

British Army Recruitment in Limerick during WW1

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The enlistment of Limerick men in the British army during the Great War is discussed and analysed. It is clear from the study that very considerable numbers were recruited, particularly in the early months of the war. The high casualty rate, impact of the 1916 Rising and the threat of conscription in 1918 reduced the rate of recruitment but men continued to enlist and the factors which motivated or deterred them are examined.

With the declaration of war against Germany on 4 August 1914 Britain at once mobilised her army and navy, and recalled the men on the reserve to the colours.¹ Throughout Limerick City and County reservists presented themselves at various railway stations to be conveyed to their respective depots, as well as to Portsmouth, the naval base in England.² At the commencement of the war there was 20,780 Irishmen serving in the regular army, and to 15 October 1916, a total of 17,804 reservists of whom 277 or 1.56 per cent Limerick men rejoined the army.³ There were also 38,584 Irishmen in the British Expeditionary Force [BEF], created in 1907 to maintain control in the colonial outposts, and which was sent to France at the outbreak of the war, engaging the German army in the first battle of the war at Mons, Belgium 23 August 1914.

The total strength of the army was 247,432 officers and men, one third of who were on overseas duty in India.⁴ While it was regarded by the standards of the day as 'incomparably the best trained, best organised, and best equipped British Army which ever went forth to war',⁵ it was not numerically strong enough to engage in a war that Field Marshal Lord Kitchener,⁶ who was appointed Secretary of State for War, anticipated would last at least three years.⁷ Kitchener set in motion plans for the establishment of what became known as Kitchener's army or K1.⁸ The call went out on 10 August 1914 for the first 100,000 men to enlist 'as immediately necessary in the present grave national emergency' and this figure was achieved within a period of two weeks.⁹ K1 consisted of six divisions, one of which was the 10th (Irish) Division. An additional call was made in September 1914 for another 100,000 men to create six more divisions or K 2; the 16th (Irish) Division was one of these.

¹ *Limerick Chronicle* [L.C.], 24 Sept. 1914.

² *Cork Examiner* [C.E.], 5 & 6 August 1914.

³ NAI, Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers (CSORP) no. 20933, 13 Nov. 1916, 25625, 23. Nov. 1916; *Report on Recruiting In Ireland 1914-16* Cd 8168 Volume XXXIX (London 1916) p. 2.

⁴ Tim Travers, 'The Army and the Challenge of War' in David Chandler (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army* (Oxford 1994) p. 215.

⁵ Brigadier General J.E. Edmonds, *History of the Great War, Military Operations France and Belgium, 1914* (London 1922) pp 10-11.

⁶ *Freeman's Journal* [F.J.], 7 June 1916; Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Lord Kitchener was born 24 June 1850 at Gunsboro Villa, near Tralee, Co.Kerry.

⁷ L.C., 29 September 1914.

⁸ *Report on Recruiting In Ireland*, p. 2.

⁹ F.J., 10 August 1914.

The term of enlistment for each volunteer of these new armies was for three years or for the duration of the war; those joining were to be between 19 and 30 years of age.¹⁰ The age for recruits was further extended in May 1915 to 40 years, and the height requirement was reduced to 5ft 2ins.¹¹ In addition to this in January 1916 the War Office issued a new order in an effort to get healthy retired soldiers from the regular army to re-engage, which would enable them to complete twenty-one years service, and thereby be entitled to a pension.¹² Separation allowances were also improved with a view to increasing the rate of recruitment. Medical officers and civilian doctors regularly passed men fit who had poor eyesight and other problems. The payment of 2s. 6d for each man passed provided an inducement to the civilian practitioners to process as many as possible.¹³ Recruiting sergeants also received the same amount and were eager to ensure that as many as possible were accepted irrespective of whether they were above or below the official age. Examples of this practice in Limerick are Lance Corporal John Nash, who was sixteen years of age and had only six months service when he died as a result of wounds received on 27 February 1916¹⁴ and Private George Gardiner, aged fifty-nine when he was killed in action 28 April 1916.¹⁵ However, some recruiters conscientiously turned away those either too young or too old.¹⁶

The initial reaction in Ireland to the war was one of uncertainty. In particular the attitude of the leader of the Irish MPs in the House of Commons, John Redmond, and the fate of the Third Home Rule Bill, were crucial. When the Bill received the royal assent on 18 September Redmond came out unequivocally in favour of Irishmen joining the British army and he strongly encouraged the Irish Volunteers to enlist. In May 1914 it was reported that there were 3,599 Volunteers in Limerick city and county¹⁷ and this figure had increased substantially up to the outbreak of the war.¹⁸ When Redmond came to Limerick in December 1914, it was estimated that 5,000 National Volunteers from all over Munster gathered at Greenpark to hear him encourage them to enlist.¹⁹ However the Limerick regiment had passed a resolution in early August, before the split in the movement,²⁰ that their involvement should only be 'for the defence of the rights and liberties of the people of Ireland - not for the Crown or Empire'²¹ and an interesting attempt by some prominent Unionists in the Limerick area to form an alliance with the Volunteers had failed.

At the outbreak of the war Lord Monteagle had called for co-operation in détente with the Volunteers in the preservation of order and in defending the country, and on that basis he was prepared to join the Volunteers.²² There was an immediate response from N.A.F. Kingscote, who described himself as Major, late Royal Engineers, indicating that he was prepared to offer his services to the City Corps of the Volunteers in order to place them on a military basis for local defences.²³ A senior retired

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *L.C.*, 20 May 1915.

¹² *Ibid.*, 18 Jan 1916.

¹³ Peter Simkins, 'The Four Armies 1914-1918' in *Oxford Illustrated History of the British Army*, p. 244.

¹⁴ *Limerick Leader* [L.L.], 13 March 1916 & Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), Royal Munster Fusiliers Casualty List (Berkshire 1996) p. 25: John Nash, Lance Corporal. Army Number 6526, 2nd Bn. RMF, was the son of Jane Nash, 9 John Street, Limerick; he is buried in Bethune town cemetery, France.

¹⁵ Munster Fusiliers Casualty List, p. 37: George Gardiner, Private, Army Number 4584, 9th Bn. RMF, was the husband of Margaret Gardiner, 2 Taylor's Row, Limerick; he is buried in Dud Corner cemetery, France.

¹⁶ Clive Hughes, 'A Nation In Arms' in Ian Beckett, & Keith Simpson (eds), *A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester 1985) pp 102-3.

¹⁷ PRO, CO 904/93, County Inspector's Report 1 June 1914.

¹⁸ PRO, CO 904/94, County Inspector's Report 31 July 1914.

¹⁹ PRO, CO 904/95, County Inspector's Report 1 Jan. 1915.

²⁰ The Volunteers split into the National Volunteers led by Redmond and the minority Irish Volunteers led by Eoin MacNeill over the former's support for the war.

²¹ NLI, Moore papers MS 10549 (5), letter 11 August from R.P. O'Connor. Honorary Secretary.

²² *L.C.*, 4 August 1914.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8 August 1914.

officer, Colonel Massey Westropp became a member of the Volunteers²⁴ and was appointed to the position of joint inspecting officer for Co. Limerick, on the recommendation of Monteagle.²⁵ He resigned after a short period however, indicating that his appointment had not been well received in County Limerick, and that as civilians wanted to control the movement, they would be quite impossible to deal with. In this he was correct, there was an element of discontent from members of the Volunteers who were not at all pleased with the foisting of ex-officers with strong unionist views on the various corps by the Head Office in Dublin.²⁶ Captain W. Harkness another retired officer also joined and was asked by Limerick County Council to form a Corps of Volunteers in the Glin and adjacent district and was prevailed upon to take command of them.²⁷ Captain & Brevet Major J.J. Sweetman of the Worcestershire Regiment offered his services, and though granted the position of inspecting officer, eventually declined.²⁸ Ex-Lieutenant John Holland, Royal Army Service Corps, and H.M.V. O'Brien formerly of the Imperial Yeomanry were involved in training members of the Limerick City Regiment of the Volunteers.²⁹ Major-General Lloyd, Beechmount, Rathkeale, the highest-ranking retired officer in the Limerick area, gave the local Volunteers a cheque for £3 to pay for additional equipment.³⁰ The main reason that has been offered to explain these men's participation with nationalists is their belief that they were the natural leaders of the country. They therefore 'hoped to retrieve their deteriorating position in Irish politics and Irish life by putting themselves once more at the head of the "tenantry" which would lead to a new beginning in the governance of the country and hoping that the latter would be kept loyal to the British connection'.³¹ When the War Office indicated that it would not have any hand in the training of the Volunteers unless they were under its control, the ex-officers resigned.³²

Lord Dunraven, who was the Honorary Colonel of the 5th Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers, the local regiment, was also full of praise for the Volunteers, indicating that 'no scheme for Irish service in the war, which fails to take account of the National Volunteer Force, can do justice to what Ireland can give'.³³ Dunraven also encouraged men to join the new Irish Division that Kitchener was establishing. Although 'Division' was the proper title, he preferred to call it the 'Irish Brigade', because it recalled great memories from a distant past. He was referring to the Irish Brigade that fought in the service of France in previous centuries. It was to this 16th (Irish) Division that the majority of the National Volunteers, who enlisted, were assigned and which in Ireland was, in fact, generally referred to as the 'Irish Brigade'.

Dunraven also suggested that members of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) should be allowed to enlist with a guarantee that their positions in the force would be retained for them.³⁴ Even without such a promise 'twelve men from the Limerick City Constabulary volunteered ... for the army' by

²⁴ NLI, Maurice Moore Papers MS 10549(5), letters and other documents relating to the Irish Volunteers in Co. Limerick, application for membership of the Irish Volunteers, 29 August 1914; Colonel Massey Westropp, age 54, resided at Doonass, Clonlara, Co. Limerick, he had served as a Captain in the 12th Lancers and had commanded the 5th Battalion RMF for seven years.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, the other inspecting officer was Captain J.J. Holland, Rose Cottage, Ballinacurra.

²⁶ Thomas Hennessy, *Dividing Ireland, World War I and Partition* (London 1998) p. 65.

²⁷ NLI, Maurice Moore Papers MS 10549(5), Captain W. Harkness, Cahara, Glin, fought in the Zulu War 1889 and South Africa War 1899-1902.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, & L.L., 8 Dec 1915; Captain & Brevet (acting) Major J.J. Sweetman was a native of Queen's county, and resided at Richmond, Limerick.

²⁹ PRO, CO 904/120, Synopsis of County Inspector's Report for April 1914, National Volunteer 6 February 1915 & NLI, MS 1059 (5), Holland returned to the Royal Army Service Corp 30 January 1915.

³⁰ L.C., 1 April 1915.

³¹ Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism: the Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland 1885-1922* (Dublin 1972) p. 32.

³² Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation* (Dublin 1999) p. 152.

³³ C.E., 6 October 1914.

³⁴ *Irish Times*, 5 October 1914, L.C., 6 October 1914, C.E., 6 October 1914.

early November.³⁵ The entire staff of the barracks at Shanagolden, Co. Limerick, consisting of a sergeant and three constables later joined up.³⁶ Most RIC men joined the Irish Guards, which had been allocated a quota of 200 in 1914. Nine times that number volunteered and as a result only four from Limerick were initially accepted,³⁷ but others were later on.³⁸

Although Limerick had several military barracks situated at various locations throughout the city,³⁹ recruitment was initially confined to the Strand Barracks, which was the headquarters of the 5th Bn RMF.⁴⁰ Thus any man in the Limerick area seeking to enlist would have been greatly encouraged to join that regiment. The exception to this was that recruits for the Army Service Corps were taken at the New Barracks.⁴¹ While the vast majority of Limerick men served in the Royal Munster Fusiliers, some joined the Connacht Rangers, such as Privates Michael O'Brien⁴² and Michael Wixted,⁴³ or the Leinster Regiment, such as Private Patrick Hayes⁴⁴ or the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, such as Percy Alexander.⁴⁵ Free railway passes were available to all intending recruits who had to travel distances, on application to any police barracks.⁴⁶ Recruitment, it was reported for the first three months of the war, was very brisk, averaging ten men a day, tapering off during the month of November. However, it increased again after Christmas, so that by the end of January 1915, approximately 940 men many of whom were National Volunteers had enlisted.⁴⁷

In order to maintain the impetus in attracting recruits regular meetings were held in the city and county. These meetings proved successful; seventy-six men had enlisted during the closing days of March 1915, many of them, as before, indicating a strong preference for the 'Irish Brigade'.⁴⁸ In conjunction with these meetings the RMF sent two detachments of the 8th & 9th, to Limerick as part of their tour of recruiting for the 'Irish Brigade'. The 8th was under the command of Captain Larry Roche, a well-known figure throughout county Limerick, and who was reputedly responsible for influencing some of the National Volunteers from the Dromin Corps to join the army.⁴⁹ To emphasise the strong connection that the battalion had with Limerick, the nuns of the Good Shepherd Convent in the city made a religious banner depicting the Sacred Heart subscribed for by public donation of not more than one shilling per person. It was then sent to the battalion where Roche wrote 'that the

³⁵ L.C., 17 November 1914.

³⁶ C.E., 1 March 1916.

³⁷ C.E., 27 January 1915, F.J., 18 November 1915; Jim Herlihy, *The Royal Irish Constabulary* (Dublin 1997) pp 161, 191, 206, 222; Constable Thomas Shannon, Private, 2nd Bn Irish Guards, Army Number 6653, was wounded and awarded the Military Medal; Constable Martin Molloy, Private, Irish Guards, Army Number 6649, was KIA 13 September 1916; Constable P. Kavanagh, Private, Irish Guards; Constable W. Carr, Private, Irish Guards, died 17 February 1922.

³⁸ Such as Sergeant William Burke, Ashford, Constables James Mitchell & John Sullivan, Abbeyfeale, and Constable Thomas Burke, Caherconlish, who also served with the Irish Guards, Herlihy, RIC, p 199; not all RIC men served with the Irish Guards, District Inspector Martin, Newcastle West was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Royal Irish Regiment, was discharged as medically unfit for service 16 October 1918 and rejoined the RIC 3 April 1920.

³⁹ New Barracks (now Sarsfield Barracks) located at Edward Street; Ordnance Barracks located at Mulgrave Street; King John's Castle barracks and Strand Barracks, located at the North Strand, now Clancy Strand.

⁴⁰ L.C., 12 June 1917; during this month also a meeting was held in the Town Hall to discuss the erection of a memorial to the men of the battalion who had fought and died during the war, however nothing came of it.

⁴¹ C.E., 1 Oct 1914.

⁴² CWGC, *Limerick Casualties of World War One* (Berkshire 2000) p. 40; O'Brien, Michael Private, Army Number 1038, 5th Battalion Connaught Rangers. KIA 21 August 1915, age 30, son of Thomas O'Brien, Sand Mall; husband of Julia O'Brien, 15 Corporation Cottages, Sand Mall, no known grave, commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Gallipoli, Turkey, Panel 181 to 183.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 41, Wixted, Michael Private, Army Number 1450, 5th Bn Connaught Rangers, KIA 6 September 1915, age 22, brother of Mrs Elizabeth Roche, 3 Bank Place, Limerick, commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Gallipoli, Turkey, Panel 181-183.

⁴⁴ *Soldiers Died in the Great War 1914-19*, (SDGW), *The Leinster Regiment*. (Suffolk 1989) p 19; Hayes, Patrick Private, Army Number 496, 6th Bn Leinster Regiment, born Limerick, enlisted in Limerick, died Gallipoli, 24 December 1915.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Alexander, Percy Private, Army Number 16657, 7th Bn. Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Born Limerick, enlisted in Waterford, KIA Gallipoli 16 August 1915.

⁴⁶ L.C., 9 June 1915; C.E., 28 Sept 1918.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2 February 1915.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 April 1915.

⁴⁹ Mainchín Seoighe, *Dromin Athlacca* (Limerick 1978) pp 86, 174.

banner so kindly sent by the good people of Limerick was greatly admired by all...that Limerick muscle and brains would yet make the Hun regret his attack (barbarous and furious) on civilisation'.⁵⁰

Two officers Lieutenants D. D. Sheehan, an independent MP for Mid-Cork,⁵¹ and Cregan of the 9th Bn presented themselves at Cruise's Hotel during the month of March 1915, with the purpose of gaining recruits for it. Although the battalion claimed a strong Cork ethos,⁵² it was reported that close to a hundred men each week joined it.⁵³ The required number of recruits for all the battalions of the 16th (Irish) Division at its establishment was 1,050, which increased by 50 during the month of July 1915, and reduced during August 1915 to 988 men. The numerical strength of the 8th and 9th RMF increased steadily from March 1915 to August 1915, despite the alterations mentioned, and the fact that 1,200 men had been sent to the 10th Division to complete its establishment. Given that the strength of a battalion normally varied from 1,000 to 1,100 men,⁵⁴ it was reported on 2 March 1915 that there was 625 men in the 8th leaving 425 to complete its establishment, and 646 in the 9th leaving 404 to complete its strength. By 29 August 1915, just before the Division left for Britain to complete its training they had a surplus to requirements, the 8th boasting 1,143, some 155 in excess of requirements, and the 9th having 1,026, giving them a surplus of 38 men.

According to the casualty lists, there were 190 in the 8th of which 60 or 31.58 % came from Limerick and 60 casualties in the 9th of which only 8 or 13.30% came from Limerick.⁵⁵ However, the small number of Limerick men recorded as casualties in the 9th Bn may be due to the fact that its existence was short-lived. It was amalgamated with three other battalions of the RMF at the end of May 1916, to replace casualties in these. In total 22 officers and 486 other ranks were transferred to the 1st, 2nd, and 8th, with the latter receiving the majority.⁵⁶

It is difficult to ascertain precisely the number of National Volunteers who joined from Limerick City and County. However, Henry Meaney, a member of the local city corps in a letter dated 12 September 1915 to Colonel Moore reported that out of 1,100 volunteers in the city who sided with Redmond, 500 had joined the colours.⁵⁷ The date on this letter is significant, because official figures indicated that between 16 August 1915 and 15 September 1916, some 249 National Volunteers had enlisted in the city and county. Therefore it can be safely stated that over 600 National Volunteers, at a conservative estimate, had joined the colours locally and it was to the 'Irish Brigade' that they went.

Although not part of the 'Irish Brigade' the regimental band of the Irish Guards accompanied by recruiting officers arrived in Limerick during the month of April 1915. They were greeted by a significant number of the population, who converged on the railway station, and included about a dozen of the National Volunteers accompanied by three of the city bands.⁵⁸ They thronged the

⁵⁰ L.L., 24 May 1916 & L.C., 17 June 1916; this banner is now preserved in Kilmallock museum.

⁵¹ Thomas P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English Soldiers?* (Liverpool 1995) p. 199; D.D. Sheehan was also the Honorary General Secretary of the All for Ireland League and President of the Land and Labour Association, three of his sons enlisted and two were killed in action.

⁵² L.C., 7 January 1915.

⁵³ F.J., 31 March 1915; L.C., 1 April 1915 states they had enlisted eighty-two men in the course of the two nights that they were there.

⁵⁴ CSORP 21679, 1918, list giving strength of 16th Division from 2 March 1915 to 29 August 1915 & letter dated 18 January 1916 from the Department of Recruiting for Ireland.

⁵⁵ SDGW, pp 31-2.

⁵⁶ Tom Johnstone, *Orange Green and Khaki* (Dublin 1992), p. 213; Captain S. McCance, *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers*, Volume II (Aldershot 1927) pp 196-7 & 203-4.

⁵⁷ NLI, Moore Papers. MS 1058 (5), letter 12 September 1915 from Henry Meaney, 12 John Street, to Colonel Moore; the *Limerick Leader* 19 May 1916 concurred more or less with these figures, stating that the National Volunteers in the city had between four and five hundred serving with the colours.

⁵⁸ PRO, CO 904/96, County Inspector's Report 1 May 1915; L.L., 3 Feb 1916: these usually consisted of the Boherbuoy Brass Band, St. Mary's Fife & Drum and Sarsfield Fife & Drum Bands. The former two had 22 & 34 Limerick men respectively serving with the colours while the latter had between 20 & 30 serving while another, the Number 9, was practically depleted of its members.

thoroughfares to such an extent that the police had difficulty in controlling the traffic. The officers established recruiting offices in Cruise's Hotel;⁵⁹ at a recruiting meeting held outside the hotel, Bryan O'Donnell and Sergeant Major Rahilly spoke.⁶⁰ O'Donnell stressed that men of military age should join the army, not only for the honour of Ireland and the fact that we were now loyal citizens of the empire, but also to avenge the men and priests of Belgium and France who had been inhumanely treated. Rahilly appealed for men to join the 'Irish Brigade' and recalled that the first man to join the Irish Guards was an O'Brien from Ballyneety.

Although some success was recorded, as thirty recruits had joined up,⁶¹ the authorities were not pleased with the result.⁶² The arrival of Sergeant M. O'Leary of the same regiment attracted large numbers of people to a meeting held at the O'Connell Monument on 17 July. The inclusion of a soldier who had been awarded the Victoria Cross for valour in France it was hoped would encourage men to enlist.⁶³ Again, the appeal was for men of military age to follow his example. At the same meeting Mr McLoughlin, the Hon Director of the Irish Recruiting Council, lauded the fact 'that Limerick had done well'⁶⁴ but claimed that he had been informed that employers in the city did not want any more men to enlist.⁶⁵ This does not seem to have been true to any great extent. At a public meeting held at Cruise's Hotel during the month of August for the purpose of encouraging recruitment in the city and county some notable members of the business community attended.⁶⁶ In addition to this Limerick employers guaranteed at a meeting in November 1915 that their workers would have their jobs back on their return from military service after the war, and that every consideration would be given in dealing with their pay.⁶⁷ While the majority of men in Limerick enlisted in the regiments of the 'Irish Brigade', some joined other regiments, as in the case of five members of the LPYMA who enlisted in a Scottish regiment, the Seaforth Highlanders.⁶⁸

In November 1915 Wimborne, the Lord Lieutenant, issued an appeal for fifty thousand Irishmen to join the army, which was posted to all households in Limerick and also printed in the *Limerick Chronicle*.⁶⁹ Following this it was reported that approximately 'one dozen young men from Newcastle West which is already well represented in the army, joined the colours in Limerick' as a result of the circular.⁷⁰ Another report indicated that 'one hundred recruits had been received, and more were daily offering'.⁷¹ Wimborne visited Limerick and held a recruiting conference at Cruise's Hotel on 27 November 1915. Those who attended were given an opportunity of discussing the various phases of the recruiting with him and included members of the business community, politicians, farmers and trade union officials. It was important to have all of these people on the side of the recruiting campaign to present a united front. During the course of his speech he directed his attention to the farmers and shopkeepers and publicans, who he admitted had been somewhat reluctant to enlist. He emphasised that it would be very important to have some of them, as well as parish priests, on

⁵⁹ L.L., 21 April 1915; L.C., 22 April 1915.

⁶⁰ Harry Greensmith & Tom Toomey, *An Antique And Storied Land* (Limerick 1992) pp 186-7.

⁶¹ L.C., 22 April 1915.

⁶² PRO, CO 904/96, County Inspector's Report 1 May 1915.

⁶³ The Victoria Cross is the highest award for valour that can be attained by an airman, sailor or soldier in the British military system.

⁶⁴ L.C., 17 July 1915; PRO, CO 904/96, County Inspector's Report 31 July 1915.

⁶⁵ L.L., 17 July 1915.

⁶⁶ L.C., 12 August 1915.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 30 November 1915 & 11 December 1915; L.L., 13 December 1915.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17 Nov 1914, 11 October 1917; L.L., 12 Oct 1917, one of these men, Second Lieutenant James Dunn, was killed in action, prior to joining the colours he was employed as an assistant at Mr J. Stewart's City Pharmacy, 45 George (O'Connell) Street.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2 Nov 1915 & 4 Nov 1915.

⁷⁰ L.L., 5 Nov 1915.

⁷¹ L.C., 6 Nov 1915.

canvassing committees, which should be set up in small towns and villages. The wounded ex-soldier should also be a part of these committees.⁷² The inclusion of such influential people on these committees would as far as he was concerned boost recruitment.⁷³ Many of the committees and platform parties in Limerick had in fact been doing that already. Some priests did appear on recruiting platforms, although not regularly, though they do not appear to have served on any of the recruiting committees that were established locally.⁷⁴ The exclusion of agricultural interests reflected the general apathy in farming circles throughout Ireland.⁷⁵

The *Limerick and District Recruiting Committee* was established in August 1915, and concentrated on providing incentives for enlistment. One such idea was the distribution of what was called Certificates of Honour [Plate 1] issued by the Central Council for the Organisation of Recruiting in Ireland. Relatives of officers and men could apply for these 'most treasured documents',⁷⁶ designed to make 'the relatives of the brave men who were serving their country' feel proud, and hopefully inspire others to join so that their relations could also get these prized possessions.⁷⁷ The presentation of these certificates was made at recruiting meetings, such as those held at Belfield and the O'Connell Monument in the city, and in the county at Rathkeale and Kilmallock.⁷⁸

Some speakers at meetings listed the names of men from localities who had joined, in the belief that it would encourage other. At Kilmallock reference was made to Lieutenant Walsh, George Clarson, Denis Taylor, John Fitzgerald and others, all hailed as men to be proud of. While at Glin a speaker was heard to refer to the National Volunteers from West Limerick serving with the colours, notably, Private John Walsh, RMF, who was an instructor of the Loughill INV prior to enlistment, and Private Patrick Mulvihill also of the RMF.⁷⁹

Another way of promoting enlistment was to publish details and photographs of the families of men who were serving with the colours as well as photographs of men who were awarded medals of distinction for bravery. One such family was that of Mrs Johanna McKnight, 26 Upper Henry Street, Limerick. She had seven sons in the army, who belonged to the RMF and Leinster Regiment. The details with photographs were published under the heading 'A Limerick Recruiting Record'.⁸⁰ Another was that of Corporal P. Hogan, 8th Bn. RMF, Blossom Hill, Rathkeale, who received what was known as the Hickie Parchment, for distinguished conduct in the field. Major Roche of the same battalion wrote that 'Rathkeale ought to feel proud of having produced the man capable of performing heroic deeds in face of a determined enemy and in the greatest war the world has ever known' and that this applied equally 'to all the Rathkeale boys in our regiment, to every Limerick City and County man in the ranks of the RMF'.⁸¹

The Provincial Sub-Director of Recruiting, Sir Charles Barrington, in a letter to one of the national newspapers sought photographs of men from the Limerick district who had been awarded the VC, DCM, or mentioned in despatches. The purpose of this was for the photographs to be turned into slides

⁷² *Ibid.*, 16 Nov 1915 & 27 Nov 1915.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 27 Nov 1915.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 13 Jan 1916.

⁷⁵ Patrick Callan, 'Voluntary recruiting for the British Army in Ireland during the First World War', UCD PhD thesis, 1984 pp 67-8.

⁷⁶ *L.C.*, 29 June 1915; *C.E.*, 23 Oct 1915.

⁷⁷ *L.C.*, 2 Oct 1915.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 28 Aug 1915, 2 Oct 1915, 11 Sept 1915; *C.E.*, 23 Oct 1915.

⁷⁹ *C.E.*, 23 Oct 1915.

⁸⁰ *L.C.*, 29 June 1915; *C.E.*, 22 July 1915 published the photographs of the sons with their mother taking centre stage under the heading 'Seven Soldier Sons', the address here is given as 29 Henry Street; there is no reference to the father, Daniel, who in the 1901 Census is listed as a labourer, aged 40, at which time the family resided at 9 Roches Street.

⁸¹ *F.J.*, 27 March 1916, letter received by Mr D J. Madden of the District Council, Rathkeale from Major Laurence Roche, who it was reported also sent the Certificate of Honour received by Corporal Hogan, this is obviously a mistake as Major General Hickie did not issue such certificates, but he did issue that which became known as the Hickie Parchment.

and shown at the local cinema houses with an outline of the feat that won the decoration, 'in this way it is hoped that the magnificent deeds of valour performed by the gallant soldiers from Limerick, Clare and Kerry will be better known to their admiring fellow countrymen'.⁸²

Captured German war trophies were placed on display at the premises of W.M. Kidd, 49 George Street during the month of May 1916.⁸³ These consisted of some German-made placards captured by men from the battalion, which stated that 'British soldiers were shooting Irishmen and women at home'.⁸⁴ This of course alluded to the rebellion that had just taken place in Ireland. They had been placed on the top of the trenches opposite those in which the 8th Bn was situated, obviously to test their loyalty, which the men displayed by 'singing God Save the King'⁸⁵ and 'they were the centre of a very warm fusillade' of bullets.⁸⁶ By displaying them in Limerick the authorities hoped that it would encourage recruitment. The 8th Battalion was after all 'for the most part recruited from Limerick City and County',⁸⁷ and 'the only regular or service battalion of the regiment where Co. Limerick soldiers outnumber those from the more populous Co. Cork and this is the most striking feature of the battalion'.⁸⁸

Towards the end of 1915 the issue of the minimal enlistment of farmers became an issue. The working class had given more than its fair share of recruits to the forces, while those who gained financially as a result of the war were unresponsive.⁸⁹ The authorities stressed 'the physical difficulties of making an impression on a scattered population of conservative tendencies...' ⁹⁰ and it was alleged that they were 'lacking in martial spirit and show no disposition to enlist'.⁹¹ The avoidance of enlistment by farmers was not regarded as cowardly, 'but as evidence of good sense', and those who were better off regarded it as a step down socially.⁹² They seemed only interested in the financial rewards accruing from the war with the increased demand for cattle and farm produce that was required by the military to feed the thousands of soldiers at the front. The authorities, 'some of whom were apt to refer to them as a set of cowards, sneaks and shirkers',⁹³ became concerned at this failure of farmers and their sons to enlist, and asked those who spoke at recruiting meetings to encourage the farmers fearful that the other social classes would also refuse to join if they did not. Sergeant Major Rahilly, at a huge gathering in Pery Square, Limerick in October 1915, said 'in the matter of recruiting the working classes had set an example to all of them, and it was now up to the farmers sons and shop assistants to do something for the preservation of their liberties'.⁹⁴ It had been argued by farmers that they could not spare their sons, as they were required to tend to the cattle and save the hay. However, the falseness of this argument was pointed out at a meeting in Doon, County Limerick, when it was stated that there were plenty of men of 60 years and over who could do this work.⁹⁵

⁸² F.J., 15 Mar 1915.

⁸³ *Guy's Limerick Directory 1914* (Limerick 1914) pp 27 & 29; W. M. Kidd were Grocers and Provision Merchants, and also had premises at 4 & 103 O'Connell St (George Street).

⁸⁴ L.C., 27 May 1916.

⁸⁵ Michael MacDonagh, *The Irish On The Somme* (London 1917) pp 129-30; McCance, *History of the Royal Munster Fusiliers* p 197.

⁸⁶ L.L., 24 May 1916 indicated that they were placed on display at the County Club, O'Connell Street.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 May 1916.

⁸⁸ Martin Staunton, 'The Royal Munster Fusiliers in the Great War 1914-19', MA thesis, UCD 1986, p. 220.

⁸⁹ PRO, CO 904/96, 1 June 1915 & 30 June 1915; Inspector General's Report Aug 1915 & CO 904/98

14 Dec 1915.

⁹⁰ *Army Report on Recruiting In Ireland, 1914-16*. Cd. 8168 Volume XXXIX (London, 1916), p. 3.

⁹¹ PRO, CO 904/96, Inspector General's Report, August 1915.

⁹² Tom Garvin, *The Evolution of Irish Nationalist Politics* (Dublin 1981) p. 110.

⁹³ Terence Denman, *Ireland's Unknown Soldiers* (Dublin 1992) p. 34.

⁹⁴ L.C., 5 October 1915.

⁹⁵ C.E., 28 July 1915.

William Molony, a farmer from Rathmore, Croom,⁹⁶ spoke at a meeting in Kilmallock and sternly rebuked his fellow farmers:

the farmers of this country had the largest interest in the fortunes of war, and that being so he asked them was it right to expect that the labourers should lay down their lives while those whose interests were greatest should do nothing. The farmers' son who had not the manhood to do his duty in this war was a disgrace to humanity, and was not showing a good example to the labourers, who had no interest except to preserve their liberty and freedom.⁹⁷

The formation of a farmers' battalion may have been gestating in the mind of William Molony for some time as he continued to address recruiting meetings with the specific aim of persuading farmers to enlist.⁹⁸ The impetus for the move to establish such a battalion came from the Lord Lieutenant at the meeting held on 27 November 1915, when he remarked that farmers' sons should be encouraged to raise 'Pals' companies in order to serve together. He also intimated that the same should be raised for drapers' assistants.⁹⁹ There is no evidence to suggest that any attempt was made in relation to the drapers' assistants. Following this appeal from the Lord Lieutenant, approval was sought by William Molony and Richard O'Connell, also a farmer from Grange, County Limerick, to form a battalion.¹⁰⁰ They received this from Captain Kelly, the Chief of the Recruiting Staff under the Lord Lieutenant, and Colonel Sir Charles Barrington, Provincial Sub-Director of the Limerick recruiting area.¹⁰¹

The first meeting with this objective in mind was held at Croom on 2 January 1916, where Molony, appealed to his fellow farmers to join the new battalion. Reference was also made by him to the numbers of agricultural labourers and town dwellers who had enlisted, and that the farmers had received great support from these people when they were fighting for the land. With this he also made the point that the Lord Lieutenant had given guarantees that officers in this battalion would be taken from amongst the farmers themselves. Provisional as it was the scheme stipulated that if insufficient numbers joined to bring the battalion to full strength, then they would not be called upon.¹⁰² Although these guarantees were very laudable, it is difficult to see how men that had joined up would not be called upon to fight irrespective of the outcome of whether such a battalion was formed or not. Meetings with the same agenda were held in the neighbouring parishes of Granagh, Ballingarry and Adare.¹⁰³ At a meeting in Limerick City at the O'Connell Monument in early February Sergeant Major Rahilly, was optimistic that 'the farmers' sons were coming forward in their numbers, also the sons of shopkeepers'.¹⁰⁴ Further meetings were held during the month of April at Kilmallock, Caherconlish and Doon, where the emphasis was again stressed on getting farmers to join up.¹⁰⁵ While there is no doubt that some farmers, their sons and shop assistants enlisted, they did not do so in adequate numbers to warrant a battalion of their own.

With the bulk of the battalions of the 'Irish Brigade' having achieved their quotas of men before

⁹⁶ L.C., 20 September 1917, he was to receive a commission in the 9th Bn RMF and was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry during the war.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 October 1915.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7 December 1915.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1915 & C.E., 29 November 1915.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3 Feb 1917 & conversation with Michael Molony, Rathmore, Croom, County Limerick, son of William Molony; Richard O'Connell was later to receive a commission in the 9th Bn RMF and subsequently transferred to the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, his sister married William Molony after the war.

¹⁰¹ L.L., 22 December 1915.

¹⁰² L.C., 4 January 1916.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 13 Jan 1916, 22 Jan 1916 & 1 Feb 1916.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 Feb 1916.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1916, 15 April 1916 & 20 April 1916.



they went to France, it was necessary to keep them replenished with men after they became involved in combat particularly due to the high casualty rate; the wastage of war was assessed as being 100 per cent per annum, and the necessity to replace those killed in Irish regiments with Irishmen.¹⁰⁶ It was estimated that enlisted men fighting at the front had a life expectancy of approximately two weeks, and officers at the front more so as 20 per cent who held commissions were killed, compared to 10-12 per cent of enlisted men.¹⁰⁷

After the rebellion of April 1916 it was decided not to hold any recruiting meetings in the city and county as 'a strong wave of resentment sprung up through the Nationalist population as a result of the execution and deportation of a large number of persons' and 'very bitter feeling in ... Limerick ... where the Sinn Fein element is strong'.¹⁰⁸ It was decided that it was better to let people's emotions subside before other meetings held. In fact no such meetings were held until 1918. The possibility of introducing conscription was probably also a factor in this. This did not mean that there was not any recruitment taking place. More subtle means were devised to encourage enlistment, such as displaying the German war trophies captured by the 8th Bn RMF. When the Irish Canadian Regiment marched through the streets of Limerick on 1 February 1917 prior to their embarkation for France they received a tumultuous reception. Much was made of the fact that the mother of one of the soldiers, Lance Corporal Daly a Limerick man, 'rushed forward and threw her arms around him' and that he was released from duty for the day to be with his mother.¹⁰⁹ The authorities hoped that this would also inspire recruitment.

In July 1918, when it was decided not to proceed with conscription in Ireland, but to continue with the voluntary system, recruitment was again promoted publicly and profusely by advertisements and meetings. A system had been introduced whereby each county had to furnish a quota of men for the military by 1 October to avoid the necessity for conscription. The Irish Voluntary Recruiting Council indicated that 5,400 from a national quota of 50,000 asked for by the Lord Lieutenant, Viscount French, to replenish the Irish Divisions would be required from Limerick.¹¹⁰ The advertisements now stressed Ireland rather than the Empire. They appeared under such headings as 'Should we stab Ireland to Spite the British Government', 'More than a Million Irish Catholics have enlisted in USA', 'The call to Irishmen', 'Vindicate your Country', 'The Irish Regiments want more men' and 'The Fighting Irish'.¹¹¹ If Irishmen did not join Irish regiments, it was stressed that they would be swamped with English men.

Three meetings were also held during the same period, Serjeant Sullivan KC addressed one held at the Chamber of Commerce on 29 July 1918, at which he stated that he was in favour of voluntary recruitment and was opposed to conscription. However, there were he said people who would like to see conscription imposed so that they could win fame in the disturbance and unrest that would accrue as a result.¹¹² He was obviously referring to Sinn Féin. During the month of September a meeting was held in Cruise's Hotel where an RAF pilot delivered a lecture on his experiences at the front, and another at the O'Connell Monument, it was reported that recruits came forward at the end of both meetings.¹¹³ Limerick did not come anywhere near to completing the quota of 5,400 previously

¹⁰⁶ NAI, CSORP 1918, No 21679, the exception being 7th & 8th Bns Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers & 7th & 8th Bns Royal Irish Fusiliers, letter from The Department of Recruiting for Ireland, 18 January 1916.

¹⁰⁷ J.M. Winter, *The Experience of World War I* (New York 1989) p 147.

¹⁰⁸ PRO, CO 904/100, Report of Inspector General June 1916; County Inspector's Report 30 June 1916.

¹⁰⁹ L.C., 1 Feb 1917; F.J., 2 Feb 1917, Lance Corporal Daly had emigrated to Canada some years before the outbreak of the war and had joined the Rangers when they were embodied.

¹¹⁰ L.C., 4 June 1918; F.J., 10 Aug 1918.

¹¹¹ L.L., 5 Jul 1918, 12 Jul 1918 & 19 Jul 1918; L.C., 6 Jul 1918, 13 Jul 1918, 21 Sept 1918 & 5 Oct 1918.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 30 July 1918.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 14 Sept 1918, 28 Sept 1918 29 Oct 1918, a war flying exhibition was also held during the month of October, initially at Christy's Motor Garage and later at 51 William Street.

mentioned. By 1 October 1918, the original deadline, only 498 men had enlisted. Conscription was never introduced, and at the end of the war only 632 men or 9 per cent of the total had enlisted.¹¹⁴ The majority of these men had been attracted to the Royal Air Force (RAF).¹¹⁵

While this article has been mainly concerned with aspects of recruitment, there was also anti-recruitment activity. In January 1915 two men were charged with assaulting a recruiting sergeant of the RMF at Bruree while in the execution of his duty, and a man was charged with defacing recruiting posters at Cecil Street in March.¹¹⁶ During the month of November 1916 a man from Galbally was charged with 'using language which was seditious and calculated to prejudice recruiting'.¹¹⁷ He had apparently been singing or reciting a nationalist ballad and the magistrates dismissed the case. This led Thomas Lundon, MP for East Limerick to table a parliamentary question asking if anything was done to stop over-zealous policemen from fomenting disaffection by bringing frivolous incidents to court. A man who was prosecuted at Foynes Sessions for expressing anti-recruiting remarks at a meeting in Shanagolden, on 19 September 1915, was reported to have remarked that 'those who have volunteered or would volunteer to fight for England are only traitors, cowards, and prostitutes'.¹¹⁸ All these men had been arrested under the terms of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA).¹¹⁹ It is not clear if they were a part of any anti-recruitment movement.

The main opposition to recruitment came from Sinn Féin. It had instituted a strong anti-recruiting campaign as early as 1913, with the intention of 'pouring contempt on the British army', when it realised that a war between Britain and Germany was inevitable.¹²⁰ Anti-recruiting leaflets had been circulated at various locations in the city and county.¹²¹ The authorities became anxious over the effect that this was having on recruitment and conceded that they were successful.¹²² They also employed the tactic of sending forms with the names of men prepared to enlist, however on investigation these men knew nothing about them. This was undertaken with a view to impeding the work of the recruiting committees.¹²³ Towards the end of the war when Sinn Féin was in a much stronger position than it had been at its commencement; it was successful in breaking up a recruiting meeting at the O'Connell Monument in September 1918.¹²⁴ Sinn Féin also targeted a lecture being given by an RAF pilot at Cruise's Hotel on his experiences at the front, but their opposition was not successful.¹²⁵

In their efforts to discourage recruitment, Sinn Féin received support from several Catholic clergymen in Limerick. The Rev Fitzgerald, C.C. Knockaderry, while presiding at a United Irish League executive meeting at Rathkeale, poured scorn on Redmond's manifesto urging enlistment. He stated that 'he would do all he could to repudiate it, and he trusted that every man would not join the army to fight England's battles on the continent'.¹²⁶ The Rev Tom Wall, C.C. Drumcollogher, stated

¹¹⁴ The figures are compiled from information on recruiting statistics published in the *C.E.* on the dates quoted, a similar list was published in the *L.C.* during the same period.

¹¹⁵ *C.E.*, 31 Aug 1918 & 4 Sept 1918.

¹¹⁶ *L.C.*, 7 Jan 1915 & 17 April 1915.

¹¹⁷ NAI, CSORP 25583, 15 & 16 November 1916.

¹¹⁸ *C.E.*, 29 Oct 1915; the defendant's name was James Dalton, Clare Street, Limerick.

¹¹⁹ S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford 1998) p. 139; the Defence of Realm Act (DORA), was enacted by the government as emergency legislation empowering them to make regulations for public safety, breaches of which could be tried by Courts Martial.

¹²⁰ W. Allison Phillips, *The Revolution in Ireland 1906-1923* (London 1923) pp 67-8.

¹²¹ PRO, CO 904/94/95/96/98 County Inspector's Reports, 30 Sept 1914, 31 Oct 1914, 1 June 1915, this literature was distributed in Limerick on 1, 15, 20 Sept 1914, in Old Pallas 4 & 25 Oct 1914, Limerick, 20 Feb 1915 & 11 Mar 1915 and in Limerick by post from Munich, Germany, 7 Jan 1916 Inspector General's Report, Jan 1916.

¹²² PRO, CO 904/98 Inspector General's Report, Dec 1915.

¹²³ PRO, CO 904/96 County Inspector's Report, 30 Nov 1915.

¹²⁴ *L.L.*, 27 Sept 1918.

¹²⁵ *L.C.*, 14 Sept 1918.

¹²⁶ PRO, CO 904/94 County Inspector's Report, 30 Sept 1914.

that the British government only wanted Irishmen for the killing fields and Englishmen for reaping the financial rewards in manufacturing munitions. On another occasion he remarked that there was 'a reign of unbridled license among the Protestants of the English army' at the front.¹²⁷ Bishop O'Dwyer famously defended Wall for his remarks in the aftermath of the Easter Rebellion.

Although many soldiers serving at the front were Catholics from Limerick, including some 600 members of the Arch-Confraternity, not one secular priest from the diocese served as a chaplain in the army or navy.¹²⁸ It was left to the regular clergy of the religious orders to fill the vacuum. This was in spite of the fact that O'Dwyer had attended the bishops' annual meeting at Maynooth during the month of October 1914 that lamented the lack of Irish Catholic chaplains, and proposed a motion in favour of increasing them.¹²⁹ While there is no direct evidence to suggest that the bishop forbade any of his clergy from taking up such positions the authors of a recent study allege that it was due to 'political partisanship' on his part that there were none.¹³⁰

O'Dwyer also gave sustenance to anti-recruiting elements despite the involvement of some close relatives.¹³¹ After a number of emigrants were assaulted by a mob at Liverpool who believed that they were trying to evade military service, the ship refused to take them any further and they returned to Ireland.¹³² The incident motivated the bishop into writing an open letter that was laced with distinct anti-recruiting sentiment. He rebuked those involved in the attack, and had a strong message for those involved in recruitment.¹³³ He asked:

what wrong have they done to deserve insults and outrage at the hands of a brutal English mob? They do not want to be forced into the English army, and sent to fight English battles in some part of the world. Is not that within their right? They are supposed to be freemen, but they are made to feel that they are prisoners, who may be compelled to lay down their lives for a cause that is not worth three rows of pins to them... Yet the poor fellows who do not see the advantage of dying for such a cause are to be insulted as shirkers and cowards.¹³⁴

This letter was re-published by those involved in anti-recruitment and distributed outside churches and elsewhere by members of the Irish Volunteers in uniform and others. Interestingly it was also reprinted in Germany and distributed among the Irish soldiers in Limburg prisoner of war camp, with the obvious intention of gaining recruits for Casement's Irish Brigade.¹³⁵

However, he allowed a retreat for soldiers to be held in St. Joseph's Church, permitted special masses to be said for the dead soldiers from Limerick in the city churches, and proclaimed his admiration, pride and devotion for the priests on the battlefield 'carrying on their apostolic work, and amongst their fellow soldiers, winning souls for God'. He also entertained two officers of the Irish Canadian Battalion to luncheon during their visit and allowed a Novena of masses to be offered for Major W. Redmond when he died.¹³⁶ This was more than his successor Dr Hallinan permitted when

¹²⁷ PRO, CO 904/120 Inspector General's Reports September & November 1914, both of these remarks were made in the Church at Drumcollogher on 26 Sept & 14 Nov 1914.

¹²⁸ *L.L.*, 15 Oct 1915.

¹²⁹ *C.E.*, 14 Oct 1914.

¹³⁰ Tom Johnstone, & James Hagerty, *The Cross on the Sword* (London 1996) pp 95-6.

¹³¹ *L.C.*, 1 Jan 1918, reprinting a report from the *Sydney Freeman's Journal* stating that Mr & Mrs Michael O'Dwyer, Melbourne, Australia had given seven sons to the fighting forces of the empire, who were nephews of the Most Rev Dr O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick.

¹³² Thomas J. Morrissey, *Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer of Limerick, 1842-1917* (Dublin 2003) pp 368-70.

¹³³ *C.E.*, 9 & 15 Sept 1916.

¹³⁴ CSORP 19834. 25 November 1915.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, & PRO, CO 904/20 & CO 904/98 Inspector Generals Report 16 November 1915 & December 1915; Florence Monteith Lynch, *The Mystery Man of Banna Strand* (New York 1959) p 57.

¹³⁶ *L.L.*, 15 Feb 1915, 1 Nov 1915, *L.C.*, 16 Jan 1917, 11 Jul 1917 *F.J.*, 15 Feb 1915 & 2 Feb 1917.

John Redmond died.¹³⁷

The effect that anti-recruiting elements had on persuading men not to enlist should not be overestimated. However, there is no doubt that there had been a reduction in the number of men joining up after 14 December 1914.¹³⁸ This is verified by reports of the RIC County Inspector for the Limerick area, indicating that although recruiting was deemed to be satisfactory in the city and towns during the months of April and June 1915 and fairly good in January 1917 recruitment during the rest of the war was mainly poor.¹³⁹ This was mainly confined to the rural parts of the county and was paralleled in Britain where figures were also falling.¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, the number of men who enlisted in Limerick from the outbreak of the war to 15 October 1916, which includes 816 that had enlisted from the date of the National Register was 3,177 or 48 per cent from an estimated number that were available for military service of 6,551. The National Register was passed in parliament on 5 July 1915. Its aim was to provide a complete record of the number and distribution of men at different age levels throughout the country.¹⁴¹ The latter figure was extrapolated from the 19,728 men of military age as taken from the National Register. The remainder consisted of 7,994, whose labour was considered indispensable, and 4,367 which was the estimated number deemed to be physically unfit.¹⁴² Statistics are not available for the number of men from Limerick who enlisted from 16 October 1916 to the re-commencement of voluntary recruitment after it was decided not to proceed with the implementation of conscription in July 1918. The Irish Voluntary Recruiting Council indicated that 5,400 from a national quota of 50,000 asked for by the Lord Lieutenant, Viscount French, to replenish the Irish Divisions would be required from Limerick. Limerick did not come anywhere near to completing the quota assigned, and by the end of the war only 632 men or 9 per cent of the total had enlisted. However, if the figure of 632 attained during this period is added to that of 3,177 a figure of 3,809 is obtained. The Limerick War Memorial, unveiled in November 1929, bore the inscription 'To the glory of God and to the memory of 3,000 Officers, NCOs and Men of Limerick City and County who fell in the Great War 1914-18'.¹⁴³ This figure, however, includes Limerick men who were in the forces prior to the outbreak of the war. Shortly after the commencement of World War II a report carried in the Limerick Chronicle stated that 'the number of Limerick men who served in the last war, in sea, land and air reached nearly four thousand'. It is therefore clear that Limerick men enlisted in very considerable numbers.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ C.E., 18 March 1918, Dr Hallinan replaced Bishop O'Dwyer on his death in March 1917, and refused to allow a Requiem Mass to be said for John Redmond on his death in St John's Cathedral, on the basis that it would introduce politics into the church. In the same newspaper a letter from Dr Hallinan was published in which he stated his support for Sinn Féin with the proviso that if it as an organisation got involved in armed rebellion he would disown and distrust, and withdraw every word he wrote in its favour.

¹³⁸ P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies 1914-16* (Manchester 1988) p. 116.

¹³⁹ PRO, CO 904/96 County Inspector's Reports for 1 May 1915 & 1 June 1915, CO 904/102, 31 Jan 1917, CO 904/96 County Inspector's Reports for 31 July 1915, 2 Jan 1916, CO 904/99 County Inspector's Report, 1 Feb 1916, CO 904/100 County Inspector's Reports 31 July 1916, 31 Aug 1916 & 30 Sept 1916, CO 904/102 County Inspector's Report 28 Feb 1917.

¹⁴⁰ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 116.

¹⁴¹ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, Volume One* (London 1938) p 430.

¹⁴² *Statement ... regarding Men Of Military Age In Ireland Cd 8390* (London 1916) p 3.

¹⁴³ The Limerick War Memorial was unveiled on 11 November 1929 at Pery Square, Limerick, by Major-General Sir W. Hickie, KCB, who commanded the 16th (Irish) Division in France during the war, L.C., 12 Nov 1929: the memorial was blown up in August 1957.

¹⁴⁴ L.C., 5 Oct 1939.

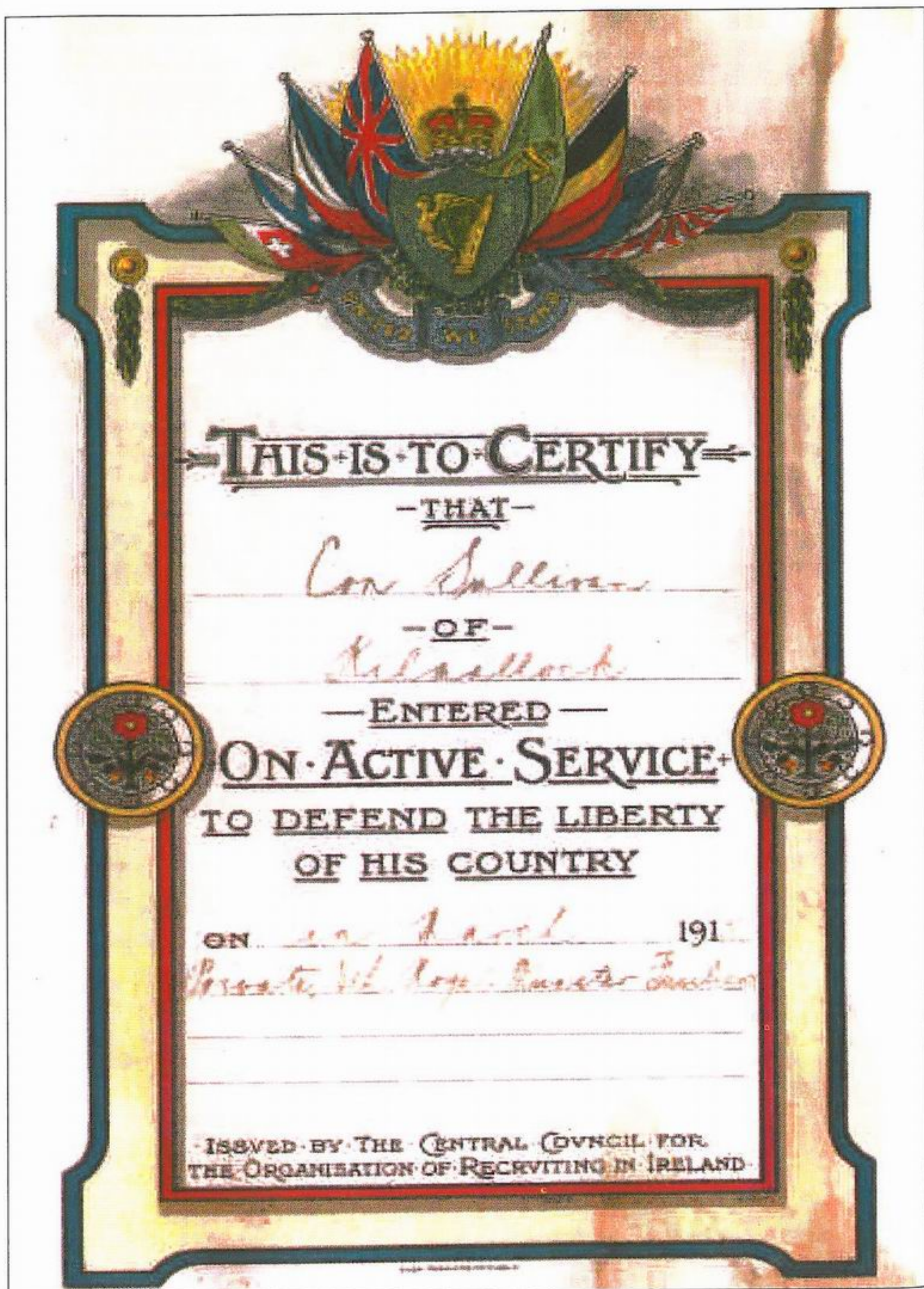


Plate 1 Certificate of Honour (by kind permission of Mr Pat Brosnahan, Limerick).