

REMARKABLE BOER WAR DISCOVERY

Extact from Terry Reillys Excellent Book “ Dear old Ballina”

And now for a remarkable story from the Boer War: Bernard Hagan (20) of Laughty, Ardnaree, was attached to the 1st Battalion, Connaught Rangers, and was killed in action in the Boer War on 14/7/ 1901 on the farm Zuurvlake in the district of Aliwal-North, Cape Province. It was only in 1992 that his relatives back in Ballina became aware of his his final resting place. His grand-niece, Mrs Beenie Murphy of 33 Lord Edward Street, in the course of some family research, contacted the National Monuments Council in South Africa, to try and throw some light on what had been a family mystery for generations. And, because of an extraordinary discovery, she hit the jackpot! It appears that a farmer was ploughing on the farm at Zuurvlake in 1975 when he unearthed an unmarked grave. Amongst the bones of three men was a sealed bottle. It contained a perfectly preserved note which read “Sacred to the memory of No 6702 Lance Cowl. M. Cryan; No 6454 Private M Cullen; No 2405 Private B. Hegan, all of the 1st Battalion, The Connaught Rangers, who were killed in Action near this spot on the fourteenth day of July 1901. R.I.P.”

The remains of the three Irishmen were exhumed and re-interred the Garden of Remembrance, Aliwal-North, in the Cape Province.

The original note was sent in the South African National Military History Museum in Johansnesburg for preservation. Had the bottle and the note not been found the final burial ground of Pte. Bernard Hagan would have remained a mystery for ever more.

The Note read as follows:

Sacred to the Memory of No. 6702 Lance Corp. M. Cryan , No 6454 Private M.Cullen and No. 2405 Private B. Hagan all of the Ist Batt. Of the Connaught Rangers who were killed in action near this spot on the 14th Day of July 1901. R.I.P.