

IT'S A LONG WAY FROM TIPPERARY THE IRISH ON THE SOMME

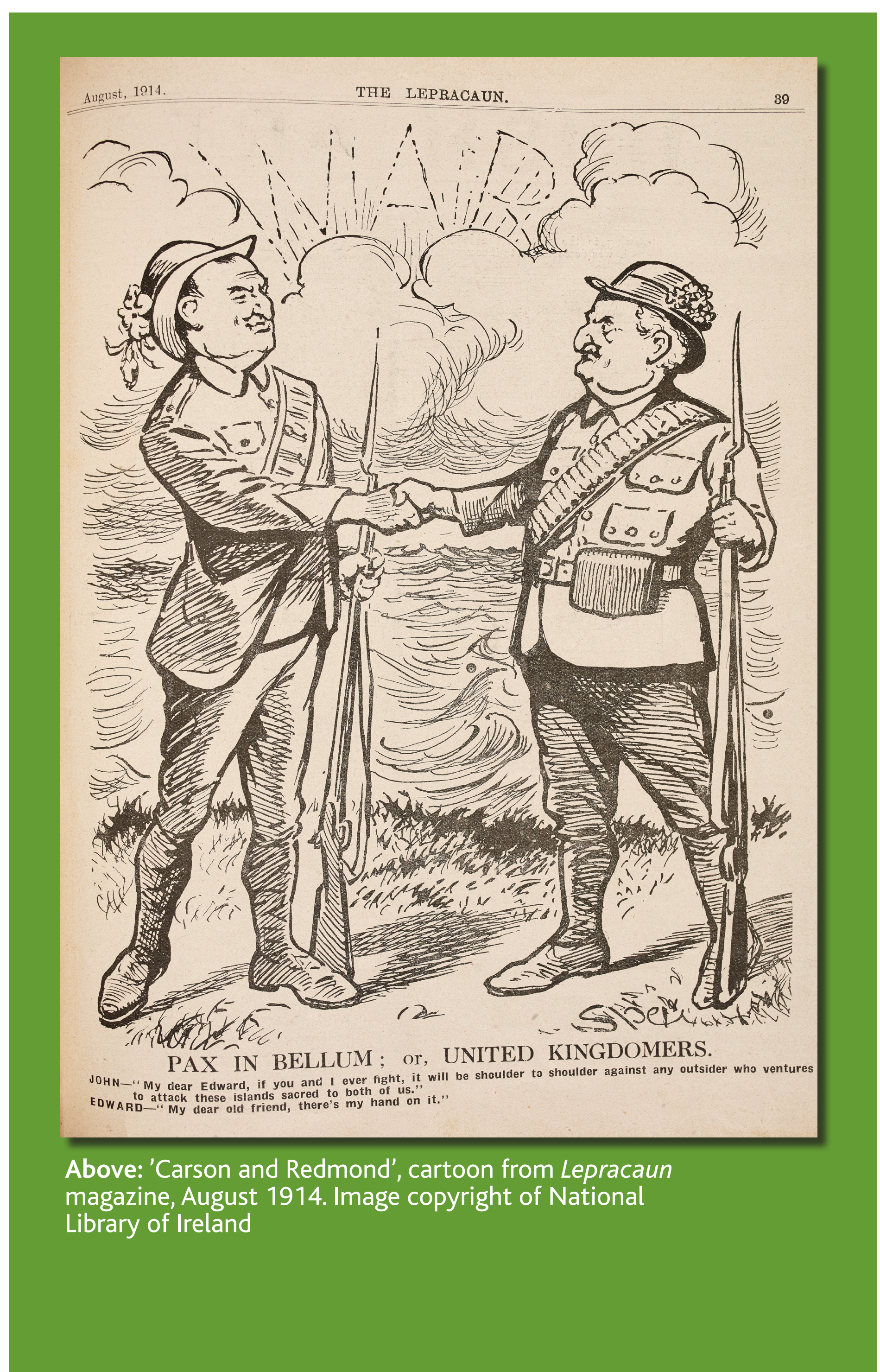
OUTBREAK OF WAR

In 1914 all of Ireland was part of Britain and its empire. In the two years before the First World War, the question of devolved government for Ireland – the Home Rule Crisis – had led to the formation of two major paramilitary organisations: the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), formed in early 1913 by Unionists, who saw any weakening of the link with Britain as a threat, and the Irish Volunteer Force (IVF), founded later that year by Nationalists who were for devolved political power.

By the summer of 1914, there was a real threat of civil war in Ireland. When Britain declared war on Germany at the beginning of August however, most Unionists and Nationalists decided to support the British war effort and both organisations provided an existing source of recruits for the greatly expanded British Army. Civil war in Ireland was thus averted by the outbreak of war in Europe, with those who had been preparing to fight each other instead going to fight on the Western Front.

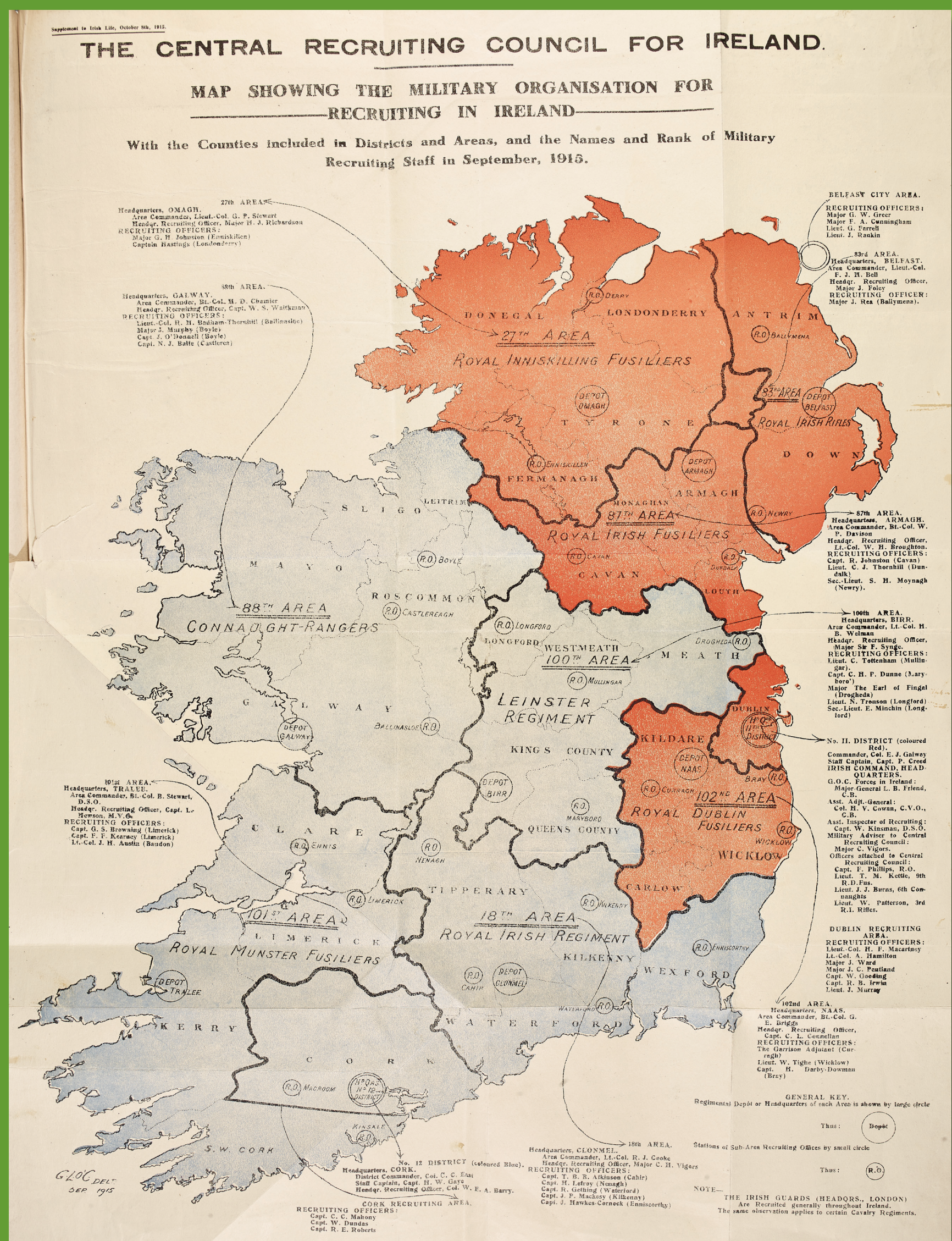
The absence of systematic military conscription meant that the army relied solely on volunteerism. Indeed, the declaration of war prompted a real drive for recruits across the United Kingdom, including Ireland. Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality, together with stories of other atrocities committed by German soldiers, inspired anger against the Kaiser's regime and spurred large swathes to join up.

Notably, not all recruitment in Ireland was divided along political lines. Some battalions in the 16th Division - the 6th Battalion Royal Irish Regiment for example - included both Nationalist and Unionists, fighting alongside one another.



Above: 'Carson and Redmond', cartoon from *Lepracaun* magazine, August 1914. Image copyright of National Library of Ireland

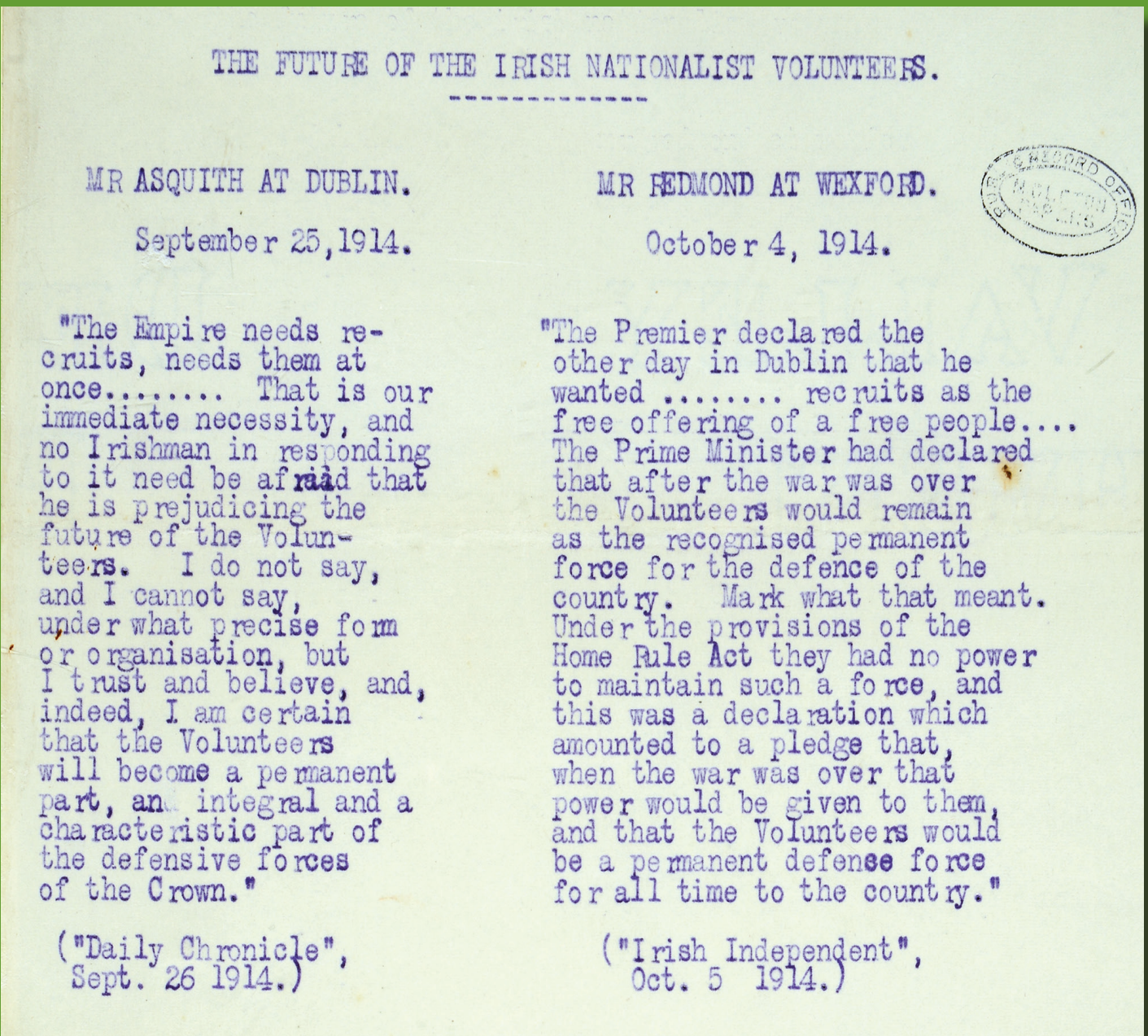
RECRUITMENT



Above: 'Who can beat this plucky four?' recruitment poster
Left: Recruiting map of Ireland from *Irish Life* magazine, September 1915. Both images copyright of National Library of Ireland

Over 210,000 Irishmen from all walks of life served in the British Army during the First World War. As conscription was never enforced in Ireland, most joined up for a variety of reasons.

Some Unionists and Nationalists were politically motivated and felt that they should demonstrate support for Britain in order to gain a favourable settlement of the Home Rule question after the war. Others enlisted out of economic necessity or a spirit of adventure. Men often joined up for a combination of reasons, but very many British and Irish people believed in the righteousness of the Allied cause and many Irishmen were motivated by a sense of duty to do the right thing.



Above: Details from speeches of Prime Minister Asquith and National Leader Redmond (Cat ref: PRO 30/67/29)

In Ireland - at least for the first two years of the war - support was widespread across both the Unionist and Nationalist communities, and the idea of supporting the British was strongly endorsed by political leaders and by Protestant and Catholic clergymen. Neighbours, family-members and comrades from paramilitary organisations also played their part in encouraging young Irishmen to enlist.

For example, in 1915, Tom Barry - later a commander in the Irish Republican Army during the War of Independence - was inspired to join the Royal Artillery to see what this 'great war was like and to feel a grown man'.

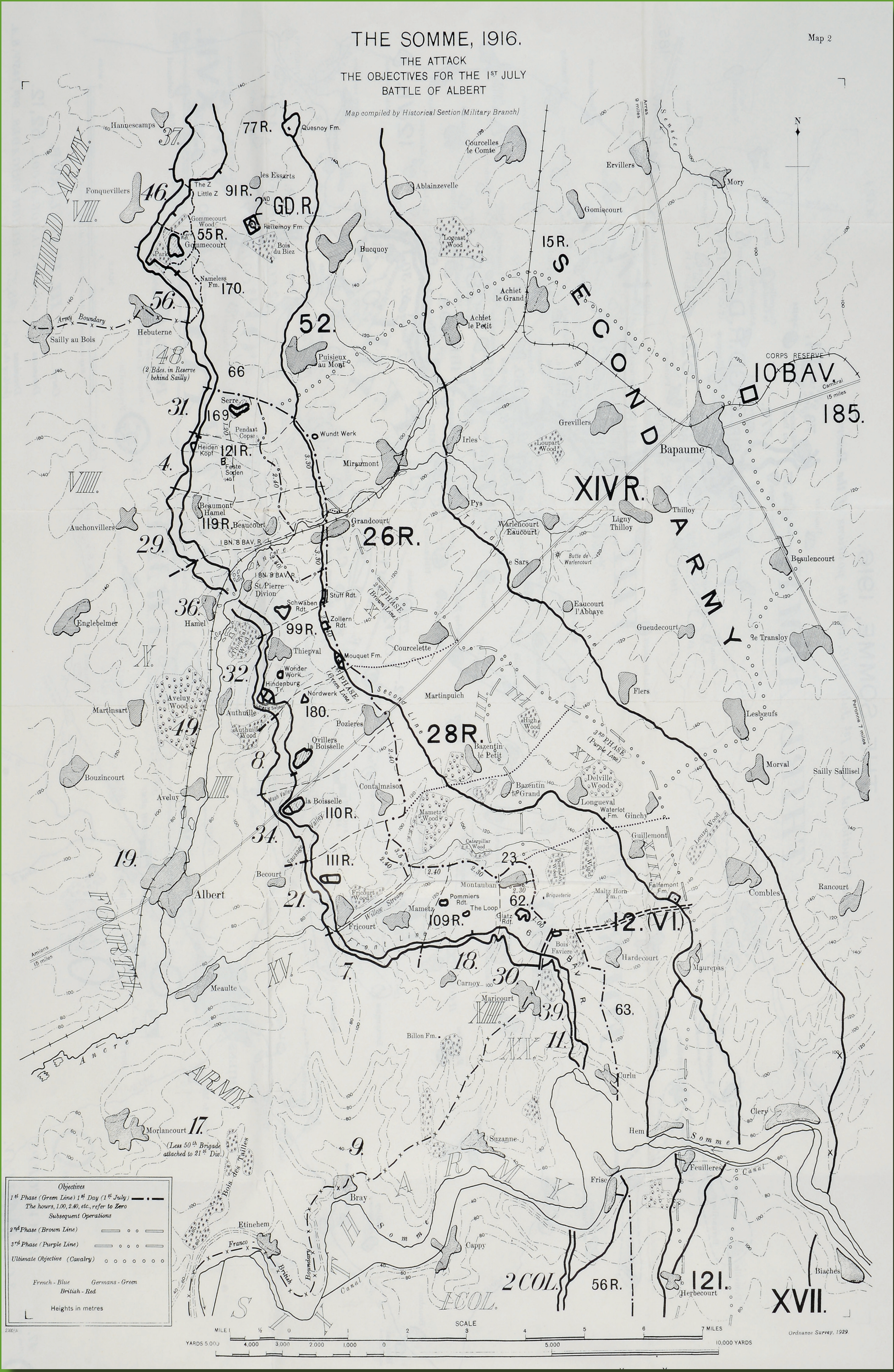
PLANNING AND EXPERIENCE

The Western Front remained in a period of stalemate for the first two years of conflict.

In 1916, the British and French agreed to attempt a breakthrough, joint offensive astride the river Somme at the start of July. The offensive was also employed to relieve the pressure on the French army, who had been suffering heavy losses against the enemy at the battle of Verdun.

On 1 July, the 36th Division was one of 12 divisions in the 4th Army - each about 12,000 strong - that attacked the German lines. It was flanked on the right by the 32nd Division and on the left by the 29th Division, both including Irishmen in their ranks. The 108th and 109th Brigades led the Division's attack across a nearly two-mile front near Thiepval Wood and were tasked with the taking of the fortified complex Schwaben Redoubt.

The success of the battle plan depended heavily on a seven day artillery bombardment.



Above: 'The Objectives for the 1st July - Battle of Albert' from *Official History*, Crown Copyright
Bottom: Panorama image of the Somme before 1 July (Cat ref: WO 316/37)

As soon as the battle had begun, however, it became clear that a combination of the wrong type of shell – shrapnel rather than high explosive – and the large number of defective shells failing to explode had left wire on the enemy line largely intact. The well-reinforced German trenches and bunkers also meant that most German troops survived the bombardment.



1 JULY

“Prisoners were now coming in very fast...we received word at 9.30am that 200 prisoners had passed through”

Quote from war diary, 109th Infantry Brigade (Cat ref: WO 95/2507/2)



The first day of the Battle of the Somme is significant in popular memory in Ireland due to the contribution of the Ulster regiments.

However, there were also other Irish units involved, notably the 1st Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, part of the 29th Division. In front of the Ulster Division, the artillery bombardment had successfully cut the wire.

The Ulstermen had climbed out of their trenches in advance of Zero Hour (7.30am) and some had managed to reach the German lines before the enemy got to their machine guns. The first wave made spectacular progress, capturing hundreds of prisoners, and in one place south of the Ancre reaching the German third line in just 20 minutes (image above).

On the 36th Divisions flanks, however, the enemy had got to their machine guns first and after forcing the other attacking divisions back, (the 29th and 32nd Divisions) the German machine-gunners were able to pour fire into both sides of the Ulster Division.



Top: BELUM.Y26402.105
Copyright National Museums Northern Ireland,
Ulster Museum Collection

Right: The Attack of the X Corps on 1 July, astride
the River Ancre, Thiepval (detail), from *Official
History*, Crown Copyright
Red markers indicate 1) Furthest advance
position division achieved
2) Position held by LT McClure of the Derrys
battalion (see next panel)

‘THE DERRYS’



Left: Photograph of officers of 10th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, October 1914. LT McClure stands on the back row, sixth from the right, Major McCrory sits on the second row, sixth from the right. Reproduced by kind permission of United Services Club, Limavady

Over 500 men from Londonderry/Derry City along with a similar number from across the county joined 10th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

The city men formed their own companies whilst others were formed of men from the county. The unit was known locally as ‘The Derrys’; many of its members had joined the UVF before the war, and the unit formed part of the 36th (Ulster) Division.

The 10th Inniskillings made one of the deepest Allied incursions into enemy territory on 1 July, but of its original strength of 1000 men, the battalion lost 400 dead or wounded.

Among the dead was 32 year old Ernest McClure who was killed in a part of the front-line known as ‘the Crucifix’ (see map on previous panel). He was considered by survivors to have shown such exceptional gallantry for defending his position that he should have been awarded the Victoria Cross. Yet with no surviving officer witnesses, no award could be made. McClure was, however, mentioned in Despatches.



“The spectacle of those lines of men moving forward, with rifles sloped and the morning sun glistening on their fixed bayonets, unfaltering, unwavering - this was not only impressive, it was extraordinary”

Quote from Major Sam Macrory (Cat ref: WO 95/2492/5)

Above: Drum used by the Derrys at the Battle of the Somme. Photograph reproduced by kind permission of United Services Club, Limavady

ULSTER’S HEROES

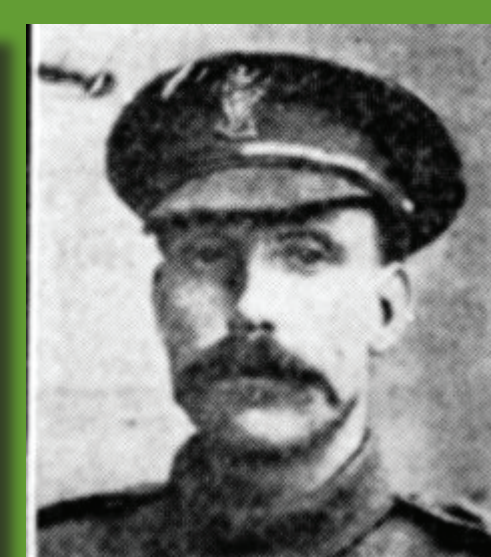
Four of the nine Victoria Cross recipients from the events of 1 July were soldiers from the 36th (Ulster) Division.

Captain Eric Bell of the 9th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Tyrone) lost his life leading his trench mortar battery.

Lieutenant Geoffrey Cather of the 9th Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers (Armagh) and Private Robert Quigg of the 12th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles (Antrim) were honoured for their courage in recovering the wounded from no-man’s land.

Robert Quigg was born in Bushmills, County Antrim, and was active in the pre-war UVF. Quigg too was noted in the London Gazette for his ‘most conspicuous bravery...he went out seven times to look for [his platoon officer] under heavy shell and machine gun fire’. When Quigg returned home he received a hero’s welcome. He died at home in Ballycastle in May 1955 and received a military funeral.

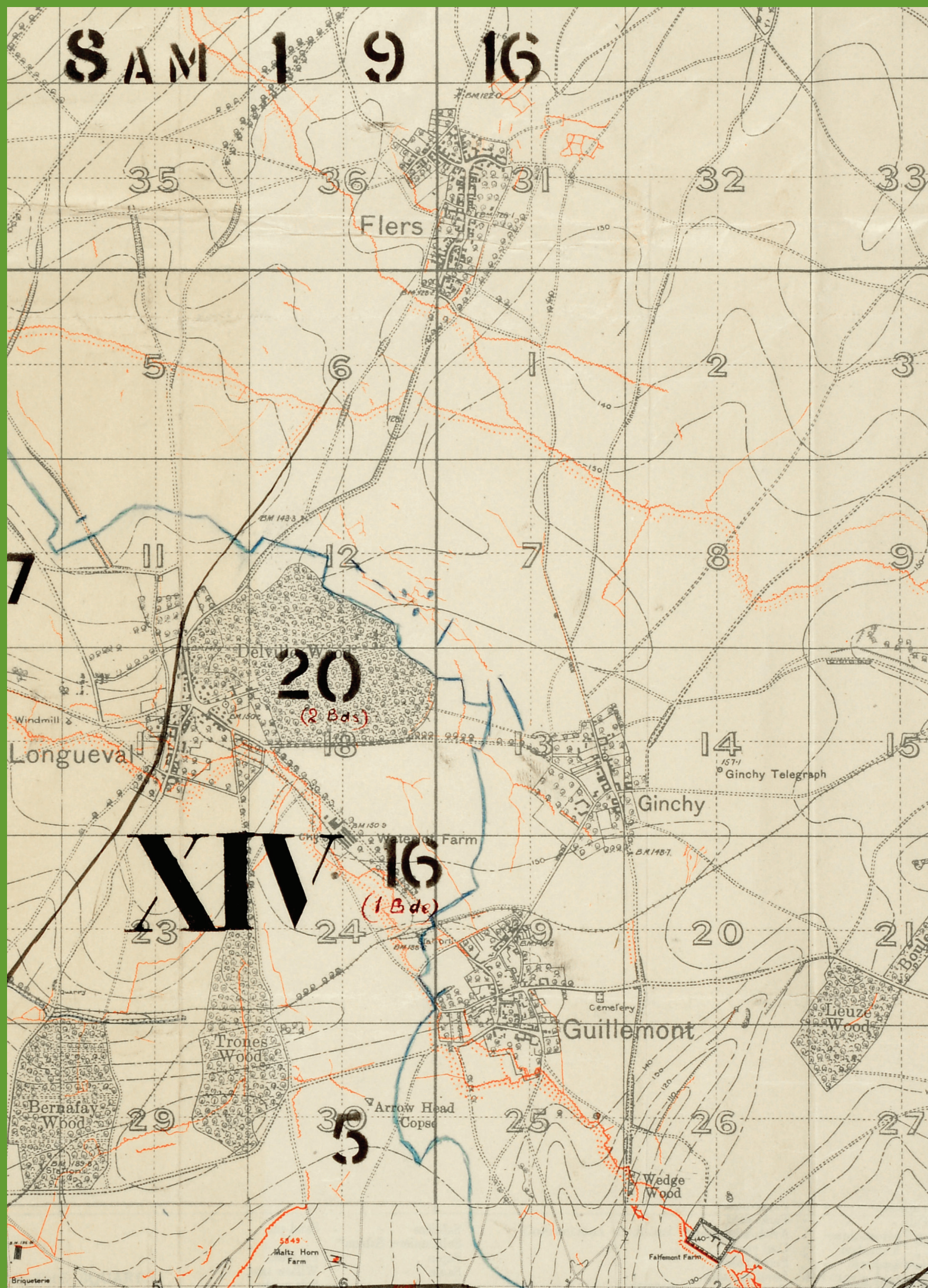
Private William McFadzean of the 14th Royal Irish Rifles was killed when he threw himself on a grenade to save his comrades before the fighting had even begun, as noted in the London Gazette. This official recognition meant that McFadzean became the most famous member of the Young Citizen Volunteers (YCV) - a civic organisation for young men - to be killed on the Somme.



Clockwise from left:
Victoria Cross of Robert Quigg (front and back) courtesy of Royal Ulster Rifles Museum Belfast, images of Robert Quigg and William McFadzean, courtesy of Belfast Telegraph

“The General Officer Commanding the Ulster Division desires that the Division should know that, in his opinion, nothing finer has been done in the war than the attack by the Ulster Division on the 1st July.”

THE 16TH IRISH DIVISION AT GUILLEMONT AND GINCHY



Above: Map with blue line marking British front line near Guillemont, 1 September 1916 (Cat ref: WO 153/185)

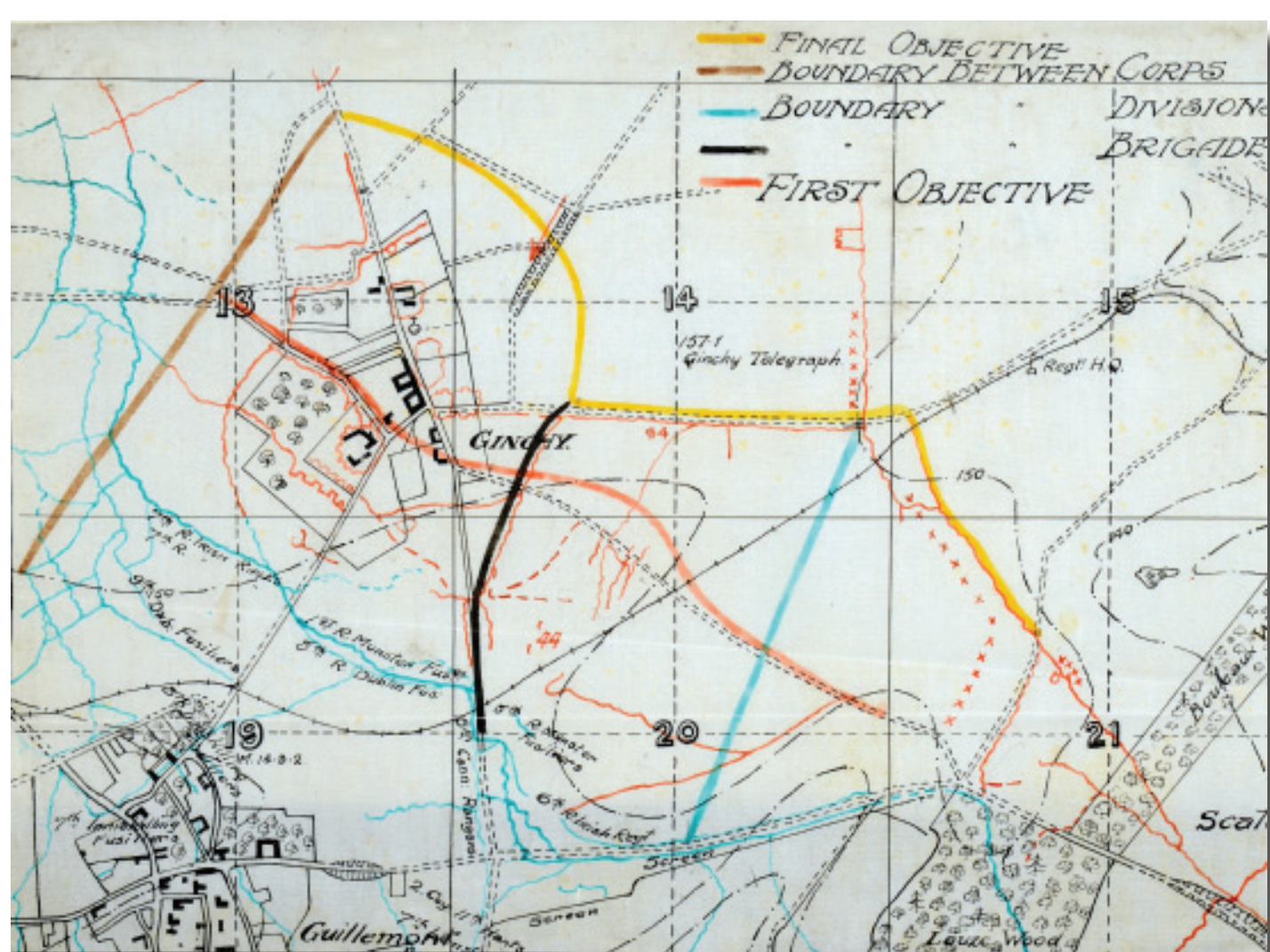
After two months, and with heavy losses on both sides, the Allied commanders were keen to push on with the Somme offensive in the hope of striking a decisive blow to the German Army, who had suffered greatly in repelling allied attacks since the 1 July.

Guillemont, a village east of Trones Wood, was a German stronghold that resisted three previous attempts at capture, having defended the area with machine guns. On 4 September it was captured by 47th Brigade of the 16th Irish Division, the 6th Royal Irish Regiment advancing 'with their pipes playing'. The 7th Leinster Regiment and 6th Connaught Rangers lost many men due to their own artillery's 'creeping barrage'.*

On 9 September, an understrength and exhausted 16th Division was tasked with capturing the village of Ginchy, one mile north-east of Guillemont.

The first objective (map below) was to be taken by the 7th Royal Irish Rifles and the 7th Royal Irish Fusiliers. In the support trenches, taking the second objective were the 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, the 8th Royal Dublin Fusiliers and the 8th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Over half of the attacking force fell victim to a ferocious German counter-attack, leaving the 47th Brigade virtually destroyed.

*Creeping barrage= a curtain of artillery fire just ahead of advancing infantry.



Above: The Attack on Ginchy, 9 September 1916 (Cat ref: WO 95/1955/3)

Right: Men of the 16th Irish Division in a lorry after taking Guillemont, 4 September 1916. Note a pipe player and a drummer amongst the troops. Copyright Wikicommons



16TH DIVISION HEROES

The attack of the 16th (Irish) Division on Guillemont in September 1916 achieved a clear victory for the Allies, but at great cost.

Out of 2,400 men who marched into battle, 1,147 were killed or wounded, with the 7th Leinsters and the 6th Connaught Rangers suffering particularly heavy casualties. The 6th Connaught Rangers also lost their commanding officer, 'Jack' Lenox-Conyngham, an Ulster Protestant. The battle for Ginchy was even more devastating, resulting in 4,314 casualties.

The Victoria Cross was awarded to Private Thomas Hughes of the 6th Connaught Rangers who captured a machine-gun post single-handedly, despite being wounded, and Lieutenant John Holland of the 7th Leinsters, who commanded the battalion bombers in the capture of a number of German dug-outs.

As recorded by the London Gazette, the officers and men of the 16th Division were awarded no fewer than 300 other military decorations for their bravery on the Somme. Among those decorated for gallantry was 18-year-old Lieutenant Emmet Dalton of the 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who was awarded the Military Cross for defending the Irish positions in Ginchy in the face of a fierce German counter-attack. Dalton would go on to serve as an IRA commander during the Irish War of Independence and as a Major-General in the Free State Army during the Irish Civil War.



Above: The wooden Ginchy Cross erected by veterans of the 16th Division. Photograph by kind permission of Office of Public Works, Islandbridge, Dublin

Temp. 2nd Lt. James Emmet Dalton, R. Dub. Fus.

For conspicuous gallantry in action. He led forward to their final objective companies which had lost their officers. Later, while consolidating his position, he found himself, with one serjeant, confronted by 21 of the enemy, including an officer, who surrendered when he attacked them.

Above and right: London Gazette notices for John Holland (awarded the Victoria Cross) and James Dalton (awarded the Military Cross)

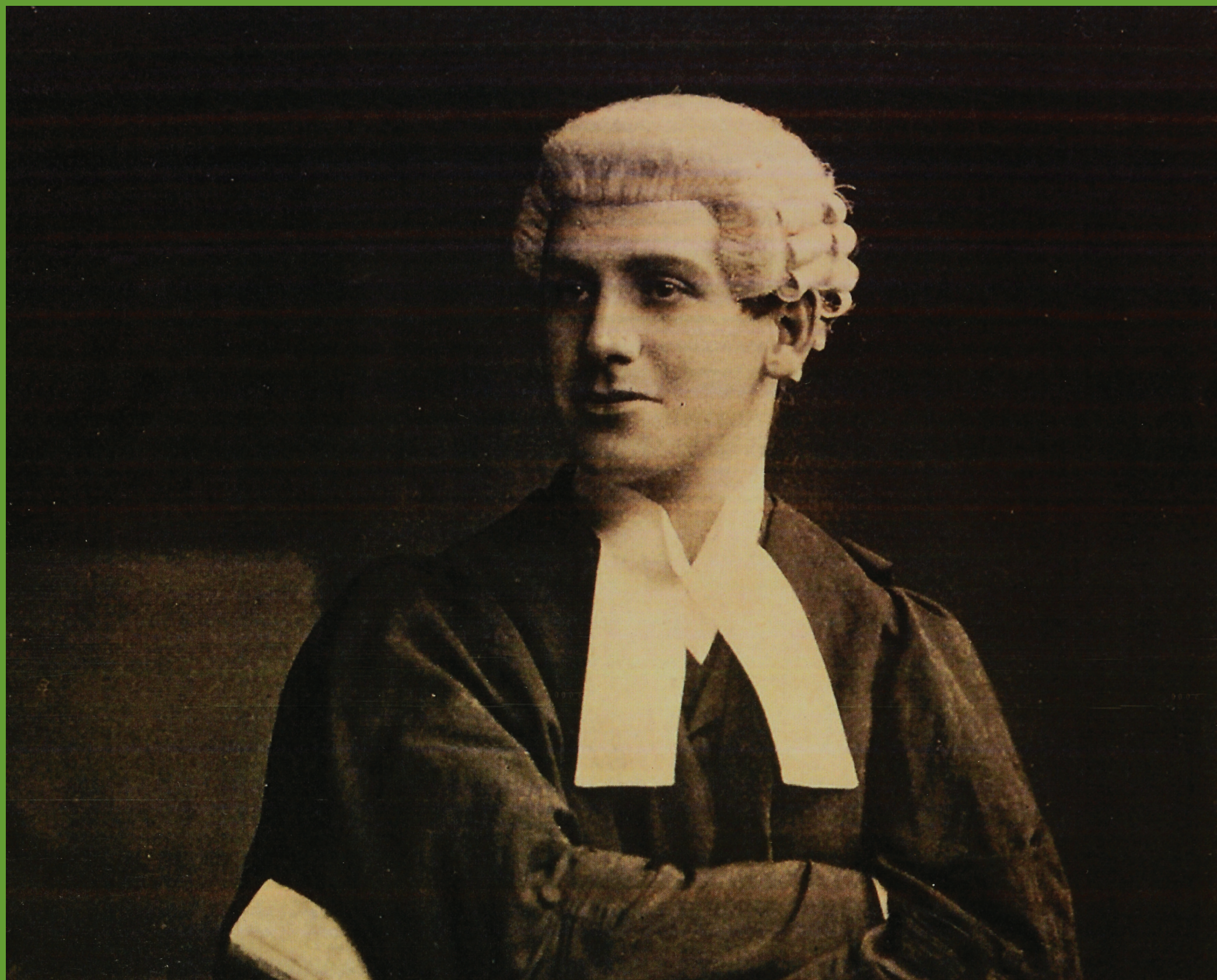
Lieutenant John Vincent Holland, Leinster Regiment.

For most conspicuous bravery during a heavy engagement, when, not content with bombing hostile dug-outs within the objective, he fearlessly led his bombers through our own artillery barrage and cleared a great part of the village in front.

He started out with 26 bombers and finished up with only five, after capturing some fifty prisoners. By this very gallant action he undoubtedly broke the spirit of the enemy, and thus saved us many casualties when the battalion made a further advance.

He was far from well at the time, and later had to go to hospital.

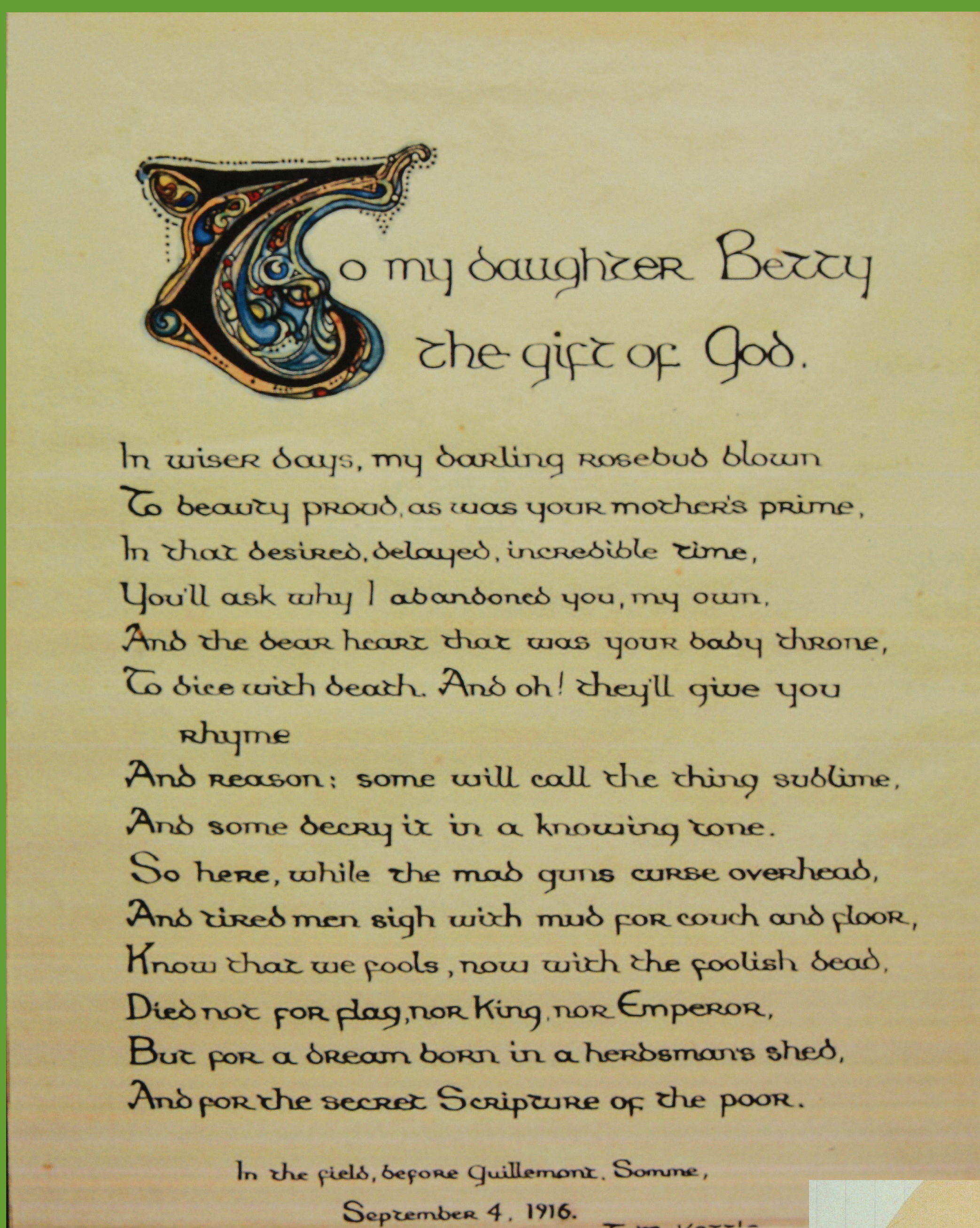
TOM KETTLE: AN IRISH SOLDIER IN THE 'ARMY OF EUROPE'



**Irish patriot, poet,
Home Rule politician
and British officer Tom
Kettle was in Belgium
at the outbreak of
war, on a mission to
purchase arms for the
Irish Volunteers.**

He was appalled by the atrocities committed by German soldiers in Belgium and supported Irish Nationalist participation in the war from the outset. He argued that Ireland's political struggles mirrored continental ones and strengthened Ireland's claim to nationhood.

Kettle produced political pamphlets, poems and battle songs for the cause. He volunteered for active duty in 1916 joining the 16th Division's 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, but died at Ginchy 9 September 1916.



Top and middle: Photograph of Tom Kettle, poem by Tom Kettle, both courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland

Right: Telegram notifying Kettle's family of his death at Ginchy (Cat ref: WO 339/13445)

A. 18 9 16 Preis. Code		POST OFFICE Inland Official		TELEGRAPHS. (Telegrams only)		No. of Telegram. 744/3	
Office of Origin and Service Instructions M.S.3. O.H.M.S. C.A.B.		Words.		Sent		I certify that this Telegram is sent on the service of the	
		At. M.		To.		W O	
		By.		(Signature)		the 29th	
Attention is called to the Regulations printed at the back hereof						Date: Stamp.	
TO: Mrs Kettle University College Dublin.							
Deeply regret to inform you Lieut T.M Kettle Dublin Fusiliers was killed in action September 9. The Army Council express their sympathy.							
FROM: SECRETARY WAR OFFICE.							

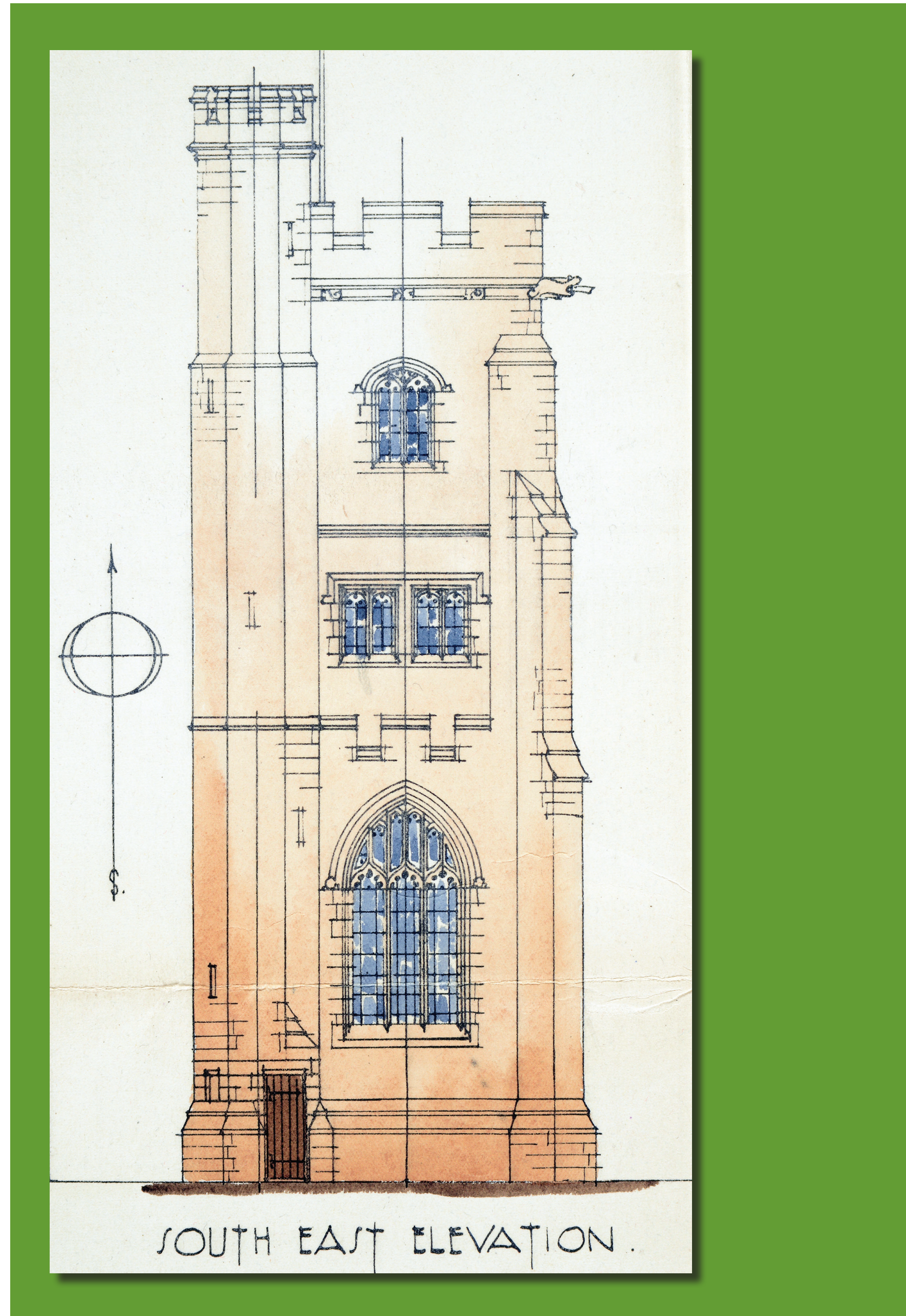
BATTLE MEMORIALS: THE ULSTER TOWER AND THE GUILLEMONT CROSS

Irishmen returning from the war were faced with a much changed political landscape.

Commemorating Irish war dead became politically sensitive due to the sweeping changes that had taken place since the Easter Rising of April 1916. The Irish War of Independence (1919-21) led to the partition of the country and a civil war in the new Free State (1922-23) increased friction concerning how the new state would remember its fallen. The men and women of the Ulster unionist tradition quickly gathered support to erect the Ulster Tower, which posed a stark contrast to the completion of commemorative monuments by the Irish Free State; the Ulster Tower was dedicated promptly in 1921, whereas the Memorial Committee in the Free State awaited legal permission and final dedication of the more modest Guillemont Cross in 1926.

Chosen because it was at a highly visible vantage point, the Ulster Tower marks the point from which the 36th Division carried out its first raid. The memorial, which replicates an existing Ulster tower (Helen's Tower, Clandeboye, Bangor), was felt to convey the 'Ulster spirit'.

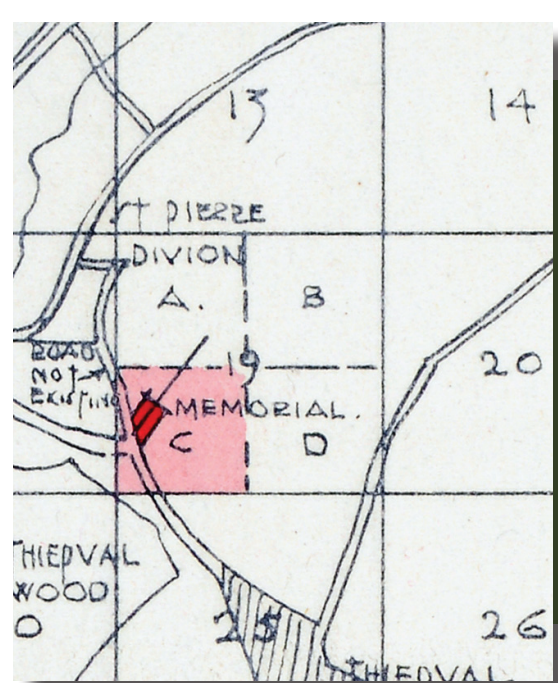
The location of the Irish National War Memorial also proved problematic. The committee desired a central Dublin site, but members of the Irish parliament objected to this. In a 1927 debate, Minister for Justice Kevin O'Higgins, whose brother had been killed while serving in France, summed up the mood: 'No one denies the sacrifice of those men...yet it is not on their sacrifice that this State is based'. The Memorial was located in Islandbridge, some distance from the centre.



Irish Battlefield Memorial Committee. ²

For some years it had been my intention to make a move in this matter but political conditions in this Country were such that it would have been impossible a couple of years ago to have obtained any response from the great body of the people. I hoped that the movement when started would be of a National character. I made some

In 1919 Lord French, when Viceroy of Ireland, had initiated a scheme to erect a Soldier's Club in Dublin as a permanent War Memorial. With this object some £40,000 were subscribed in Ireland. Events in 1919 and 1920 prevented the commencement of any work and the moneys were invested in the names of Trustees until such time when conditions became favourable. In 1921 came the Treaty and the withdrawal of British Troops from Ireland. The question of building a Club for Soldiers who did not exist fell to the ground and people began to submit schemes for the substitution of other plans. Here I saw an opportunity of obtaining a sum of money which would be a nucleus for



Clockwise from left: Map indicating the Ulster Tower's position at Theipval and architectural drawing of the Ulster Tower (Cat ref: WO 32/5868); sections from letter by Major General Hickie on 12 December 1924 to The War Office explaining the political and legal obstacles to building Irish memorials (Cat ref: WO 32/5895)

COMMEMORATION AND REMEMBRANCE

Many people in the Free State appreciated the part Irishmen played in the First World War, as well as their sacrifice (although it had not led directly to the creation of the new, Free State).

20,000 veterans paraded at the 1924 Armistice Day commemoration in front of an estimated 50,000 spectators in College Green, Dublin, where the new Stone Cross (later moved to Guillemont) was first unveiled. Thousands of men and women participated in the annual Remembrance ceremonies throughout the interwar period in the Free State as well as in Northern Ireland. In the 1920s the Free State government was represented every year in the wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph in London.



After the war the sacrifice of Ulster lives on the Somme became part of the creation narrative of the Unionist community. In Ireland as a whole there was a progressive identification of the Somme with just the Protestant-Unionist community. Even the date of battle seemed significant: 1 July being the actual date (by the defunct Julian calendar) of the battle of the Boyne in 1690, a victory of the Protestant King William over the Catholic King James. The Somme was thus conflated with the Boyne and annual ceremonies on 1 July and 11 November were used to recall Ulster's ungrudging sacrifice in the war.



Top: Photograph of College Green, Dublin, on Armistice Day 1924. Copyright National Library of Ireland (Ref HOG 131)
Left: Mural to Somme heroes - present day Cregagh, Belfast. Photograph courtesy of Pacemaker Press, Belfast

LEGACY AND RECONCILIATION



Across Ireland the First World War remains present in the everyday landscape. Memorials are present in public squares, parks, inside churches, schools and sports clubs.

In the south-east Belfast inner suburb of Cregagh, there is a veterans’ ‘colony’ of houses built for ex-servicemen by the Irish Sailors’ and Soldiers’ Land Trust in the 1920s.

In this estate, Picardy and Bapaume Avenues join Thiepval Avenue, crossed by Hamel Drive, Albert Drive and Somme Drive. There is a ‘Messines Park’ in Derry, named after the Belgian battlefield where the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions fought together in 1917. A ‘Haig Gardens’ exists in Cork City, named after the Commander of British forces at the Somme.

Foremost in the Republic is Islandbridge War Memorial Park, Dublin. This contains a ‘Stone of Remembrance’ - rose gardens, fountains and four stone pavilions. Designed by Edwin Lutyens, it was partially completed by 1939, with a public subsidy from the Free State government. Recently restored, it is a place both of contemplation and community. In 2011 it was visited by HM Queen Elizabeth II and the Republic’s President to commemorate the fallen. Ireland has today become more reconciled with its own memory of the First World War.

The Irish government in 2006 issued a commemorative stamp depicting a painting by James Beadle of the Ulster Division going ‘over the top’ on 1 July 1916 - which hangs in Belfast City Hall - as a gesture of reconciliation.

	Bapaume Avenue, Cregagh, Belfast	-	25	Cottage
Postal Address	Picardy "	"	-	29 "
	Thiepval "	"	-	32 "
	Hamel Drive	"	-	18 "
	Albert "	"	-	18 "
	Somme "	"	-	20 "
	Bells Lane	"	-	4 "



Clockwise from top left: Irish Republic stamp of James P. Beadle’s depiction of the Ulster Division, detail from a record from the Irish sailors and soldiers fund (Cat ref: AP5/1), Irelandbridge War Memorial Park (wreaths laid by HM Queen Elizabeth II and President of Ireland Mary McAleese, May 2011)