

## **Lance Corporal Martin Monaghan**

**By Ethel Corduff**

Lance Corporal Martin Monaghan 10172 of the 2nd Battalion Connaught Rangers was with the Fifth Infantry Brigade of the Second Division of the original British Expeditionary Force to enter France on 14th August 1914 at the beginning of World War One. He was in the Western Front and involved in the Retreat from Mons, Le Grand Fayt, the advance from the Maine and action at Orly, La Coup de Soupir and Tillend and in the Aisne area before he died of wounds on 25th September 1914.

Martin was born on the 18th December 1890, in Rosspport, County Mayo, the son of Mr and Mrs Patrick Monaghan, Rosspport, Erris, a very scenic isolated village at Broadhaven Bay beside the Atlantic Ocean. His Mother was Mary Corduff of The Ferry, Rosspport whose father was James Corduff a ferryman who was known as Seamus The Ferry or Seamus a Chailadh. His grandmother was Anna Murray, they had a number of children and also kept a shebeen at the ferry. His grandfather was one of the Corduff generation of ferrymen at Rosspport. They were my husband Tom Corduff's ancestors. James Corduff was my husband's great granduncle. Martin's father was Patrick Monaghan, a farmer also of Rosspport. Patrick was a good musician and he played the flute at local dances and election rallies. He was also a Land League supporter.

Martin was the third in the family of seven children, he had three older sisters, Mary, Catherine and Bridget, Ellen known as Nellie was two years younger, next came Fred, then James the youngest. All the family could speak in Irish and English, this was fairly common in the area at that time.

Mary's grandson Coleman O Toole from Baltimore, in 2002 traced his family back to Rosspport and his Father James who is still alive discovered for the first time that he had an uncle who served and died in World War One. His mother had died when giving birth to him, as a result he was not familiar with her family.

Though it is claimed that the sinking of the Lusitana by the Germans in 1914 acted as a spur to many Irishmen to enlist in the British Army, it is not known what

prompted Martin to join up, along with thousands of other Irishmen, it is more likely to have been for economic reasons.

On September 16th, 1913 a special army order directed Infantry Battalions to adopt a four-company organisation, the Second Battalion was reorganised into four companies A B C and D. The Battalion left the Curragh for Barossa Barracks, Aldershot on September 23rd 1913 under the command of Lieutenant -Colonel Abercrombie, they went into training near Frenshain under Sir Archibald Murray and were in very fit condition. There were thirty officers and five hundred and twenty seven other ranks and later three hundred and fifty one reservists embarked as part of the fifth infantry brigade of the Second Division. Martin left Southampton at midnight with his Battalion aboard either SS Herschel or SS Seahound and landed in Bulling, France 14th August 1914. I have not been able to establish which of the four companies he was to fight with.

His death certificate states that he died of wounds on Friday 25th September, 1914 aged twenty eight in the Australian Voluntary Hospital in St. Nazaire The Loire France. Harry Corduff told his son Micheal they were shrapnel wounds. On his death certificate it gives his age as twenty one, in the Commonwealth War Graves records it is twenty eight. In the 1901 census he was nine which would have put his date of birth as 1892, but his correct age when he died should be twenty four according to his birth certificate. This hospital opened on 14th September 1914 and closed 16th July the following year so Martin could not have been admitted there before that date.

I believe it may have been a hospital ship, as there were large docks in St. Nazaire. It is possible that Martin was wounded in action at La Cour De Soupier on 14th September where more than six hundred Germans and two hundred and fifty British soldiers including eight officers were killed or wounded or on the 18th September north of Verneuil when four officers were killed and thirty five other ranks were killed or wounded.

Martin is buried in grave thirty five at St. Nazaire (Toutes aides) Cemetery, Loire-Atlantique, France. There are over eighty 1914-18 war casualties buried there He was awarded three medals, the Victory, the British Medal and the Star.