The Royal Munster Fusiliers were formed from the amalgamation of the 101st and the 104th Foot Regiments, Bengal Fusiliers. These two regiments became the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Royal Munster Fusiliers, under an order passed in July, 1881. Although the regimental headquarters were in Tralee, many of the fusiliers and their officers were Limerickmen.

After spending their first 33 years on tours of duty through much of the British Empire, the Munsters were stationed at Aldershot when the German invasion of neutral Belgium brought England into the war on 4 August, 1914. The Munster Fusiliers formed part of the British Expeditionary Force to France. On 13 August, they left Southampton for the French port of Le Havre, arriving on the Belgian front on 22 August, where they formed part of the 1st of the two British armies, totalling 86,000 men, on a 20 mile front near the Belgian mining town of Mons.

The Germans attacked on the morning of Sunday, 23rd. As the battle raged all that day around the coal fields of Mons, the Munsters somehow escaped the German onslaught. About 5 p.m. the French 5th Army, which was to the right of the fusiliers, began to give way and retreat. Due to a lack of communication between the French and the British, Sir John French, the British commander, did not receive news of the retreat until 11 p.m. Later that night (2 a.m. on Monday 24th), the 1st and 2nd armies received their orders to disengage and pull back. It appears that the strategy was to hold the Germans at bay during daylight, and then fall back under the cover of darkness. That Monday morning, the Munsters were digging in as the German attack was renewed.

On 25 August, the retreating Munsters were expecting to billet at the French town of Landrecies. As the 1st Army entered the town, they encountered on the road a body of troops who wore French uniforms and whose officer spoke in French. Suddenly, these troops, 'without the slightest warning, lowered their bayonets and charged'. They were German soldiers and, like the 1st Army, were also scheduled to billet that night at Landrecies. General Haig, thinking he was under heavy attack, telephoned the headquarters to send help. Assuming the worst, GHQ sent orders altering Haig’s line of retreat for the next day. This move was to split the force in two, the result being that the 1st and 2nd armies lost contact for several days.

After a bayonet charge and a fierce artillery battle and a tiring march on Wednesday the 26th, the Munsters had reached the village of Fesmy, where they received their orders to cover the withdrawal of the remainder of the rearguard.

At 12.30 a.m., the road at Etreux was reported to be clear of all transport. At 1 p.m., orders were dispatched to all rearguard units to retire at once. This
who were now under heavy attack at

Fesmy. The Germans were forced to come

which the Germans were forced to come

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the Germans having

discovered this, raided the house and

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discovered this, raided the house and

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some confusion as to what

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victims from exploding shells

first to drop their rifles and come in. A few

and it would appear that this was to

Explosive shells knocked down the men's

be renewed by taking what was left

from breaking shells and with tree

the Prussian Guard

they relieved the Grenadier Guards. On

the next night, intense artillery fire

they were ordered into the

On the morning of the

through on the Munsters' left and could

As the Prussian Guard came closer, the

with bursting shells and with tree

with bursting shells and with tree

The rifle fire

by then, the trench system had stretched

through France, to the Swiss frontier.

Givenchy, a shot rang out, and what

artillery fire opened up on them, and the

constant vibrations from exploding shells

they relieved the Grenadier Guards. On

As the Prussian Guard

approached, they could be heard singing

Die Wacht am Rheine', the air was filled

Teuton - the point of the bayonet -

On 12 November, the Munsters began

to see H

Forming up to drop their rifles and come in. A few

battalions for nearly 12 hours.

the area was now a sea of mud, and

there had been sporadic fighting

throughout the month, the Germans

made a determined attack, on 25 January, in the village of Givenchy.

In early March, the French army

launched its spring offensive at Arras. To stop the Germans from sending men and supplies down the line, the British army carried out a supporting attack, but their
The Munster Fusiliers on parade at the New (now Sarsfield) Barracks, Limerick.
communication trenches, sweating in their improvised tunic and flannel ‘respirators’, who did not feel a sense of foreboding as they waited for the whistle that signalled the beginning of the assault.

At 6.30 a.m., the infantry clambered out of the trenches and, in a fog of gas and smoke which made it difficult to see where they were going, began their advance across no-man’s-land.

As the communication trenches became filled with the wounded and gassed, the Munsters were ordered to move into the support trenches. A company was ordered into the offensive and went to the aid of the battalion nearest to them. Jumping across the front-line trenches, they were cheered on by some of the soldiers who had been gassed and wounded. They were followed by some of their comrades from B and D. When they reached the German front line, they found that the barbed wire was still intact, and many of them died on the wire. Later in the day, A and D made a second attack, (by this time, the Germans were also being attacked from the rear) and captured 200 Germans.

In the afternoon, the Munsters moved into the captured German trenches, being within 300 yards of Hulluch, and remained there for the rest of the day. That night, they worked ceaselessly bringing up provisions and ammunition, as it was thought that they were fresh and untouched in battle, although 200 of their numbers had been killed or wounded. This is known as the battle of Loos.

The Munsters remained in the captured German trenches until the 29th, when they were relieved by the Irish Guards. On the last day, the adjutant of the battalion was killed. Sergeant-Major John Ring had just left him, when an artillery shell hit the trench. Ring rushed back to help the dying adjutant:

*He was very badly wounded by a ‘Pig’s Squeak’ bursting in the trench. I went to see him at once and, although we knew at the time there was no hope, he still had the old cheery smile which everyone knew so well. I had him removed to the dressing station which was situated in the 1st line German trenches; the doctor looked at him but could do nothing for him. I sent him further down to a Field Ambulance. He died before he reached the hospital.*

Later in October, 350 Munsters tried to hold a sector of the trenches which should have been covered by a battalion. After being reduced by another 100 men, it was quite obvious that the task was beyond their powers and, eventually, they were withdrawn.

Throughout the winter of 1915, the Munsters were out of the front line and spent their time making and re-making trenches, under intermittent shell and rifle fire. The work was hard and tedious.

In early December, a request arrived at the offices of the Limerick Chronicle.

*As a reader of our paper, I would be very much obliged if someone would send us out a melodion to help keep the boys in good heart. The Irish lads are very fond of music, especially these long cold winter nights in France.*

*Prio. P. Costello BEF 2nd Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers.*

On 21 February, 1916, the Germans launched an offensive against the French city of Verdun and it did not go according to plan and, by the end of March, the French had lost 89,000 men, and the Germans 82,000. To relieve the pressure on the French, it was agreed that the offensive on the Somme would begin on 29 June, but, owing to bad weather, it was postponed until 1 July.

That February, the Munsters were back again with the 3rd Brigade, who were still in the Loos sector. In May, there were four battalions of the fusiliers at the front. The 1st Battalion, back from the Fiasco at Gallipoli, were stationed at Mazingarbe, the 2nd at Le Brebis and the 8th and 9th near Loos. Leading up to the Battle of the Somme, raids were made on the German trenches, and the Munsters took part in one of them, on the night of 25 June.

Trench raids were sometimes made to instil fighting spirit. They were also made to gather information on the opposing enemy units, and created uncertainty as to when the offensive might take place. A trench raid was a brutal affair and one of the most dreaded duties. Such raids called for the use of a variety of weapons; knives, spiked clubs, rifles, bayonets, grenades, sharp entrenching tools, fists, boots - at close quarters. When a raid ended, the trenches were left piled with the dead and wounded. And when the raiding party made its escape, the wounded sometimes lay in no-man’s-land, lingering for as long as a week, while they died in agony.

That day, 25 June, was also the second day of the bombardment of the German trenches on the Somme.

As the morning of 1 July broke, it gave no hint to the soldiers the scale of the ordeal to come. The men had been told that the German infantry and their trenches would be destroyed by the artillery, that the attack would be a walk-over, and that they would be able to smoke their pipes or cigarettes as they advanced. It was also made known to them that water should be taken.

At 7.22 a.m., the order was given to fix bayonets: ‘The clinking of steel sounded, down miles of narrow, twisting trench.’

At 7.30 a.m., the artillery barrage which had preceded the attack stopped and 120,000 British soldiers began their advance across no-man’s-land. Within a matter of hours, over 19,000 men lay dead on the battlefield. At the end of the day, another 40,000 were wounded.

By the time the Munsters arrived in the battle area, the fighting had been in progress for nearly two weeks. On 2 July, the German garrison at the fortified village of Fricourt had retreated to the village of Contalmaison. Although Contalmaison had been one of the first day objectives, it was not taken until sometime between the 10 and 12 July. The fusiliers arrived there on the night of 14 July. The German artillery had been shelling the village with gas-shells, and, when the Munsters entered it, the men had to wear inferior gas-helmets for protection. A mile to the left of them was the village of Pozieres and on their right was Mametz and Bazentin le Petit Wood. In front of them stood three lines of German trenches. On the night of 16 July, the Munsters were ordered to capture a section of the German first and second line trenches, on a front of 800 yards. As they moved up to make the assault, they had to pass through an old communication trench, full of dead German soldiers. As the Munsters moved about in the darkness, they were shelled by the German artillery, and some of the men also walked into their own artillery barrages. Around midnight, the Munsters made a dash towards the enemy trenches. The German soldiers put up a strong resistance and the Munsters suffered heavily; but eventually the Germans were driven out. Again, their casualties were heavy.

After capturing the trenches, they spent all around mid-day on the alert. Around noon on the 18th, the long-awaited German counter-attack began. It had rained heavily and the Munsters' trenches were full of mud and water, making many of the rifles unworkable. The fighting was touch-and-go for a while but the fusiliers held their ground. Throughout the afternoon, the fighting continued and interminable, the Munsters capturing five German soldiers. Near midnight, they were relieved by another battalion.

The Munsters had been under bombardment for 100 hours; they had suffered 170 casualties, they had had no sleep or food during the fighting.

On 10 August, the transport section of the Munsters took part in the 3rd Brigade Horse Show, winning four firsts and one second out of five events. On the 20th, the battalion moved back to the front line, a quarter of a mile north of Bazentin le Petit, where they suffered more casualties. On the 24th they were ordered to capture a section of trench, 400 yards long, which was still in German hands. The left and the right of this trench had already been captured, but the German infantry held the bit in the middle. (It was said that another British officer had already refused to attack this position). In the event, the British artillery barrage had been misleading;bad weather and little damage to the Germans. The attack was doomed, even before it began at 7 a.m., in daylight, with "A" Company on the right and "B" on the left. Concealed
German machine-guns opened up and the assault came to a halt. A Company then came under a counter-attack as the Germans tried to pull down the barricade that separated both sides. The Germans were beaten back by a small company of Munsters, who were waiting in reserve. A week later, the Germans evacuated the position.

In early September, the fusiliers manned the support trenches between Bazentin le Petit and Memetz Wood. On the 12th, they moved out of the trenches for what was to have been a month's rest but, by the 17th, they were on their way back to the front again. (During the short interlude, a new and ferocious-looking weapon had appeared on the battlefield – the tank). the Munsters took up a line between Martinpuich and Flers, where they defended their trenches until 25 September, were withdrawn from the front and given their promised month's leave which they spent in huts at Feuguiers, near Abbeville.

At the end of October, the battalion was brought back to an area known as High Wood, near Mametz Wood. They spent their time, from 4 a.m. until noon the next day, restoring communications and rebuilding roads that had virtually disappeared. On 14 November, the Battle of the Somme ended. In its 140 days duration, the British armies had advanced only six miles at a cost of 400,000 casualties. The total number of casualties between the Allies and the Germans was estimated at over 1,300,000.

In December, 1916, General Joffre, the French commander-in-chief, was removed from his position and replaced by General Robert Nivelle, one of the defenders of Verdun. Although Nivelle was seen as a hero, his appointment was to have serious consequences for the French army, by this time suffering from war-weariness. Nivelle had decided to attack the German army south of the Somme, roughly on a front between Soissons and Reims. The British army came to his aid by carrying out a diversionary attack north of the Somme at Arras. Meanwhile, the Germans, although knowing of the impending French attack, were straightening out their front line on the Somme front, between Arras and Soissons; in some parts they withdrew to a distance of between thirty and fifty miles.

As the Germans retired, they destroyed the towns and villages. Key towns such as Péronne were devastated. Trees were laid across roads. Thousands of booby-traps were laid, some of which were extremely ingenious. All this should have been a warning to Nivelle but he chose to ignore it.

On 6 April, America entered the war on the Allied side. The British army attacked at Arras, in a blinding snowstorm, on April and, by 12 April, they had captured a position known as Vimy Ridge. Nivelle's offensive began, in similar conditions, on Monday, 16 April. The men, who had been led to believe that, this would be the deciding battle, were cut down in their thousands.

By Tuesday, Nivelle had lost just
system was destroyed. As the soldiers went over the top on 31 July, the rain began to fall. By 4 August, the ground was turning into a swamp. After setbacks on 16 August, Haig was advised that the attack should be abandoned, but he was committed to carrying on.

At Clifton Camp, on 15 October, it was announced that the landing was postponed but the Munsters remained there until 29 October. By that time, the battle for Passchendaele was entering its final phase.

Concrete German strongpoints, known as pill-boxes, and rain-filled shell-holes dominated the landscape. For the wounded, seeking refuge in a shell-hole was at times fatal. Exhausted and losing blood, they crawled into the holes, only to learn that this move could cost them their lives. Slowly they would slip down the muddy sides, too weak to hold themselves up. Their feeble whispers often could not be heard by their comrades passing by. Each shell-hole with blood on its water usually meant another corpse entombed below.

On 6 November, with cold rain beating down on them, soldiers of the 2nd Canadian Division fought their way through the rubble of what was once the village of Passchendaele.

It was on that day also that the Munsters moved into the battle area. On 8 November, they passed through Ypres on their way to the front line. On 10 November, a new effort was made to extend the front line. The battalion had instructions to capture three of four wrecked farm buildings and some pill-boxes which the Germans were holding; each man was carrying an extra bandolier, 150 rounds of ammunition, steel helmet, two Mills bombs (a forerunner of the hand-grenade). They also carried three days’ rations, waterproof sheet, extra water to drink, and a gas and smoke helmet. As the Munsters moved forward, keeping a distance of fifty-yards behind their artillery barrage, they were attacked by three German aircraft which bombed and machine-gunned them as they advanced. By 6.45 a.m., all the objectives and a number of German prisoners had been taken. At 7 a.m., runners were sent back to battalion headquarters to ask for new instructions on what they were to do next.

At this stage, they were only 800 yards from the summit of Passchendaele Ridge and the company commanders were eager to try to reach it. With no sign of new orders forthcoming, they decided to continue the advance, but the going was tough and at 7.30 a.m., owing to the treacherous terrain and muddy conditions, the advance came to a standstill. Most of the rifles were clogged with mud, and the men tried to clean them by pouring water down the barrels. At 7.50 a.m., German infantry could be seen preparing for a counter attack. At once, the Munsters released four carrier pigeons with a message asking for artillery support. The artillery opened fire soon afterwards; pounding the ground held by the battalion, the missing the advancing Germans. The fusiliers were in a quandary: some of them stayed where they were; others retreated to their original objectives. As the German infantry advanced on a place known as Void Farm, they found the Munsters ready and waiting for them. The fusiliers opened up with their rifles and machine-guns and threw the last of their Mills’ bombs, but still the Germans tried to advance. Suddenly, a new wave of bombs landed in front of the Germans. Although they did not explode, they were enough to discourage the Germans back for a while. The much feared ‘bombs’ were nothing more than clods of mud, pressed to resemble bombs in size and shape.

At 8.30 a.m., the Germans renewed the attack on Void Farm. During this attack, Captain Delmge, a Limerickman, was wounded and captured. When he was on the road to recovery, he was transferred to Mainz in Essen.

Another young Limerickian had not been so lucky. Private John O’Brien, from Arthur’s Quay, a baker by trade, had been killed earlier that morning. In a letter to his father, Captain Jordeson wrote:

He was one of my company, and he fell while taking part in an attack on a German position on the 10 inst. He was a good and gallant soldier, and being a Limerick man myself, I was proud to have him in my company.

As the struggle for Void Farm raged, the Germans found a weak spot on the right of the Battalion. Slowly the fusiliers began to fall back to their own lines to avoid being surrounded, although one group still held one of the pill-boxes. When the Munsters reached the vicinity of their own line, the German artillery concentrated on the, with deadly results. Casualties were by this time enormous, and many of those who fell badly wounded were drowned where they lay.

At 9.30 a.m., a party of thirty Munsters, with the support of their comrades in the captured German pill-box, regained the nearest farm. That afternoon, another battalion was brought in to reinforce the line. Meanwhile, halfway up Passchendaele Ridge, scattered groups of fusiliers still continued to hold out. By nightfall, and with no hope of being rescued, most of them had been captured by the Germans. At 10 p.m. that night, after a twenty-seven hour struggle, the remnants of the battalion were ordered to fall back. Out of the 650 men who had taken part in the operation, only 247 now remained. Five Munsters were killed that day trying to carry messages to the rear – one man did
Commemorative plaque to the Munster Fusiliers at wayside shrine.

under 120,000 men, and a fortnight later the offensive was coming to a grinding halt. By 3 May, mutinies were beginning to break out in the French army. Regiments refused to man the trenches, others said they would defend their trenches but would not attack; red flags were also unfurled. In Paris itself there were strikes and demonstrations among the civilian population. On 28 April, General Petain was made chief of the general staff, and shortly afterwards Neville was asked to resign.

Petain visited the front lines and restored morale and discipline. He promised the men more leave (one of the regiments had been in continuous action since Verdun), increased family allowances to soldiers' wives and improved canteen facilities. But there were to be other consequences. Although General Nivelle was merely demoted, those soldiers who had refused to let themselves be slaughtered in futile attempts to break the German line were executed. One source gives the figure as twenty-three and another as fifty. Two hundred and fifty more were marched to a quiet sector and annihilated by their own artillery. Over a hundred ring-leaders were banished to various French colonies. Especially disruptive units were sent to the most dangerous fronts.

In January, 1917, the Munster Fusiliers marched south, across the Somme River, and took up a position on the front line, not far from the village of Barleux. They remained in this area until St. Patrick's Day. By that time, the German army had evacuated its positions around the town of Peronne and were withdrawing to a new line of defence which the Allies called the Hindenburg Line. The fusiliers re-crossed the Somme on 18 March and began work in the Peronne area by restoring communications which had been destroyed by the retiring Germans. Some of the Munsters became victims of the numerous booby-traps that the Germans had planted. On 24 May, the Battalion won three competitions at the 1st Division's Sports Day. Towards the end of June, the Munsters moved up to the Belgian coast near the town of Nieuport. About twenty miles below them, at Messines, the opening shots had already been fired in what is officially known as the Third Battle of Ypres, a battle that was to culminate in the blood and mud struggle for Passchendaele Ridge.

The Munsters were relieved at the front line on 4 July, from there they marched to their billets at Champermont Camp. On 10 July, German artillery shells rained down on the camp, destroying most of the huts and killing seven men; another forty-one were wounded. Regimental Sergeant-Major John Ring, oblivious to the danger, supervised the evacuation of the remaining soldiers. When the Battalion returned to the front two days later, it again came under heavy artillery fire. One of the men, unable to stand the strain, rushed forward towards the German lines. He was followed by a private named Donovan who brought him back, under heavy fire, to their own lines. Private Donovan was one of six Munsters who, after the fighting at Etreux, in August, 1914, had hidden in France for a number of months. Eventually, he escaped through Belgium and Holland and returned the battalion in August, 1915.

On 19 July, the 1st Division, of which the Munsters were part, moved to a special training camp, situated south-west of Dunkirk. This was Clipon Camp (nicknamed ‘Hush Camp’) and it was here that the Battalion went into training for an amphibious landing behind the German lines. The 1st Division were to make an assault on the Belgian coast at Zeebrugge and Ostend in order to capture the German submarine bases which were at that time causing serious losses to Allied shipping. The landings were due to take place about two weeks after the opening of General Haig’s Flanders offensive.

General Haig believed he could force a successful conclusion to the war by driving the German forces out of Belgium. The ground over which the battle was to be fought was reclaimed marshland. The city of Ypres had once been a seaport and it was now an inland city only because of the man-made drainage systems. The ground between Ypres and Passchendaele was composed of clay fields. When it rained the water formed swamps and pools and sluggishly spread towards the already swollen rivers and canals.

When the British artillery opened fire on 22 July, the precarious drainage
eventually succeed in making the terrible journey.

After the Battle of Passchendaele, the Munsters were moved to Elkhoeck camp where they went into training and were re-organised as a battalion. On Christmas Day, 1917, each company provided the detachment for its own trench. There had been heavy snowfalls in the area and, when a thaw set in on 6 January, 1918, the training ground was a foot deep in water. By this time, the battalion had been brought up to a strength of 867 men. Rumour had it, at that time, that the German army was massing troops on the Western Front, with the aim of crushing their opponents before the arrival of the American army.

On 29 January, 1918, the Munsters learned that they were to sever their connection with the 1st Division in which they had served since the beginning of the war. They were now transferred to the 16th Irish Division. Father Gleeson, their Battalion chaplain, was left behind and remained attached to the 3rd Brigade. On 2 February, they boarded the train that took them down to the old battlefields of the Somme, where they were to join the 4th Infantry Brigade.

On 10 February, they took up positions on the front line, just outside the village of Epehy. On 21 March, the long awaited and much feared German offensive (code-named St. Michael) began. The greatest artillery barrage the world had ever seen pounded the 3rd Irish Division. Father Gleeson, the 4th Infantry Brigade's Battalion chaplain, was left behind at the Brigade H.Q. As darkness set in, the pursuing Germans gave up the chase. It was often noticed that when the retreating soldiers laid down to rest, the Germans followed suit, too weak to fight. At this crucial stage, the Germans had pushed the Allies back nearly forty miles. That night, the Munsters were to the east of Mericourt village where they formed a defensive line with the 2nd Dublin Fusiliers and the South Irish Horse.

The Germans attacked early the next morning, with the Munsters, under artillery support, beat them back each time they tried to advance. Just about noon, a battalion on the left of the Munsters was withdrawn. The Germans soon spotted this gap and occupied it. A counter-attack was organised, and a party of nine Munsters drove the Germans back out and re-established contact with the South Irish Horse. Throughout the afternoon, repeated German attacks were beaten off. At 7 p.m., the officer commanding the Dublin Fusiliers, who were on the right of the Munsters, came across to report that there was no sign of the enemy.

The next day, the troops on the left of the Munsters, who in the dark, the two opposing groups met; some words were exchanged; then the German officer shot dead a Dublin Fusilier, and was at once gunned down by the retaliating fusiliers, who then wiped out the whole patrol.

Following the Crozet Canal and the Somme had proved to be a dangerous
strategy, and so it was decided to take a bearing from the stars and head westwards. This proved to be a wiser move, and at 3.30 a.m. on 28 March, the Allied front line at Hamel Wood was finally reached. The Munsters marched into the village of Hamel at 4 a.m. and, after having something to eat, settled down to a long overdue sleep, but it proved to be short-lived. At 6.30 am., the village had to be evacuated, as it was expected that the Germans would bombard it. Exhausted and disorientated by the lack of sleep, the fusiliers gradually pulled themselves togethe...
On 6 October, the Munsters and the Dublin Fusiliers moved into some dugouts near the village of Gouy. That afternoon, some of the garrison were seen running away, while others put up their hands in surrender. As the fog cleared, the battalion took part in the operations to cross the Selle River and capture the village of Bazuel. Having crossed the waterway, the Munsters, rallied by the sound of their commanding officer's hunting horn, came in from all angles and captured the two strong points and dugout posts hidden in the village.

Orders and counter orders followed each other in rapid succession; nobody seemed to know what to do. On top of that, the Germans had launched counter-attacks which went the front line back in two places. Eventually, an attack was got under way at 5.30 a.m. on the morning of 18 October. As the day dawned, a heavy fog hung over the battlefield, and it was impossible to see twenty yards ahead. The objective was an imaginary line on a map and, at 6.30 a.m. as the fog cleared, the battalion advanced, with the Dublin Fusiliers on their right. Abandoned German dugouts, machine-gun emplacements, trench mortars and equipment of all kinds were found all over the battlefield. The last obstacle in their line of advance was an orchard, 500 yards square. This was held in strength by the Germans but, eventually, resistance was overcome; some of the garrison were seen running away, while others put up their hands in surrender.

Meanwhile, some Munsters and Dublin Fusiliers lost direction in the fog and, when it cleared away, found themselves near Bazuel. After fighting their way into the village, they had to abandon it around 8.30 a.m., when a British artillery barrage came down on it. For the rest of the day, the Munsters remained in a position 1,000 yards west of the village. On the morning of the 19th, the 25th Division marched through the battalion's line and occupied Bazuel. Before the Battle of the Selle, the fusiliers' strength was 322 men; after the fighting it was reduced to 210. The following fortnight was spent at Maretz; where the Munsters went through the usual process of re-organisation. Several drafts arrived, which brought the strength to nearly 400 men.

On 30 October, Turkey threw in the towel and signed an armistice, and the Austro-Hungarian empire followed suit, on 3 November. In Germany itself revolution had broken out, and it was to be only a matter of days before the country looked for an armistice.

On the afternoon of 3 November, the Munsters, in preparation for the assault of Mormal Forest, left their billets near La Cateau and arrived at the village of Fontaine au Bois at 1.30 a.m. on the 4th. Here, they were allotted the task of mopping-up behind the advancing troops. By the afternoon of the 5th, the battalion had left the forest, crossed the River Sambre, and spent the night in billets at Munsen advances the 7th of the Nor support to be cut the German side, but on it. A brough houses; went a river at German rest of across the the gal surrend Willshill village out the 7th, the artillery 4 a.m. the 9th, the Sars-Pt p.m. v march that did 2nd 11th they w did no fightin On messenger...
The Munsters left that morning at 6 a.m. and advanced towards the village of Noyelle; the 7th Wiltshires were on their left and the Northumberland Fusiliers were in support. Outside the village, a river had to be crossed; the bridge was down and the Germans, hidden in houses on the far side, had several machine-guns trained on it. While the Wiltshires tried to outflank the Germans, the Munsters brought a steady fire to bear on the houses; while another party of fusiliers went downstream, waded across the river and surrounded the village. As a German field-gun shelled the road, the rest of the battalion made their way across the stream. The Germans saw that the game was up and sixty of them surrendered to the Munsters before the Wiltshires arrived. Later on that day, the village of St. Remy was taken. Throughout the night of the 6th and all day on the 7th, the battalion came under heavy artillery fire; the shelling continued until 4 a.m. on the 8th. On the morning of the 9th, the fusiliers marched eastwards to Sars-Poteries. They arrived there at 2.30 p.m. whistling the 'Marseillaise', as they marched into the village. It was also on that day that the Great War ended for the 2nd Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers, as they were 'whipped off' the pursuit and did not take part in any more of the fighting.

The Munsters won the British Army's Victoria Cross for the second time. It was awarded for bravery in the face of the enemy.

On the morning of November 11th, a message was sent out to all the armies on the Western Front - French, British, American, and, of course, German - which stated that hostilities would cease at 11 a.m. That night, each side treated the other to fantastic fireworks displays of rockets, flares, signal-lights and burning explosives. The next day would bring a million problems of withdrawal and reparation, of occupation and control. Men who had been trained to kill, and had killed, would now be returning home and be expected to lead normal lives.

During the Great War - a more appropriate name would have been the Great Slaughter - more than 8,000 men passed through the ranks of the 2nd Munsters, and out of that number 4,261 were classed as killed, wounded, and missing. After the war, and prior to their disbandment in 1922, the Munsters served in Egypt and the Sudan.

When the survivors came home to Limerick and other parts of Munster, they got a mixed reception. They had returned to a changed country. The nationalist movement, led by Sinn Féin, was in the ascendancy. Although they hardly expected a hero's welcome, they had fought bravely under desperate conditions and were, at least, worthy of admiration and respect.

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