



# **MOURNE AND THE GREAT WAR**



**SCHOMBERG  
FESTIVAL COMMITTEE**



# MOURNE AND THE GREAT WAR...

Through this leaflet, the Schomberg Festival Committee aim to record the impact of World War One and the mark it has left on the Kingdom of Mourne and its people. We are very grateful to all of those who contributed to the project and also the Heritage Lottery Fund who made this project possible. We hope that this leaflet gives you a better insight into the life and times of Mourne during The Great War...

During the late 19th and early 20th Century the Mournes was divided over Home Rule. Its majority Protestant population had deep fears of the economic and civil / religious outcomes if there was a Dublin Catholic dominated parliament. Mourne Catholics were attracted to Home Rule because they believed Ireland was a nation and had a right to govern itself.

## THE ULSTER VOLUNTEERS

Unionists formed the Ulster Volunteer Force to fight against Home Rule. The Kilkeel Volunteers became a part of the 2nd Battalion of the South Down Regiment U.V.F.



## IRISH VOLUNTEERS

Nationalists formed a Mourne Battalion of the Irish Volunteers to fight for Home Rule.

## POSSIBLE CIVIL WAR?...

Two rival forces were now active in Ireland, and the Mourne area was no different. Some believed that a confrontation between both was just a matter of time...

# THE OUTBREAK OF WAR...

On the 4th of August 1914 the atmosphere in the Mourne District changed. The announcement that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was now at war, they 'all' were now at War, was an opportunity for both sides to take a step back.

## THE FIRST EFFECTS

Local men who had been reserves in the Army went straight back to their former units. Kilkeel's two banks closed for two days because of fear after the announcement, while supplies of sugar and flour became low in Kilkeel because of stockpiling. On Sunday 9th of August each Church in the Mourne District offered up prayers for peace.

## MORE MONEY!

The Countess of Kilmorey requested that everyone who already supports the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association 'double their contribution'!



## COMFORTS

Local people started to hold events to raise funds for 'comforts' for soldiers such as socks, mufflers and cigarettes. Some of the early concerts took place in Kilkeel Courthouse in aid of the National Relief Fund, and in Mourne Lecture Hall for the Soldiers and Sailors Fund.





# ENLISTMENT...

Calls for Mourne men to join the army started when the War began, but many were reluctant to enlist. Many Unionists were scared that Home Rule would happen if they left, while many Nationalists simply did not want to leave their homes.

## A CHANGE OF HEART

Many Ulster Volunteers changed their minds, and after meetings organised by the local U.V.F. some enlisted into the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division. By the 12<sup>th</sup> of September a large number of men from the 4<sup>th</sup> South Down Battalion had enlisted, including the commander and two half company commanders of the Kilkeel No.3 Company.

Some Mourne Irish Nationalists had enlisted and would continue to enlist, but in mostly a personal capacity as opposed to a reaction to calls from the Irish Volunteers. Patrick Cunningham of Harbour Road, Kilkeel enlisted into the 7th Leinster Regiment, where he rose to the rank of Sergeant Major. He lost his life on the 21st March 1918.



## RALLIES

There were many large recruiting rallies in Kilkeel, Annalong, Ballymartin and outlying districts. In March 1915 the Royal Army Medical Corps visited the area, while the Royal Irish Fusiliers made several visits during the War years.

# A WAR AT SEA...

The Mournes always had a profound connection with naval military service. A connection that continued during the Great War with considerable numbers enlisting to serve in the British Navy. In the period from September 1914 to May 1915 alone no less than five men would die in that duty.

## 'EARNEST'

In May 1917 the 'Earnest' was sunk by a German U-Boat when it had been transporting coal to Dublin. The U-boat captain apologised to 'Earnest' Captain James Ferguson for sinking his vessel!

The worst incident was on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1918, when nine fishing boats were sunk by German forces on board U-boat the UB64. After surfacing in the middle of the fleet, the crews of all nine ships were ordered via loud hailer to abandon them. The Mournes boats destroyed were the 'Never Can Tell', the 'Sparkling Wave', the 'Lloyd', the 'Cyprus', the 'Jane Gordon', the 'Honey Bee' and the 'Marianne McCrum'.

## U-BOATS

There were several other instances of Kilkeel, Annalong and Ballymartin fishing boats being sunk by U-Boats. In June 1915 the Schooner 'Edith' was sunk by a submarine on the Cork Coast, but it's crew of three Kilkeel men survived.





# KILLED IN ACTION...

Private Herbert Marmion, known as Bert, enlisted into the 8th Battalion Royal Fusiliers and was only at the front a very short time when he was killed in action on the 9th August 1915. He was said to be quiet and highly respected in his native town. Herbert Marmion was 18.

On September 14<sup>th</sup> there were two deaths 'in action'. On that date Able Seaman Samuel Robinson from Moneydarragh, a petty officer in the Australian Navy, and Private Patrick Rogers of 1st Battalion Irish Guards from Ballymartin both would die.



## THE FIRST OF JULY

Like the rest of Ulster, the one date that would have the biggest impact on the Mourne was the 1st July 1916.

On that tragic day seven Mourne men died at the Battle of the Somme. Rifleman Thomas Balance, Rifleman Hugh Campbell, Rifleman William Teggerty, Rifleman William Hunter and Rifleman Peter Rooney all died serving with the 13th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles.

Lieutenant Corporal Robert Purdy dies serving with the 11th Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers.

# HEROES...



Robert Hill Hanna was born in Kilkeel in 1887 in the area known as 'Hanna's Close', and while still a young man emigrated to Canada in search of a better life. It was there shortly after the outbreak of war he left the work he enjoyed in the logging industry and enlisted into the Canadian Expeditionary Forces. He rose through the ranks quickly to the level of Colour Sergeant-Major, and it was at that rank he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

William Hayden Floyd was the only son of Dr Ferguson Floyd, Greencastle Street; who enlisted into the forces on 19th October 1914 in Belfast. A mechanic by trade, he eventually joined the Royal Flying Corps in March 1916. On the 9th of July he was in a plane that was shot down and he died from his injuries on the 11th July. He was just 20 years of age.



Nurse Margaret Anderson was a qualified nurse who joined Queen Alexandra's Military Nursing Reserve in 1916. She was awarded the Military Red Cross, the highest award issued to a woman during the War. Despite her age, fifty eight, at the outbreak of the Second World War she re-joined the nursing reserve and was involved in the evacuation of Dunkirk.



# REMEMBRANCE



On Friday 30th December 1921 an event in Kilkeel Courthouse saw 200 natives of the Mourne District who had enlisted given specially made Kingdom of Mourne Great War Medals. In 1923 a War Memorial was erected at Mourne Presbyterian Church to honour all those men and women of the congregation who had served.

Other memorial tablets have been erected in Churches and buildings across the Mournes. An estimated 600 Mourne born men served during the Great War. At least 68 lost their lives on the many fields of battle across the World.



## Lest We Forget

