A General view of Duisans
British Cemetery near Etrun where Cyril Dermott Somers is buried

World War I Stories
Written by Sean Glennon

The recently published book ‘The Clare war dead of World War 1’ was compiled by Ger Browne in Association with The Clare Roots Society. It lists nearly 1000 Clare war Dead. It includes two Clare Nurses who died when the passenger steamer R.M.S. Leinster was sunk by a German Submarine in the Irish Sea on a passage to Dublin in October 1918, a few weeks before the war ended. Their names were Delia and Nora Davoren from Claureen House, Ennis. Both are buried in Dromcliffe Cemetery.

This book was produced by Mountshannon Community Employment Scheme
Brief tributes to their memory

We know of eleven men from our parish of Whitegate Mountshannon who died in the great war of 1914-1918 from casualty figures we know that about one in ten soldiers sailors and airmen died in the war so up to a hundred men from our parish fought in that conflict the following stories are brief tributes which I have compiled to their memory.

May they Rest In Peace

Sean Glennon

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When the Kaisar signed the declaration of war against Russia, he threw his pen on the table and is reported to have said "Gentlemen you have compelled me to sign this document, but you will live to rue this day." How true he was. The anniversaries of remembrance ceremonies for Great Britain, Ireland and Belgium were held in a common wealth war. Cemetery called St Symphonie's which is near Villars St Ghislain outside Mons in Belgium. Among those representation Ireland was the President Mr Michael O'Higgins. The Cemetery is universal in that it contains the graves of both British and German war dead. While in Belgium recently I took to opportunity of visiting the cemetery. It is in a beautiful setting. It has many Irish associations. It contains the grave of Westmeath man Lt Maurice Dease who was posthumously awarded the first Victoria Cross of the war for his bravery at the Ninny canal bridges during the retreat from Mons. He was 24 years of age a was the son of Edmund and Catherine Dease of Llevington Park outside Mullingar. The ruins of his house was advertised 'for sale' recently in the property pages of The Irish Independent. Also buried in the cemetery is the last British Soldier to die in the war Pte G.E. Ellison of the 5th Royal Irish Lancers. He is buried opposite the first British Soldier to die in the war Pte J. Par of the Manchester Regiment. I counted the graves of eleven other Irishmen who all died in August 1914. Nearly all from the Royal Irish Regiment. One Joseph Gardiner from Castle Comer Co Kilkenny was only 18 years old when he died on August 24th 1914.

The Germans were the first to use the cemetery in 1914 and erected a distinctive memorial to the Royal Irish regiment nearby at La Bascule is a fine Celtic cross memorial to the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment. The columns of the Irish memorials to the dead contain the names of 50,000 Irishmen who died in the conflict. These were compiled in the 1920's and were printed to a design by Harry Clarke, the Dublin Artist. Several Counties have compiled lists of their dead soldiers from the first world war. I have copies of lists from Cork, Kilkenny, Limerick, Galway and Clare. The list compiled by a team from County Cork was launched at a ceremony in the city hall, Cork a few years ago. It was compiled by a team led by a friend Eugene White. The list was published as a volume called the great sacrifice. It contains the names of over 4000 Cork men who died in the conflict. Eugene tells me that since its publication over 200 extra names of casualties from the war it has come to his notice. Recently I attended the launch of the Clare list which has nearly one thousand named casualties.
The launch was in St Brendan’s church in Ennis in connection with the Ennis Book Festival. The list was compiled by Ger Brown in Association with the Clare Roots Society. Plans to remember the 4200 war dead from Cork are being considered. It is proposed to erect a wall with all their names inscribed on it. Gerry White mentioned above is the curator of the Michael Collins museum in Cork city. A similar project is planned for Clare with a memorial wall listing the names of the Clare war dead to be erected in one of the parks near the GLOR in Ennis.

In Ireland North and South lie the graves of nearly 4000 dead soldiers from the First World War. They and their resting places might have been long forgotten had it not been for the efforts of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the office of Public works in indentifying, registering and marking these graves, temporarily at first with wooden crosses and permanently afterwards with standards of the Commonwealth War Graves Headstones. These lie today in every county. In large military cemeteries in secluded country churchyards, in isolated burial grounds their headstones silent witnesses to their own and their families’ tragedies. One of our parishioners war dead, Rody McNamara lies in the churchyard at Moynoe on the road from Scariff to Mountshannon. All or most of the grave yards in which these men lie are owned by the local County Council. For a number of years the council would not allow their regimental insignia to be inscribed on their grave stones. A petty regulation when you consider what is happening in some of our graveyards, now over the years most councils resisted this restriction. Clare was the last to do so. On Jan 11th 1999 Clare County Council formally notified the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that they no longer had any objection to the inscribing of the regiments being engraved on the gravestones. The council motion to do so was seconded by our then local County Councillor Paul Begley. At that time there were six cemeteries in Clare with eleven gravestones minus their badges and three cemeteries with eleven gravestones with badges engraved. There are in all 37 such war graves in County Clare.

On show in the museum of military history in Vienna is the car in which the arch Duke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were travelling when shot by Gavrilo Princip on June 28th 1914 thus starting the lead up to the First World War. It has the number plate A 111 118 the date of the assassination was November 11th 1918.
The 16th Irish division memorial Celtic Cross is beside the military cemetery where Clare man John Walsh lies buried. The cross was unveiled on 26th August 1926 and blessed by Fr O’Connell who had been the chief Chaplain to the division. 46 Irish chaplains died in the war. Also present was General Sir William Hickie who commanded the 16th Irish division during the war. He was from Slievehour house, Terryglass on the Tipperary shore of Lough Derg and was instrumental in erecting this cross and another one at Guinchy which was unveiled the next day by Marshal Foch. The commander of the French army. The cross had just being renovated when I took this photograph.

This is the grave of John Walsh from Ennistymon Co Clare who was serving with the Royal Munster Fusiliers when he was killed on the 7th June 1917. He was 32 years old. I took this photograph of his grave in Wytschaete Military cemetery a few years ago his grave is almost beside the 16th Irish Division memorial nearby. It can be seen in the background.

The great war had only begun a few weeks before. In November 1914 when in a dismaying episode near admiral Sir Christopher Cradock’s antiquated royal naval cruiser squadron, less it’s battleship “Cromas” in a suicidal gesture took on a more modern German squadron commanded by Admiral Von Spee in a battle now called coronal off the coast of Chile in South America. All of Cradock’s cruisers good hope and Monmouth and the light cruiser Glasgow were sunk with all their crew numbering 1600 sailors. Albert Thompson from Cappaduff was one of the sailors on board the cruiser HHS good hope. Albert was aged 29 years and left a young wife behind him. His name is remembered on the Royal Naval memorial in Plymouth, England.

For years a memorial plate for Albert was on the wall of St Caimins Church in Mountaharrow. But it was removed during one of the Art festivals and never replaced.

Of Cradock, the then Prime Minister Asquith said the poor man has gone to the bottom otherwise his richly deserves to be court-martialled.

In November 2014 the Royal navy held a memorial service for the sailors who lost their lives in the battle. The service was held over the recently discovered wreck of Albert’s ship the cruiser H.M.S. “Good Hope”.
Thomas Bulger was the eldest son of Mr & Mrs Patrick Bulger of Kilranea, Mountshannon. He went to the United States before the war and lived at 61 Main St., Peabody, New York. In 1917 when the United States joined the allies in the war against the axis power he joined the American Army. One of the big factors in bringing the United States into the war, was the sinking of the passenger liner Lusitania off the old head of Kinsale by a German U-boat. Like the invasion of Belgium it was fatal mistake by Germany. Thomas was in the 95th regiment which had incorporated the famous Irish fighting 89th regiment which had won fame during the American civil war. The division to which the regiment was attached was the 42nd division also famous in American history as the rainbow division. Thomas was stationed in the American sector of the front which extended from Soissons to St Quentin. He was killed in action on August 1st 1916 in the Aisne-Marne offensive by 10 American Divisions. He is buried in the American military cemetery of Oise-Aisne near Ferrières-en-Tardenois France which is North East of Paris. He is buried in plot A, Row 4, Grave 9. He was 34 years of age when he died, most of his comrades in the regiment were Irish. The regimental chaplain was a father Francis Duffy. One of the officers of Thomas Regiment at the time was a young 1st Lieutenant name George P. Patton who afterwards became famous as a general in the American army during the second war in Europe. There are 8 American war cemeteries in France and Belgium at Aisne-Marne, Belleau, Oise Aisne, Meuse-Argonne, Warogem, Somme, St Mihiel and Suresnes. Every morning when the cemeteries open, pipes, the American equivalent of the last post is sounded. All of the cemeteries have chapels and carillons installed with pealing bells a sequence of patriotic American music. In Oise-Aisne cemetery where Thomas Bulger is buried there are over 6000 graves, of these 250 are unknown soldiers. The cemetery covers 36 1/2 acres. Thomas was one of the last of generations of Irish speakers in this area.

An Areal view of the Oise Aisne American cemetery. Here 6012 Soldiers lie buried.
PTE William McNamara 8th Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers Whigate

PTE William McNamara 5716, 8th Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers was killed in action on June 8th 1916 in France. He is buried in St Patrick's Cemetery Loos, grave no I/6/1 a large number of his comrades from the Munster Fusiliers are also buried in this cemetery which I visited a few years ago the appropriately name military cemetery is North of Lens and Arnes. Loos after which the battle of Loos in the first war is named is a small town and I can remember having some difficulty locating the cemetery there.

The grave of William McNamara from Whigate in St Patrick's Cemetery in Loos France.

My son Jonathan beside the grave of William McNamara after placing a Poppy Cross in Remembrance, during a visit in October.

St Patrick's Military cemetery Loos where William McNamara is buried with 28 of his comrades from the Royal Munster Fusiliers. I also counted 17 Irishmen from the Royal Irish Regiment 10 from the Leinster Regiment, 2 Connaught Rangers and 1 Inniskilling Fusilier. One I can remember is Michael Hynes from Ennis.

Sean outside St Patrick's Cemetery in Loos
Lieutenant Frederick Ralph George from Mountshannon was serving with the first battalion the Connaught rangers when he was killed in action in France. At the time he was the adjutant of the battalion something like a secretary who keeps all the battalion records etc.

He died on 5th November 1914 and is buried in Rue - Du - Bacquerot: No 1 Military Cemetery, Laventie, which is on the road between La Bassée and Estaires North of Lens.

Battle of Messines

Lieutenant George is buried in a row with 20 other Connaught rangers and a Leinster Regiment Capt. R.H. Gilliat all of whom died on November 5th 1914. The cemetery is in an out of the way place and seldom visited. You can know this by looking at the visitors book which is kept in a watertight receptacle in all of the cemeteries. The cemetery contains the graves of 637 soldiers. It has a field of vines growing along one side. 61 of the soldiers are unidentified and special memorials commemorate 12 soldiers believed to be buried here. The cemetery was close to the British front lines.

Lieutenant George was the son of Barry George and was born in Mountshannon House, Mountshannon on 9th September 1883. He was educated at the Abbey School in Tipperary and Trinity College, Dublin. He was gazetted a 2nd subaltern in the Connaught Rangers on 13th January 1906 and promoted Lieut on 2nd January 1909 and appointed adjutant in June 1914. He was killed in action on 5th November 1914 during a Bayonet Charge on a German trench in front of their position near Neuve Chapelle. In the attack Lieutenant George was severely wounded as he rushed forward but a sergeant T Kelly cleared the parapet and in the face of a very heavy fire lifted the officer to carry him to safety as he was doing so another bullet killed Lieutenant George in his arms. For his bravery Sergt Kelly was awarded the distinguished conduct medal. Sergt Kelly’s citation published in the London Gazette was “For conspicuous gallantry during an attack on the enemy’s trenches”. While examining the ground where this happened...

Action took place last June I came across the hill of a broker British Bayonet and a hand grenade with the firing pin still in place. The 1st Connaught rangers had been in India and when in France was attached to an Indian division Lieut Georges Brother Lieut R. W. George stationed at the Royal Engineers office in Athlone applied for his brother medals.

Sergt Kelly was later killed in action with the Battalion in Mesopotamia in January 1916. He was from Leixlip, Co Kildare. British army records gave his home address as Mountshannon House, Co Galway, Mountshannon at that time was in Co Galway.

A general view of Rue - du - Bacquerot: No 1 military cemetery where Ralph George is buried in a row with 20 of his comrades from the Connaught Rangers.
The writer placing a memorial cross on Ralph Georges grave in Laventie in France.

A close up photograph of Ralph Georges well cared for grave near Laventie in France.

The Broken Bayonet which I found near scene of the Connaught Rangers Bayonet charge in which Lieut George was killed in November 1914.

Private Michael Ward who died on the 3rd October 1916 was aged 23 years. He is buried in Mont Huon military cemetery, Le Treport which is on the English channel coast near Dieppe. He was in the first battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers. He died of wounds received in action and was probably brought to a hospital on the coast when he died and was buried. He is listed in Ireland casualties of World War 1, which I wrote about last month. As having been born in Mountshannon and in Colm Brownes the Clare war dead of World War 1. He was the son of John and Caroline who afterwards lived in Scariff.

Mont Huon Military Cemetery Le Treport where Michael Ward is buried. Le Treport is on English Channel Coast West of Amiens and the River Somme.
Rifleman Henry Wiseman
1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles was from Cappaduff

Henry Wiseman, from Cappaduff, Mountshannon is remembered on panel 138 on the memorial wall in the Tyne Cot Cemetery, near Passchendaele in Northern France. Tyne Cot is the largest British Military cemetery in the world. On the memorial wall nearly 35,000 soldiers who have no known grave are remembered. Almost 12,000 are buried in the adjoining cemetery in at most parade ground order. A large number of these soldiers are unidentified. A good number of their names must be on the wall with Henry. The cemetery is a few miles from Passchendaele. Henry was with the first Battalion royal Irish rifles, which being a regular Battalion was part of the 8th regular division. The royal Irish rifles had 21 battalions in the first World War. On the 16th August 1917 Henry Wiseman and 70 of his comrades were killed in a Stoyer charge on German trenches near Langemarck and pass Chendaale, which was a notorious sector of the front. The Royal Irish Rifles were attacking up hill against German machine guns in concrete bunkers. One of these machine gun bunkers is still there. I remember walking the area a few years ago and came to the conclusion that 'they hadn’t a chance' Douglas Heard, who is buried in the church of Ireland graveyard in Mountshannon was badly wounded at Passchendaele. I can remember him telling about the terrible conditions under which they fought. He suffered the pain of machine gun bullets in his side for the rest of his life. His wife once told me that it ‘made him a bit cranky at times’.

The Entrance to Tyne Cot cemetery. The cross of sacrifice centre is built on top of a German bunker.

Tyne Cot cemetery near Passchendaele. The memorial wall in the background is where Henry Wiseman’s name is on panel 138 near the Cupola on the left.

The writer leaving a memorial cross on the wall at Tyne Cot cemetery near Harry Wiseman’s name, Harry was 6 foot 6 inches tall.

A Photograph I took of Passchendaele years ago, is now a peaceful farming area.
PTE Joseph Costello from Whitegate was in the 2nd Battalion of the Leinster regiment. He died of wounds on 14th March 1915 and is buried in Cite Bon Jean Military cemetery which is near the village of Erquincem-Lys situated to the West of Armentieres. It is hard to find and we were probably the only people who ever visited his grave. His grave no is IXC38 there are 2 other soldiers named Costello buried in city Bon Jean both are Australian soldiers one from Queensland and one from Victoria. Joseph is buried with four comrades from the Leinster regiment near Bandsman D Coffey, PTE JH Greaege, who died on the same day as Joe PTE T Lawler and Lance Corporal P Kiernan. The Leinster regiment started their involvement in the great war in an action at place called Premeques West of Lille. The 2nd Battalion in which Joseph was on their 1st day in action suffered over 200 casualties. Their sacrifice is being remembered in the town this October the 100th Anniversary, with Remembrance ceremonies which I have attended. Beside Joseph Costello grave is one of the few private memorials erected by their families. This one is to Capt Angus Makart the 5th loyal North Lancashire Regiment among those present were the Irish ambassador to Paris and the British Ambassador.

A view of Cite Bon Jean military cemetery near Armentieres in France where Joseph Costello and his comrades are buried.

The entrance to Cite Bon Jean cemetery which shows how well kept these cemeteries are.

A close up view of the grave of Joseph Costello from Whitegate in Cite Bon Jean military cemetery in France.

The writer placing a memorial cross on the grave of Joseph Costello in Cite Bon Jean cemetery.
Pte Michael McNamara was in the 7th Battalion of the Leinster Regiment and died of wounds in Belgium on the 10th of August 1917. He is buried in Brandhoek new military cemetery No.3 which is midway on the road between Ypres and Poperinge. It is one of three cemeteries grouped together named Brandhoek, New Brandhoek No.3, his grave is VI.25.

Michael is buried in a row with five other Irish soldiers who died in the same month August 1917. They are: Pte Stewart, Royal Irish Rifles; Healy, Royal Dublin Fusiliers who was aged 19. A Morgan Royal Irish Regiment aged 21. J Cassidy Royal Dublin Fusiliers and J McPhilips Royal Irish Rifles. Also buried in the same place is Sergt Michael Curley of the 5th battalion the Connaught Rangers who died on August 3rd 1917. He is buried in grave 2011. He was from Athlone and was a founding member of the committee of the Midland volunteer force in 1912. This force of 1,500 men was formed before the Irish National volunteers was even heard of. Also buried in the same place is Capt. Noel Chavesse the army Doctor who was the only one to win a double Victoria Cross. He had Irish connections in Cork, and studied medicine at the College of Surgeons, in Dublin.
A Mountshannon airman buried in Malta

Albert Edward Hutchinson
Royal Air Force

In the church of Ireland graveyard in Mountshannon, a gravestone of the Hutchinson family records details of a son of that family who was a casualty of the First World War. Anthony Albert Hutchinson was a mechanic in the Royal Air Force who died while on active service on November 4th 1919 at Malta and was originally buried in the military cemetery at Fort Rinella in Malta. The gravestone in Mountshannon was freed from Brambles during the recent clean up and restoration of the graveyard by the Community Employment team under Tom McNamara. It is now a pleasure to visit and a credit to everyone involved. I asked several people that I thought would know about the Hutchinson family and drew a blank. One person whose family grave is nearby never heard of the family. Maybe this article might ring a bell with somebody. Albert was 32 years of age when he died and all the information I have about him is that, he had 2 sisters Margaret and Harriet and that his father’s name was George and that his mother’s name was Alice. It was his sisters who erected the stone. On a recent visit to Malta I found that the commonwealth war graves in the cemetery at Fort Rinella had been moved to the Capucine Naval Cemetery at Kalkara. I visited this cemetery with my son Ross and laid a wreath on Albert’s grave. We were probably the first visitors from Mountshannon to do so.

While I was in the naval cemetery I met a man named Wright who had an index of information on people buried in the war cemeteries on Malta. But unfortunately he had nothing on Albert Hutchinson. I have come across one reference to his father and mother coming from Co Limerick, to Mountshannon. A recent visitor to Mountshannon George Howle told that the Hutchinson family owned property where the Cupan Café and the adjoining houses now stand and were related to the Clarkees.

Kala Kari is a Naval cemetery which is appropriate for Albert as he, although in the Royal Air Force, was serving on H.M.S. Ark Royal which I think was the first purpose built aircraft carrier in the world. Albert is in grave no 46 plot. During the First World War Malta was a hospital base for soldiers wounded in Salonica, the Dardennels and Palestine who were brought to Malta by hospital ships. So it is more than likely that Albert was wounded else where and brought to Malta for the treatment for his wounds from which he sadly did not recover.

The writer placing a wreath on Albert’s grave in Naval cemetery in Malta.

A general view of the Naval cemetery at Capuccini, Malta where Albert Hutchinson from Mountshannon lies buried.
20 year old Cyril Somers was, the eldest son of Rev. S.N. Somers the then rector of St Cairns Church of Ireland parish Mountshannon. He died of wounds received in the battle of Arras on Sunday May 20th 1917. There is a memorial tablet to his memory in the Parish church of St Cairns. He was a second Lieutenant in the First Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He is buried in Duisans Military Cemetery near the Village of Etun North East of the town of Arras in Northern France. While being in the area I took the opportunity of visiting his grave and to lay a little floral tribute to show that he is still remembered in Mountshannon for the sacrifice he made. The graveyard where he is buried is now almost in accessible. The French are building a motorway beside the cemetery and the old entrance Road is gone. Even the local bin men in the nearby village shrugged their shoulders in response to our queries in broken French. Afterwards I suspected that they may have been Polish immigrants. Eventually by sheer perseverance and wearing wellingtons we found the entrance. The cemetery is beautifully kept it is unusual in that behind the row of graves in which Cyril is buried is a row of graves of 5 Germans soldiers. Their parents must have gone through the anguish of receiving the German equivalent of the yellow telegram bringing them the awful news of their deaths also.

The work on the graveyard was barely finished 20 years when war rolled over the Arras area of Northern France again. The cemetery entrance still bears the scars of the second world war with Pockmarks from bullets in the masonry and on the gravestones. The words of the song "When will they ever learn" came to mind when I saw the puckmarks. Duisans cemetery contains the grave of 3112 soldiers each of whose deaths must have been a tragedy for those families in Germany, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa, England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland.

Cyril is buried in a row with other soldiers who also died on May 20th 1917. The German soldier buried right buried Cyril is Bruno Beyer FLIEG-ABT-235 who died on May 5th 1917. We put some flowers on his grave also.