

Special History Supplement

Eyrecourts' Involvement in WW1

JOHNNY I HARDLY KNEW YE

Ballad Workshop with Mr Johnston

On Monday the 16th of March, Mr. Johnston came to our school to talk to the fifth and sixth class about World

War 1. Mr. Johnston used to teach with Ms. Treacy in Creagh NS.

He taught us songs and poems. He told us that while the men were gone to war, the women would get separation money.

This was one of the reasons men joined

the British army. They got a steady wage. People needed the money, there wasn't a lot of work to be had. However many Irish people mocked the soldiers. A very funny song is *The British Army*. The chorus goes like this:

Toora loora loora loo,

They're looking for monkeys up at the zoo

And says I: "If I had a face like you,

I'd join the British army"

Women started taking the mens' jobs at home like factory work, milk rounds and ticket collectors. The poem *War Girls* lists all these jobs. Mr. Johnston explained that that is why women are working today.

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PROJECT INITIATED BY BALLINASLOE WW1 HERITAGE GROUP

Readers might be aware of the major new library building for Ballinasloe Library.

The Ballinasloe WW1 Heritage group will have a space in the new library to display artifacts from WW1.

In November 2014 the school was contacted by the WW1 Heritage Group. They are seeking to gather and locate artifacts from WW1 to display in the library. They will only take the artifacts on a loan basis and return the items to the families after a few weeks.

They are running a competition for primary schools about local heroes in WW1. This will be part of our entry.

Mr Johnston Workshop continued....

Ordinary soldiers were “food for cannons”. The general would send out about 5000 soldiers at a time to the front and they would immediately get killed by the cannons. He read a poem *Base Details* by *Siegfried Sasson*. We downloaded a really good cartoon of the poem and have it on our blog.

Most of the soldiers would have a horse and that would be their best friend. We read the story *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo when we were in 3rd class. It was a story all about a soldier in WW1 and his horse. When the war was over the soldiers fighting in Palestine couldn't leave their horses behind because they had seen the people in that country treat horses terribly. They couldn't transport their horses home because it would be very expensive back then and also their horses might give a disease to the other horses back at home. The horse was the soldiers' best friend so the soldiers made pacts with their comrades that they would shoot their comrades horse and they would shoot theirs. Eric Bogle's poem *As if he knows* really shows how the horse would have felt:

It's as if he knows,

He's standing close to me

His breath warm on my sleeve

His head hung low

It's as if he knows



Dogs were specially trained for the war. They went from place to place carrying messages. There was a big problem of poison gas especially mustard gas which was used by the Germans. The soldiers all wore gas masks and they realised the dogs would need them also.

Mr Johnston showed us postcards that were sent from his grandfather to his girlfriend from France during WW1. Mr Johnston's grandfather survived the war and went on to marry his girlfriend Margaret Bradley and otherwise there would be no

Mr Johnston!

Mr Johnston showed us the postcards. He explained it was all part of army propaganda. When the soldier joined the army and got their new uniform and kit, a portrait was taken of them by a professional photographer. Those photos were developed and made into postcards. The soldiers then had those postcards to write on when they were fighting at the front. Their families received these lovely handsome photos of their son/brother/boyfriend/husband. Little did they know that the postcard was written from a stinky, rotten, wet, soggy, cold trench! In the postcards the soldiers called the Germans “Johnny” or “Johnny Fritz”.

Letters in the Trenches by Patrick McGill tells the true story of the letters from the front:

We'll write to her tomorrow and this is what we'll say:

He breathed her name in dying; in peace he passed away:

No words about his moaning, his anguish and his pain,

When slowly, slowly dying - God! Fifteen hours in dying!

He lay all maimed and dying, alone upon the plain.

There was another postcard from France and in the picture a cathedral has been bombed. Our Lady is hanging off the steeple by a small piece of wire. Mr Johnston's Grandfather speaks about it in his postcard and believes that when the statue falls, the war will be over.

We really enjoyed Mr. Johnston's talk and all the ballads he introduced us to. We looked them up on youtube and downloaded some to our blog. Have a listen, you'll recognise some and most importantly listen to the stories they tell.

Michael Kelly, Shea Sloan, Mark Loughnane

Local Heroes in WW1

For the competition run by the Ballinasloe WW1 Heritage group, we researched 6 soldiers that were originally from Eyrecourt and close to Eyrecourt. We have further research to do but we aim to locate the ancestors of these soldiers. If you have any information to help us please make contact with the Eyrecourt Examiner.

eyrecourtexaminer@gmail.com



Malachy Goode

Born: 1895, Aughrim, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway

Childhood: Malachy went to primary school in Aughrim until he was 14 then he worked in Keary's shop in the village.

Home: Malachy lived in a small cottage in the village of Aughrim.

Family: Malachy had 2 sisters Annie and Kate, 3 brothers Patrick, Edward and James and a Mother Sarah (nee Leonard). His Father died when he was very young.

Jobs: Malachy first worked in Keary's shop Aughrim but did not like it as there was a lot of heavy lifting involved and early morning starts for a 14 or 15 year old boy! Then he found another job in Galway city as a groom in a big house. This job gave him a love of horses that lasted all of his life.

His part in WW1: Malachy joined the British Army in Ballinasloe on the 6th of November 1916, as a Gunner in the Royal Field Artillery. He only joined the artillery because they had the most horses.

Malachy trained for 4 months in Athlone then he was sent to France on the 13th of March 1917.

7 months later Malachy was admitted to the Field Hospital suffering from a severe kidney infection. It was so bad he was sent to the UK to recover until May 1918.

Malachy was riding a horse that was carrying a big gun. A shell exploded beneath the horse he was riding, the horse took the worst of the explosion and saved Malachys life. He received burns to his face and hands and a small piece of shrapnel hit his chin.

Luckily the wounds were just enough to keep him out of the front line until the war ended.

After the War: Malachy returned to Dublin and met Ellen Corr. They got married and 5 children. Malachy lived until 1990 aged 95.

Stephen Anthony Joyce

He was born in England in 1892 and joined the army at the age of 22. He died on the 30th September 1915 aged only 23 years. He was a Lance Corporal. His mothers name was Bridget and fathers name was Patrick. He grew up in Eyrecourt and was listed in the 1911 Census.

He could read and write. He was a Connaught Ranger. He was an Agricultural labourer. He had a brother called John and a sister called Bridget. He had 5 other siblings but 1 of them died at birth.

Lieutenant Cyril Roland Eyre Miller

He was born on 17/1/1882. His mother was Alice Maud Eyre (1847-1925) and father was John Blair Miller (unknown -1889). His brothers were John Blair Miller (1875-unknown) and Huber Blair (1881- unknown) and he had one sister Isobel Maud Eleanor Miller. His War number was WO339/9389 and he was in the Scottish Rifles. Date of death 23/11/1994 aged 32 and he died of wounds.

Thomas Corcoran

Thomas Corcoran was born in 1891. He was an Irish Guard in WW1. Thomas was the son of James and Bridget Corcoran of Eyrecourt. He had six brothers and sisters and was the eldest. Thomas was lucky before the war as he could read and write. Thomas worked on the farm before he went to war.

Thomas signed up for the army and became a Lance Corporal, which is also known as a third rank soldier. His soldier number was 10189. Unfortunately, he was killed in action in Bourlon Wood, France on the 28th of November 1917 age 26. He bravely survived three years of the war. He was later buried in France.

We recently found out that Thomas Corcoran is related to Kiara Corcoran. Thomas is her Great Granduncle! *Alannah Larkin, Aoife O'Dowd, Kiara Corcoran & Thomas Fleming*

John J. McCabe

John J. McCabe was born in the UK in 1890. At the age of eleven he lived in House 9.2 Old Street Portumna, Ireland. His family then moved to Eyrecourt to House 24 Main Street. At first we couldn't figure out what house 24 Main Street was so we asked Pat Horan. He said that House 24 Main Street is the Davis' house. He explained to us that all the even numbered houses were on the Davis' side of the street and all the odd numbered houses were on the Duffys' side of the street! He also said that there was a stone plaque outside the house that said 'McCabe'. He said that the Burke's bought the house off the McCabes and the Davis' bought it off the Burkes!

John originally had 12 siblings but three of them died. He had three sisters- Maude, Gertrude and Helena, and five brothers- James, Thomas, William, Ernest and Vincent.

His mother was Mary Anne McCabe. Mary was born in Roscommon. She was 26 when she gave birth to John. His father was James McCabe. James was born in Sligo. He was the clerk of Petty Sessions, Eyrecourt. Petty Sessions were held in a Courthouse, for not very important cases. They were the lowest courts in the country. They dealt with fighting, damaging of property and stealing.

John J. joined the army at the age of 24 in September 1914. He went on to become a sergeant in the Eleventh Bn., Highland Light Infantry. His service number was #19782. Sadly he died in action at the age of 25. He was killed in The Battle of Loos, Pas De Calais, France. His grave is now in Loos Memorial, France.

We think that Johns' younger brother James, also served in the war. We e-mailed Christie Cuniffe, the local Historian to see if he knew anything about John J. McCabe but, he has not got back to us yet.

Patrick Eyre

Patrick Eyre was born in 1885 in the United Kingdom. He was a Private in the army. He was killed in action on the 26th of April 1915, aged 30. He had no brothers or sisters. His mother was Helen Eyre. He lived in Derry Cottage in Eyrecourt. His service number was 9127. He was part of the Connaught Rangers.

Alfred Reilly

Alfred Reilly was born in Eyrecourt. He seems to have lived in England. He was a Rifleman with the Second Royal Irish Rifles. He was killed in action in France on the 27th October 1914. We couldn't find out much about him. If you have any information please contact us.

THE BATTLE OF GALLIPOLI

CAPT. MURTAGH BRENNAN CUSTUME BARRACKS ATHLONE

On Monday the 16th of March, Murtagh Brennan came to talk to us about the battle of Gallipoli. Captain Murtagh Brennan is the Agenant of Athlone Army Barracks. He is very interested in History and particularly in the Battle of Gallipoli. He wrote a paper on it which was published and he even visited the battle grounds a few years ago.

Winston Churchill was the Lord of the Admiralty. He said Russia was poorly equipped and if Britain could reach Russia they would give them weapons and the Germans would have to fight on two fronts. The problem was, to get to Russia the Allies had to go through Turkish Dardanelles.

The British were very arrogant about this battle. They believed the Turks would just let them through and



would not be able to fight them. The Munster Rifles and the Dublin Fusiliers were the Irish battalions involved. The army stopped in Egypt along the way and the Turks knew they were coming. The British had fought in African countries before and were expecting the same:

tribesmen with spears, soldiers on camels etc.

Ian Hamilton was the General of this battle. He was 70 years old and he had no maps of the area so his battle strategies were very poor. When they arrived in Gallipoli the Turkish army were ready for them. They planted mines under the sea so they delayed the big battle that Britain had brought the battleships for. When the British army finally landed they were immediately under assault by the Turkish army because they had the high ground. The Turks just had to shoot down at the British army. Murtagh told us at one stage when the Turkish army was throwing grenades down at the British army the soldiers and they caught them and threw them back at the Turkish army.

The plan had been to land on different beaches and take the high ground, however the reality was a mess. There was total confusion with all the mines going off. Because Ian Hamilton had no maps, nobody had any knowledge of the hilly terrain. The soldiers kit and uniform was totally inappropriate. They were wearing uniform that was too heavy and many abandoned their kit trying to climb up to the higher ground. As a result many ran out of water and suffered in the hot sun.

New Zealand and Australia sent armies to that battle also. This was one of their first major actions since they became independent countries. New Zealand lost 3000 in the Battle of Gallipoli. Anzac day is celebrated every year on the 25th of April in Australia and New Zealand to commemorate all Australians and New Zealanders who fought

and died in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping duty. Anzac Day was originally to honour the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who fought at Gallipoli.

3500 Irish lost their lives in the Battle of Gallipoli 25th April 1915-9th January 1916. Those that returned to Ireland from that battle came back to a very republican Ireland. Their service in Gallipoli was seen as a betrayal to their country. There is no commemoration in Ireland for all the men who lost their lives in that disastrous battle or indeed any of the other battles in WW1.

There is an Australian song which sums up the mood of WW1, particularly the Battle of Gallipoli. Eric Bogle wrote it and it is called *The Band Played Waltzing Matilda*. Here is a small part of the song, you can listen to it properly on our blog.

And the band played Waltzing Matilda

When the ship pulled away from the quay

And amid all the tears, flag waving and cheers

We sailed off for Gallipoli

