# Ireland's Memorial Records: World War 1 1914-1918
## Irish deaths in World War I.

At the end of that war, the Committee of the Irish National War Memorial compiled information under the direction of the Earl of Ypres. The result was eight volumes of information about 49,400 Irishmen who served in the British Army and lost their lives fighting in the Great War.

All 32 counties in Ireland lost men in the Great War, more than 5,000 from Antrim, 4,800 from Dublin, and 3,000 from Cork alone. Indeed, it is likely that every village, town, and city in Ireland at the time was touched in some way by the loss with many families affected.

The committee that extracted all these names from official records was not able to obtain a complete list of the names of the fallen Irishmen in the Navy, Air Force, and Colonial Regiments. Keep in mind that all of Ireland was a part of the United Kingdom at the time, and the army regiments were part of the British Army, although many of them consisted solely of Irishmen.

The toll of 49,400 deaths from an island as small as Ireland is grievous in itself. Nearly every single family in Ireland felt a loss of a family member, a neighbour, or a close friend.

# Irish Soldiers in the First World War

## Irish Soldiers in the Battle of the Somme

The Battle of the Somme started on 1 July 1916, after an eight-day artillery bombardment of the German front lines. Despite 60,000 casualties in one day, no progress was made in the British sector and the battle continued until the following November when the weather intervened.  The total number of casualties in the Battle exceeded one million. This included the deaths of some 3,500 Irishmen from all parts of this island.

## Marshal Foch's Tribute to the Irish Soldiers who died in the First World War

### PARIS, FRIDAY, Nov. 9th, 1928

THE Heroic Dead of Ireland have every right to the homage of the living for they proved in some of the heaviest fighting of the world war that the unconquerable spirit of the Irish race—the spirit that has placed them among the world's greatest soldiers—still lives and is stronger than ever it was.

I had occasions to put to the test the valour of the Irishmen serving in France, and, whether they were Irishmen from the North or the South, or from one party or another, they did not fail me.

Some of the hardest fighting in the terrible days that followed the last offensive of the Germans fell to the Irishmen, and some of their splendid regiments had to endure ordeals that might justly have taxed to breaking-point the capacity of the finest troops in the world.

## ON THE SOMME

Never once did the Irish fail me in those terrible days. On the Somme, in 1916, I saw the heroism of the Irishmen of the North and South, I arrived on the scene shortly after the death of that very gallant Irish gentleman, Major William Redmond. I saw Irishmen of the North and. the South forget their age-long differences, and fight side by side, giving their lives freely for the common cause.

In war there are times when the necessity for yielding up one's life is the most urgent duty of the moment, and there were many such moments in our long drawn- out struggle. Those Irish heroes gave their lives freely, and, in honouring then I hope we shall not allow our grief to let us forgot our pride in the glorious heroism of these men.

They have left to those who come after a glorious heritage and an inspiration to duty that will live long after their names are forgotten. France will never forget her debt to the heroic Irish dead, and in the hearts of the French people to-day their memory lives as that of the memory of the heroes of old, preserved in the tales that the old people tell to their children and their children's children.

## A GERMAN TRIBUTE

I know of no better tribute to Irish valour than that paid after the armistice by one of the German High Command, whom I had known in happier days. I asked him if he could tell me when he had first noted the declining moral of his own troops, and he replied that it was after the picked troops under his command had had repeated experience of meeting the dauntless Irish troops who opposed them in the last great push that was expected to separate the British and French armies, and give the enemy their long-sought victory.

The Irishmen had endured such constant attacks that it was thought that they must be utterly demoralised, but always they seemed to find new energy with which to attack their assailants, and in the end the flower of the German Army withered and faded away as an effective force.

## "THEY NEVER FAILED"

When the moment came for taking the offensive all along our line, it was these same worn Irish troops that we placed in the van, making call after call on their devotion, but never finding them fail us. In the critical days of the German offensive, when it was necessary that lives should be sacrificed by the thousand to slow down the rush of the enemy, in order that our harassed forces should have time to reform, it was on the Irish that we relied repeatedly to make these desperate stands, and we found them responding always.

Again and again, when the bravest were necessary to delay the enemy's advance, it was the Irish who were ready and at all times the soldiers of Ireland fought with the rare courage and determination that has always characterised the race on the battlefield.

## "WE SHALL NEVER FORGET"

Some of the flower of Irish chivalry rests in the cemeteries that have been reserved in France, and the French people will always have these reminders of the debt that France owes to Irish valour. We shall always see that the graves of these heroes from across the sea are lovingly tended, and we shall try to ensure that the generations that come after us shall never forget the heroic dead of Ireland.

There is no agreement on the total number of Irish soldiers who served in the British Army and Navy in the First World War. Professor Keith Jeffery gives a figure of 210,000. There appears to be a consensus that at least 35,000 died though the figure on the National War Memorial is 49,400.

About 140,000 enlisted in Ireland during the war. The increase in 1918 is worth noting.

| Period | Recruits |
|---|---|
| Aug 1914 –Feb 1915 | 50,107 |
| Feb 1915- Aug 1915 | 25,235 |
| Aug 1915 –Feb 1916 | 19,801 |
| Feb 1916- Aug 1916 | 9,323 |
| Aug 1916 –Feb 1917 | 8,178 |
| Feb 1917- Aug 1917 | 5,607 |
| Aug 1917 –Feb 1918 | 6,550 |
| Feb 1918- Aug 1918 | 5,812 |
| Aug 1918 –Nov 1918 [3 Months] | 9,843 |

The first year total of Irish recruits exceeded the total of the remaining three years of the War. As the War progressed, Irish losses were replaced by UK conscripts. For example, the percentage of non-Irish soldiers in the 1st Royal Irish Rifles, which was based in Antrim and Down, was 23% in 1916. One year later it was 52%.



# Ireland's Memorial Records: World War 2 1939-1945
## Irish deaths in World War 2.

Ireland was neutral in World War 2 but many Irish fought and died in the British and U.S. armed forces. With an estimate of some 20,000 lost. In 1995 Irish Prime Minister John Bruton claimed at least 10,000 Irish were killed serving in the British or Commonwealth armed forces. All were volunteers.

# Irish Guards

November 1940, The Holding Battalion (later to be the 3rd Battalion) was formed.

On the 10th April 1940 the 1st Battalion, which formed part of the 24th Guards Brigade, left London for service in Norway putting an end to the questions about where they might be sent first. It was here the Battalion fought against German troops for the first time since 1918. The ship carrying the Battalion into action (HMT Chobry) was bombed by a force of Heinkel bombers

resulting in a dreadful loss of life, including the Commanding Officer Lt. Col. W.D. Faulkner, the Second-in-Command Major C.L.J. Bowen, the Adjutant Capt the Hon B.A. O'Neill and three of the five Company Commanders. However, the Battalion successfully went into action and was subsequently withdrawn in the evacuation on the 4th June 1940 from Narvik. The Battle Honour 'Norway' was awarded.On the 1st September 1939, general mobilisation was ordered again, and the training Battalion was formed and moved to Couldsdon Common just outside the Guards Depot at Caterham. Meanwhile on the 3rd September 1939 when War was declared both the First and Second Battalions were at Wellington Barracks, London. In

On the 12th May 1940 (the day before the 1st Battalion sailed) the 2nd Battalion was ordered to sail for the Hook of Holland, to cover the evacuation of the Dutch Royal Family and Government. Eight days later, in the company with the 2nd Battalion Welsh Guards, they were off again, this time to Boulogne in an attempt to buy time for the BEF's evacuation from Calais and Dunkirk. Pressed on all sides by the Germans and being fired upon the remains of both Battalions re-embarked. Each Battalion leaving behind 200 Officers and Other Ranks killed, wounded or missing.

In June 1941, the 2nd Battalions equipped with well worn Covenanters Mark 1 Tanks and took it's place in the newly formed Guards Armoured Division. The 3rd Battalion joined the Guards Armoured Division during the Autumn of 1943 to be one of the Infantry Battalions in the Division and from then until the end of the war they trained with the 2nd Armoured Battalion on the Regiment. On the 1st March 1943 the 1st Battalion embarked for North Africa and formed part of the 1st Army. They suffered very heavy casualties but it was during this campaign that Lance Corporal Kenneally won his Victoria Cross (For his full citation see the Victoria Crosses page).

From North Africa the 1st Battalion moved across to Italy and took part in the particular bitter fighting in the Anzio beach head. Casualties were very heavy and in April 1944, the remnants of the 1st Battalion, a total of no more that 20 Officers and 247 Other Ranks returned to England and took no further part as a Battalion fighting in Europe with the survivors being absorbed into the other two Battalions.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions landed with the Guards Armoured Division in Normandy in June 1944, and fought with the Division until the end of the war, taking part in the advance from Seine to Nijmegen. It was during this time the celebrated Lt. Col. J.O.E. Vandeleur, Commander of the Irish Guards Group led an attack on the bridge over the Meuse-Escaut Canal at De Groote Barrier (which is forever immortalised by the film "A Bridge Too Far'.) This bridge is now known as 'Joe's Bridge' in Honour of his exploits.

In June 1945, the 2nd Battalion relinquished its tanks and reverted back to its original rôle as an Infantry Battalion and formed part of the Occupation Army of the Rhine. The Battalion returned from Germany in March 1947 and was disbanded in July of the same year when it's Colours were laid up.

The 3rd Battalion was withdrawn to England in February 1946 and disbanded. The training Battalion was disbanded in July 1946.

# During the Second World War the Irish Guards lost a total of

59 officers killed
114 Officers wounded
645 Other ranks killed
1464 Other ranks wounded

## During this time the following Medals were awarded

2 Victoria Crosses
17 Distinguished Service Orders
33 Millitary Crosses
18 Distinguished Conduct Medals
72 Military Medals
110 Mentions in Despatches

A very large number of Irish citizens volunteered for service in the British armed forces between 1939-1945. During the war an estimated 70,000 citizens of neutral Ireland served in the British armed forces, together with 50,000 or so from Northern Ireland. Virtually all who served were volunteers and, unlike the First World War decisions to volunteer and serve were mainly individual. No doubt individual decisions were influenced by family and friends and sometimes the process of enlistment was aided and abetted by various organisations, but there is no sign of the "logic of collective sacrifice" evident in Irish recruitment to the British armed forces during World War I. Nor was there any general political mobilisation for war even remotely comparable to what happened in Ireland in 1914-1918. In that light the figure of 120,000 recruits North and South, if at all accurate, compares well with the estimated 210,000 Irish volunteers during the First World War.

It should be mentioned that between 1939 and 1945 nearly 200,000 workers from Eire migrated to work in the British war economy – most of whom remained in the country after the war. Increased Irish emigration to Britain during the 1940s supplied navvies, nurses, clerks, policemen and munition workers. Count John McCormack, the legendary Irish tenor, contributed through public performances and recordings. "They all provided pieces to building the worldwide jigsaw that was Allied victory in the war."

*Ireland now officially remembers its lost sons of the Great War without embarrassment or shame. It would be no bad thing if people also freely recalled the purely personal and voluntary sacrifice made by many individuals, unsupported by any political campaign and rigorously concealed by the censor – even in their deaths – those whose fight for freedom helped to give us a free Europe.*

In April 1995 Taoiseach John Bruton spoke at Islandbridge and paid tribute to the 150,000 Irish people North and South who "volunteered to fight against Nazi tyranny in Europe, at least 10,000 of whom were killed while serving in British uniforms…In recalling their bravery, we are recalling a shared experience of Irish and British people…We remember a British part of the inheritance of all who live in Ireland."

Irish volunteers during World War II included more than military and airforce personnel. The longest campaign was fought at sea. So many Irishmen, women and boys perished during service with both the British merchant navy and the Irish merchant marine service, "many Irish sailors found their lonely graves beneath the waters of the great oceans, especially the Atlantic."

History texts have taught me that the term `Emergency' was an Irish euphemism for World War II. The 26 county state of Eire was neutral, but favoured the Allied cause. We should remember the innumerable Irish men and women etc who participated in the bloodiest conflict in human history.

**'Few Irish families could have remained untouched'. For some survivors, the war did not end with a safe return home:**

The Irish Mercantile Marine was tasked during the war with the carriage of badly needed supplies to and exports from Ireland. It was inevitable, sailing as they did in the Atlantic and home waters infested with German and Allied warships, submarines and aircraft, that losses would occur. The many brave Irish Seamen that volunteered to keep our supply lines open should be honoured, remembered and never forgotten.

We offer the above information following a request for detail regarding Kinsale losses from WWI and II, the above is an example only of recently found facts and figures. We shall continue to seek more relevant information and when found all subject matter will be made public and will be forwarded on to yourselves, in regard to all Irish losses from both wars. We are currently researching all Welsh losse's.

We understand that the information sought is of use to residents of Barry, Wales and Kinsale, Irish Republic. We cannot enter into the Friendship Pact debate. But as a tribute site we ultimately remember all that have fallen and believe that one death alone is too much and should be remembered.

**One loss alone, Casualty Details**

**BARRY (MERTHYR DYFAN) BURIAL GROUND**

Able Seaman, LUCEY, PATRICK JOSEPH, Merchant Navy

**Age:** 50   **Date of Death:** 10/04/1942

S.S. Westdale (Liverpool)

Son of Michael and Joan Anna Lucey; husband of Mary Christina Lucey, of Scilly Kinsale, Co. Cork, Irish Republic.

**Most Merchant Navy Seamen have no known grave but the sea,** **Lest we forget.**

**Although, It is not possible to link all towns in both countries ,  we are of the view and hope that the officials involved may, use all historic links and that two towns in both countries may eventually represent the two Celtic nations and remember all.**

Our search for records continues, we intend to remember thousands.

**One fact that cannot be left out is the sinking of the Lusitania of the old head of Kinsale. This will forever link the area with all seamen worldwide and Kinsale's dealings with the Titanic aftermath, DESERVE OUR TRIBUTE .**

### U-20 and the Lusitania

*Paul Kildare recalls the May afternoon 90 years ago when the Lusitania, the world's biggest liner was sunk by a German submarine off the Cork coast in one of the greatest disasters in maritime history.*

"Even when the white streak of the torpedo flashed towards us," said Alan Bestic, third officer on the Lusitania, "I heard one of the passengers ask, that's not a torpedo, is it?' The reply was lost in the explosion."

The Lusitania, then the world's biggest liner, built in Scotland in 1907, sailed from New York on her 102nd Atlantic crossing on 1 May 1915, with 1,257 passengers and a crew of 702 under Capt William Turner. The previous day the German submarine U-20, with a crew of 39 under Commander Walter Schwieger, left Emden, Germany, for Ireland's south coast. They "met" ten miles off the Old Head of Kinsale on Friday afternoon 7 May.

World War I was in its first year and the US was still neutral, until 1917. Germany published notices in American newspapers warning people not to travel on the Cunard liner as she was liable to be sunk. Passengers were handed copies of these as they boarded the ship, but 1,257 people, including 159 Americans, ignored the warning.

Shortly after arriving on 5 May off the south coast of Ireland - which the Germans called *Torpedo Alley* - U-20 sank two big British cargo ships. Two days later the submarine surfaced off Kinsale and her crew came up on deck to enjoy the fresh summer air. About 2 pm Schwieger saw a speck on the horizon and noted in his log, "Right ahead appear four funnels of a large passenger steamer."

When the Lusitania reached the Cork coast her escort, the battle cruiser Juno was instructed to return to Cobh because a U-boat was reported in the area but incredibly, the liner got no such warning. As the Lusitania steamed in nearer to the coast, the Old Head of Kinsale was the first land they saw since leaving America. Many passengers were strolling on the decks or looking at the Cork coast; others were already packing, for they were due in Liverpool the next morning.

But no one knew they were being carefully watched by a pair of sharp German eyes, as the liner and the submarine approached one another. For one hour Schwieger's eyes never left the liner, except to make log entries like, "The steamer turns starboard and makes possible an approach for a shot." He realised that he must now fire a torpedo or lose this golden opportunity, for he was dead on target, a U-boat captain's dream.

At 2.10 pm Schwieger recorded in his log, "Clean bow shot from 700 metres range hit steamer's starboard side right behind bridge. An unusually heavy detonation followed." Four minutes later the Lusitania sent out an SOS - "Come at once. Big list. Ten miles south Old Head Kinsale."

Schwieger next reported, "She has the appearance of being about to capsize. Great confusion on board. Many crowded lifeboats come down bow first or stern first into the water, fill immediately and sink." Only now, just before she sank, did he see "the name *Lusitania*" on her bow and learn the identity of his victim. A few minutes later he wrote in his log, "We rise to 11 metres and look around. In the distance some lifeboats are drifting. Of the Lusitania nothing is to be seen."

"The end came with dramatic swiftness," said third officer Bestic. "An all swallowing wave was rushing up the boat deck, enveloping passengers, boats and everything that lay in its path. A heart-rending wail rent the air. All the despair, terror and anguish of hundreds of souls passing into eternity composed that awful cry. I hurled myself over the side. When I came to the surface the *Lusitania* had gone and nothing remained but a big boiling ring of foam to mark her grave. In the middle of it I could see waving hands and arms belonging to struggling men, women and children trying to keep afloat."

First on the scene was the small Man, x trawler *Wanderer*, with a crew of seven who, incredibly, rescued about 200 people. Other rescue vessels landed survivors and dead between 8 and 11 pm that night in Cobh (former and now current gaelic name of Queenstown) where many were later buried in three mass graves. "We saw the ghastly procession of rescue ships as they landed the living and the dead under flaring gas torches along the Queenstown waterfront," reported Wesley Frost, American consul there. "Sometimes two or three ships waited their turn to discharge bruised women, crippled and half-clothed men and a few wild eyed little children.

Women caught at our sleeves and begged desperately for word of their husbands, while men moved from group to group, seeking a lost daughter, sister or even bride. Piles of corpses began to appear on the shadowy old wharves."

Of 1,198 lives lost, 785 were passengers, 79 were children. About 200 bodies were recovered from the sea, but some 700 were never found. Nearly 800 people were rescued. Capt Turner survived, was exonerated from blame and died in 1933.  Schwieger died in another U-boat, destroyed in 1917.

Britain blamed Germany for "the greatest maritime crime in history". The Admiralty at first denied that the *Lusitania* was carrying a cargo of arms, but later admitted this when it was revealed in America that she was loaded with US arms and munitions, including five million rounds of ammunition and thousands of shells. The Admiralty actually classified her, states Nicholas Tomalinin his work on the *Lusitania*, as an "auxiliary naval cruiser" for carrying urgent war materials at high speed across the Atlantic. This apparently justified her sinking as an act of war, though not with such loss of life. Another British writer, Colin Simpson, says in his book, *Lusitania*, "The evidence that she was not an innocent passenger liner is now overwhelming."

Whether through German malice or British negligence and scheming, 1,198 people perished in one of the world's greatest maritime disasters off Kinsale on that summer afternoon 90 years ago.

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