The Irish Anzacs: Irish men and women in the Australian Imperial Force

The town of Cahir in County Tipperary is situated in a delightful setting on the River Suir at the eastern end of the Galtee Mountains. On a rocky island in the middle of the river stands the town's major tourist attraction: Cahir Castle, reputed to be one of Ireland's largest and best-preserved Norman castles. In its shadow stands a less well known landmark, one not shown in the postcards or mentioned in the tourist books: the town's war memorial, on which are inscribed the names of 'the officers and men of Cahir and surrounding district who gave their lives in the Great War'. An Australian tourist visiting Cahir Castle and used to seeing war memorials in almost every town and suburb in Australia might not pay the memorial much attention. Yet, on closer inspection, our hypothetical Australian tourist might be surprised to see on the memorial in bold red lettering the word 'Australians', underneath which appear in black lettering the names: D Clohessy, J Lonergan and TP Holloway.

These names belong to just three of the approximately 6,600 Irish-born men and women who, on my estimation, served in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during the First World War, of whom approximately 970 paid the ultimate price.[1] Most already called Australia home, having emigrated to the new land of opportunity in the South Seas. Some, however, found themselves in Australia by chance when war broke out and enlisted there rather than returning home to join up, perhaps fearful that the war might end before they did so or in the hope that they might get a free passage home when the AIF sailed.[2]

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1   According to the AWM website <http://www.awm.gov.au/atwar/statistics/1885_1973.htm>, 421 809 enlisted in the AIF. This figure includes soldiers and nurses, of whom there were over 2500. As at January 2006, the National Archives of Australia Record Search included in series B2455 First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914–1920, the names of 375 867 members of the AIF or 89.10 per cent of the total enlistments. A search of the NAA database using the keyword 'Ireland' returned 5863 entries for the B2455 series. Of these, 83 persons had the surname Ireland, none of whom has Ireland as the place of birth. (Some entries include an Irish county for the place of birth without the word 'Ireland', and there may be other Irish-born soldiers whose place of birth is not stated in the title, but the number is not knowable without searching each file.) Therefore, there are approximately 5818 persons with a disclosed place of birth in Ireland. Of the 375 867 persons whose names have been entered into the database, 5435 have 'N/A' for place of birth. Deducting that number gives 370 432 as the number of entries that do disclose a place of birth, of which the 5818 Irish-born represent 1.57 per cent. Applying that percentage to the total enlistments of 421 809 gives a figure of 6622. The number of deaths is derived by applying the fatality rate of 14.63 per cent (that is, 61 720 deaths out of 421 809 enlistments), as per the AWM website, to the estimate of 6622 Irish-born enlistments giving 969.

2   The reasons for enlistment are many and varied. See Richard White, 'Motives for Joining Up: Self-sacrifice, Self-interest and Social Class', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, Vol. 9, 1986, pp. 3–16; John McQuilton, 'Enlistment for the First World War in Rural Australia: The Case of North-eastern Victoria, 1914–1918', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, Issue 33, 2000.

In this paper, we will look at the Irish Anzacs – ie. the Irish-born members of the AIF – from a number of aspects: who they were and what they thought of the war; what did some of them do during the war; and how they have been remembered in the land of their birth; and finally, how do these Irish men and women fit into the Anzac legend?

Irish Anzacs: Who were they?

Given the estimate of 6,600 Irish Anzacs, what does it tell us about the Irish-born in Australia and their attitudes to the war? That figure represents 1.57 per cent of total AIF enlistments of just under 422,000.[3] In 1911, the year of the last census before the First World War, Australia's population was just under 4.5 million of whom almost 140,000 were born in Ireland, ie. Irish-born Australians were 3.13 per cent of the general population.[4] At first sight, this suggests that the Irish-born did not support the war in proportion to their numbers in the general population. This conclusion would seem to be confirmed by the fact that while total enlistments represented 9.47 per cent of the Australian population, the Irish-born enlistments represented only 4.73 per cent of the Irish-born population. However, a closer examination of the 1911 census reveals a startling fact about the Irish-born, namely that they were an aging population, with 74 per cent being 45 years and over compared to 19 per cent for the general population. This was due largely to the fact that in the second half of the 19th century Irish immigration to Australia slowed both in absolute terms and as a relative contributor to population growth, so that the Irish-born proportion of the population decreased from 15.4 per cent in 1861 to only 3.13 per cent in 1911. If one counts only males of military age (that is, between 18 and 44 years), the proportion of eligible Irish-born males to all eligible Australian males is not 3.13 per cent but 1.8 per cent, much closer to 1.57 per cent, the proportion of Irish-born enlistments compared to total AIF enlistments.

Irish Anzacs: Attitudes to the War

The fact that the Australian Irish generally supported the war might come as a surprise to some in the light of the antagonism between Ireland and Britain during the war and the way Ireland's troubles were played out vicariously in Australia. However, the Australian Irish had generally prospered under the British Crown in the broad, new land of Australia and had tended to put behind them the conflicts of the old world. Tighe Ryan, the editor of the

3   According to the AWM, total AIF enlistments were 421,809
4   *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia for 1911*, Vol. 2, p. 135 shows a total population of 4,455,005 of whom 139,434 were born in Ireland.

Catholic Press, summed up the feeling of the Australian Irish in an editorial early in the war, shortly after the enactment of home rule:

> The attitude of Ireland towards the European war is the attitude of the Irish people throughout the world. For it must be remembered that during the past quarter of a century the relations between England and Ireland have been completely revolutionised … Today Ireland is no longer a garrisoned country. She is as free as Australia and hence we find her sons not only in arms for the defence of her own shores, but fighting in the trenches of France and Belgium against the ruthless militarism and materialistic despotism of the Prussians.[5]

To the Australian Irish, who were overwhelmingly Catholic, the war also presented an opportunity to rid Australia of its sectarian divide. By sharing in the blood sacrifice they hoped the wider community would come to accept them for whom they were. For a time this goal seemed attainable with Catholics and Protestants joining together to support the war effort. However, the Easter Rising in April 1916 and the divisiveness of the conscription referendum the following October saw the façade of interdenominational cooperation crack.

Thereafter, the contribution to the war effort of the Australian Irish community, both Irish-born and Australian-born, came under scrutiny, with many Protestant commentators accusing the Catholic Irish of shirking. The release in June 1917 of embarkation figures, which substantially refuted these claims, failed to silence the critics. The figures published by Defence Minister Senator George Pearce showed that 18.57 per cent of those who had embarked for overseas service were Catholics, compared to the 1911 census figure of 19.6 per cent for the proportion of Catholic males over 20 years of age.[6] Half a century later, Lloyd Robson's 1973 survey of 2,291 enlistment papers provided further evidence that Catholic enlistments were about par, with his figures indicating that 19.73 per cent of the AIF were Catholics.[7]

Given the correlation between Catholicism and Irishness in early 20th-century Australia, these figures might suggest that the religious affiliation of Irish-born members of the AIF would match the religious affiliations of the Irish-born generally. But this was not the case. In 1993 John Connor, who had examined the AIF service records of 350 Irishmen, reported that

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5   *Catholic Press*, 8 October 1914, p. 26. Although the Home Rule Bill was enacted on 18 September 1914, it was suspended for twelve months or the duration of the war, whichever was the longer. Even so, the Australian Irish generally regarded the home rule issue as resolved in Ireland's favour.

6   These figures are as quoted in the *Catholic Press*, 28 June 1917, pages 26–27. See also *Freeman's Journal*, 12 July 1917, p. 39.

7   LL Robson 'The Origin and Character of the First AIF, 1914–18: Some Statistical Evidence', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 61, 1973, pp. 737–48 at p. 748. Unfortunately, Robson does not indicate the numbers of Irish-born, referring to the geographical entity 'Great Britain', within which, presumably, he includes Ireland.

only about 60 per cent were Catholics.[8] Furthermore, a sample of over 600 Irish-born recruits from the AIF Database compiled by Peter Dennis showed that Catholics accounted for just under 50 per cent.[9]

Again, one has to be careful in drawing conclusions. Connor reported that among his sample almost two-thirds had arrived in Australia after 1909, when an assisted immigration scheme, reinstated following its suspension during the 1890s depression, was at its peak. He notes that in the main they were not youngsters, most having been born in the 1880s. These findings are consistent with the small size of the cohort of military age referred to above. The counties with the largest number of enlistments in the AIF were Antrim, Dublin and Cork, followed by Down, Tipperary, Derry, Clare and Kerry. The majority of recruits were labourers or farm labourers, for whom a private's pay of six shillings a day might have been an attraction. The AIF Database sample indicates a similar trend, but with a more pronounced Ulster Protestant influence.[10]

A contributing factor to the over-representation of Protestants amongst the Irish-born who enlisted in the AIF is the pattern of Irish immigration in the 19th and early 20th centuries. As we have seen, Irish immigration declined in the second half of the 19th century. But the religious affiliation of the immigrants also changed. Up to the 1880s, Irish emigrants to Australia were mainly from the south, particularly the province of Munster, but thereafter the emigration map changed rapidly, with Leinster and Ulster, provinces that were more prosperous and more Protestant, accounting for an increasing proportion of immigrants. In fact in the early 1900s Ulster took the lead in migration to Australia.[11] As a result, while Irish immigration declined in absolute terms, an increasing proportion of Irish immigrants were Protestant. Thus, while Oliver MacDonagh found that Catholics comprised almost 83 per cent

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8   John Connor, 'Irish Soldiers in the 1st Australian Imperial Force' in Rebecca Pelan (ed.), *Papers Delivered at the Seventh Irish-Australian Conference July 1993*, Crossing Press, Sydney, 1993. See also John Connor, 'Some Examples of Irish Enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force, 1914', *Irish Sword*, Vol. 21, No. 83, pp. 85–94

9   I am grateful to Dr Peter Dennis, formerly of the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), for supplying the data for this survey from the AIF Database.

10 Dr John Connor has informed me that his sample of 350 Irish-born was not totally random and might have included a bias towards Catholic Irish, which could account for the difference between the two surveys.

11 David Fitzpatrick, 'Irish Immigrants in Australia: Patterns of Settlement and Paths of Mobility', *Australia 1888*, Bulletin No. 2, 1979, pages 48–54 at p. 49; GM Tobin, 'The Sea-Divided Gael: A Study of the Irish Home Rule Movement in Victoria and New South Wales, 1880–1916', Australian National University, MA thesis, 1969, pp. 15–16.

of Irish immigrants overall,[12] by 1911 only 70 per cent of Irish-born Australians were Catholics,[13] and many of them would have been over enlistment age. Another factor would have been the enthusiastic support for the war among Protestants in Australia generally and in particular in north-east Ulster. Indeed, those born in the United Kingdom, which then included all of Ireland, were overrepresented in the AIF throughout the war and particularly at the beginning when they accounted for 27 per cent of the first contingent.[14]

So, the paradox might be explained this way: when war broke out in 1914, the newly arrived Irish-born of military age had a more Orange tinge proportionately than earlier generations of Irish immigrants, while the Australian-born descendants of those earlier and larger waves of Irish immigration preserved the predominantly Catholic character of the Australian Irish community.

A further point to note is the level of enlistment among the Australian Irish throughout the war. Did events in Ireland, for instance, have an impact on recruitment among the Irish-born? Lloyd Robson demonstrated with his 1973 survey that the support for the war among Catholics continued even after the Easter Rising and its suppression by the British government.[15] This continuing support is confirmed in the case of the Irish-born by comparing the enlistment dates of the AIF Database sample with those of the AIF as a whole. As shown by this graph, the trend in recruiting throughout the war is remarkably similar, with the exception of the spike in July–August 1915, which is not as pronounced for the Irish-born, though a couple of months before they had had a boost in recruiting not matched by the general population.[16]

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12 Oliver MacDonagh, 'The Irish in Australia: A General View' in Oliver MacDonagh and WF Mandle, *Ireland and Irish-Australia: Studies in Cultural and Political History*, Croom Helm, London, 1986, pp. 155–74 at p. 169.

13 *Census 1911*, Vol. 2, pp. 242–43.

14 According to E.M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Irish Relations during World War I*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 44: 'They were 13.3 or 15.64 per cent of the Australian population, but either 18 or 22.5 per cent of the AIF for the whole war, depending on whose figures are taken. They were more numerous in some formations, however, being 27 per cent of the first contingent'.

15 Robson, 'Origin and Character of the First AIF', pp. 740–41.

16 The spike in March 1915 among the Irish-born is attributable to a dramatic increase in enlistments in Western Australia, where enlistments in that month were twice the average enlistments for the first six months of 1915. Throughout the war, Western Australia contributed just under 8 per cent of the AIF, but in March 1915 the figure was almost 11.5 per cent. Among the Irish-born sample, enlistments across Australia averaged 18 for the first six months of 1915, while in March there were 26 enlistments, of whom the data indicate a place of enlistment for 25. Nine of those 25 (36 per cent) were from Western Australia. The reason why the number of Irish-born in Western Australia rose more sharply than the general population of that state is not apparent. But because the sample is so small, a random event, such as a group of Irish-born mates deciding to enlist, could influence the data. The spike in July 1915 for the AIF is due to an anomaly in Victoria where enlistments were more than six times higher than June and August, with the state contributing almost 60 per

AIF Enlistments: Irish-born Compared to All AIF
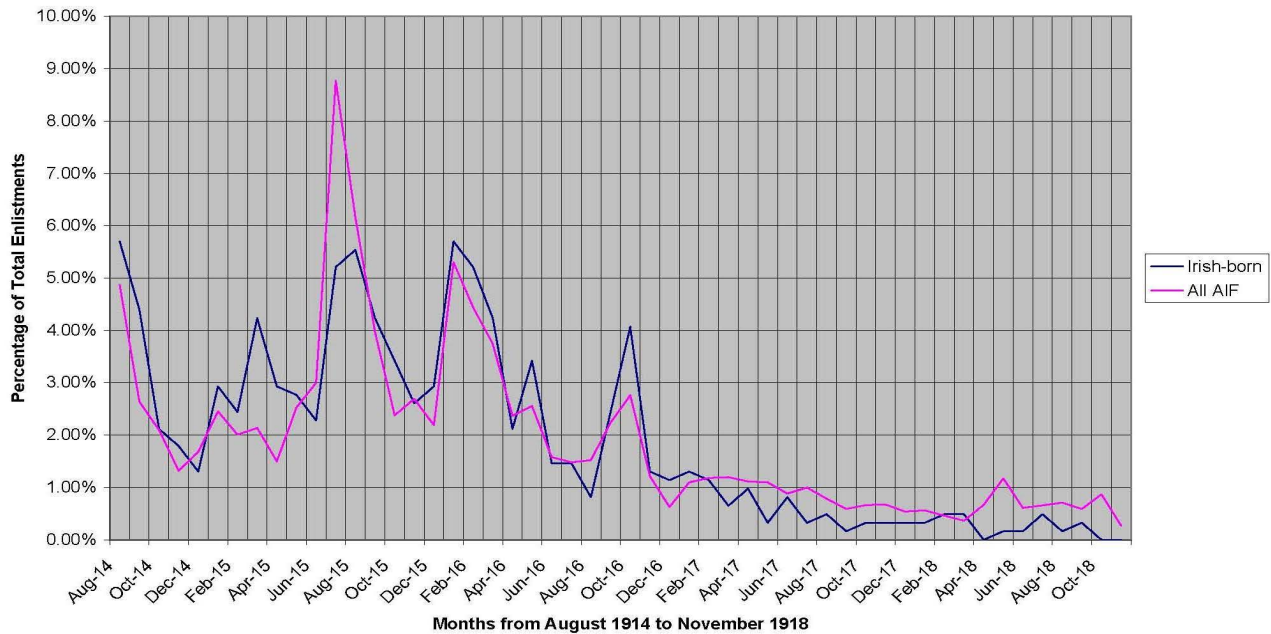
Irish Anzacs Some stories

So much for the big picture, what of some of the individuals. The stories of the Irish-born volunteers in the AIF are many and varied, and in *Anzacs and Ireland* I narrate a few of them. There is not time to repeat them now, so I will speak briefly about just three: a Victoria Cross recipient, a chaplain and a nurse.

The Victoria Cross recipient: Sergeant Martin O'Meara, VC

During the First World War, 64 Australians won the Victoria Cross.[17] Only one of them was Irish-born: Martin O'Meara of Lorrha, County Tipperary. However, many others had Irish surnames, being second and later generation Irish-Australians.

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cent of the AIF's recruits that month, more than double its average for the war. The traditional explanation for the spike is an intensive recruiting drive in Victoria in July 1915. See, for example, Ernest Scott, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: Australia During the War*, Vol. 11, UQP, St Lucia, Qld, 1989, p. 292. While acknowledging the positive effect of the recruitment drive, Robson, 'Origin and Character of the First AIF', p. 740, speculates that recruiting officials may have made an upward adjustment of the true figure for that month so as to correct clerical errors that had resulted in Victorian enlistments for previous months being understated. In 1917–18 Irish-born enlistments from the sample are generally at a lower level than the AIF as a whole. However, the numbers in the sample for each month after November 1916 are in single digits and after April 1917 are less than five, so it is difficult to draw hard and fast conclusions.

17 Lionel Wigmore, *They Dared Mightily*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1986.

Born in 1885 to Michael O'Meara and his wife Margaret (née O'Conner), Martin O'Meara emigrated to Western Australia as a young man, where he worked as a labourer.[18] In August 1915, at age 29, he enlisted in the AIF and sailed the following December for Egypt, where he joined the 16th Battalion, part of the 4th Division. He arrived too late to serve at Gallipoli but was soon to see action when his battalion sailed to France in June 1916 and took part in the Battle of the Somme from August.

It was during the fighting around Mouquet Farm near Pozières between 9 and 12 August 1916 that O'Meara earned his Victoria Cross. His citation reads:

> For conspicuous bravery. During four days of very heavy fighting he repeatedly went out and brought in wounded officers and men from 'No Man's Land' under intense artillery and machine gun fire.
>
> He also volunteered and carried up ammunition and bombs through a heavy barrage to a portion of the trenches, which was being heavily shelled at the time.
>
> He showed throughout an utter contempt of danger, and undoubtedly saved many lives.

There are many eye-witness accounts of his gallantry. One witness, Lieutenant WJ Lynas, described O'Meara as 'the most fearless and gallant soldier I have ever seen'. Charles Bean in the *Official History* wrote that the barrage that fell on the 16th Battalion on 11–12 August was 'furious' and that the battalion 'suffered heavily'. He continued:

> The carriage of water, supplies, and the wounded was sustained largely by the example of one man, Private Martin O'Meara, who four times went through the barrage with supplies, on one occasion taking with him a party, and who thereafter continued to bring out the wounded until all those of his battalion had been cleared.[19]

Eventually O'Meara's luck ran out and on 12 August 1916 he was severely wounded in the abdomen and evacuated to a hospital in England, where he remained until December 1916 before being able to return to his unit at the front. Twice more before war's end O'Meara was wounded in action: in April 1917, when he received a slight wound to the face, and in August 1917, when he received a shrapnel wound to the back.

O'Meara was promoted to sergeant on 30 August 1918 and the next day he left the front for England, this time in order to return to Australia. However, this brave and compassionate man, described by Lieutenant Lynas as 'always cheerful and optimistic', was not destined to live the full and productive life which the many wounded men he rescued would have wished

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18 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11, p. 86.
19 CEW Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918: The AIF in France*, Vol. 3, UQP, St Lucia, Qld, 1982, p. 750.

for him. Soon after his return to Australia, he was admitted to a mental hospital. According to one report: 'this patient is suffering from Delusional Insanity, with hallucinations of hearing and sight, is extremely homicidal and suicidal, and requires to be kept in restraint. [The doctor] is not hopeful of his recovery in the near future'.

The prognosis proved correct and O'Meara spent the rest of his life in psychiatric institutions, dying on 20 December 1935 at Perth's Claremont Hospital. He was buried with full military honours at Karrakatta Catholic Cemetery, Perth, by Father John Fahey, whose own outstanding deeds as a chaplain during the war bear telling.

The chaplain: Father John Fahey, DSO

Fahey was one of 457 clergymen who served as chaplains with the AIF. Of those whose place of birth is known, almost 12 per cent, were born in Ireland – much higher proportion than in the AIF generally. Although chaplains were not combatants, it did not stop them being killed or wounded or from receiving awards for gallantry and conspicuous service. The names of twelve chaplains appear in the Australian War Memorial's Roll of Honour, three of them (ie. a quarter) Irish-born.

Father John Fahey, a native of County Tipperary, had been sent to Western Australia shortly after his ordination in 1907 at age 24. Described by Irish author Myles Dungan as 'an outdoor priest … teak-tough, a fine sportsman and a good shot',[20] Fahey joined the AIF in September 1914 and was assigned to the 11th Battalion. Disregarding an order to remain on board ship, he was the first chaplain ashore at Anzac Cove, passing unscathed through a hail of bullets on his way to the beach while men around him fell dead, an eerie experience, one of many which Fahey felt compelled to describe in graphic detail in letters home, which were published regularly in the Catholic papers in Australia making him 'a household name amongst Australian Catholics'.[21]

But his reputation was given international exposure when the Irish journalist Michael MacDonagh wrote an article on Catholic chaplains at the front. In the article MacDonagh quoted from a letter from an officer of the 11th Battalion:

> 'The "Padre" as he is called by his battalion,' writes the officer in his letter to the
> Archbishop of Perth, 'fills in his spare time carrying up provisions to the men at

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20 Myles Dungan, *They Shall Grow Not Old: Irish Soldiers and the Great War*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 1997, p. 74.

21 Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches 1914–1918*, Catholic Theological Faculty, Sydney and AWM, Canberra, 1980, p. 50.

the front, and helps the wounded back, and I can tell you he is not afraid to go where the bullets fall pretty thickly'. Since that communication was written Father Fahey has done more in the way of utilising his spare time – he has led the men in a charge against the Turkish entrenchments. On an occasion when all the officers had been killed or disabled, he called on the remainder of the company, 'Follow me, and although I have only a stick you can give the Turk some Western Australian cold steel'. In the engagement Father Fahey was wounded, and the latest account of him is that he is in hospital at Malta.[22]

But was his gung-ho reputation deserved? Although Myles Dungan repeats without comment MacDonagh's account of Fahey's leading the charge, Michael McKernan cast doubt on the veracity of such stories.[23] Fahey's service record indicates that, rather than battle wounds, it was a far less romantic ailment, haemorrhoids, that led to his evacuation to Malta. Certainly, he had been tempted on the first day to join in the helter skelter of the Australian troops as they chased Turks up the ridges and through the gullies. He wrote to a priest friend in Australia: 'My first impulse was to grab a rifle and bayonet, and go with them. The cheering and yelling would do your heart good to hear'. But he added, 'after clearing the first ridge, I saw so many wounded and dying that I had to turn my attention to them'.[24] And it was the spiritual and material well-being of the men, rather than fighting Turks, that occupied his time and required his fearless devotion to duty in the difficult and dangerous conditions of the peninsula.

Fahey had high praise for the soldiers he served and they for him. Yet, he was far from the enthusiastic warrior his publicists were keen to portray, even though, on his own admission, he crawled out of his trench one night to souvenir a Turkish mauser rifle and ammunition belt to keep as a trophy or to use in self-defence.[25] Early in the campaign he recognised that it would be a drawn out affair: 'It will be a long and costly operation unless something unforeseen occurs, such as the sudden collapse of the Turkish resistance. Gallipoli Peninsula is a fortress, and the operations here are in the nature of a siege'.[26] He was also appalled by what he witnessed:

> War is abominable. I shall never volunteer again in any capacity, for I have seen enough of it. It is not so much personal fear that would deter me, as the awful sights and nerve-shaking ordeals of fire one has to go through. You have no idea

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22 Article republished in the *Catholic Press*, 6 January 1916, p. 17. The story was repeated in MacDonagh's *The Irish at the Front*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1916, pp. 115–16.

23 Dungan, *They Shall Grow Not Old*, p. 75; McKernan, *Padre*, p. 54.

24 *Catholic Press*, 23 October 1915, p. 7.

25 *Catholic Press*, 23 October 1915, p. 7.

26 Extract from a letter dated 13 June 1915 to Archbishop Clune and published in the *Catholic Press*, 5 August 1915, p. 18.

what an awful thing shell fire is. I have seen strong men become gibbering idiots as the result of a shell bursting near them and tearing men to pieces. Yet they were untouched. It will shake the strongest nerves.[27]

His horror was heightened the following year by what he witnessed at Pozières. On 29 July 1916, he wrote to Archbishop Clune, 'Whatever I have said in previous letters about the horrors of war I wish now to withdraw. I must admit that I have not seen the real thing until the last fortnight … It just beggars all description'.[28]

Despite a number of close calls at Gallipoli, where he was buried in his dugout by a shell-burst, his pack was struck by shrapnel, his overcoat was penetrated by bullets, and objects were shot out of his hand, Fahey continued unscathed to minister to the men until he took ill and was evacuated to England in November. For his service during the campaign, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for 'gallantry under fire' and was also mentioned in dispatches. Following his convalescence, he rejoined the 11th Battalion in France in March 1916 and served with it until November 1917. By then he had become the longest-serving front-line chaplain of any denomination. He returned to Australia in March 1918 where he resumed pastoral duties in various Perth parishes for the next forty years, until his death in 1959.[29]

The nurse: Staff Nurse Kathleen Power

According to the Australian War Memorial, 2139 Australian nurses served overseas with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) and 130 with the British counterpart, the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS), while a further 423 nurses served in hospitals in Australia. How many of these were born in Ireland is not disclosed but the database of the National Archives of Australia (NAA) gives the names of 24 AANS nurses with places of birth in Ireland. Many more bear Irish surnames. Of the 2269 nurses who served overseas, 25 AANS nurses and at least five QAIMNS nurses were killed or died on active service during or in the years immediately after the war due to their war service.[30] One

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27 *Catholic Press*, 23 October 1915, p. 7.

28 Quoted in Tom Johnstone, *The Cross of Anzac: Australian Catholic Service Chaplains*, Church Archivists Press, Virginia, Qld, 2000, p. 51.

29 For an account of Father Fahey's life and chaplaincy, see ADB entry by Michael McKernan at Vol. 8, p. 456; McKernan, *Australian Churches at War*, pp. 50–51; and Dungan, *They Shall Grow Not Old*, pp. 73–76.

30 AWM Information sheets: Researching Australian military service: First World War nurses. <http://www.awm.gov.au/research/infosheets/nurses/ww1.asp>. The information sheet states that 29 AANS nurses died, but I have only been able to confirm the names of 25. *The British Journal of Nursing* of April 1925 lists only 21 (p. 84).

of those who died while caring for sick and wounded soldiers was Staff Nurse Kathleen Power of Piltown, County Kilkenny.

Nurse Power was 27 years of age when on 11 August 1915 she applied to enlist in the AANS, having previously trained for four and a half years at Dr Steeven's Hospital, Dublin, and having six and a half years experience in all. She was initially posted to the 10th Australian General Hospital, embarking with 25 fellow nurses at Melbourne on the *Morea*, on 24 August 1915, bound for England. Already on board were 26 nurses who had embarked at Sydney, and a further six would join at Adelaide. However, like the troops almost a year before, the nurses were surprised to find themselves off-loaded in Egypt, where they were assigned to the 1st Australian General Hospital at Heliopolis, Cairo.[31] Power served at a number of Australian military hospitals in Egypt before sailing on 22 July 1916 to India on the *Devanha*, a passenger liner used during the war as a troop and hospital ship.

Conditions on the hospital ships carrying wounded soldiers from the Middle East to India were terrible, particularly during the northern summer, and India was a difficult and dangerous posting because of the physical conditions, the cultural differences and the ever-present threat of cholera. It was the last of these that claimed Kathleen Power. Soon after her arrival at Bombay, she was admitted to the Colaba War Hospital, where she died on 13 August 1916. Just the day before, another Australian nurse, Sister Amy Veda O'Grady, had died of cholera in the same hospital. Both nurses were buried at Sewri Cemetery, Bombay, but later reburied at Kirkee War Cemetery at nearby Poona.

Remembering the Irish Anzacs in Ireland

These are just three of the stories of the thousands of Irish men and women who served in the Australian forces during the First World War. Many of them are remembered not only on war memorials here in Australia but also on memorials erected in their former home towns in Ireland.

Locating the names of Australian servicemen on Irish war memorials is not an easy task and the difficulties vary between north and south. Few public memorials were erected in that part of the country which today is the Republic of Ireland because those who succeeded in the struggle for Irish independence considered the First World War to be "England's war" and regarded those Irishmen who fought in it as having sold out their true national heritage to take

the "king's shilling". So the main difficulty in the south is to find a war memorial at all. In Northern Ireland, where war memorials are as ubiquitous as they are in Australia, the principal problem is finding memorials that include a roll of honour that identifies the country of service. Even so, such war memorials, whether in the north or the south, tend to record only those who died in the war and not those who survived, unlike most memorials in Australia. An exception is the war memorial at Ballycastle, County Antrim, which includes the names of seven Australians, only one of whom, Private David Rennie of the 2nd Battalion, died in the war.

The highest number of Australian names I have so far found on an Irish war memorial is 11 out of a total of 472 on the Carlow County War Memorial at Leighlinbridge. It was unveiled at a ceremony in September 2002, evidencing a recent trend in the south towards greater recognition of those who died in the First World War. In Northern Ireland, where remembrance has always been strong, new memorials are springing up as well. In Ballymoney, County Antrim, six black marble tablets bearing the names of those from the district who died in the two world wars and in Korea were erected on the facade of the Royal British Legion Hall in February 2000. Those killed in the First World War account for over 300 of the almost 400 names on the memorial, 9 of them members of the Australian forces.

Behind each of the unadorned names on the memorials across Ireland, there is a story to be uncovered. Here are just a few of them.

Private Samuel James MacFarlane (Portrush War Memorial, County Antrim)

The sole Australian listed on the Portrush War Memorial in County Antrim is Private Samuel James MacFarlane of the 13th Battalion AIF, who died of wounds received at Gallipoli on 20 August 1915, aged 21 years. He served in the New Guinea campaign before going to Gallipoli. After being wounded there, he was evacuated to a hospital ship, where he died and was buried at sea. Here is a photograph of his parents taken in 1915, his father is wearing a black armband and his mother a black dress.

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31 AM Kellett interview (No. 55) of Nurse JVM Kennedy, as quoted in Ruth Rae, 'Jessie Tomlins: An Australian Army Nurse – World War One', unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Clinical Nursing, University of Sydney, 2000.

Second Lieutenant Everard Digges La Touche (Newcastle War Memorial, County Down)

The rather unusual-looking war memorial at Newcastle, County Down, includes the names of two brothers Averill and Everard Digges La Touche, the latter having emigrated to Australia before the war, where he enlisted. He was killed at Gallipoli, while serving as a second lieutenant with the 2nd Battalion AIF. His brother Averill was killed at Loos in France the following month, fighting with the Royal Irish Rifles.

Born in 1883, and ordained as an Anglican clergyman in 1908, Everard initially applied to be appointed as a chaplain. When his application was refused, he enlisted as a private soldier. Too late to participate in the landing at Gallipoli, he arrived on the peninsula on the evening of 5 August 1915, the day before the start of the August offensive. He pleaded to join the attack at Lone Pine and was given permission to do so. However, his part in serving the Empire in what he believed was its righteous cause was cut short when he was mortally wounded in the opening minutes of the assault and died soon after. The family suffered a double blow that day – his wife's brother, Sergeant William Ernest King of County Galway, was killed in the same battle, also serving with the 2nd Battalion. They are both buried in the Lone Pine Cemetery at Gallipoli.[32]

Private Patrick Morgan – Portadown War Memorial, County Armagh

The war memorial at Portadown, County Armagh, records the names of six Australians, one of them being Private Patrick Morgan of the 3rd Battalion, a ship's fireman who had emigrated to Australia in his late twenties. While MacFarlane and Digges La Touche are known to have been committed opponents of Irish home rule, Morgan's sympathies can be deduced from his sister's comments on the circular she completed for the Australian Official War Historian. In answer to the question, 'Any other biographical details likely to be of interest', she wrote, 'His great grandfather died fighting for Ireland in 1798 and his grandfather received wounds of which he died in 1867'. Patrick seems to have shared their fighting spirit for he was recommended for a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions at Lone Pine on 6 August 1915. Unfortunately, he did not survive the battle, being killed in action the next day, less than three months after he had enlisted.

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32 Information on Digges La Touche is derived from Dungan, *They Shall Grow Not Old*, pp. 103–105; Robert D Linder, *The Long Tragedy: Australian Evangelical Christians and the Great War, 1914–1918*, Openbook Publishers, Adelaide, 2000, pp. 145–46; Connor, 'Some examples of Irish enlistment in the Australian Imperial Force, 1914'.

The Irish and the Anzac tradition

The Irish Anzacs, like their fellow Australians, were ordinary men and women thrust into extraordinary circumstances. Some acted seemingly in total disregard for their own survival, such as Martin O'Meara; some performed their duties with a high degree of determination, such as Everard Digges La Touche; while others showed remarkable compassion for their fellow-man, such as Chaplain Fahey. For the most part, however, they just survived – existing from day to day in the most appalling conditions imaginable, resigned to their fate. For every one who received a medal for bravery, there were many more whose deeds of valour went unrecognised, but there were also many others who cowered in fear at the bottom of a trench, their resilience crushed by ceaseless shelling, the ravages of rats, lice and assorted vermin, and the mud, the blood and the gore of the battlefield. Through it all, though, there emerged a camaraderie that sustained them to the end, giving rise to the digger legend, which has contributed so much to Australia's national mythography. Just as in Australia the Irish were the leaven in the Australian mix, as Patrick O'Farrell has so eloquently described in *The Irish in Australia*, so, too, in the First World War did the Irish play their part in building that most enduring edifice of Australian national identity, the Anzac tradition.