 14, ill clad and under-nourished, one invalid child and one Greek priest”.*

The current population is estimated to be about 100, mainly elderly and young. There is still a Priest and the best building in the village is the Church, a testament to the enduring faith of the people.

The rump of the SRA eventually evolved into the present-day Salonika Campaign Society (SCS) mainly made up of descendants of Salonika veterans. It was during a recent SCS visit to the battlefields that a visit to Mavroplagia took place, believed to be the first since 1968. We were a party of about twenty and had some initial difficulty in finding our way up the narrow mountain roads to the village. On our arrival it did not take long for word to get about that there were strangers in town. A curious crowd soon gathered and was

promptly joined by the Priest and village elders. Having explained ourselves we were quickly invited to visit the Church and the previously described Community Hall where the commemorative plaque is displayed. Presently, we were joined by an elderly lady who, as a young girl, remembered the excitement caused by the arrival of the first aid packages in 1952. Then, to the surprise of all, she led us down a steep ravine at the edge of the village and uncovered a forgotten well that had been built by French army engineers when they were in the village in early 1916, the first piped water supply for the village.

By the time we returned to the village an impromptu party had been organised in the village Taverna with the local version of Ouzo being supplied by the Priest. The warmth of our welcome and the hospitality of good people meant that the remainder of our programme for the day was soon forgotten. Before leaving we had a whip around and were able to donate a sizeable sum to the village cultural fund. As we took our leave the elderly lady, previously mentioned, started to sing. It took us a moment to realise that she was singing *“Auld Lang Syne”* in Greek. The rest of the party soon took up the traditional hymn to friendship and nostalgia in our respective languages. It was a special moment.

The visit to Mavroplagia was a useful reminder that remembrance need not be all about solemn occasions, of flags, wreaths and silences, but can also be about fellowship, friendship and helping others.



The first piped water supply to the village, the work of French Army Engineers in 1916



## Armistice Day Roundup

The period around the 11th November is always a busy one for any organisation concerned with remembering the sacrifice of previous generations who have lost their lives or had their lives profoundly altered in past wars and conflicts. The Leinster Regiment Association

is no exception and our members and supporters attend many individual events all over the United Kingdom and Ireland. Space does not permit us to show all but here are a selection of what members have sent us. Our thanks to all those who have contributed.



H.M. The Queen chats with David Ball at the Regimental plot during the opening of the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey.



The Irish Defence Forces UN Veterans were well represented at the Leinster Regiment Memorial in Portlaoise. Among those present was Mr Charles Flanagan TD (*3rd from the left*) who represents Laois/Offaly in the Dáil and is the Chairman the Oireachtas Committee on Foreign and Defence Affairs.



Members and friends gathered at the Regimental Memorial in Crinkill to pay their respects to all those who served in the Leinsters. The ceremony was led by Junior O'Callaghan (*right*) who recently took over the role of Chairman of the Irish Regional Committee and is a Vice-Chairman of the General Committee. He is accompanied by his wife Mary.

Also in the picture are Chris Brummell and Patrica Brophy. The memorial stands outside the remaining wall of Crinkill Barracks, the Regimental Depot of the Leinsters between 1881 and 1922.





*(Left)* Among those paying their respects in Cork, accompanied by RBL standard bearers, were *(Left to right)* Francis O'Connor, Gerry White and Denis Kirby.



*(Above)* Mr Ralph Parsons showing family memorabilia at the Regimental Memorial in Crinkill. Ralph's grandfather served with the Leinsters.



*(Left)* Muireann Meade, a pupil at the Ursuline Secondary School, Thurles, placing a cross in remembrance of Cpl John Cunningham VC, 2nd Leinsters. Cpl Cunningham, a native of Thurles, was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions on the 16th April 1917. Muireann and two fellow students were in London to attend the Western Front Association service at the Cenotaph having won the WFA Malcom Doolin Award for a local history project.

The Editor has charged me with producing an article on sport in the British Army following the Childers Reforms of 1881 up to the outbreak of the World War 1 in 1914. This is a vast subject and yet there is remarkably little information on sport in the Regimental History produced by Lieutenant Colonel F E Whitton CMG. The subject will be covered in general and finally, in an effort to produce some original Leinster material, there will be one photograph where personalities can be identified. What follows is a reflection of those times.

Late Victorian schools firmly believed that sport and war were in some sense the same. That sport was mimic war and war was the greater game. In the ideology of athleticism, games produced not only the physical, but the moral qualities required of a good soldier: courage, quick thinking, loyalty to the team, and leadership. General Burgoyne's report into Sandhurst had prescribed "all outdoor manly exercise' including cricket, football, racquets, boating, swimming, quoits, rifle practice and gymnastics, as the best antidote to youthful unruliness". By the 1880s, military training establishments such as Sandhurst and Woolwich were using sport to bring a sense of discipline and purpose to the recreation of the students. Sport was given an additional focus to foster discipline and esprit de corps to create new identities after the Childers system of doubling and renaming regiments. Sports kit featured regimental colours and emblems. Regimental journals featured sport in great detail. Sports teams provided a focus for expressions of loyalty to the regiment and success increased esteem. Inevitably, no commanding officer objected to the filling of the silver trophy cabinet.

Obviously, sport was a means to achieving an acceptable level of fitness in the army. It was also an antidote to boredom, drunkenness and unsociable behaviour. Some sports claimed particular military value. Cross-country running, like hunting, was said to foster 'an eye for the country'. The army's first actual *Physical Training Manual* wasn't produced until 1908. In 1911, Major General EAH Alderson said "a regiment that is good at games is also good at fighting. I only need to look at you now and at your games to know that you would be good at the real game, which is the game of fighting". Thus there is a continuing thread almost up to the outbreak of the First World War.

Of the many drivers for enlistment, travel and the opportunity to play sport were important. But traditional Irish sports such as hurling and Gaelic

football did not appear to feature. In the army, there was a sporting rank divide. Football was played overwhelmingly by the other ranks. Additional sports played by the other ranks were hockey, tug of war, boxing, gymnastics and athletics. Rugby and cricket were officer sports. It is perhaps not surprising that it was these latter sports that the colonies adopted first.

Sport played an important role in increasing the visibility of the British Army to wider society. It provided a useful bridge between civilian life and the soldier. As regimental sport developed in the later 19th century, regimental sportsmen began to play regularly with their civilian neighbours and to compete in civilian competitions. Soldiers made significant contributions to important military centres such as Aldershot and the Curragh. When service football teams were admitted to the Devon County Football Association in 1891, they dominated the County Cup for the next nine seasons. Sport also helped to bridge the gap between the regular army and volunteer units, the latter merging in 1908 to form the Territorials.

Overseas in the last quarter of the 19th century, sport became a component of establishing and maintaining the British Empire. It was a means of transmitting Christian moral values such as fair play, self-control, adherence to the rules, loyalty, sacrifice, working as a team, fitness and leadership. In far flung parts of the empire, there was a lot of time to fill. Captain Brigstock of the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry challenged any officer to compete against him in six disciplines: single-wicket cricket, quoits, throwing a cricket ball, putting the stone, billiards and racquets. Colonel WS Jarvis of the Royal Munster Fusiliers took him on and won by four events to two. In Jubbulpore Garrison in India, the officers of one regiment challenged the rest of the garrison to polo, cricket, a three mile race, a two mile walking race, billiards, golf, rifle shooting, revolver shooting, racquets, tennis, the racing and jumping of polo ponies and tug of war. This was an event of almost Olympic proportions. Baron De Coubertin who founded the modern Olympic games in 1896, thought that games had given Britain the necessary characteristics to create the largest empire the world. Throughout the colonies, sport provided a sense of common background, a means of increasing contact with civilians, and projecting the essence of what it meant to be British.

In India, a particular 'officer's game' was pig-sticking; the pursuit of wild pigs across country on horseback



armed with an eight-foot spear. Tent clubs were established along similar lines as foxhunting, each having a recognised territory, a master, and an Indian *shikari* (hunter) whose job it was to organise the Indian beaters who drove the pigs out of the cover. Competitions, with umpires, were organised and spectators watched mounted either on horses or elephants. In 1883, the Kadir Cup was won by Robert Baden-Powell.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the popularity of pig sticking was challenged by the emergence of a new sport - polo. It was in India that polo really became integral to army life. India was well known as a 'sporting paradise' for officers. Cheap ponies and cheap grooms made polo accessible to all officers, regardless of private income. Almost every station had a polo ground and games were played two or three times a week. The Indian first class tournaments - the Inter-Regimental, the British Infantry, the Native Cavalry and the Indian Polo Association became high profile sporting and social events. Winston Churchill famously returned from Britain to India in 1899 to take part in the Inter-Regimental Tournament. The common theme is the horse, the primary means of transport. Horse racing, or rather polo pony racing, was also a popular pastime.

Finally, whilst in Barbados, the officers of the 2nd Leinster Battalion filled their leisure time with duck shooting, polo and pony racing. Both the polo and the racing took place on the Savannah, Bridgetown. Here is a photo of a polo team in Barbados in 1900, with some recognisable characters:



From left to right: Standing - Lt Wildblood, Lt Bredin, Capt Colquhoun, Lt Edwards 2nd West Indies Regt  
Seated - Capt Whitton, Col Borth DAAG, Maj Hill DAAG, Capt Machind 2nd West Indies Regt  
Front - Lt L'Estrange, Lt Weldon. All 2nd Battalion Leinster Regiment, except where shown

## Reflections on the National Day of Commemoration Ceremony

What is the National Day of Commemoration? It is when the Irish State commemorates all Irishmen and Irishwomen who have given their lives fighting for just causes and with the United Nations.

A very smart stiff invitation embossed with a gold harp arrived in my letter box at home near Skibbereen in early June. It was from the Taoiseach and requested the pleasure of my company at Ireland's National Day of Commemoration on the 9th July at Collins Barracks, Cork.

Given my military connections, not only as a member of the Leinster Regiment Association, but I had also served in the Irish Guards, I promptly accepted as I had never attended this parade before. I felt that if the quality of the stationary and the administrative liaison with the Taoiseach's office was anything to go by then it was going to be impressive. I wasn't disappointed.

On arrival at The Barracks I was greeted by very smart red capped Military Police who escorted me to my allocated parking area and thence to the Parade ground itself. I was immediately struck by the sheer size of this Barracks square bordered on 3 sides by huge Georgian

facades and on the 4th side 2 enormous colonial style Brigade Officers messes in front of which stood the main flagpole with the national flag flying at half-mast. In between various features one could glimpse green hills in every direction as we were so high up that Cork City was almost out of eyeshot below us. Before the Commemoration started there was a gentle reminder on the PA system that the event was being broadcast live on TV which was a subtle hint about camera behaviour. The ghastly proliferation of mobile camera devices which can deprive both the viewer and the subject of any form of dignity was therefore alleviated. As I was seated a gust of wind took my invitation which we had been instructed to carry as ID but was saved by the person sitting in front of me who said "don't worry the Garrison Sergeant Major is otherwise occupied, look behind you". Yes a few yards behind me was the imposing figure of what can only be described as an epitome of a classic Sergeant Major in every way. My new friend who was not in uniform in front of me turned out to be a serving Commandant so it was a privilege for me to have someone so versed in every aspect of the Irish Defence Forces to chat to and he explained the minute detail of the Ceremony to our front. As there were lots of empty places, by adopting a fore and aft position, we were able



to face our front and converse in a manner conducive to the occasion.

Our MC for the parade was the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, who conducted proceedings in a most dignified manner. His opening statement was as follows: "it is fitting that we remember here today all those Irishmen and Irishwomen who died past wars or on service with the United Nations". This wording was also reflected on the principal wreath laid by the President on behalf of the nation. It is therefore only fitting to point out the inclusiveness of this statement which can apply to all those who gave their lives whilst serving with the Leinster Regiment. The President, Mr Higgins, was escorted into the Barracks by an Escort of forty eight Garda motorcycle outriders. This Escort in past would have been provided by mounted police but now all is mechanised. The President was then invited by the Captain of the Tri-Service Guard of Honour to inspect it. This Guard of Honour was immaculate in terms of drill and turnout. As a former Guardsman I felt this would not have been out of place on Horse Guards Parade in London.

The whole setting reeks of history and in between the two Officers Messes there is what was the main gate of the Barracks through which one James Blundell, 7th Earl of Cardigan, led his Light Brigade in 1854 on their way to the Crimea. The standard of musicianship by the Band of 1 Brigade was of the highest and when the strains of Nimrod started to waft over the ground I knew we were in a very special place. What followed was the same principle of the Cenotaph Service in London but with a very Irish touch. A rendition of Flowers of the

Forest by the lone Piper then blended with the main Band was excellent. This same lament was played by a lone Piper at the conclusion of each of the funerals of the late Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. No less than 10 faiths were represented with seemingly opposite faiths following each other in prayer. The Last Post, silence then Reveille were performed with the National flag being raised to full mast concluding the Commemoration.



It was an experience that made me immensely proud to have been a soldier and Irish.

Michael Bevan.

*(Photos by kind permission of the Irish Defence Forces)*



## It's all in the Name

The nomenclature of battlefield place and trench names during the Great War is an interesting side subject to consider. Each side named places and trenches to help distinguish one from another and to identify them on maps. Painted name boards were frequently displayed, rather like street names, to help men find their way around the labyrinth of trenches and the wasteland of devastated countryside. The origins of the names chosen often give us a clue to the early story of a particular location. What follows is an examination of a well-known feature on the Western Front that has an obvious connection to the Leinster Regiment, Birr Cross Roads.

In the early days of the war, places, typically clusters of farm buildings, were often named after the regiment that first used them, perhaps as a battalion HQ. There are many examples of this, Irish House, near Kemmel, named after the Royal Irish Rifles, Lancashire Farm, near Ploegsteert, called after the Lancashire Fusiliers and so on. This custom avoided anglophone tongues having to negotiate Flemish place names, a process that seldom ended well. Trenches were often given the names of streets in familiar towns and cities, perhaps the home town of the regiment. Well known London street names were a favourite, but all the major cities of the British Isles appear, including Dublin, Sackville Street and Grafton Street crop up in several sectors. Using such names gave a slightly more homely feel to an utterly alien landscape. Sometimes names had a darker, more descriptive origin, Dead Horse Corner, or Stinking Farm, both at Ploegsteert are examples. At the beginning these names were applied in a pretty arbitrary way on a local basis and passed into common usage. Some names stuck and some did not. Inniskilling Wood, near Whyshatte, appears on some maps in mid-1917 and then disappears from later editions. As the war progressed the naming of trenches became more systematic as divisional and corps staffs became involved. Individual trenches in a larger scheme would be given names beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. Later as the Topographical Sections of the Royal Engineers, responsible for surveying and map making, became more organised they took over responsibility for naming trenches in an orderly and systematic way so as to avoid duplication; there were at least eight Oxford Street trenches dotted around the Western Front. Some of these names survive to this day, often as names of cemeteries that were established near named places or trenches, perhaps adjacent to an Advanced Dressing Station (ADS), Duhallow ADS Cemetery near Ypres, Devonshire Cemetery, at Mametz on the Somme are examples. What follows is

a further example of a name bestowed by Tommy Atkins and his Irish cousin, Paddy, over 100 years ago and remains in use.

Birr Cross Roads and the adjacent Birr Cross Roads Cemetery are a short distance outside Ypres along the Menin Road. The cross roads, a fairly insignificant junction, is the first after the notorious and better-known Hell Fire Corner. Post war, the junction was slightly realigned although the roads from it still go south to Zillebeke and north towards Wielje. Standing at the junction and looking along the Menin Road, you can see the ground rising gently towards Hooze and the Bellewaarde Ridge, giving you a good impression of the advantage that the Germans had occupying those modest heights, the top of the ridge is only about 45 meters of elevation.



Birr Cross Roads was so named by the 1st Battalion of the Leinsters when they were deployed in this sector in early April 1915. The trenches they occupied were south of the Menin Road, from Hooze to Armagh Wood. The Battalion had previously been in the muddy hell that was the St Eloi sector and their arrival in their new location coincided with the start of the 2nd Battle of Ypres, during which the Germans used poison gas for the first time. The battle raged between the 22nd April and the 25th May 1915 swinging back and forth across a narrow strip of territory north and south of the Menin Road. Each side sought to take and hold the high ground, particularly the feature known as Hill 60 at the southern extremity of the area. At the end of the battle the Germans, although short of their objectives, were the net gainers. 1/Leinsters part of 82nd Brigade, 27th Division played a full and costly part in these operations. The Leinsters came out of the line on the 6th May having suffered, according to the Regimental History, 30 fatal casualties, including 3 Officers. The same source tells us that over 100 officers and men had been wounded. According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission records, the History's fatal casualty figure seems to be understated. They list 125 men of

the 1st Battalion who died between 22nd April and 25th May 1915. Of these, 96 are remembered on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres, out of a total of 323 Leinsters listed. The relatively large number of missing probably reflects the see-saw nature of the fighting at this time and the fact that at the end the Germans were left holding much of the ground. The remaining 29 casualties are scattered in various cemeteries, mainly around Ypres, including one in Birr Cross Roads Cemetery.

Birr Cross Roads Cemetery is on the southern side of the Menin Road and is tucked into the corner of the road leading to Zillebeke. There are 834 burials there of which 330 are unknown. The cemetery was begun in August 1917 and was next to an ADS. After the war it was enlarged to concentrate over 650 graves from isolated locations in the locality. There are a number of “Special Memorials” to men whose graves have been lost including that of a Belgian interpreter. Also in the cemetery is the grave of Capt. Harold Ackroyd VC, MC, RAMC, attached to the Royal Berkshire Regiment, who died on the 11th August 1917. The cemetery was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens. The majority of named graves (366) date from 1917/18. There are 12 burials from 1914 of men from the regiments who fought in the area during the 1st Battle of Ypres. These graves include that of an RFC Air Mechanic who died in November 1914, one of the earliest Royal flying Corps (RFC) casualties. All burials dated prior to August 1917 in this cemetery will have been moved there after the war.

There are 17 named Leinster graves in Birr Cross Roads Cemetery and a number of name unknown Leinster burials. There is only one named Leinster from early 1915 in this cemetery: 3574 Pte. Anthony Byrne, who died on the 28th April 1915. We know nothing about Pte Byrne except that he was a native of Athy, Co Kildare. However his digitised burial records include clues that may help cast light on who some of the “unknown” burials might be. Included in his record



is the “Burial Return” that tells us that Pte Byrne, who was identified by his boots and shoulder titles, was found buried with at least seven other men at the same location, given as 28NW I.30.a90.60. This is a spot adjacent to Armagh Wood and consistent with where the Battalion was at the time. Of the other seven, one is identified, using shoulder titles, as a Leinster, name unknown. There are three bodies described as “Unknown British Soldier” but it is noted that they have an “R.C. Token” with them, in common with Byrne and the Unknown Leinster. An “R.C.Token” probably refers to a crucifix or religious medal indicating a strong possibility that these are Irish soldiers, if so, also likely to be Leinsters. The other two bodies are of a named Private in the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry and an unknown Officer of the Cambridgeshire Regiment.

The remaining 16 named Leinster burials in Birr Cross Roads Cemetery are from the 2nd Battalion and are dated between the 12th and 15th August 1915. During this period the Battalion was in trenches at Hooge astride the Menin Road. The fighting that occurred in the area, earlier in the year during the 1st Battalion’s time had left an awkward and exposed section of the front line around Hooge. In order to resolve this problem a mine was tunnelled under the German lines just north of the Menin Road and detonated on the 19th July. The operation to seize the crater and surrounding ground was at first entirely successful but soon brought down the usual vigorous German counter attacks. One of these, at dawn on the 30th July saw the first use of flamethrowers by the Germans. The fighting continued into August with each side refusing to yield ground to the other. 2/Leinsters, part of 17th Brigade, 6th Division entered the line at Hooge on the 11th August. The Battalion remained in these trenches until the 17th during which time they were subject to regular German attacks and incessant artillery fire. The Regimental History describes it as the heaviest artillery fire the Battalion experienced during the war. The History also reports 32 killed and 151 wounded during these six days. The CWGC reports 39 dead for the same period.

Included in the 16 named casualties from the August period there are five remembered with “Special Memorials” because their original marked graves were later destroyed. These seem to have been in two nearby small burial grounds known as Union Street No 1 and No 2 Graveyards. Although grid references are not given for these two locations, descriptions put them at, or, very close to the positions where the remaining victims were found at 28NW.I.16.b.5.5. This location is close to the Menin Road and a few hundred yards from Birr Cross Roads, and again is consistent with where the Battalion was at the time. Ten casualties from this period appear on the Menin Gate. Eleven of the



remaining casualties are buried at Poperinghe and Lijssenthoek, indicating that they were wounded, evacuated and died at Field Hospitals. There is only one anomaly, one man is buried in Bedford House Cemetery having been recovered from a location a little distance from where the rest of the battalion was positioned, there may have been a Battalion Aid Post there.

Compared to the 1st Battalion's experience in April, in August the 2nd Battalion's casualties seem to be better recorded and organised. This probably reflects the fact that the fighting in August was mainly defensive as compared to the more mobile operations of April. There were more opportunities to pass the wounded back through the casualty evacuation chain and to bury the dead in an organised fashion. The number of missing, as recorded on the Menin Gate, probably reflects the fact that the Battalion was subjected to heavy shell fire for most of the period.

After August 1915, the 1st Battalion did not serve again in this area but left a lasting reminder of their time with the name "Birr Cross Road". The 2nd Battalion were regular visitors throughout the war and in due course were joined by the 7th Battalion. A few years ago when the Association brought the Chairman and a delegation from Birr Council to Ypres, Birr Cross Roads Cemetery was a priority visit.

The 2nd Battalion left its mark on the landscape by naming a local farm "Leinster Farm". This cluster of farm buildings was a short distance south of the Menin Road, at 28NW.I.17.a.7.4., and served as Battalion HQ. Capt. Frank Hitchcock MC includes a sketch of it in his published diary, "Stand To". He uses a little artistic licence, giving the impression that the buildings



are closer to the Menin Road than they actually were. A range of modern farm buildings including a house now stands on the site.

There are other reminders in the nomenclature of the Western Front of the presence of the Leinsters. There was a Leinster Lane trench near Loos, a Leinster Street, near Birr Cross Roads. There was Birr Barracks, a camp just behind the front line at Loos: one of many in that area and a short distance from where Maj. Willie Redmond MP is buried. Other "Irish" names used close to this location are Wicklow Lines and Tralee Lines, both camps. Finally there is Birr Trench near Wytchaete, close to where 7/Leinsters attacked from at the beginning of the Battle of Messines.

Over a hundred years on, it is good to think that in addition to the "silent cities" that our forebears left behind on the battlefields, there are other reminders of their presence in the form of place names that they would recognise and be able to navigate their way back to the "old front line".

## Last Post



It was with great regret that we received the news last May, of the passing of Frank Walshe, at the age of 85. Frank was a long time member and supporter of the Association and other Irish based commemorative organisations.

Frank led a full life. He was commissioned into the engineering branch of the Irish Air Corps and subsequently had a long career in aero engineering with Aer Lingus. Latterly he worked all over the world in a consultancy capacity. He had family connections to The Royal Irish Regiment (18th of Foot) and was one of those responsible for establishing the 18th Regiment of Foot Royal Irish Regiment Association of which he

remained President. In his later years Frank embarked on a Phd project at Maynooth University on an Irish military history theme.

Frank was a regular attendee at Leinster Regiment Association functions wherever they were, distance was no problem and he was as likely to turn up in London as he was in Dublin. A few years ago he gave a well-received talk on behalf of the Association at Birr Vintage week. At meetings he would always have something relevant to say and could be counted on to have an amusing or informative anecdote to share on social occasions.

Frank's other great passion was golf. He combined his interest in military history and golf by researching the connections between the two, particularly in the context of his home club, The Island Golf Club at Donabate, Co Dublin, of which he was a former Captain. He died two days after returning from America where he had acted as a volunteer steward at the US, PGA Championship at Rochester, NY. This was the 51st "Major" that he had attended and he was interviewed by NBC TV to mark this achievement.

We shall miss Frank, his wise words and good company. We extend our sincere sympathies to his wife, Siobhan, and all his family.

## ...VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED TO ENHANCE OUR WEBSITE...



Who are these men, which battalion, where was this photograph taken, and when?

We have an excellent website, thanks to the efforts of our President – Sir Anthony. There remains one area where we both feel the website could be improved significantly, providing an elevated level of service to our members.

Wouldn't it be good to have a comprehensive gallery of photos, catalogued and cross-referenced? Such images could be identified by date, battalion, place and even individuals (where known): any, as many as possible, or even all the search key words could be used. In due course, images could be found by searching these parameters. Other parameters could be uniform, sport, etc. You may have more ideas.

This is a big task, at least initially, but it could be taken at a steady pace. A lot will be learned in the process, and it should be immensely rewarding. Most important of all, the gallery will be providing a lasting resource for our members, present and in the future.

I have attached an example. Not all the captions will be so comprehensive.

This task is beyond the 'bandwidth' of both Sir Anthony and me. So, we are looking for dedicated individuals who would focus solely on the compilation of this gallery. Hopefully, the images would be forthcoming from the membership. We already have one volunteer: it would be good to have others.

If you think you could assist, please contact our Chairman

[markweldon@live.co.uk](mailto:markweldon@live.co.uk)

**Thank you**



*Brigadier General J G Dill CMG, DSO receives the 1914 Star from HRH The Prince of Wales during the Medal Presentation Parade for 2/Leinsters at Sobraon Barracks on 6 February 1920*



# THE LEINSTER REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

## Committee and Post Holders January 2024

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

## Members of the General Committee

<b>Chairman</b>	Lt-Col Mark Weldon	markweldon@live.co.uk
<b>Vice-Chairman (Ireland)</b>	Mr. Junior O'Callaghan	juniorocallaghan@gmail.com
<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>Membership Secretary</b>	Mr Bob Templeman	bob.templeman@btinternet.com
<b>Association Secretary</b>	Mr David Ball	theleinsters.4010@gmail.com

## Members of the Ireland Committee

<b>Chairman</b>	Mr. Junior O'Callaghan	juniorocallaghan@gmail.com
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	Mr Junior O'Callaghan	juniorocallaghan@gmail.com
<b>Secretary</b>	Mr. Damien Delaney	damiendelaney@gmail.com

\*\* Also members of the General Committee

We'd like to remind all members that membership subscriptions became due on the 1st January. If you have already renewed yours, thank you for doing so. If you have not completed your renewal, please do so without delay. The subscription remains at £20 for UK residents and €25 for Irish residents. It would be much appreciated if you would pay by Standing Order as it greatly simplifies the administration for the Membership Secretary and the Treasurer. However, cheques in either currency may be sent to the Treasurer: Ian Lowe, 42 Woodridge Avenue, Marford, Wrexham, LL12 8SS. If you would like to switch your payment method to a standing order, please contact the Treasurer.

### Help Required

The running of the Association falls on a very small number of people, some of whom are doing more than one job. We would be hugely grateful if more volunteers offered their services. Many hands make light work! The tasks are not onerous, yet the potential satisfaction is great. A number of long-standing committee members have indicated that they would like to stand down from their current responsibilities. We urgently need more members to volunteer to help run your Association and continue to provide the high standards of remembrance already achieved. If you are interested in becoming more involved with the running of the Association please contact Mark Weldon, Junior O'Callaghan or David Ball.

### 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.

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



A SOLDIER  
OF THE GREAT WAR  
LEINSTER REGIMENT  
20TH OCTOBER 1914



KNOWN UNTO GOD