

Off to the Great War

From "Dear Old Ballina" by kind permission of author, Terry Reilly,

The widespread desire for Home Rule and fear of the Ulster Volunteers led to the rapid expansion of the Volunteer movement in the Provinces during 1914. One fear was that Sir Edward Carson in the North was going "to baulk their hopes and snatch the Cup (Home Rule) from the lips of mother Erin," as an assembly of Volunteers was told in Enniscrone in July of 1914. **"Better die like men in the battlefield than live as slaves"**, the 2,000 attendance was told. Close to 500 volunteers were enrolled. The meeting was held within sight of the guns of a British torpedo destroyer, which lay at anchor in Killala Bay.

A few weeks later Co!. **Maurice Moore**, Inspector-General of Ireland's National Army (The Volunteers) received an invitation to review the **North Mayo battalions in Ballina** at a military tournament, i.e., marching, drills, etc. The strength of the local movement was demonstrated towards the end of July when 1,500 paraded through Ballina to protest against the murders of women and children in Dublin by the King's Own Scottish Borderers. Several revolver shots were discharged into the air. The Volunteers were called upon to shoulder rifles when issued so that *"Dublin's case today won't be ours tomorrow"* (loud cheers).

However, on August 4th there came an event which forced the Volunteers on to other fronts ... at 11 p.m. on that night England declared war on Germany after the invasion of Belgium.

The Western People, in a most optimistic prediction editorialised thus:
"With the millions of armed men in the field it will be impossible to carry on the war for any long period because of its exhausting effect even upon the wealthiest of the nations. It may end in a few short, sharp and decisive conflicts on sea and land, and lay the ghost of martial lust for a generation to come."

There was almost a sense of euphoria. British army reservists in town had already received the call up and on Wednesday, August 4th - the very day that the war was announced - the local Commander of the Volunteers, Mr. L. Dodd, called on his men to assemble at the **Humbert Monument** at 1 p.m. to see off the reservists, many of whom had helped to train the Volunteers. **Thousands looked on as the 500 Volunteers paraded "over a dozen reservists, looking proud and fearless, but not a little unnerved by the warmth of the demonstration"** to the Railway Station, headed by the two local bands, the Hibernians and the Foresters.

As they got on the train *'female relatives cried bitterly as the last sad greetings were exchanged, while male friends cheered and encouraged them by hearty shakes of the hand. "*

The following morning there was a similar send-off for a further batch of reservists. That same week Ballina UDC met and wished the men a speedy and safe return, one Councillor commenting that it was the first time in history that Ireland's sympathies had been with English arms ... *"it is great statesmanship on Mr. Redmond's part,"* he commented.

On **August 14th** a meeting of the *Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief of Distress Association* was held in the Harbour Office, presided over by Very Rev. T. L. Beirne, v.F., Adm. Col. Saunders-Knox-Gore said the association had been formed some years ago to assist the wives and families of reservist soldiers who were called to:fight in time of war. The wives of these men were entitled to a separation allowance of Is. 2d. per day, and 2d. per each child per day. However, there would be a delay in making first payment and hence the need for local contributions. It was revealed that there were 29 families in Ballina, 19 in Ardnaree, 2 in Crossmolina and 4 in Killala needing assistance from the committee.

On **August 19th Ballina UDC** called a meeting to consider what steps might be taken to relieve the distress arising out of lack of employment during the war, and a committee was set up representative of the clergy, the UDC, Ballina Board of Guardians, Insurance Committee, Employers, Labourers, Harbour Commissioners, Women's organisations, Soldiers' and Sailors' Association, St. Vincent de Paul, doctors and solicitors.

Col. Maurice Moore arrived in Ballina on Saturday evening, August 19th, for the much heralded "great review" of Volunteers in the Show grounds on the following day. He was met at the station by a guard of honor of local Volunteers, accompanied by the Hibernian and Foresters' bands. Co!. Moore had been in the town four months previously and was undoubtedly among those in the vast throng *"surprised to an unexpected degree by the marvelous efficiency of the splendid, well setup body of young men who stood proudly erect in the ranks -a battalion >~whose splendid discipline and bearing would have gladdened the heart of any commander,"* as the *Western People's* man on the spot put it.

Addressing the men, Co!. Moore dismissed the notion that the Volunteers were set up to assist the British in the Great War. *"Some foolish people,"* he said, *"thought that if they joined the Volunteers they were going to be shipped to France or some other foreign country. "* The Irish, he continued, had fought for France long enough, and now he thought they ought to be ready to fight

for Ireland (cheers). The English Territorials were defending the shores of England and the Irish Volunteers would defend the shores of Ireland. That was one of the things the Volunteers were formed for (hear, hear).

Another speaker was **Alderman Boyle, M.P.**, who told the Volunteers that he would see their leader, **Mr. Redmond**, on Tuesday and tell him of the magnificent display of manhood he had seen in Ballina. According to the *Western People* reporter, the Ballina company looked extremely smart with khaki putties and creamcoloured haversacks. The company was under the charge of **Mr. L. Dodd, Capt. D. F. Courell, Lieuts. T. Boshell and M. Connell, Sergts. T. Connell, W. Boshell, M. Gilmartin and V. Shaw.** In attendance were companies from Ballina (2), Crossmolina, Lahardane, Foxford, Ardagh, Cloghans and Kilglass. On August 24th the *Western People* revealed that there had been an extraordinary response in Ballina to Kitchener's appeal for recruits. "*Not a day passes but from five to ten join the colours and up to the present there seems to be no slackening in the steady stream of men anxious to defend the Empire.*" More reservists were placed on standby, including one local who had been out of the army for 20 years.

HOME RULE BILL: On September 18th the Home Rule Bill was passed by the House of Lords and House of Commons and there to witness the debates were the **Bishop of Killala, Dr. Naughton, and Canon Munnely.** The passing of the Bill led to a more sympathetic approach to the British cause and recruitment was stepped up in Ireland, John Redmond calling on the Volunteers, then numbering over 150,000, to help the British war effort for "the freedom of small nations." By October much of the glamorising of the war was giving way to a more realistic assessment of the struggle which was to eventually claim the lives of millions, including thousands of Irishmen.

The reality of the conflict was brought home to *Western People* readers early in October when an anonymous **Connaught Ranger** (evidently from the 2nd Battalion which lost heavily in the retreat from Mons) wrote home to his mother: "*I am still alive, but it is a miracle that I am as the regiment has had an appalling amount of casualties.*" After walking 360 miles they became engaged in their first big battle on the front and lost 200 men, had been shelled incessantly, and in a German onslaught had lost another 40 men and five officers. "I am at present in command of a company; the weather is very bad. I have not changed my clothes or boots for about three weeks and we have been wet through and through night after night."

On October 17th three members of the Ballina Post Office staff left town to serve as field telegraphists with the British Expeditionary force in France, Messrs. **McGarry, Mulligan and Phillips.** That same week the price of Ford cars came down at **Bourkes of Castlebar** who advertised

1915 models at £115 and £125 (two and five-seater). But cars were far from the minds of many young men who thought either of war, or of escaping it. Rumours of conscription sent many to the US and, ironically, some of them ended up at the front and were never to see their native land again.

Ballina casualties . One of the first Ballina men to be sent home wounded to recuperate was **Pte. John McHale of Ardnaree** who injured his arm in the fierce fighting at the battles of the Mons and the Aisne. *"Out of 20 casualties from my own town (Ballina) during the battle [was one of the lucky ones to escape,"* he said.

Stories of death and injury filtered through daily: **Edward Hallinan of Bonniclonn, a private in the Connaught Rangers** who received eight wounds at Ypres, said his battalion had lost 514 men and 7 officers out of a total of 1,300 on the way to Paris. In the trenches the German shrapnel created havoc; the soldier next to him was blown apart, and others were buried alive as the trenches caved in. The bottom line of the story told of the severity of the casualties: *"Out of 150 men in my company, 'D', there are only seven men left, and out of 1,300 men who went out in the battalion there are only 350 left now."* (Indeed, casualties were such in the two battalions of Connaught Rangers fighting in France and Flanders during the early months of the War that on December 5th, 1914, the two were formed into one. Even then, the Battalion had only just over half its normal complement of officers).

Another Connaught Ranger, home recovering from wounds, gave "a thrilling" account of his experiences at the front. *"It was fifty times worse than hell,"* said **Private Pat Gallagher**, a veteran of the Boer War who described the war in South Africa as being like a picnic compared to Ypres. He claimed that out of 33 officers in his battalion, only three had survived the first few months. He had assisted a wounded soldier from **Ballina, Pte. Murray**; and he saw a number of other wounded Ballina men; he named five. One of the first Ballina men to be killed at the front was **Corporal James Moyles of Shamble Street**, a married man with eight children, who had acted as instructor in the **Ballina Volunteers Corps** before being called up. The same issue revealed that two Ballina natives in the Connaught Rangers had been taken prisoners of war, **Pte. McHale of Hill Street, and Corporal John Caslin of Ardnaree**, and it was unofficially reported that an Ardnaree man had been killed.

The Western People told readers in December that there were over a dozen soldiers at home in Ballina with wounds (something like 30 Ballina men had already been wounded), while it had been officially confirmed that two had been killed. More of those home and recovering from wounds spoke of their experiences: **Sapper T. Sayers of the Royal Engineers**

(Garden Street), **Pte. Patrick Gallagher of the Royal Highlanders (Ardnaree), and Pte. Matthew Gorman, Connaught Rangers (Ardnaree)**, who was beside "Brady" Fleming, also of Ardnaree, when he was killed. For the part he played in bringing up ammunition under fire, Pte. Gallagher was specially mentioned twice and his Commanding Officer offered him promotion, which he declined *"as I preferred the more free life of a private."*

Another, **Pte. W. Stokes of the Connaught Rangers** (Garden Street), had three fingers blown off when a shell burst nearby, killing many of his colleagues. He lay all night in the trenches unaided, and the next morning walked two miles before meeting an ambulance. *"The Connaught Rangers"*, he said, *"were always in the thick of the fighting and suffered dreadful casualties."* Despatches from the front flowed in weekly to the Western People throughout 1915, most of them telling of awful conditions, of ghastly wounds and of death. Into the latter category fell the news of the death of **Private Martin Quigley of Hill Street**, a famed athlete and a star on the crack **Ballina Stephenites'** junior team. Only 22, he had joined the Connaught Rangers in 1913. He had been a side drummer attached to the **Foresters Band**. The extent of the Ballina involvement in the Great War was mapped out in March when it was stated that at the outbreak several hundreds from the town were in the army, and that 150 had volunteered since hostilities began, most of them joining the Connaught Rangers.

Honoured for gallantry . In April (1915) Ballina Board of Guardians and Ballina UDC joined in congratulating four Ballina men, three from the Quay, who had been honoured for gallantry at the front: **Sergt. Ruddy (Royal Field Artillery), who had been promoted to rank of second lieutenant; Sergt. Walsh (Royal Engineers), Pte. Kennedy of Ardoughan and Pte. P. Hennigan (Irish Guards)**, all of whom had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Thanks to historian Stuart Barr of Birmingham Polytechnic, I am able to shed some light on how both **Kennedy and Hennigan** won recognition:

Pat Hennigan from The Quay, Ballina, served in the 1st Battalion, Irish Guards, where he earned a reputation as a regimental "character" and a man of strong powers of leadership. In February, 1915, the Battalion was engaged in continuous and bitter hand-to-hand fighting at a most insalubrious spot called the **Brickstacks, near Cuinchy in France**. Hennigan was in No. 1 Company, which became noted for the ferocity of its attacks. One of its members, **Michael O'Leary**, won the **Victoria Cross**, at the Brickstacks on 1st February and five days later, Hennigan won the D.C.M. in an action dramatically described by the regimental historian, **Rudyard Kipling**: "At the opening of the rush the Germans made a close-range bombing-raid on one of the corners of the Keep and at

last pitched a bomb on to the top of a sand-bag redoubt. This so annoyed one of our bomb throwers, a giant of the name of **Hennigan**, of No.1 Company, that he picked up a trench-mortar bomb (no trinket), which lay convenient, cut down the fuse for short range and threw it at a spot where he had caught a glimpse of a German officer. The bomb burst almost before it reached the ground, and must have made a direct hit; for nothing upon the officer was recognisable later save the **Iron Cross**, which in due time went to the Regimental Orderly Room. **Hennigan** was awarded the D.C.M.; for his bomb also blew in aJld blocked up the communication-trench through which the bombers came - a matter which he regarded as a side issue compared to his "splendid bowlin". Some months later Hennigan was wounded in action.

Private Kennedy of the **1st Battalion, The Connaught Rangers**, was awarded the D.C.M. "*For gallant conduct on 23rd December, 1914. When the soldier working the trench mortar was killed, Private Kennedy at once took up the duty and carried out the work with success, showing great zeal and ability.*" .The bald facts of the official citation do scant justice to a situation which was very fraught on two counts. Kennedy had been in the thick of some very heavy fighting which continued unabated, with attack and counter-attack, for a week. His unit had been under continuous trench mortar fire during that period, losing 8 men killed and twenty-four wounded in the bombardment. Furthermore, operating a trench-mortar at this period of the war was almost as dangerous to the user as to the enemy. It was in late 1914 and immediately after that weapons appropriate to the new trench warfare were hurriedly being devised. The mortars being used by Kennedy and his comrades were primitive, made of wooden battens, bound round with wire or metal hoops. They were first used by The Connaught Rangers in the action of 19-23rd December, 1914, and four days before Kennedy won his D.C.M. operating one, another had blown up killing its operator. The men were untrained in their use and the Regimental History records that it was not until the following month that "*a beginning was made in training men of the battalion as trench-mortar or 'bomb-gun' teams.*" On 6th March, 1915, **William Kennedy was decorated in the field with his D.C.M.** Nine months later he moved with his Battalion to Mesopotamia, where, eleven days after landing, they were thrown into a major battle at Hanna. **Kennedy, together with two other Ballina men, Michael McHale and Dominick Murray**, was killed in action. Another to be decorated at that time was **Captain William Saunders Knox-Gore of Belleek Manor**, who was appointed a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order for gallantry.

Two men wounded at the battle of Neuve Chapelle told of their experiences when sent home to recover in May (1915): **Pte. George Flynn, Shamble Street, and Pte. Kelly of Ardnaree** (both

Connaughts). Flynn was one of no fewer than six brothers fighting at the front!

SUNK BY SUB: Early in May the officers and crew of the **Cherbury**, carrying 6,000 tons of coal, brought war tales directly to Ballina when they arrived from Belmullet after their vessel had been sunk in **Broadhaven Bay by a German submarine**. The adjacent column told of the harrowing experience of a **Miss Mabel Patterson of Bridge Street**, who decided to return to Ballina on holidays after eight years in New York: the ship was tracked by a submarine shortly after leaving the American coast and what followed was a cat and mouse manoeuvre of zig-zagging before the sub gave up the hunt.

The sinking of the *Lusitania*, about 25 miles off Cobh, by a German U-boat accelerated America's decision to enter the war. The sinking of the ship made world headlines and the ripples spread to Ballina for on board was a local man, **John Sweeney**, (brother-in-law of **James Murphy**, vice-chairman of Ballina UDC), who was returning home for a holiday after thirteen years in the U.S. When the torpedoes struck there was an inevitable panic with women and children in a terrible state, many of them flinging themselves overboard. With a life-belt fitted, **Sweeney** jumped overboard, too, and swam as far away as he could before the ship went down. *"The air was filled with the heart-rending shrieks of women and children. I saw living persons clinging to floating dead bodies,"* he reported. After two hours in the water he was picked up by a boat which put in at Cobh with the bodies of six women and three babies.

A memorial in St. Michael's Church, Ardnaree, to Captain Ivan Harold Garvey, M.C., Connaught Rangers, who died on 20-2-1917 from wounds received while leading his men on the German trenches at the **Wyschaete Messines Ridge**. He was 25.

A lighter moment was provided in June when news filtered through that **Pte. Henry Convey of Shamble Street** had distinguished himself at the front by capturing a German flag. He crawled 100 yards to within 130 yards of the German trenches for his booty! This episode was referred to again when the **Connaught Rangers** held a recruiting meeting in Ballina in June. It was stated that out of a population of 4,000 Ballina had supplied 600 volunteers ... *"the best record in the county."* Lieut. John Garvey wondered why this was so. He said when he looked at some of the streets and miserable hovels in the town he could not but express surprise that there had been any response to the call of arms from those men. Ballina's record, he said, was second to none.

The number of Ballina-born dead in the Rangers (approx 50)* represented over 1 per cent of its 1911 Census population - a higher

percentage than any other town in Connaught, and the highest number of dead in absolute terms, even exceeding Galway and Sligo which had over twice the population. On the basis of these figures, WWI affected Ballina to a far greater extent than any other town in the West. A number of factors combined to bring this about: high unemployment and tactful recruiting methods being two of these. Others, apart from the recruiting agents, must have wondered why the response was so good, especially when the wives and children of these left behind were so badly treated, some of them having their separation allowances stopped because they were spending it on drink: was it any wonder with the burden of worry they carried? .

Mayo's three towns (Ballina, Castlebar and Westport), representing 6 per cent of the county's 1911 population) accounted for 49 per cent of the Rangers' Mayo dead in the War - i.e. 8 times their share of the county population. (* At least 68 Ballina men, 57 born and 11 residents born outside the town, died in Irish Regiments of the British Army) ..

In July the *Western* printed sections from a diary kept by Bombardier James Moloney, RFA, of Ballina over an 11-month period at the front. "*Death is reaping a rich harvest. Shells everywhere searching for us,*" he wrote. Another townsman, Sapper Joseph Reilly (Royal Engineers), recovering in hospital in Malta, wrote home telling of conditions in the trenches ... "*as many as 400 dead Turks and British in one small trench ... smell so frightful I had to put on a respirator.* " Conscription was looming as the war machine sought more human flesh to soak up the German bullets. Ballina Board of Guardians voted to oppose conscription following a resolution from the Dublin Conference. The vote against was 12. Five voted to have the resolution marked "read", two abstained and three left the meeting before the vote was taken.

Father and son killed . Ballina blood was spattered liberally on Gallipoli when the 10th Irish Division landed there in August 1915. After a courageous bayonet charge by the 6th Connaught Rangers, Pte. Patrick Duffy wrote home that of the 49 men in his platoon only 18 answered their names after the onslaught. Corporal David Rydel~ the famous Stephenites' footballer, was there, too, and in a letter home he wrote: " ... *heaps of dead and wounded lay around us ... after that terrible charge I sat in my trench and my mind wandered back to Ballina and I thought of how on that Saturday night the boys were enjoying themselves. But there is no time for day-dreaming here.*" The majority of the Ballina boys had been hit and he named a few whom he had learned had been killed - D. Millar, a man named Mulderrig from Ardagh, and Pte. J. Corcoran of Ardnaree.

Not a week went by without a despatch from a Ballina man in the thick of the fighting. One of the most poignant was to Mrs. Lyons in Shamble Street who learned of her son's death in France • only weeks after her husband, also in the army, had died in Cork. By November, 1915, it was estimated that 100,000 Irishmen had joined the British Army. Before Christmas Pte. Harry Frazer wrote home to say that he had been involved in the retreat from Serbia to Salonika. *"This fight tested the best of us,"* he wrote, adding that the Ballina men in his company had been sent elsewhere *"but before they went we toasted Ballina."* He added that he looked forward to his weekly copy of the *"Western People"*!

Others had not such cheerful news. Mrs. Flynn of Shamble Street was informed just after Christmas that her husband, John, of the Connaught Rangers, had been wounded and was missing since the retreat from Serbia. He was son of Mr. Wm. Flynn who had six sons in the fight, two of whom were then prisoners of war in Germany. Henry Forde, Ardnaree, received news that his son, Pte. Henry Forde, who had been missing for eighteen months, had been killed in action - the second of his sons to die in such circumstances. In April, 1916, Mr. Charles Kelly of Ardnaree was notified that his son, Pte. Peter Kelly, Connaught Rangers, had been killed in France. Two other sons of Mr. Kelly also saw action, one being wounded, the other falling a prisoner of war.

The Easter Rising of 1916 pushed the War into the background, but only for a few weeks. News of the Rising mainly centred around the experiences of Mayo visitors to Dublin who got caught up in the crossfire, one of them being Johnny White who owned a garage in King Street. He went to Dublin on business and ended up driving an ambulance for two days and three nights,

Dr. Tommy Heffernan from Ballina who served as a medical officer throughout the war, in France, Egypt, etc., and was wounded several times. Picture courtesy of his great grand niece Mrs. Mary Gaughan (nee Ryan).

In May reports from the front told of more Ballina men being wounded - **Pte. Patk. Ferguson, Hill Street; Farrier Pte. Doherty, Garden Street; Pte. Eugene Beirne, Garden Street; Pet. Willie Boshell, Pet. P. Carroll, Brook St.** There was relief for the family of Pte. Patrick Conway, Ardnaree, who had been reported missing but who was alive and well; however, the same post to Ballina told of the death of Pte. Samuel Marley, Garden Street, in Mesopotamia. Writing from the trenches in Salonika, Pte. William Maloney of Ardnaree, hoped Ballina UDC was not piling on the rates, and he told of how he longed for one of Mr. Beirne's big loaves!

Lest one gets the impression that the author is exaggerating the impact of the "Great War" on the area, a cursory glance at the newspaper files will quickly dispel that notion. Take, for instance, an issue in July of 1916, which reported that "*during the last week 23 labourers left Ballina for munitions work in England ... this makes a total of 174 men who have left Ballina for similar work since the outbreak of war (all passed through the branch of the Labour Exchange). It can be truthfully said that between the army and munitions work the number of men who have gone from Ballina touches close on 1,000.*" The drain left a great scarcity of labourers in the town, the *Western* pointing out that the men didn't see why they should work for 14s or 15s a week when they could get 7d an hour in England on munitions work. No fewer than ten tailors had volunteered for army service, the same issue reported. Surely, however, no single firm suffered more than **Duffy's Bakery** from whence no fewer than seven former employees had been killed in action between the outbreak of war and November, 1916 " ... *a remarkable, if sad, record,*" wrote the *Western People*.

Casualties reported from the front from July to December, 1916, included **Killed - Pte. J. Grehan, Garden Street; Sailor Harris, St. Muredach's Tce.** (lost at sea); **Pte. Christopher Kelly, Ardnaree (died in hospital after being released from prisoner of war camp); Pte. Patrick Doherty, Garden Street; Pte. Robert Stokes, Garden Street (a brother had previously been killed); Pte. J. Carroll, Brook Street (two other brothers wounded); Lance-Corporal Cafferkey, Hill Street; Pte. McLoughlin, Shamble Street; Pte. M. Cawley, Ardnaree; Pte. Kelly, Cloghans; Pte. James Tighe, The Quay; 2nd Lieut. John H. Moore, Ulster Bank.**

Wounded: Sergt. James Carroll, Ardnaree; Sergt. M. Reilly, Shamble Street; Pte. P. Hennigan, DCM; Pte. Luke Kennedy, DCM, Ardoughan (his brother had earlier been killed); Pte. J. T. Lally, RDF, Garden Street; Pte. Ml. McHale, Workhouse Row (missing); Pte. A. Grehan, Garden St.; Pte. James Murphy, Hill St.; Pte. Michael Howley, Ardnaree; Pte. William Rutledge, Hill St.; Pte. J. Daly, formerly of National Bank; Pte. Joseph Hanlon; Pte. E. Dixon, Pte. Christopher Carroll.

Life goes on; Life went on in Ballina as usual as 1917 dawned and the end of the war seemed as far away as ever. At the weekly market in February, straw sold at 3/6 per cwt.; turnips at 2s per cwt.; butter 1/5 per lb., and pigs (dead weight), 112s per cwt. Frazer Rowlette received £235 for 190 stones of flax, the produce of 1.5 bags of seed, and a number of local farmers received up to 27s a stone for flax in mid-February.

Back at the war front, business, too, continued as usual and the bloody mayhem found its way back in telegrams of condolences from the War Office to Ballina households. Captain Ivan Garvey of Downhill was killed

near Ypres, and the same despatches brought news of the fatal wounding of Pte. Barrett of Gurteens, and the wounding of Pte. Murray of Tullyegan. Some weeks later word came through that Pte. Barrett had been wounded but was recovering.

In April the American Senate voted 82-6 to declare war on Germany and there were developments on the home front, too. **In Ballaghaderreen** two RIC constables were wounded in a shooting incident as emotions were stoked following the Rising, the executions which followed, and Ulster talks on partition. The latter fears drew a response from the Catholic Bishops who asked people to sign a petition opposing *"the dismemberment of our country, to show the world that our country is unrelentingly opposed to partition."*

Yet for the men who were fighting for "the freedom of small nations" including their own, the primary concern remained one of personal preservation. Some did not succeed in seeing the year out, for the Western People recorded the deaths of at least seven from this region, and the wounding of countless others, several of whom for the second and third time. **In June**, though, there was much rejoicing when two Ballina men, who had been reported killed in action, returned home on leave. They told of the horrors of gas poisoning and sulphur shells. At a function in the Town Hall towards the end of June 600 certificates were presented to the relatives of men on active service from Ballina, Crossmolina, Killala,

Attymass, and others were in preparation for those who had enlisted since the list had been compiled. One woman received four certificates for her sons, while Mrs. Garvey of Downhill, received a MC, awarded posthumously to her son, Ivan, who had been commissioned into the 3rd (Special Reserve) Battalion, The Connaught Rangers on the day war broke out, 4th August, 1914. Again thanks to Stuart Barr, I can give some background to how he won his decoration: Garvey was posted to the Royal Irish Regiment initially, but finally rejoined The Connaught Rangers as a Captain commanding 'N Company of the 6th Battalion. He arrived on 30th December, 1916, when the Battalion was in Loos sector and four weeks later was awarded the Military Cross for 'conspicuous gallantry in action' when repelling a German attack on his Company position. Three weeks later, on 19th February, 1917, he was detailed to lead a large-scale raid on the enemy trenches in the Kemmel sector. At 7.15 a.m., three raiding parties comprising 9 officers and 109 men attempted to enter the enemy trenches under cover of a dense fog. A fierce battle ensued and the raiding party suffered heavy casualties. In bravely trying to rally his men, Captain Garvey fell wounded in No Man's Land. He was brought out under heavy fire by four of his men, but died of his wounds the next day, 20th February, 1917.

December came and thoughts of Christmas loomed but those who wished

to bake Christmas cakes found a shortage of flour, accentuated by the closure of Russell's stores in the town, an event which brought a resolution of protest from the Urban Council.

A photograph of a kind once commonplace in Ballina households . . . **Sergt. Patrick Gallagher** of **Brook Street**, home from duty at the front with the Royal Scottish Regiment, had this picture taken with his wife and family, fearing that he might not survive the action. The picture, taken by **Louis Slater, Garden Street**, shows (front) Hughie (few months old), Anne (6), Nell (7) and, at back, standing on a box, Jim (3), later to fight in the Second World War, their father and mother, Jane (nee Fleming). **Mrs Gallagher** lost two brothers in the war, **Michael and John**, while a third, Thomas, came through with the 1st Battalion of Irish Guards to become a **groundsman at Buckingham Palace**. **Sergt. Gallagher saw action at Mons and Ypres** and sustained an eye wound in 1915. He was twice mentioned by his commanding officer for bringing up ammunition under fire. He served throughout the war and died in the early 1950s.

Feeding the hungry ;

There was great poverty in the town at that time and, indeed, for years after, so much so that coming up to Christmas the Ladies' Charitable Association found it necessary to open a communal kitchen to feed the hungry. On the first day 76 meals were served and this jumped to 120 in a matter of days, each deserving applicant receiving soup, meat and potatoes *"the whole constituting a nourishing and very palatable meal."* It was conditions like these and the lack of work - that accounted for so many young men opting for service.

1918 dawned and no one spoke optimistically of an end to the war. In January other issues grabbed the headlines, the burning of the flax mills at Laughty being one of them. £3,000 worth of flax was destroyed when an oil lamp exploded and the fire spread rapidly to raze the building and its valuable equipment to the ground.

The communal kitchen had to close temporarily in March when the Ladies' Committee rented property. By then they had served 7,027 one penny meals and had handed out 2,273 free meal tickets. In that same month a heavily censored report of a Sinn Fein demonstration appeared in the Western. It was addressed by Dr. Cusack and Darrell Figgis and drew an attendance of approximately 1,000 on St. Patrick's Day. Calls were made for Irish freedom, speaker after speaker pointing out that the time was right to press England with the mailed fist.

Arising out of that *"unlawful assembly"*, Thomas Ruane, captain of the

local Sinn Fein Volunteers, was arrested and taken to Sligo Jail. Brought back to Ballina, he refused to recognise the Court and got seven days. There was a large contingent of military in town for the trial and four young men were charged with disorderly conduct and subsequently were sentenced to four months. These were the first signs of civil disobedience but the drift was unmistakable as Irish people began to assert themselves and fight for their freedom. The process was hurried along when the Conscription Bill passed through the House of Commons in April. In St. Muredach's Cathedral Bishop Naughton told the congregation: *"To anyone acquainted with the deep feelings of resentment engendered amongst all classes of nationalists by the deception practised upon them in recent years it was appalling to contemplate what the results would be if the Government persisted in their insane determination to apply conscription to Ireland. "*

On April 14th the feeling of the public towards conscription was illustrated when 15,000 attended a monster protest meeting in the Market Square. It was said to be the largest assembly ever seen in" Ballina and drew people from North Mayo and West Sligo, including 2,500 Volunteers who lined up in military formation. The meeting was organised by Mr. M. Davis, Chairman of Ballina Board of Guardians, and Mr. W. Tolan and on the platform were clergy from throughout the region. *"There were many Protestants present, in fact, every class, creed and section took part in what, from its vast dimensions and purpose, may be truly described as an historic meeting,"* the *Western People* observed in a report which occupied most of the page. The meeting was chaired by Canon Tully, Adm., and speaker after speaker denounced the Conscription Bill and pledged to oppose it. *"All classes united in opposition,"* proclaimed one of the headlines.

Defiance of English rule now became much more pronounced in Ballina and in August two Sinn Fein leaders, John Moylett and Patrick Melvin, were arrested after an assembly held without permit at St. Patrick's Well. All Sinn Fein branches had been ordered to hold meetings without permission and the police in Ballina were engaged in a cat and mouse exercise with the local branch which announced, at 7 in the evening, that there would be a pilgrimage to the Well at 9 p.m. Six policemen mingled with the crowd, which, after reciting the rosary, listened to speeches from the local leaders. Later that night, after the crowd had dispersed, Moylett and Melvin were arrested and taken to Castlebar under guard.

In September St. George Laing and I. J. Reid (Gas Company), announced the establishment of a flax mill on the outskirts of the town, near the Behymore road junction with the Sligo Road. Fire risks, proclaimed the advertisement, would be kept to the minimum because of the use of electric light, adequate ventilation and the use of steel and iron sheeting in the building of the plant. All flax growers would also be protected against

any loss by fire. The advertisement warned: *"The giving of drink or any other inducement to Scutchers will not only be unnecessary but will not be permitted on any account."*

Meanwhile, young men were sought for the War effort: "Irish Horse and Foot have made Ireland's fighting fame. Are they to cease when victory is in sight? Is their name to be forgotten," cried the appeal. It was a cry which elicited no great surge, for the young people of Ballina had other aspirations. In October the anniversary of the death of Thomas Ashe saw a commemoration by members of Ballina Boy Scouts who paraded from the Sinn Fein hall carrying a banner with a picture of Ashe and the words "Remember Thomas Ashe". Near the Post Office a struggle ensued and police tried, unsuccessfully, to gain possession of the banner. One youth, Patrick Farrell of Hill Street, who held possession, was asked to give his name and he did so-in Irish. He was taken to the barracks, followed by a large number of his colleagues. Batons were drawn and used, several boys being struck. Arrested were Michael Tolan, John McHale and Stephen Donnelly. Public sympathy was very much on the side of the youths, the Western observing that they could have been easily scattered without recourse to a baton charge.

Connaught Rangers' Records

The impact the War had on Ballina was more deeply felt than in any other Mayo town, and this can be quantified from records which are available. For instance, of more than 151 Mayomen who lost their lives while fighting with the Connaught Rangers, 52 were from the immediate Ballina area, 17 from Castlebar and 15 from Westport. By contrast Galway and Sligo each sustained 40 Connaught Ranger fatalities.

The Ballina men were scattered through the six Battalions of the Rangers and the following listing, compiled from official records, gives the names of those who perished. Given are the name, place of birth (b), place of enlistment (e), domicile in brackets, service number, rank, whether killed in action (KIA), died of wounds (d. of w.), or died from other causes (d.), and the date of death. F&F stands for France and Flanders.

Connaught Rangers;

Cabry, Patrick, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 6689, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 17/6/16.

Henry, Patrick, b. Ballina (Ballina), 10161, Pte., KIA, F&F, 23/11/14.

Joyce, Patrick, b. Ballina, e. Bathgate, West Lothian, IIB, Pte., d.

Mesopotamia, 16/6/16.

Kelly, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4435, Pte., d. India 29/3/'6.

Kennedy, William, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10164, Pte., KIA Mesopotamia, 21/1/16.

Awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Kilgallon, James, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 4140, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 17/4/16.

Lyons, Edward, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4112, Pte., KIA, F&F, 26/4/15.

McHale, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Edinburgh (Ballina), 10192, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 21 /1 /16.

McManus, John, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10804, Pte., KIA, F&F, 17/7/15.

Marley, Samuel, b. Kilmoremoy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 5505, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 11 /3/16.

Mitchell, Patrick, b. Kilmoremoy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3877, Cpl., KIA F&F, 14/3/15.

Murray, Dominick Wilfred, b. Ballina, e. Mullingar (Ballina), 8698, Pte., KIA, Mesopotamia, 21/1/16.

Murray, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Bonniconlon), 9181, Pte., KIA, F&F, 19/12/14.

Quigley, Martin, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3960, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 12/2/15.

Rouse, William, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 6266, Pte., d. India 8/1/15.

Ryder, William, b. Ballina, e. Stratford (Ballina), 5229, Pte., KIA, F&F, 15/10/15.

Walsh, Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 7772, Pte., d. of w., Home, 17/5/16.

Barrett, Anthony, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 3907, Pte., KIA, F&F, 7/11/14.

Convey, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4179, Pte., d. of w., F&F,22/10/14.

Costello, Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 3708 Pte., KIA, F&F,8/11/14.

Cullen, Patrick, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 8403, Pte., KIA, F&F, 2518114.

Fleming John, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 3947, Cpl., d. of w., F&F,13/11/14.

Forde, John, b. Ballina, e. Glasgow (Ballina), 4055, L/ Cpl., KIA, F&F,28/10/14.

Grehan, Edward, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Crossmolina), 7754, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/11/14.

Kelly, Christopher, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4235, Pte., d., F&F, 10/11/16.

Kennedy, Stephen, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10691, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 22/8/14. Moyles, James, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 3479, Pte., KIA, F&F, 2/11/14.

Mullen, Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Keighley, Yorks.), 7845, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/10/ 14.

Murray, Martin, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3929, Pte., KIA, F&F, 23/11/14.

O'Donnell, Frederick, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 4141, Pte., d. of w., F&F, 6/11 / 14.

O'Hara, Edward, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4023, Pte., d. of w., F&F,11/11/14.

Walsh, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 7771, Pte., KIA, F&F, •• 2/11 / 14.

Dolan, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Clonmel (Ballina), 8396, Pte., d. Home, 10/10/'18.

McGuigan, Anthony, b. Ballina, e. Galway (Ballina), 5083, Pte., d. Home, 16/7/15.

Stokes, Francis, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 10461, Pte., d. Home, 10/9/'14.

Barrett, Patrick, b., Attymass, e. Selby (Selby), 7557, Pte., KIA, F&F, 8/10/18.

Fleming Michael, b. Ballina, e. Castlebar (Ballina), 3050, Pte., KIA, 8/10/18.

Harte, Martin, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3529, Pte., KIA, Salonika, 7/12/15.

Mulderrig Thomas, b. Ballina, e. Leeds (Leeds), 3822, Pte., KIA, Gallipoli, 21/8/15.

Rafter, Michael, b. Ballina, e. Hamilton (Ballina), 668, Sgt., d. of w., Salonika, 12/12/15.

Anderson, John, b. Ballina, e. Glasgow (Ballina), 4888, Pte., KIA, F&F,3/9/16.

Beirne, Eugene, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Galway), 3959, Pte., KIA, F&F,21/3/18.

Broderick, Henry, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 5934, Pte., KIA, F&F,9/3/17.

Ferguson, Patrick, b. Kilmoremy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4175, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Grehan, Joseph, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 5532, Pte., KIA, F&F, 23/3/16.

Kennedy, John, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3811, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Lyons, John, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 280, Cpl., d., Home, 4/4/15.

McLoughlin, Thomas, b. Kilmoremy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 11153, Pte., KIA, F&F, 21/3/18.

Neilon, Anthony, b. Ballina, e. Jarrow (Jarrow), 7365, Pte., KIA, F&F,20/11/17.

Sweeney, Owen, b. Kilmoremy, e. Ballina (Ballina), 4091, Pte., KIA, F&F, 20/11/17.

Tighe, James, b. Ballina, e. Ballina (Ballina), 3769, L/ Cpl., KIA, F&F,3/9/16 ..

Garvey, Ivan, b. Ballina, Captain A Company, 6th Battalion Connaught Rangers, 20/2/1917. Awarded Military Cross.

Ballina men in other regiments killed in WWI included:

Irish Guards (Res) 1st Bn: Guinan, John, b. Co. Mayo, e. Glasgow

(Ballina) 5685 L/CPL., KIA FF 30/11/17.

Higgins, John, b. Ballina, e. Derry 6947, PTE. KIA FF 27/9/15.

O' Malley, Patrick, b. Ballina, e. Ballinasloe. 9174 L/SGT, KIA FF 5/12/17.. 2nd Bn (Res):

Hanley, John, b. Ballina, e. Cowdenbeath, Fife (Ballina) 9655 L / CPL, KIA FF 29/3/18.

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers 2nd Bn:

McKenzie, Martin, b. Ballina. e. Manorhamilton (Bonniconlon) 40617 PTE. KIA FF 18/9/17. Formerly 24802 8th Kings Royal Irish Hussars. 7th Bn (Res):

McHale, Michael, b. Knockmore. e.

W. Calder (Ballina) 28623 PTE FF 16/9/16. Formerly 8669 Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. 8th Bn:

McKenna, James, b. Ballina. e. Ballina 43182. PTE KIA FF 9/9/16. Formerly 585 Connaught Rangers..

.Royal Irish Rifles .1st Bn: WiDs, Baskerville, b. Ballina. e. Manchester. 10364 RFN. KIA FF 31/7/17.
Formerly 5961 Manchester Rgt.

Royal Irish Fusiliers

5th Bn: Casey, Martin, b. Ballina. e. Ballina 16782. PTE. KIA FF 1/10/18. Formerly 1101 Connaught Rangers..

6th Bn.: Corcoran, James, b. Ballina. e. Ballina 16779.. PTE KIA Gallipoli 15/8/15. Formerly 1195 Conn aught Rangers.

Kilgallon, Thomas, b. Ballina. e. Ballina 16907. Pte. KIA Salonika 30/9/16. Formerly 12227. Irish Guards.

Royal Munster Fusiliers

1st Bn: Magee, Michael, b. Ballina. e. Limerick (Scariff, Co. Clare). 9792 Pte. KIA Gallipoli 26/4/15.

Royal Dublin Fusiliers

.1st Bn (Res): Duffy, John, b. Knockmore, Co. Mayo. e. Edinburgh (Ballina) 40118 . Pte. KIA FF 24/4/17.

Formerly 5610 R. Munster Fusiliers.

10th Bn (Res): Barrett, John, b. Glencastle, Co. Mayo. e. Blaydonon-Tyne (Ballina) 26518. Pte. KIA FF 10/2/17.

***Not covered in the foregoing were Ballina men in non-Irish regiments.**

For additional information on Ballina's war dead I am much indebted to Martin Staunton of Dublin.

Pte P. Lackey of Royal Irish Fusiliers (who died in 1920) is buried in New Leigue Cemetery; while in Old Leigue are Cpl. John Lyons (5th Connaught Rangers) who was killed in 1915, and Pte Christopher Murray (Royal Irish Regiment) who died in 1918. In St. Muredach's Cathedral graveyard lie the remains of Capt. William Walsh of the Army Veterinary Corps who died in 1919, aged 26.

Apart from these graves and the plaque in St. Michael's (Church of Ireland) in Ardnaree, no war memorial was erected to the memory of the Ballina men who gave their lives in the Great War.

Mutiny in India . One of the last Ballina men to join the Connaught Rangers was Pat Mangan, who enlisted while still in his 'teens at the end of the First World War. In his search for adventure little did he realise that he would become embroiled in what was to become known as the Connaught Rangers Mutiny in India! He joined with James Convey at £2 a week, an increase on the 30 shillings he had been receiving in various local butcher shops. He was sent to India, via Dover and Malta, and despatched to Jullundur, in the Punjab, for training and later to the hill-station of Solan.

On Monday, June 28th, 1920, one of the companies refused to parade after hearing of the Black and Tan atrocities back in Ireland and four were locked up in the guardroom after telling their Sergeant "We'll soldier no more for England." The number grew to 35 men from Band C Companies who whiled away the time singing rebel songs. Soon, there were 400 mutineers and the Tricolour was hoisted at Jullundur. .Eventually news of the mutiny reached Solan, where Pat Mangan was stationed, and some of the men there, led by James Daly of Tyrrellspass, Co. Westmeath, refused to report for duty. What followed was a tragic attack on the magazine, led by Daly, in which two men died and another, Private Eugene Egan of Claremorris, was wounded.

The following morning all the mutineers were rounded up and sent to various prisons. Fourteen were sentenced to death but all, except Daly, were reprieved and got life sentences. Pat Mangan got two years and was sent to Simla where he made doormats for one year before being sent back to England to serve out his sentence. Daly, incidentally, was executed on November 2nd, 1920, and was buried in grave No. 340 at Dagshai Prison. Fifty years later the body was returned to Ireland and reinterred on November 1st 1970 in Tyrrellspass.

After the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the British Government reduced army

numbers and the Connaught Rangers, together with the other South Irish regiments, was disbanded in July 1922. Pat Mangan lived on in England after his discharge from prison and was a regular visitor to Ballina over the years. He died, aged 90, in September, 1988.

Remarkable Boer War discovery

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 Zuurvlaakte in the district of Aliwal-North, Cape Province. It was only in 1992 that his relatives back in Ballina became aware of 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 aears that a farmer was ploughing on the farm at Zuurvlaakte 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 Corp I. 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.F."

The remains of the three Irishmen were exhumed and reinterred in the Garden of Remembrance, Aliwal-North, in the Cape Province. The original note was sent to the South African National Military History Museum in Johannesburg for preservation. Had the bottle and the note not been found the final burial ground of Pte. Bernard Hagan would have remained a mystery forever more.

One of the survivors: Michael Keegan, Station Road, Ballina, and formerly Crossmolina, who fought in the 1914-18 war with the Connaught Rangers. He lived at 33 Lord Edward Street until his death in 1951. He was grand-father of Mrs. B. Murphy of the same address.