

## Somme observations



## Joint service at the Somme

**‘The Somme has somehow become a river of Ulster,’ said Church of Ireland primate Archbishop Richard Clarke as Irish Protestant and Catholic church leaders held joint service in the Somme**

Irish Times - In an address at the Ulster Tower, near Thiepval in France, [Church of Ireland](#) primate Archbishop [Richard Clarke](#) recalled the final scene from Frank McGuinness's play *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching towards the Somme*.

“The young Ulster soldiers, about to go ‘over the top’ on the morning of 1st July 1916, start discussing the rival merits of the rivers of Ulster - the [Lagan](#), the Foyle, the Bann,” he said.

Realising they are standing near another river, the River Somme, “the discussion becomes more excited and excitable. One of the soldiers calls out that now the Somme is the Lagan, the Foyle, the Bann.

“This river, the Somme, is now theirs. The Somme has somehow become a river of Ulster,” the Archbishop said.

“Few images could more perfectly encapsulate that connectedness between the Somme and Ulster. For many people of that province, the Somme and Ulster have, for 100 years, belonged together in the imagination of succeeding generations. This connectedness is something we celebrate today,” he said.



***Dignitaries lay wreaths during a service to mark the 100th anniversary of the start of the battle of the Somme at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Memorial on July 1st, 2016 in Thiepval, France.***

He recalled how just a week ago he and the Catholic primate Archbishop [Eamon Martin](#) “stood here, at this Ulster Tower, with a group of young people from all parts of [Ireland](#), and representing both our Christian traditions - traditions which for so long have seen themselves as apart, even at enmity with one another.

“We prayed, we kept silence, and we reflected, all in the sombre realisation that many of those who had died here at the Somme were of an age

with the young people who were part of our group.”

The soldiers who died at the Somme “were now part of us, but we would do them no honour if we saw their young lives and early tragic deaths only as sad or even sacred history”.

A week ago, “we prayed in this place for true peace, God’s peace in our lives and for our world. And this must surely also be at the heart of our praying today”, he said.

Other Irish church leaders who took part in the commemorative service included Catholic primate Archbishop Eamon Martin, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church Rev Dr [Frank Sellar](#), and President of the [Methodist Church](#) Rev Bill Mullally

In a joint statement the four Church leaders jointly called for Christians of all traditions in Ireland to pray for peace in these challenging times.

They said: “Let us put our faith into action - love our neighbours, reach out to the stranger, care for the vulnerable, build community and be agents for peace, forgiveness and reconciliation.”

## **Solemn ceremony remembers soldiers killed in Somme**

Irish Independent

Catholic Archbishop Eamon Martin, **Church of Ireland** Archbishop Richard Clarke, President of the Methodist Church in Ireland Rev Bill Mullally and ...

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/solemn-ceremony-remembers-soldiers-killed-in-somme-34850811.html>

## **Northern Ireland's dead at Battle of the Somme remembered**

Belfast Telegraph

... from the 36th (Ulster) division and the 16th (**Irish**) division lost their lives. .... Civil, **religious** and military commemorations have been staged across ...

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/northern-irelands-dead-at-battle-of-the-somme-remembered-34849646.html>

## **Commemoration service in St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast**

News Letter

Descendants of over a dozen Ulster brothers who died on the first day of the Battle of the

Somme attended a moving commemoration service in St Anne's Cathedral

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/descendants-of-ulster-fallen-attend-service-1-7460023>

## Presbyterian Historical Society perspective

The Battle of the Somme lasted from 1 July to 18 November 1916 but it was the heroic action of the 36th Ulster Division on 1st and 2nd July who suffered 5,000 casualties of whom over 2000 died that has long been memorialised. Of the nine Victoria Crosses awarded for service on the first 2 days of the Battle, three went to the Ulster Division, one of them being [Private William McFadzean](#), a Presbyterian.

Millions died in the course of the war which has rightly been described as one of the most deadliest conflicts in history. At the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 thousands of men from Ulster volunteered to defend their nation, not least many Ulster Presbyterians from every part of the country. One has only to open the pages of the **Presbyterian Roll of Honour** produced by the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland just a few years after the war to appreciate the sheer numbers of Presbyterians

who served, many of whom were injured or lost their lives.

The Roll contains the names of some 24,000 names but we know that there may be another 2,000 names that were not recorded. *If you know of names that are not listed in a congregation or congregations that are not included please let us know so that these names can be added.* The Roll included some 41 Presbyterian ministers who served as commissioned army chaplains or who served with the YMCA while others even enlisted within the ranks of the army. Even one of our Presbyterian missionaries, the Rev Frederick O'Neill, a Presbyterian missionary in China served in France with the Chinese Labour Corps composed of 96,000 people who assisted the Allied Forces in France and Belgium from 1917 to 1919. For his work with the Chinese Labour Force, the Rev O'Neill was awarded the Order of the Striped Tiger by the Chinese government. This medal is now held by the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland. One Presbyterian minister, the Dr Neil Gavin lost his life while serving with the Royal Army Medical Corps at the Front.

## **The Presbyterian Chaplains**

Presbyterian chaplains who served during the war provided vital spiritual support to the troops – preaching, administering the sacraments, pastoring and conducting burials. They too were often wounded or killed. The first Presbyterian chaplain to die was from Ulster – the Rev Alexander Stuart who was killed in France in October 1917 just two weeks after his arrival (see the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland website for more information about the Rev Stuart). Other Presbyterian chaplains who died during the war included the Rev William Wilson of Coleraine who, while serving with the YMCA, died in a motor accident in France. Recognition of the chaplains' bravery and courage is reflected in the number of honours bestowed on them. These included the Rev Hugh Craig Meeke, Ballylinney congregation, who was awarded the DSO and 5 others received the Military Cross – the Rev Andrew Gibson, Hill Street Lurgan congregation, the Rev John Edmond Hamilton, Helen's Bay congregation, the Rev William Holmes Hutchison, Cullybackey congregation, the Rev James Gilbert Paton of Malone Belfast congregation, and the Rev John Jackson Wright, Ballyshannon congregation.

Leadership of the Chaplaincy Department was provided by another Ulsterman, the **Rev Dr**



**John M Simms** who was appointed Principal Chaplain of the British Expeditionary Force. He and his secretary reorganised the Chaplaincy Department and thereby placing the spiritual welfare of soldiers on a more satisfactory footing. Described later on as ‘A man of rare sagacity and wide experience who for over 30 years has shared the fortunes of our Army in many a campaign ...’ Dr Simms was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath and was the first chaplain to be awarded the Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG).

Three of the First World War chaplains later became Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in Ireland – the Rev Dr Simms, the Rev Dr Gilbert Paton and the Rev Dr Andrew Gibson.

The first Presbyterian chaplain from Ulster to die was the Rev Alexander Stuart, minister of Bessbrook, Co Armagh, who was killed in France in Oct 1917, only two weeks after he took up duty.

## **The Support for the War from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland**

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland supported the war and did much to encourage recruitment

into the British army. While recruitment was successful in urban areas the Committee for Social Services of the church deplored the fact that the same support was not realised in rural areas.

## **The Aftermath of the War**

The deaths of so many fathers often left families destitute and as a result there was an marked increase in the number of applications to the Presbyterian Orphan Society for assistance. This is described in more detail in '[Putting Children First - the Story of 100 Years of the Orphan Society](#)' (Presbyterian Historical Society (2016). A lasting memorial to those who died was marked by the decision of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to erect the Presbyterian War Memorial Hostel at the corner of Howard Street and Brunswick Street which was opened in 1925. To provide accommodation for young people at work or at university or college.

## **Reporting the Somme through the lens of the *Church of Ireland Gazette***

Continuing to focus on the value of the *Church of Ireland Gazette* as a primary resource for

historical research, the RCB Library, in collaboration with the Editor and Board of the *Gazette*, commemorates the Battle of the Somme this month with a focus on how it was reported through the pages of the Church's weekly newspaper. The battle began 100 years ago today with the Allied objective of advancing along the banks of the River Somme to the French village of Thiepval to penetrate the German trench network called the Schwaben Redoubt.

Both the 36th Ulster and 16th Irish Divisions were involved at the Somme and paid a heavy price. Indeed as early as 14th July, the *Gazette* writing from 'a little village on the north coast which has sent most of its young men to the firing line' published a heart-breaking piece entitled "Ulster's Sacrifice" recording that 'there is hardly a house where there is not one dead'.

The shared experience of unionists and nationalists fighting side by side at the Somme remains one of the most poignant Irish legacies of the First World War, and in the first edition published after the battle began, on 7th July, the *Gazette* was highlighting this significance. Its lead article of that date – entitled "The Somme or the Boyne" – was written in the context of government proposals to partition Ireland as a

solution to the Irish question in response to the Easter Rising. Speaking for wider Church and island interests as a whole, the article took on the language of appeal that all would remain united in the spirit of the Somme, rather than dividing along green and orange lines, thus promoting the Somme as a symbol of Irish unity. The online search engine which provides free access to the editions of the newspaper for the entire commemorative period, 1911-1923, reveals no less than 23 different articles covering the Somme between July and December 1916.

The conciliatory tone of many of these articles may be attributed to the newspaper's lay editor and wartime correspondent, Ware Bradley Wells (1892-1958), who, as previous online presentations have shown, was 'imparted of Nationalist sympathies' yet noted for a pluralist and fair outlook (see these links: <http://ireland.anglican.org/about/186> and <https://beta.ireland.anglican.org/news/6397/the-church-of-ireland-gazette>). The first of his "Somme or the Boyne" articles was published six days after the battle commenced which he considered 'a death grapple' yet one that added a 'new and glorious page ... to Irish history'.

In this context, and reflecting general Church of Ireland opinion of the time, Wells was convinced

that Lloyd George's proposed partition or – as he put it – ‘the furtive plan for the dismemberment of Ireland’ represented potential disaster for all true patriotic Irishmen. Using the symbol of Ulster's nationalists and unionists fighting a common enemy beside one another, he appealed to his readers to make their choice for the real Ireland.

The content of Wells's interesting editorials, his regular column “The War Week by Week” devoted to military aspects of the Allied offensive, the “Boyne or the Somme” series, and all the other content of the *Gazette* editions between 1911 and 1923 remains freely available using the online search engine available through the Church of Ireland website at <https://esearch.informa.ie/rcb>

Additionally, with support from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, a second commemorative reprint of the 7th July 1916 edition – as it appeared for contemporary readers – will be printed and circulated for current *Gazette* readers on 8th July 2016.

[www.ireland.anglican.org/library/archive](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/library/archive)

## Portadown rector ministered at Somme

Although he witnessed some of the worst atrocities of the Battle of the Somme during his time as chaplain, the Rev John Redmond, of Grange House, Portadown, rarely spoke of them when he returned to civilian life.

News Letter - However, he was an avid diarist and his accounts of ministering to the dying and wounded have been preserved by his family, including daughter-in-law Mrs Dorothy Redmond, who still lives in the town.

Some of those vivid experiences have also been collated by Canon WEC (Ted) Fleming, historian and former rector of Tartaraghan, who knew Rev Redmond personally and conducted his funeral service almost 50 years ago.

The Rev Redmond, who was born in 1876, arrived in the Somme on June 16, 1916. He was stationed just 12 miles behind the firing line, and could hear the booming of the heavy guns like distant thunder.

Ten days later, his casualty clearing station received the first convoy of wounded from the front. “It is a most heartbreaking sight to see a victim struggling in anguish for breath,” he wrote.

On July 1, the infantry launched an attack on the German lines and the station was inundated with injured soldiers, admitting about 1,000 in three days.

There were some 60,000 British casualties (including 20,000 killed) during the first day of the assault, with the 36th Ulster Division suffering heavy losses.

In the days and weeks that followed, the Rev Redmond spent his days visiting the wounded, writing letters for patients and to relations of those who had died, and conducting funerals.

Among those he tended on the battlefield was James Emerson from Louth, aged 21, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. The Rev Redmond wrote to the young soldier’s mother telling her of his gallant actions and of his final moments “when he thought of you”.

He wrote, “War is a barbarous thing and cruel and atrocious beyond words. This comes home to one with a shock as one sees young men

coming in from the battlefield with the most terrible gashes and wounds - faces broken and swollen into all shapes and into no shape, limbs blown off and bones stripped of their flesh.

“It is pitiful to see the unconscious fling their arms, and the constant turning and rising and changing position of those who have fatal wounds; and to look at the patient and uncomplaining suffering of strong men, whose faces are now pale as death and lie helpless.”

On a happier note, he noted that a soldier was brought in who had been lying for 13 days on the battlefields. “He had many wounds and was delirious when found, there were maggots in his wounds, but soon he was making a wonderful recovery.”

At the beginning of September, feeling that he had done his share of hospital work, the Rev Redmond applied for transfer to the Ulster Division troops serving in the trenches, but was posted to a vacancy with the 64th Brigade. He was shocked to see the whole countryside “a wilderness of mud with troops, horses and transport ploughing through it”.

His division moved up the trenches in October, coming under heavy attack.



The Somme offensive ended with the battle of Ancre from November 13-18. The number of men killed on both sides over 140 days exceeded 1.3 million, which included 400,000 British casualties

<http://www.newsletter.co.uk/clergyman-who-ministered-soldiers-at-battle-of-somme-1-7443843>

## News links to reports on faith, politics and education

### Church leaders in Cork unite to condemn attack on Muslim cleric

Irish Examiner

In a show of inter-faith solidarity, the Cork ecumenical secretaries who represent the Catholic Church, **Church of Ireland**, Methodist Church, and ...

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/church-leaders-in-cork-unite-to-condemn-attack-on-muslim-cleric-408518.html>

### How much do chaplaincy services cost each third-level institution?

Irish Times

Number of chaplains employed: Two Catholic lay chaplains, one **Church of Ireland** chaplain (to be appointed); one Presbyterian chaplain; one ...

[churchnewsireland@gmail.com](mailto:churchnewsireland@gmail.com)

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/how-much-do-chaplaincy-services-cost-each-third-level-institution-1.2704626>

## **Pope's advisor: Irish Church needs to be forward thinking**

The Irish Catholic

One of the Pope's closest advisors has urged the **Church in Ireland** not to fear letting go of its former glories and to be forward thinking. German ...

<http://www.irishcatholic.ie/article/pope%E2%80%99s-advisor-irish-church-needs-be-forward-thinking>

## **New guidelines published on how to deal with abuse allegations in the Catholic Church**

Newstalk 106-108 fm

The National Board for the Safeguarding of Children on the Catholic **Church in Ireland** (NBSCCCI) has launched new guidelines on child safety.

<http://www.newstalk.com/NBSCCCI-Catholic-Church-abuse-allegations-guidelines-new-standards-Teresa-Devlin>

### **Ind/Guard/Exp**

Reports on the resignation of Nigel Farage as leader of Ukip. The articles quote the party's only MP, Douglas Carswell, who has ruled himself out of taking over the leadership, saying: "I never want to be in a party where the Archbishop of Canterbury feels compelled to criticise some of the things that people say," referring to

comments made by Archbishop Justin during the EU referendum debate about Mr Farage's views.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-resignation-douglas-carswell-next-ukip-leader-resigns-quits-latest-a7119081.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/live/2016/jul/04/brexit-live-plan-leave-vote-hysteria-boris-johnson>

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/686015/douglas-carswell-rules-himself-out-ukip-leadership>

### Christian Today

Reports that evangelicals are preparing to block what they believe is an attempt to introduce same-sex blessings to the C of E. Nearly 500 members of the General Synod, which meets this weekend, will spend time in "shared conversations" discussing the Church's response to same-sex relationships. Article says that conservatives believe that after the York meeting, the Church's bishops will discuss the issue and then draw up a plan for some form of "pastoral accommodation" which will go back to Synod when it meets in London in February.

### **Portsmouth Today**

Reports that the Archbishop of Canterbury will visit Portsmouth to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the diocese's only religious community. Archbishop Justin will preach and lead a service in Portsmouth Cathedral on July 29, marking the milestone of the Sisters of Bethany in Southsea. Sister Rita-Elizabeth, the current Mother Superior, is quoted.

<http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/archbishop-of-canterbury-will-visit-portsmouth-to-celebrate-religious-order-s-150th-anniversary-1-7461837>

### **York Press**

Reports that the Archbishop of York joined students graduating from Askham Bryan College. More than 1,200 students graduated from the college. Archbishop Sentamu presented BSc (Hons) degrees and Foundation degrees to more than 200 students at the last of three events, for subjects including agriculture, equine and animal management, horticulture and veterinary nursing.  
[http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/14595870.Sentamu\\_praises\\_students/?ref=rss](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/14595870.Sentamu_praises_students/?ref=rss)

### **Church Times**

Reports the publication of the first of a series of theological responses to *Renewal and Reform*, the programme designed to address the C of E's numerical decline. In his essay, *A future that's bigger than the past*, the Vicar of St Martin in the Fields, Dr Sam Wells, warns of the Church's "historic temptation to use power for pernicious purposes", and speaks of people's experience of Christianity's influence "as a curse, rather than as a blessing".  
<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2016/8-july/news/uk/renewal-and-reform-is-subjected-to-theological-scrutiny>

### **Global Witness**

Reports that the Church Commissioners have divested its £1.6 million holding in London-listed oil company Soco International. The move comes after the company failed to satisfy the Commissioners with its response to evidence of human rights abuses, bribery and corruption linked to its operations in Democratic Republic of Congo's Virunga National Park.

<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/church-england-divests-uk-oil-company-soco-international-after-virunga-scandal/>

### **Mirror**

Reports that more than 400 friends and family attended the memorial service for comedienne Victoria Wood at St James's church, Piccadilly London yesterday.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/3am/celebrity-news/victoria-woods-friends-family-gather-8349154#ICID=nsm>

### **Guard**

Report on the congregation of the [Highway House](#) church in Tottenham which seven years ago decided to transform their church into a homeless shelter for some of the most marginalised people in society.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jul/04/london-church-highway-house-giving-a-home-to-people-even-charities-wont-help>

### **Exp**

Further coverage that the University of Cambridge has commissioned dozens of new portraits at a cost of £900 each. Staff and students have been asked to nominate "suitable subjects" by the end of this week. Some colleges already have new pictures of prominent figures, including one of Libby Lane, the first female C of E bishop, at St Peter's College.

<http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/685905/Oxford-Uni-changes-art-from-white-men-to-ethnic-minorities-black-gay-women>

**Tel**

Reports on St Swithin's Day 2016. What is it and will it rain for 40 days?

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/st-swithins-day-2016-what-is-it-and-will-it-rain-for-40-days/>

**GET CNI HEADLINES EACH DAY**

**Facebook and Twitter**

**Click on logo at CNI Home page**

**[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)**

**+ Please share CNI with your friends**

**[www.churchnewsireland.org](http://www.churchnewsireland.org)**