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# *Two war memorials at Kickham Barracks, Clonmel*

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By Áine Máire Chadwick

By the end of July 1922 both the infantry and the artillery barracks at Clonmel had been burned out. The combined barracks had for over a century housed the soldiers of the British garrison in the town and had recently been designated Depôt for the Royal Irish Regiment. However, it fell to other regiments to ensure the orderly evacuation of the establishment in the early months of 1922.

Subsequently the fine stone buildings were demolished. Fortunately, however, the impressive monuments of Irish design and manufacture raised to the memory of the dead of the Royal Irish Regiment were preserved unharmed. These stand today, carefully maintained by the members of the 12th Infantry Battalion, the inheritors of more than three centuries of military presence in the town.

On the south side of the barrack square, McCarthy Square, backing on to Davis Road, stands the Afghanistan and Egypt Cross. Modelled on the design of the ancient high cross with circled arms, carved ornamental bosses and panels of interlace in low relief, it is made of polished red granite. The cross and base together measure 3m in height.

On the North face of the Memorial the inscription reads:

**IN MEMORY OF THE OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS, AND  
PRIVATE SOLDIERS OF THE 1st AND 2nd BATTALIONS OF THE ROYAL IRISH  
REGIMENT, WHO DIED OF DISEASE OR WERE KILLED IN ACTION DURING  
THE CAMPAIGNS OF AFGHANISTAN, 1879-80, AND EGYPT, 1882.  
THIS MEMORIAL IS ERECTED BY THEIR COMRADES.  
ALSO IN MEMORY OF THE NILE EXPEDITION 1884-85.**

## **AFGHANISTAN CAMPAIGN (1879-1880)**

This campaign in Afghanistan was a short one. Suspicious of the encroaching Russian influence in the wild country to the North West of India, the British were intent on establishing and supporting a diplomatic and military mission at Kabul. A detachment of the Royal Irish Regiment left the bright plains of India and faced the rocky outcrops of the Hindu Kush.

"This natural rampart is pierced by the Khyber Pass – a dark and gloomy gorge, winding its way between high mountains which so nearly approach each other that in some places their rugged sides are only ten or twelve feet apart".<sup>1</sup> The task of the 1st Battalion was to keep the Pass open, to ward off the guerilla attacks of the Afghans and to maintain a military presence in this remote outpost of Empire.

At the end of a long, hot and frustrating summer the detachment was attacked by cholera. As a result, the losses incurred were caused mainly by accident and disease.

**AFGHANISTAN – 1879-80**

Died



Quarter Master R Barrett

Colour Sergeant J Bagnall

Sergeants: J Mann; J McConnell; J Cox

Corporal I. Connolly

Lance Corporal A Thompson

**Privates:**

J Barry; R Bolger; J Clarke, P Carroll; T Carty; J Cleary; P Darmody; M Delaney; R Dillon; M Downey; P Dunphy; J Freeman; J Gorman; T Graham; M Haldon; W Johnston; A Keefe; R Keefe; M Kehoe; G Kelly; M Keane; J Kenny; J Kennedy; H King; J Lee; J Madden; J Manley (Drummer); W Milne; J Monaghan; J Moore; G McDonnell; D McGuill; J McGuire; A Newman; J O'Brien; T O'Connell; M O'Donnell; J Poe; T Preston; T Ready; M Shea; P Traynor.

In England Gladstone was bent on attacking this latest imperial adventure of Disraeli and the Conservative Party. In the election of March 1880 the Liberals were returned to power, and Gladstone's second ministry began. That same month the Battalion returned to Peshawar, leaving behind in the valleys and in the dark reaches of the high hills the bones of their dead comrades.\*

**EGYPT – 1882**

The 2nd Battalion of the Regiment meanwhile had been moving in detachments between Fermoy, Clonmel, Carrick-on-Suir, the Curragh, Aldershot and, finally to Portsmouth from whence in August 1881 it sailed for Egypt.\* For some years, although nominally monitored by the Triumvirate of France, Britain and Turkey, the country had been sliding into bankruptcy. Advisers, British and French, were installed, but succeeded only in uniting the country against the puppet administration under the leadership of the nationalist Colonel Ahmed Arabi Bey.

A cautious Gladstone would agree to only limited military intervention and Lieutenant General Sir Garnet Wolseley was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Army. The major battle of the month-long "war" took place on 13 September 1882 at Tel-el-Kebir – a bloody conflict in which the Royal Irish regiment played a decisive role. Arabi Bey was defeated and exiled.

By the end of May following the 2nd Battalion was back in Aldershot.\* "The tidiest war in British History", commented Wolseley.<sup>2</sup> A "war against the wrong people for the wrong reasons", commented his friend and fellow officer, Sir William Butler.<sup>3</sup>



*The Afghanistan and Egypt Cross. – Photo copyright A. M. Chadwick.*

In Clonmel more names would be added to the memorial in the barrack square.

**Killed in Action:** Lance Corporal F Devine

**Privates:** P Milligan; P Stars;

**Died – Accident or Disease:**

**Lieutenant** J H Lothian;

**Armourer Sergeant** T Gillson;

**Sergeants:** M Harput; T Holmes; C Whiteside;

**Drummer** J O'Connor; **Boy** A Paradine;

**Privates:** J Brophy; M Callaghan; N Fardy; H Gardner; J Gulliver; P Jordan; P Joyce; J Maher (Drowned); J Ryan (101); J Ruan (1254); F Street; J Willis; J Woodall; E Whelan.

### NILE EXPEDITION – 1884-85

In 1884, under the pressure of public opinion whipped up by the popular press, the British Government was forced once again to involve itself in Egyptian affairs. Ever since 1881 a fiery religious leader, the Mahdi, at the head of Sudanese tribesmen, had been waging a Holy War in the Eastern Sudan, defeating successive forces sent against him. The stability of Egypt was threatened.

General Charles Gordon was deployed to the Sudan to evacuate British interests there from a base in Karthoum. He chose, however, in defiance of orders, to fortify the city and to await reinforcements. The armies of the Mahdi, the “Chosen of God”, closed in. In England the plight of Gordon, a national hero, roused such passion that Gladstone had to authorise a hasty military intervention.

The 1st Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment left India en route for Cairo to join the Nile Expedition.\* Once there they moved slowly inland, facing immense difficulties in taking to the capricious waters of the Nile, fording the cataracts, finally crossing the sands of the desert. The men of the Royal Irish played a notable part in the constructing, the navigating, the man-handling and the repair of the unwieldy whale-boats which were best for the river route.

Their mission failed in its main objective, however. In January 1895 Khartoum was captured and General Gordon was killed. The armies fell back and by May Wolseley, now General Sir Garnet, received orders to leave the Sudan which, under protest, he did. By Christmas '85 the Battalion was once more en route for England.\*

The names of the 36 Officers and men of the Regiment lost on the Expedition of '84-'85 are not recorded on the Memorial at Kickham Barracks. However, they are to be found in Appendix 2(N) of Gretton, page 369.

Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Irish Regiment in 1895, and remained so until his death in 1913.

### The South African War Memorial

The second memorial faces out towards Davis Road from the north side of the square. This strikingly beautiful structure standing, 4½ feet tall, is made of Stradbally limestone. The front panel of the triangular block carries the simple bronze image of a morning spirit bearing palm. Bronze wreaths embellish this and the side panels on which the names of the fallen are inscribed.



At each of the upper corners are escutcheons enclosing the regimental badges, namely, the Harp Crowned, the Lion of Nassau and the Sphinx of Egypt. Behind the seats which form the triangular base are the plaques bearing the dedications.

**Front:**

SOUTH AFRICA 1899-1900

TO THE MEMORY OF THE OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS, AND MEN OF THE ROYAL IRISH REGIMENT WHO WERE KILLED IN ACTION AND DIED OF WOUNDS OR DISEASE DURING THE CAMPAIGN.

Those dates mark the duration of the South African War (the Boer War), from its commencement in October 1899 to March 1902. On the right-hand panel the battles of the first year are recorded.

**1899-1900 Relief of Kimberley, etc.**

In the previous decades the discovery of a rich seam of gold in the Transvaal had attracted hordes of prospectors and miners, mainly British, who came in the hope of making their fortune. They settled down, paid taxes, built townships, but were disenfranchised and denied all citizenship rights.

Paul Kruger, the Boer leader, did not take kindly to external pressure for these people, "uitlanders", to be accorded full citizenship of the state. In England his attitude was resented as being unjust and arrogant. Under threat of "gunboat diplomacy" certain concessions were offered grudgingly to the British Government. These were deemed insufficient and, by October, the two nations were at war.

Ignited by that mixture of complacency and greed categorized by Cecil Rhodes as "Philanthropy plus 5%", the affairs of a vast continent hundreds of miles away reverberated along the valley of the Suir. At Aldershot by November 1899 mobilization was under way. Reserves were brought from Clonmel.\* Hastily they were "armed, clothed and fitted out in every way". After a few frantic weeks the 1st Battalion was under way, aware that in that same week the British forces had sustained three major defeats at Colenso, Stromberg and Magersfontein.

Landing in Capetown, the men of the Royal Irish fought their way up country to Pretoria. By the end of 1900 the Boer Republics had been annexed and an uneasy stand-off had been established. The sombre list of the dead records the names of those who did not live to see it.



*The South African War Memorial. – Photo copyright A. M. Chadwick.*



**KILLED IN ACTION OR DIED OF WOUNDS**

**Captain** Power S(ir) J.E.C.

- . . . Alderson J.B.S.
- . . . Arbuthnot R.R.
- . . . Fosbery F.L.
- . . . French F.L.
- . . . Gloster W.

**Sergeants:**

- 6154 Brady W.J.
- 2343 Keyton J.
- 4882 Jones J.

**Corporals:**

- 5583 Hogan C.
- 6217 Ryan T.

**Lance Corporals:**

- 4348 Dowie G.
- 3843 O'Farrell W.

**Privates:**

63	Azelby, H.	2958	Costan, W.	6035	Eaton, A.
3733	Barry, J. V.C.	3158	Cullen, M.	12898	Fitzgerald, J.
1040	Brett, J.	3798	Dawson, M.	1049	Gardiner, J.
289	Brophy, E.	3614	Dennison, J.	858	Grindon, W.
3855	Carroll, M.	459	Devereux, D.	6413	Holden, M.
724	Clancy, J.	3923	Donovan, J.	140	Keogh, M.
1198	Colwell, J.	6512	Donovan, M.	3425	Keating, M.
944	Connolly, J.	2512	Doyle, D.	6331	Murphy, T.
5062	Corbett, T.	5295	Dundon, M.	6435	Murphy, P.
6447	McGrath, M.	4055	McLean, J.	5391	Ryan, P.
6559	Neagle, M.	6529	Power, M.	6609	Power, J.
2494	Ryan, T.	3439	Shea, J.	2066	Stewart, D.
2744	Taylor, L.	5871	Walsh, B.	6114	Whelan, M.

**Drowned:**

- 5845 Kehoe, D.
- 3496 O'Neal, M.
- 4257 Sweeney, W.

On the left-hand panel the battles of the second year are recorded.

**1901-1902**

Cape Colony, Belfast, Wittebergen, South Africa 1901.  
South Africa 1902.

The Boer farmers, regrouping under fresh leaders, continued an aggressive regime of guerilla tactics which were difficult to counter with conventional methods of warfare. The whole wasteful campaign was costing Britain dear in terms of men, money and international prestige. By 1901 and with 450,000 troops in the field making little headway against a resourceful enemy numbering no more than 50,000 to 60,000 largely untrained men, it was realised that alternative strategies were called for. These included the burning of farmsteads, the capture of livestock and the herding into concentration camps of women and children.

The Boers surrendered, and since an onslaught of enteric fever and disease had decimated sections of the British forces the Treaty of Vereeniging came not a day too soon. In Clonmel 62 new names were soon to be added to the roll of honour.



## DIED OF DISEASE

Captain Trechard, C.A.A.

Second Lieutenant Fletcher, A.C.S.

### Staff Sergeants:

3750 Broderick, P.  
2264 Morey, T.

### Sergeants:

4313 Cheasty, J.  
3157 Healy, H. T.

### Corporals:

5804 Fagan, W.  
5130 Murphy, P.

**Drummer:** 5672 Wall, M.

### Privates:

5411 Brennan, J.	138 Brien, J.	32 Carthy, P.
6260 Clancy, I.	1858 Clince, J.	4106 Clouter, E.
5400 Coveney, M.	4256 Craven, J.	4227 Daly, C.
1823 Dempsey, P.	6606 Donoghue, W.	3767 Dunne, T.
6305 Erett, J.	3146 Eustace, J.	3951 Fagan, J.
6248 Fenelon, J.	6346 Field, R.	6219 Fleming, J.
6335 Foran, W.	1444 Giltrap, J.	1918 Gorman, T.
580 Hanton, J.	6797 Houghton, J.	1578 Hill, J.
2909 Holohan, B.	274 Kane, P.	939 Kavanagh, T.
6363 Kavanagh, A.	6542 Keating, P.	586 Kelly, W.
6031 Lee, J.	6228 Martin, J.	3846 Malone, M.
4084 McGuinness, M.	83 McNamara, W.	4719 McNamara, J.
4414 Moran, J.	6153 Mulcahy, P.	6264 Mulcahy, J.
131 Murphy, P.	1670 Murphy, J.	6375 Murphy, J.
2111 Murray, M.	6513 O'Neill, J.	6397 Power, T.
6326 Pyte, J.	6453 Quirke, J.	3419 Scannell, W.
1471 Sinnott, J.	4871 Slattery, J.	3620 Walsh, R. J.
1458 Webster, G.	6350 Whitmore, W.	

John Barry of Kilkenny was awarded the Victoria Cross (posthumously) for his bravery on Monument Hill, where he died under a hail of bullets while disabling a captured Maxim gun. Some little way north of Port Elizabeth, perched astride the railway line which snakes northwards from the coast, is the small township of Glenconnor. Perhaps it was so named by some forlorn soldier who carried with him fond memories of strolling “up Glenconnor” with his sweetheart in that pleasant spot near Clonmel.

### FOOTNOTES

1. Gretton, *Campaign and History of Royal Irish Regiment*, p. 230.
2. Smith, P. *Victoria's Victories*, p. 149.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
4. Gretton, p. 311.

The full list of the “movements of the XVIIIth Royal Irish Regiment” between the years 1864 up to 1902 from which I have quoted, marking with an asterisk, will be found at Appendix 1, pp 375-384 of Gretton.

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