

# **Lance Corporal Michael Colclough**

## **1891 to 1 Oct 1915**

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Prepared by Shane Colclough [Shane.Colclough@gmail.com](mailto:Shane.Colclough@gmail.com)

Michael Colclough joined the second Battalion of the Irish Guards<sup>1</sup> at the age of 24. He made his will on 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1915<sup>2</sup> and within weeks of joining the British Army headed off to war via Le Havre, arriving in France at midnight on Monday, 16 August. He died of wounds sustained in his first engagement with the enemy at the Battle of Loos on 1 October 1915<sup>3</sup>.

Michael was the eldest son of Margaret and James Colclough, having been born between January and March, 1891. He was brother to Catherine, Mary, Margaret, Annie, Tom and Patrick<sup>4</sup>.

He was a member of the Irish National Volunteers<sup>5</sup>, which was an offshoot of the Irish volunteers formed after an impassioned speech by Redmond at Woodbridge Co Wicklow where he urged support among the Irish Volunteers for the war effort. While only 20% of the 120,000 Irish National Volunteers enlisted<sup>6</sup>, Michael was one of them and he enlisted in the British Army in Drogheda (presumably in the summer of 1915). He joined the second Battalion of the Irish Guards<sup>2</sup> along with a number of other Navan men (see photo below).

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1 the second Battalion of the Irish Guards was formed on 15 July 2015 at Warley Barracks, UK.

2 see appendix 5

3 see appendix 2

4 See family tree, appendix 7

5 see appendix "The Irish National Volunteers"

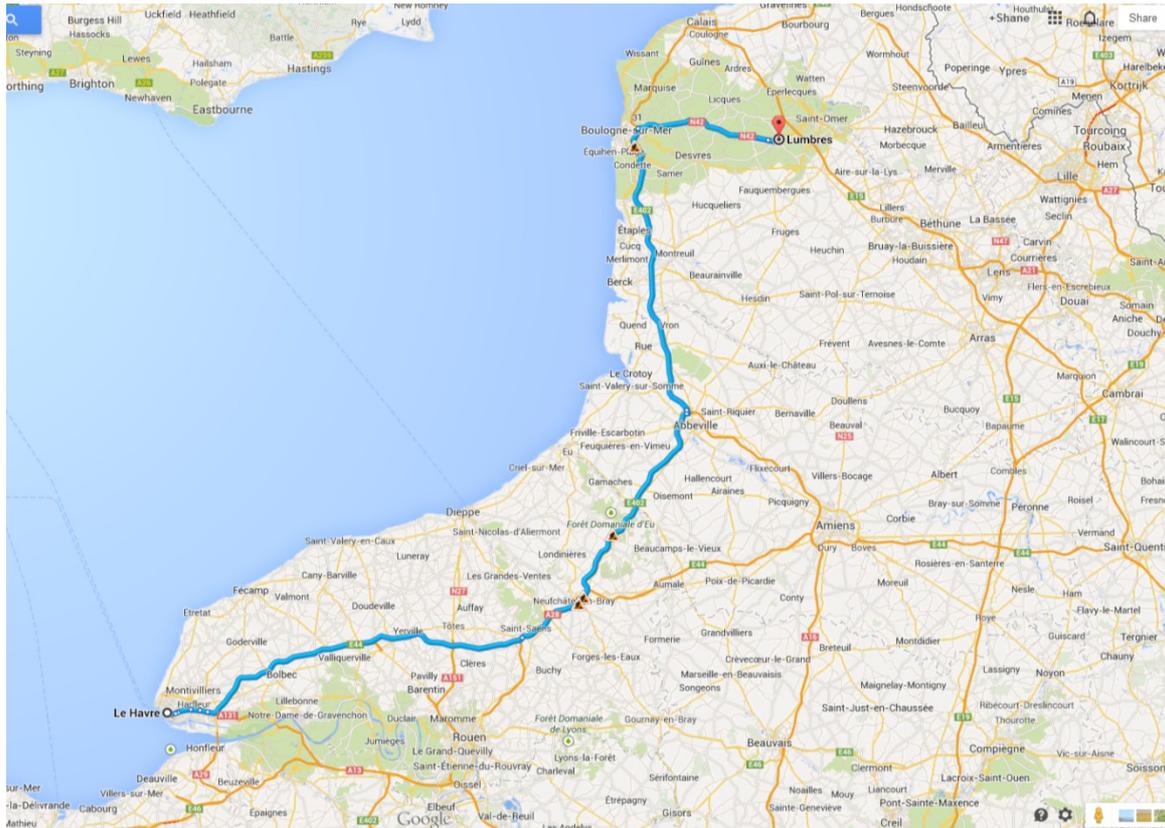
6



**Figure 1 Michael Colclough (on extreme right) with other members of the Irish Guards from Navan**

Details of Michael's exact movements from Ireland to the UK are unknown, but he travelled to Le Havre, France on 16 August, 1915, aboard either the Anglo-Canadian or the Viper. The ships were escorted by destroyers given that the seas have significant numbers of submarines, and arrived in Le Havre at midnight<sup>3</sup>.

The second Battalion travelled the 300 km by train to Lumbres on the 18th August and next day, marched the 5km to billets at Acquin, a little village on a hill-side 14km from the Army headquarters at St. Omer.



**Figure 2 The Train Journey from Le Havre to Lumbres on August 18**

The billets consisted of barns which were occupied by 40 to 50 soldiers and the second Battalion were to remain there for just over a month. It was a period of training and preparation and the men got an insight into French rural life. Kipling<sup>7</sup> writes of the soldiers helping to bring in the corn for the local farmers, in the absence of their own sons. In his letter dated 9 September, Michael also wrote bringing in the corn for the family he was billeted with, and talks of the agriculture in the area<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup>The Irish Guards in the Great War Vol 2. Among the many British and Empire troops to lose their lives at the Chalk Pit at the battle of Loos was 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant John Kipling, son of the author Rudyard Kipling who died there in Autumn 1915. Despite lying in an unmarked grave for many years, Kipling's body was eventually identified and he is buried at St Mary's ADC cemetery near Huluch. Kipling never got over the death of his son, and worked for many years with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It is because of this book, that we have an excellent insight into the movements of the second Battalion of the Irish Guards and therefore the movements of Michael Colclough.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 1, Michael's letter

The locals got on well with the soldiers and subsequently spoke very fondly of the men who had inhabited the village.

Kipling wrote of the second battalions time in Acquin:

*“...it was to be their first and only experience of comfort for any consecutive time, and of French life a little untouched by war. They most deeply enjoyed the simple kindness of the village-folk, and the graceless comments of the little sharp-faced French children at the halting attempts of the Irish to talk French; the glimpses of intimate domestic days, when sons and brothers of their hosts, returned on a few days’ leave from far-away battlefields in the Argonne or beyond, were shown with pride to the visitors who were helping the villagers to cart their corn—“precisely as our own sons would have done.” They talked, too, with veterans of ’70 met in the fields and at the cafes, who told them in set and rounded phrases that war was serious. And the French men and women upon whom they were billeted liked them well and remembered them long. Said one, years after, with tears in the eyes: “Monsieur, if you drew a line in the air and asked those children not to cross it, it was as a wall to them. They played, monsieur, like infants, without any thought of harm or unkindness; and then they would all become men again, very serious—all those children of yours.”*

Kipling notes that Rev. Father Knapp joined as R.C. Chaplain to the Battalion, and reportedly proved himself as far forward on all fields as any of the rest of his brethren. Michael makes mention of the Chaplain as a fine man and writes of attending mass every Sunday and benediction and rosary in the local church in Acquin on the evenings they were in billets.



**Figure 3 The church in Acquin where Michael attended Mass and Benediction Services**

The historic first meeting between the 1st and 2nd Irish Guards Battalions took place on the 30th August on a march out to St. Pierre, 8 km from Acquin. Michael reports that he met Navan man Pat Fox from the first Battalion who had been in France from 24 May 1915, and was subsequently to be killed in action on 15 September 1916, at the age of 40. Training took place at St Pierre of the combined first and second Irish Guards battalions.

Kipling wrote of the training:

*“On Wednesday the 1st September, they joined up with their Brigade, the 2nd Guards Brigade, and shared a wet day of advancing, on parallel roads, with three Guards Brigades, for practice at coming up into the line. Otherwise, the Battalion dug trenches by day and night and developed their own system of laying them out in the dark. They practised storming trenches with the help of bombers who reportedly had had very little practice with the live bomb.*

*On the 5th September, Lieut. General Haking, commanding the Eleventh Corps, addressed all the Officers of the 2nd Guards Brigade at the 1st Coldstream Mess at Lumbres. He told them that an attack on the German lines was close at hand; that the Germans had but forty thousand men at the selected point to oppose our two hundred thousand; and that behind their firing-line and supports were only six divisions as a reserve to their whole western front. This may or may not have been true at the time. General Haking also said that almost everything depended on the platoon leaders, and “he instructed them always to push on boldly whenever an opportunity offered, even at the expense of exposing and leaving unguarded their flanks.”*

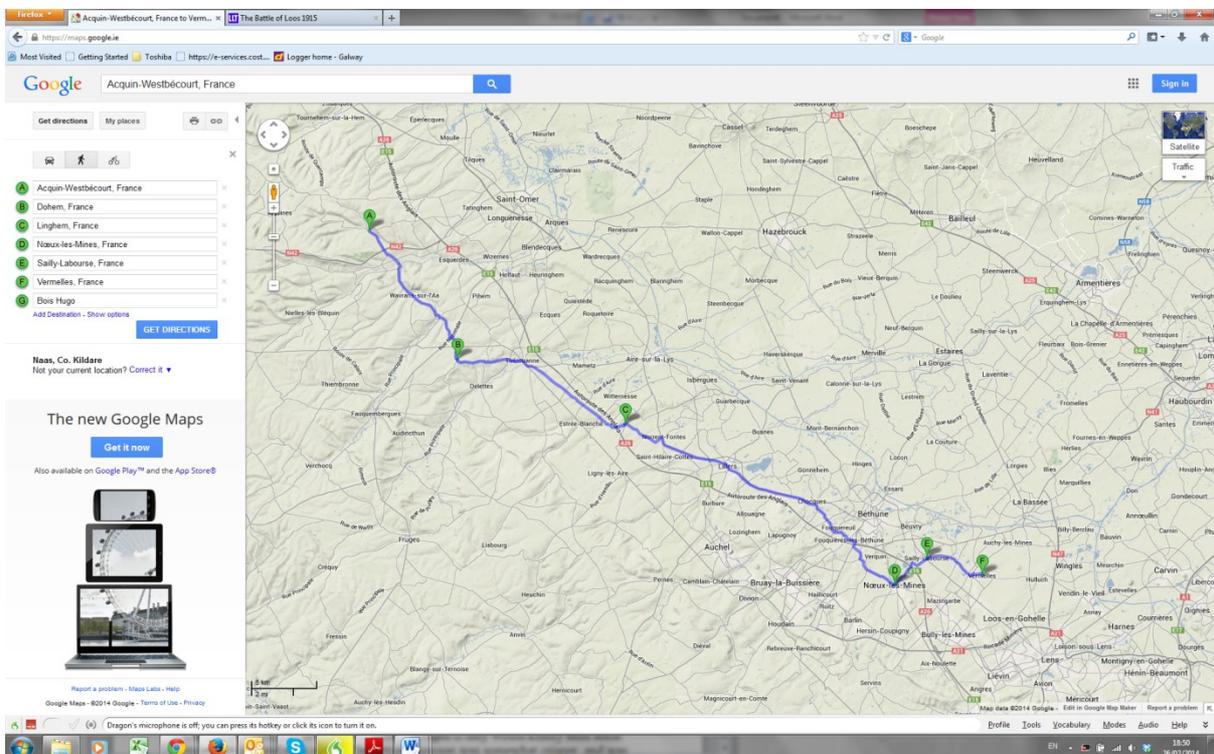
Kipling reports that from a “civilian point of view the advice seems hardly safe to offer to a battalion of at least average courage a few days before they are to meet singularly well-posted machine-guns, and carefully trained bombers”.

They moved out from Acquin on the evening of the 22nd September and marched the 14 km to Dohem where they picked up their Brigade Headquarters and some other units, and onwards the next day, in heavy rain to billets in Lingham, 17 km from Dohem. The battalion stayed in Lingham until 25 September.

On 25<sup>th</sup> Sept they marched the 17 km and billeted (this was merely a form) at Haquin “very wet and tired” about one on the morning of the 26th, having been on their feet standing, marching, or variously shifted about, for twenty odd hours. The men’s breakfasts were issued at half-past four that same dawn “as there was a possibility of an early move.”



**Fig 4 March of the second Battalion, Irish Guards, 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27 of September**



**Fig 5. Details of the part of the Irish Guards 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1915**



On the day Michael was fatally wounded, 29<sup>th</sup> of September 1915, the Irish Guards were holding the old German communication-trench trenches at Chalk pits Woods which they had held for two days.

*“That night (28<sup>th</sup> Sept) closed in rain, and they were left to the mercy of Providence. No one could get to them, and they could get at nobody; but they could and did dig deeper into the chalk, to keep warm, and to ensure against the morrow (September 29) when the enemy guns found their range and pitched the stuff fairly into the trenches “burying many men and blowing a few to pieces.” Yet, according to the count, which surely seems inaccurate, they only lost twenty dead in the course of the long day”...*

Kipling writes of the experience of the Irish Guards in the offensive....*They had been under continuous strain since the 25th of the month, and from the 27th to the 30th in a punishing action which had cost them, as far as could be made out, 324 casualties, including 101 missing. Of these last, the Diary records that “the majority of them were found to have been admitted to some field ambulance, wounded.*

Summarising his perspective of the Irish Brigade’s involvement at the Battle of Loos, Kipling writes:

*“..it does not seem to have occurred to any one to suggest that direct infantry attacks, after ninety-minute bombardments, on works begotten out of a generation of thought and prevision, scientifically built up by immense labour and applied science, and developed against all contingencies through nine months, are not likely to find a fortunate issue. So, while the Press was explaining to a puzzled public what a far-reaching success had been achieved, the “greatest battle in the history of the world” simmered down to picking up the pieces on both sides of the line, and a return to autumnal trench-work, until more and heavier guns could be designed and manufactured in England. Meantime, men died.”*

A significant learning from the Battle of Loos<sup>9</sup> was while it was possible to break into the enemy lines, the use of newlyformed army units, of men “just off the bolts”, was a mistake, and the new army had been decimated.

2 ½ years later, the Germans had been pushed back only 150 yards of territory at Loos.

It was known by the family that Michael was wounded 29th September, and admitted to the 5th Field Ambulance in France. However, it is unclear if the family knew of what happened him after that, as a question was raised by the local MP (Patrick White) to the under Secretary of State (Harold Tenant) on 10 January 1916 seeking further information.

The reply was:

“Lance-corporal Michael Colclough died on the 1st of October, 1915, in the 24th Ambulance Train, from wounds received in action. He was buried at Etaples”.

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<sup>9</sup> see appendix 7

Michael Colclough was awarded the 1914/15 Star Medal, British War Medal and Victory Medal.

The first members of his family to visit his grave in Etaples did so in April, 2000.



6908 LANCE CPL.  
MICHAEL J. COLCLOUGH  
IRISH GUARDS  
1ST OCTOBER 1915



SACRED TO HIS MEMORY  
DIED OF WOUNDS

TRY  
15

# Appendix 1

## Article from the Meath Chronicle (a letter from Michael Colclough)

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[http://www.navanshamrockfestival.com/ww1\\_meath\\_men.html](http://www.navanshamrockfestival.com/ww1_meath_men.html)

### “Navan Soldier’s Story

A Navan gentleman has received the following letter from Corpl. Colclough of the Irish Guards, dated “France 9th Sept – I suppose you have been watching a line from me for many a day. I take this opportunity of dropping you a line. I am quite well and rather enjoying this new experience. We find things rough betimes, but you have one consolation – when you are finished duty you are finished till the next day. We met the 1st Battalion, some time ago. I was speaking to Pat Fox. He is well and you would think it was in the ‘Mollies’ we were again, we settled down so comfortably for a chat. He is slightly thinner than usual but otherwise seems as good as ever. He wishes to be remembered to you. I also met young McIneeny, who was in the Post Office. I saw him as we passed through the town in which he is stationed. I called him. He was quite surprised to see me. He also looks fit.

This is a fine country for agriculture. All around you as far as you can reach is nothing but crops in their various stages. The people are very hard-working. They begin their days about 5.30 a.m. and finish often about 7 or 8 o’clock that evening. Here and there are patches of clover, in which cattle, mostly milch cows, are tethered out. I have spent a couple of evenings giving the people with whom we are billeted a hand to get in the corn. We have a Catholic chaplain attached to our regiment. He is a fine man and ranks as captain. We have Mass every Sunday and there is every opportunity given to fulfil your other religious duties. Any evening we happen to be in billets we have Rosary and Benediction in the local church. The country around simply teems with religious emblems. At every cross roads you find huge crosses and here and there along the road are small shrines, as well as statues of the Blessed Virgin set in the gable ends of many houses. Pig rearing also seems to be an industry in this part of the country.

John Sherlock<sup>10</sup> has transferred to the 1st Battalion. He is a signaller. We went for a swim one day and one of our fellows got into difficulties and caught hold of a swimmer who happened to be passing and I believe Sherlock brought both in. The river was narrow but very deep: but you would know anyone who learned swimming at the Metal Bridge could never be beaten in a stiff stream. There is a

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<sup>10</sup> It is believed that John Sherlock (4169) survived the war, along with his brother who was in the RASC

little more noise out here than we used to make when we were shooting at the slopes." Meath Chronicle 2 October 1915. Colclough was dead the day before the date of issue of the paper.

## On the same webpage:

"Lance Copt. Michael Colclough, aged 24, Navan, 2nd Batt. Irish Guards, has died in France of wounds received in action on October 29th. The deceased was much esteemed in Navan, where the sad news evoked keen regret, and occasioned deep sympathy with members of his family." Meath Chronicle 4 December 1915.

COLCLOUGH, Michael Joseph. Lance-Corporal, Irish Guards, 2nd Battalion, 6908. Born: Navan, about 1891. Son of James and Margaret Colclough, Kells Road, Navan. Father's occupation: Gatekeeper, Railway. Served in Navan Irish National Volunteers. Enlistment location: Drogheda, Co. Louth. Died of wounds, France & Flanders, 1 October 1915. Age: 24. Memorial: IV.H.4; Etaples Military Cemetery.

FAY, James. Private, Leinster Regiment, 2nd Battalion, 6032. Born: Johnstown. Son of Mrs. Mary Fay, Garlow Cross, Navan. Enlistment location: Navan. Reservist. Joined on mobilisation. Served in France from 8 September 1914. Wounded at Mons. Killed in action: France & Flanders, 12 August 1915. Age 35. Memorial: Panel 44, Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. Drogheda War Memorial.

"Meathmen Killed and Wounded

James Fay, of the Leinsters, has been wounded in action in France. He is a native of Garlow Cross. ..." Meath Chronicle 28 November 1914.

FOX, Patrick. Private, Irish Guards, 1st Battalion, 5861. Baptised Navan, 29 December 1874. Son of Patrick and Joan Fox, nee Graham, Flower Hill, Navan. Father's occupation: Labourer. Enlistment location: Navan. Served in France from 24 May 1915. Killed in action, France & Flanders, 15 September 1916. Age: 40. Memorial: Pier and Face 7 D, Thiepval Memorial.

"At the Navan recruiting meeting Mr. Timmon stated that he had a letter from Mr. P. Fox, who was once a "back" in the Pierce Mahony's but is now a "forward" at the front scoring points for the English!" Meath Chronicle 31 July 1915.

# Appendix 2

## Information sought on Michael Colclough from the under Secretary of State for War

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Question from Patrick White MP, Meath to the under Secretary of State, Harold Tennant was raised on 10 January 1916:

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written\\_answers/1916/jan/10/2nd-battalion-irish-guards-lance](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/written_answers/1916/jan/10/2nd-battalion-irish-guards-lance)

2ND BATTALION IRISH GUARDS (LANCE-CORPORAL COLCLOUGH).

On 10 January 1916 §Mr. PATRICK WHITE (Meath North October 1, 1900 - December 14, 1918) asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he can supply any information concerning Michael Colclough, lance-corporal, No. 6,908, 2nd Battalion Irish Guards, wounded 29th September, and admitted to the 5th Field Ambulance in France?

Mr. TENNANT (undersecretary of state 1912 to 1916)

Lance-corporal Michael Colclough died on the 1st of October, 1915, in the 24th Ambulance Train, from wounds received in action. He was buried at Etaples.

# Appendix 3 Casualty Details and Medals Record

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Commonwealth War Graves Commission

### Casualty Details

<b>Name:</b>	COLCLOUGH, MICHAEL JOSEPH
<b>Initials:</b>	M J
<b>Nationality:</b>	United Kingdom
<b>Rank:</b>	Lance Corporal
<b>Regiment/Service:</b>	Irish Guards
<b>Unit Text:</b>	2nd Bn.
<b>Age:</b>	24
<b>Date of Death:</b>	01/10/1915
<b>Service No:</b>	6908
<b>Additional information:</b>	Son of James and Margaret Colclough. Native of Navan, Co. Meath.
<b>Casualty Type:</b>	Commonwealth War Dead
<b>Grave/Memorial Reference:</b>	IV. H. 4.
<b>Cemetery:</b>	<b>ETAPLES MILITARY CEMETERY</b>

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Name	Corps	Rank	Regt. No.
COLCLOUGH	I.Gds.	L/Cpl	6908
Michael		* Rte	
Medal	Roll	Page	Remarks
VICTORY	16/106 B4	334	Died of W 1-10-15
BRITISH	-do-	-do-	
15 <sup>th</sup> STAR	99/1 B	28	
Theatre of War first served in	France		
Date of entry therein	17-5-15		

## Appendix 4 Forces War Record Details for Michael Joseph Colclough - Irish Guards

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Available from: <http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/>

First Name: Michael Joseph

Initials: M J

Surname: Colclough

DOB: Circa 1891

Age: 24

Birth Town: Navan, Co. Meath

Resided Town: Drogheda, Co. Louth

Nationality: British

Date of Death: 01/10/1915

Fate: Died of Wounds

Information: Parents: James and Margaret Colclough. Native of Navan, Co. Meath.

Rank: Lance Corporal

Service Number: 6908

Duty Location: France And Flanders

### **Information on Campaign Medals:**

#### **1914/15 Star**

Given the information we have available, Michael Joseph Colclough was awarded the 1914-15 star campaign medal of the British Empire for his service in World War One.

This Star is identical to the 1914 Star in every respect except that the centre scroll bears the dates "1914- 15" and the two small scrolls bearing "Aug" and "Nov" are omitted.

He also received the British War Medal and Victory Medal, as it was not awarded singularly. These three medals were sometimes irreverently referred to as Pip, Squeak and Wilfred. With Pip representing either this medal or the 1914 Star, only one of which could be awarded to a soldier, Squeak represented the British War Medal and Wilfred represented the Victory Medal.

#### **Victory Medal**

Given the information we have available it is likely that Michael Joseph Colclough was entitled to the Victory medal, also called the Inter Allied Victory Medal. This medal was awarded to all who received the 1914 Star or 1914-15 Star and, with certain exceptions, to those who received the British War Medal. It was never awarded alone. These three medals were sometimes irreverently referred to as Pip, Squeak and Wilfred.

Eligibility for this award consisted of having been mobilised, fighting, having served in any of the theatres of operations, or at sea, between midnight 4th/5th August, 1914, and midnight, 11th/12th November, 1918. Women who served in any of the various military organisations in a theatre of operations were also eligible.

#### **British War Medal**

From the information available to us, it is very possible that Michael Joseph Colclough was entitled to the British War Medal for service in World War One. This British Empire campaign medal was issued for services between 5th August 1914 and 11th November 1918.

The medal was automatically awarded in the event of death on active service before the completion of this period.

# Appendix 5 appendix 3 Michael Colclough Will

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2/132781/1 1/2  
HA 110/236530 '9/16 C Irish  
(a)  
6908 L/b. M. Colclough  
Died 1/10/15.  
Irish Gds.  
Will L27789  
NAI/2002/119

6. In English law a Will is revoked by the marriage of the testator, and therefore a new Will ought to be made after marriage if desired. By the law of Scotland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man, the rights of the widow or children to some part of the estate cannot be defeated by a Will.

7. If any alteration is made in the writing of a Will, the signatures of the testator and the witnesses ought to be made in the margin or other part of the Will, opposite to or near such alteration, or at the foot or end of, or opposite to, a memorandum referring to such alteration and written at the end or some other part of the Will.

8. But an alteration or addition may be made by a *Codicil* (that is to say, by an addition to the Will), executed and witnessed in the same way as the Will.

9. When engaged in actual warfare, or when he has been placed under orders for active service, a Soldier of English, Guernsey, or Manx domicile is privileged (where circumstances do not allow of these Forms being used) to record his Will in writing without the attesting witnesses [see page provided for the purpose in Army Book 64 (Soldier's Pay Book)], or to declare the same orally in the presence of witnesses. A Soldier of Scottish, Jersey, or Guernsey domicile can make a written Will without witnesses at any time, provided it is entirely in his own handwriting and dated and signed by him.

N.B.—The testator, if of English domicile, must be of the age of 21 years unless he is on active service or under orders for active service. A Scotsman can dispose by Will of personal property (as distinguished from real property) when over the age of fourteen years.

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8/132481/1

Army Form B 243.

FORM OF WILL, No. 1.

To be used by a Soldier desirous of leaving the whole of his effects to one person.

I, (a) Michael Colelough

(a) The names of the soldier to be written in full.

No. 6908 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt<sup>n</sup>  
Regiment of Irish Guards

do hereby revoke all former Wills by me made, and declare this to be my last Will.

After payment of my just Debts and

(b) Insert "friend," or if a relative, in what degree.

Funeral Expenses, I give to my

(b) Mother

(c) The name in full.

(c) Margaret Colelough

(d) Insert the address, if known, or other description.

(d) Kells Rd. Wavan Ireland

(e) If to a female, add the words [for her sole and separate use, her receipt alone being a sufficient discharge].

absolutely (e) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

the whole of my Estate and Effects, and everything that I can by law give or dispose of, and I appoint (f) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(f) The full names and descriptions and exact addresses of the Executor or Executors should be carefully stated.

Executor of this my Will.

E. 13278111

In Witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this 3<sup>rd</sup> day of August A.D. 1915

(g) Soldier to sign here, or if he cannot write, to make his mark.

(g) Michael Colclough

Signed and acknowledged by the said Michl Colclough

the same having been previously read over to him as and for his *last Will*, in the presence of us, present at the same time, who, in his presence, at his request, and in the presence of each other, have hereunto subscribed our names as Witnesses.

(h) Witnesses to sign here.

(i) Add addresses in full.

(h) R. Hannay 2nd Lieut

(i) Mt Mearns Killiney Co Dublin

(h) J. Henry Sgl

(i) Castlemartyr Co Cork

*Declaration of the Medical Officer.*

I declare that I was present at the Execution of this Will, and that Michael Colclough the Testator was at the time in a fit state of mind to execute the same.

R. Hannay 2nd Lieut

Army Form B 244.

FORM OF WILL, No. 2.

*To be used by a Soldier desirous of leaving  
Legacies to some one or more persons, and  
the residue to another, or others.*

(a) The names  
of the soldier to be  
written in full.

I, (a) \_\_\_\_\_

No. \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_

Regiment of \_\_\_\_\_

do hereby revoke all former Wills by me  
made, and declare this to be my last Will.

After payment of my just Debts and

(b) Name the  
person, and de-  
scribe him by his  
rank or profession,  
regiment, degree  
of relationship (if  
any), or in any  
other way, and  
give his address  
in full. If to a fe-  
male, also add the  
words [*for her sole  
and separate use,  
her receipt alone  
being a sufficient  
discharge*].

Funeral Expenses, I give to (b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_

And I give to (b) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Here state  
the particular  
articles or money  
intended to be  
given.

And all the rest of my Estate and  
Effects, and everything that I can give or  
dispose of, I give and bequeath absolutely  
to (b) \_\_\_\_\_

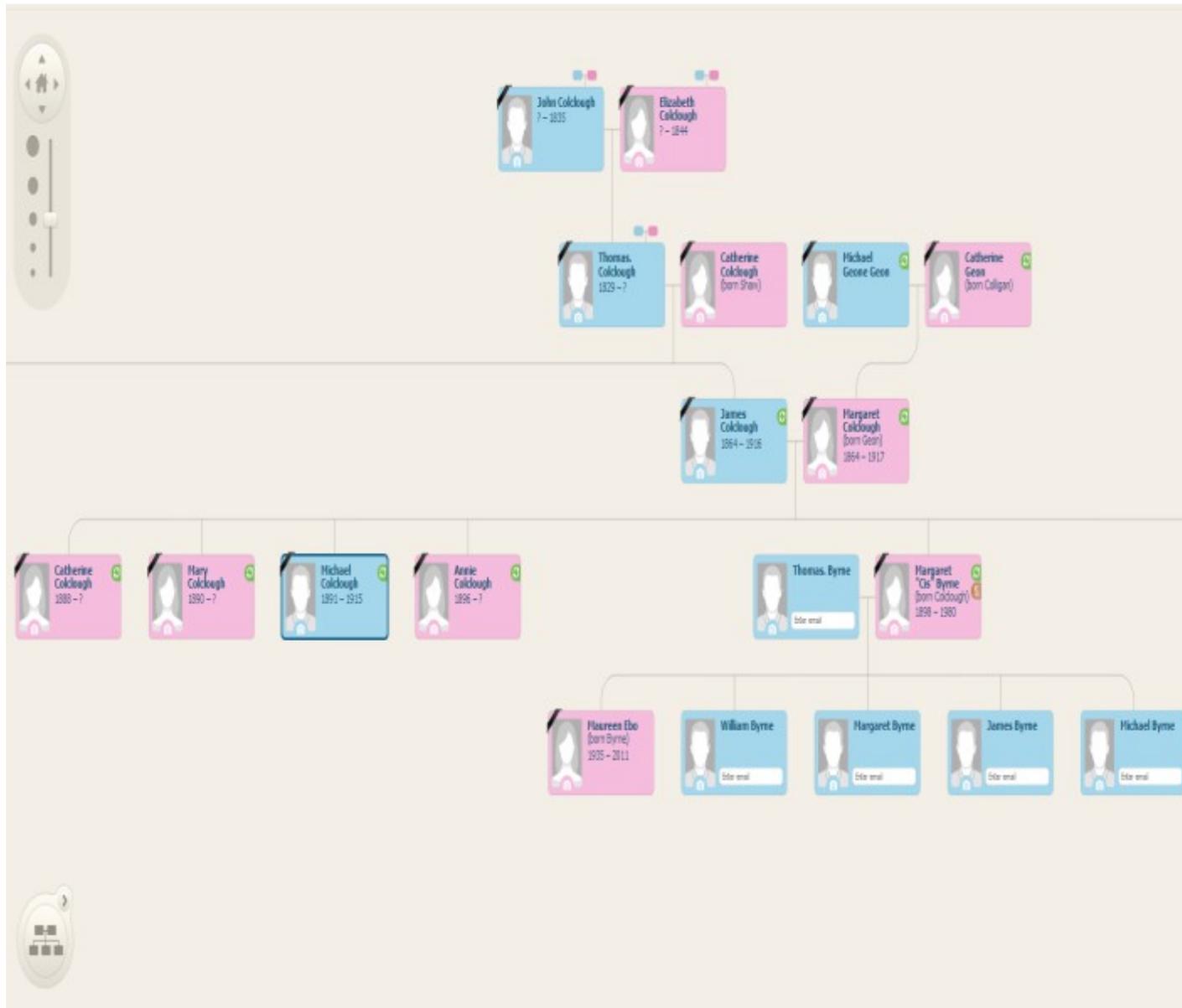
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# Appendix 8

## Colclough family tree



# Appendix 7

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Extract from Rudyard Kipling *The Irish Guards in the Great War Vol 2*

[http://www.telelib.com/authors/K/KiplingRudyard/prose/IrishGuardsv2/1915\\_loos.html](http://www.telelib.com/authors/K/KiplingRudyard/prose/IrishGuardsv2/1915_loos.html)

<http://www.di2.nu/files/kipling/IrishGuardsv2.html>

**OFFICIALLY**, the formation of the 2nd Battalion of the Irish Guards dates from the 15th July 1915, when it was announced that His Majesty the King had been “graciously pleased to approve” of the formation of two additional Battalions of Foot Guards—the 4th Grenadier Guards, and the 2nd Battalion Irish Guards, which was to be made up out of the personnel of the 2nd (Reserve) Battalion. And, officially, on July 18 that formation took place. But those who knew the world in the old days, and specially the busy part of it that had Warley Barracks for its heart, know that the 2nd Battalion was born in spirit as in substance, long ere the authorities bade it to be. The needs of the war commanded it; the abundance of the reserves then justified it; and, though Warley Barracks had been condemned as unfit for use by the Honourable the East India Company a trifle of fifty odd years ago, this was not the hour to stand on ancient tradition. So the old, crazy barracks overflowed; the officers’ damp and sweating dog-kennels were double-crammed; and, by sheer goodwill and stark discipline, the work went forward to the creation. Officers and men alike welcomed it, for it is less pleasing to be absorbed in drafts and driblets by an ever-hungry 1st Battalion in France, than to be set apart for the sacrifice as a veritable battalion on its own responsibility, with its own traditions (they sprang up immediately) and its own jealous esprit-de-corps. A man may join for the sake of “King and Country” but he goes over the top for the honour of his own platoon, company, and battalion; and, the heart of man being what it is, so soon as the 2nd Battalion opened its eyes, the first thing that it beheld was its 1st Battalion, as an elder brother to measure its stature against in all things. Yet, following the ancient mystery of all armies, there were not two battalions, but one regiment; officers and men interchangeable, and equally devoted to the battalion that they served for the time, though in their deeper minds, and sometimes confessing it, more devoutly attached to one or the other of the two.

By summer of ’15 the tide of special reserve officers was towards its flood, and the 2nd Battalion was largely filled by them. They hailed from every quarter of the Empire, and represented almost every profession and state of life in it, from the schoolboy of eighteen to the lawyer of forty odd. They had parted long ago with any delusion as to the war ending that year or the next. The information that came to them by word of mouth was not of the sort dispensed in the Press, and they knew, perhaps a little more than the public, how inadequate were our preparations. One and all they realised that humanly speaking, unless fortune favoured them

with permanent disablement they were doomed men; since all who recovered from their wounds were returned to the war and sooner or later despatched. He was lucky in those days who survived whole for three months; and six without hurt was almost unheard of. So the atmosphere of their daily lives, underneath the routine and the carefully organised amusements that the world then offered to its victims, had an unreality, comparable in some degree, to the elaborately articulated conversation and serious argument over utterly trivial matters that springs up among officers in that last hour of waiting under the thunder of the preliminary bombardment before the word is given that hoists all ranks slowly and methodically into a bone-naked landscape.

Lieut.-Colonel the Earl of Kerry, M.V.O., D.S.O., who commanded the reserve and whose influence over the men was unbounded, began the work of making the 2nd Battalion, and, later on, Major G. H. C. Madden was recalled from duty in France to be its senior major. Captain the Hon. T. E. Vesey was the first adjutant and, with a tight hand which was appreciated afterwards, showed all that young community how to take care of itself. It was a time for understanding much and overlooking little. "Or else," as the sergeants explained, "ye'll die before ye've killed a Jerry."

On the 27th of July, Major and Brevet-Lieut.Colonel the Hon. L. J. P. Butler took over command, and on August the 6th the Battalion with full transport, and packs, paraded as such for its first route-march, of sixteen miles in the flat country, filled with training troops, that lies round Warley. The weather was very hot, nor did that officer who had bethought him to fill his "full pack" with a full-blown air-cushion, take much reward of his ingenuity when his unlucky fraud betrayed him by bursting almost under the adjutant's eye. Men said that that was their real introduction to the horrors of war.

They were inspected on the 10th August by Major-General Sir Francis Lloyd, commanding the London District who, after the usual compliments on their physique and steadiness, told them they were due for France in a few days. Lord Kitchener came down and addressed them on the 13th of the month, was photographed with a group of all the officers of the 2nd Battalion and Reserve Battalions, and expressed his belief that they would be a credit to the Guards Division then, as we know, being formed in France.

On the 16th they left Brentwood Station, that has seen so many thousands depart; and that evening were packed tightly at Southampton in the *Anglo-Canadian* and the *Viper*. Duly escorted by destroyers, for the seas were troubled by submarines, both ships tied up at Havre in stillness and strange "foreign" smells at midnight. The city and its outskirts for miles round had long since been turned wholly to the monotonous business of expediting troops and supplies; and the camps that ringed it spread and linked on almost daily. The French were used, now, to our armed Empire at large flooding their streets. Wonder and welcome had passed. No pretty maids met them with wine or garlands, and their route inland to their work was as worn and smooth as the traffic-burnished metals from Brentwood to the sea. But the country and its habits were new to all those new hands, trained in a strict

school; and it filled them with joy to behold the casual manner in which a worn and dusty French sentry was relieved while they were marching to their first wonderful camp outside the city.

They entrained for Lumbres on the 18th August and were bidden, next day, to march to billets at Acquin, a little village on a hill-side a few miles from St. Omer, in a fold of the great Sussex-like downs. It is a place both steep and scattered, cramped and hot, and when the air-war was in full swing had its small share of bombs intended for Army Headquarters at St. Omer, and the adjacent aerodromes. The men were billeted in barns forty and fifty at a time which, specially for a new battalion, was rather unhandy, as offering many ups and downs and corners, which afford chances for delays and misunderstandings. But it was to be their first and only experience of comfort for any consecutive time, and of French life a little untouched by war. They most deeply enjoyed the simple kindness of the village-folk, and the graceless comments of the little sharp-faced French children at the halting attempts of the Irish to talk French; the glimpses of intimate domestic days, when sons and brothers of their hosts, returned on a few days' leave from far-away battlefields in the Argonne or beyond, were shown with pride to the visitors who were helping the villagers to cart their corn—"precisely as our own sons would have done." They talked, too, with veterans of '70 met in the fields and at the cafes, who told them in set and rounded phrases that war was serious. And the French men and women upon whom they were billeted liked them well and remembered them long. Said one, years after, with tears in the eyes: "Monsieur, if you drew a line in the air and asked those children not to cross it, it was as a wall to them. They played, monsieur, like infants, without any thought of harm or unkindness; and then they would all become men again, very serious—all those children of yours."

So things were gracious and kindly about them in that little village where every one had suffered loss, and was making their resolute, curt, French best of it; and the 2nd Battalion settled down to an eleventh-hour course of instruction in everything that the war of that day might call for—except, it may be, how to avoid their own cavalry on the march.

The historic first meeting between the 1st and 2nd Battalions took place on the 30th August on a march out to St. Pierre, when the units of the different Guards Brigades were drawing in together for combined work preparatory to the Battle of Loos. The veterans of the 1st were personal in their remarks, deriding the bright cap-stars of the 2nd Battalion, and telling them that they would soon know better than to advertise their rank under fire. The 2nd Battalion Diary notes a point that the 1st, doubtless through delicacy, omits—that when the merry gathering under the trees in the field was at an end, after dinner, the 2nd Battalion fell in and marched off the ground "before the critical eyes of their older comrades, and the 1st followed." No fault was found, but it was a breathless business, compared, by one who took part, to the performances of rival peacocks. ("There was not any one else, that we considered; but we knew that, if we put a foot wrong that parade in

front of them we'd be in the road to hear tell of it the rest of our lives.") And it was on this great day, too, that the Rev. Father Knapp joined as R.C. Chaplain to the Battalion, and thereafter proved himself as far forward on all fields as any of the rest of his brethren.

### Loos

They began to learn something about service conditions when, on the 1st September, they joined up with their Brigade, the 2nd Guards Brigade, and shared a wet day of advancing, on parallel roads, with three Guards Brigades, for practice at coming up into the line. Otherwise, they dug trenches by day and night, developed, more or less, their own system of laying them out in the dark, and their brigade's idea of storming trenches with the help of bombers who had had very little practice with the live bomb; and kept their ears open for any news about conditions on the front. The "smoke-helmets" issued on the eve of the Battalion's departure from England were new also. Many of the talc eye-pieces had cracked in transit, and had to be replaced, and the men instructed how to slip them on against time. This was even more important than the "attack of villages," which was another part of their, curriculum at Avroult, Wismes, Wavrans, Tatinghem, Wisques, Dohem, and the like in that dry autumn weather that was saving itself to break filthily at Loos.

On the 5th September, knowing extremely well what they were intended for, after battalion drill, Lieut.General Haking, commanding the Eleventh Corps, addressed all the Officers of the 2nd Guards Brigade at the 1st Coldstream Mess at Lumbres. The summary is set down in the Diary with no more comment than three exclamation points at the end.

He told them that an attack on the German lines was close at hand; that the Germans had but forty thousand men at the selected point to oppose our two hundred thousand; and that behind their firing-line and supports were only six divisions as a reserve to their whole western front. This may or may not have been true at the time. What follows has a more direct bearing, perhaps, on the course of events, so far as the Battalion was concerned. General Haking said that almost everything depended on the platoon leaders, and "he instructed them always to push on boldly whenever an opportunity offered, even at the expense of exposing and leaving unguarded their flanks." Hence, perhaps, the exclamation points. From the civilian point of view the advice seems hardly safe to offer to a battalion of at least average courage a few days before they are to meet singularly well-posted machine-guns, and carefully trained bombers.

Ceremonial drill of the whole of the 2nd Guards Brigade followed the next day, when they were inspected by Major-General the Earl of Cavan, marched past in column of double platoons, returned to line in mass, complimented on their appearance and so forth, after which, in the evening the C.O. of the Battalion with General Feilding (1st Guards Brigade) Captain Viscount Gort (B.M. 1st Guards Brigade), and Colonel Corry commanding the 3rd Grenadier Guards, went off in a

car to “see the country south-east of Béthune.” This was not a sector that improved on acquaintance; and in the days that followed all senior officers looked at and pondered over the unwholesome open scarred ground over which “the greatest battle in the history of the world,” as General Haking said, was to take place. Meantime, among the drills held at Acquin appear orders, presumably for the first time, that every one was to fire ten rounds “from his rifle while wearing his smoke-helmet.” The result on the targets of this solitary experiment is not recorded; but it takes some time for a man to get used to sighting through dingy talc eye-pieces. Nor is it likely to be known in this world whether the “six young officers” who attended riding-school just before the march towards Loos, derived much benefit from their instruction.

They moved on the evening of the 22nd September and marched to Dohem where they picked up their Brigade Headquarters and some other units, and thence, next day, in heavy rain to billets in Lingham. General Haking delivered another speech at the Corps Conference on the 24th, explaining the broad outlines of the “greatest battle, etc.” which at that moment was opening. He dwelt specially on the part to be played by the Eleventh Corps, as well as the necessity for speed and for the use of reserves. It may have occurred to some of his hearers that they were the reserves, but that speed was out of the question, for the roads were clotted with cavalry, and there did not seem to be any great choice of those “parallel roads” on which they had been exercised, or any vast crush of motor-buses. When they got away from Lingham on the early morning of the 25th and marched with their brigade to Burbure and Haquin, they enjoyed continuous halts, owing to the cavalry going forward, which meant, for the most part, through them, and the wounded of the battle being brought back—all on the same road. They billeted (this was merely a form) at Haquin “very wet and tired” about one on the morning of the 26th, having been on their feet standing, marching, or variously shifted about, for twenty odd hours. The men’s breakfasts were issued at half-past four that same dawn “as there was a possibility of an early move.”

No orders, however, came, the world around them being busied with the shifting phases of the opening of Loos, which had begun with an advance at some spots along the line, and at others was hung up among wire that our two or three hours’ bombardment did not seem to have wholly removed. The 2nd Guards Brigade, then, waited on at Haquin till shortly after noon, and moved via Nœux-les-Mines, Saily-Labourse, Noyelles, and Vermelles, large portions of which were then standing and identifiable, to trenches in front of Le Rutoire. Here the German lines had been driven back a little, and Captains Alexander and Hubbard commanding the two leading companies of the Battalion were sent on to look at them in daylight. The results of the Captains’ adventure, when it is recalled that one set of trenches, at the best of times, looks remarkably like another, and that this was far from being a good time, were surprisingly satisfactory. “There was no one to tell them exactly which trenches were to be taken over, but, from instructions given on the map, and in consultation with the 1st Scots Guards who had to occupy ground on their right, they arranged which set of them to inhabit. Owing to congestion of

roads, and having to go across much broken country, etc., it was nearly midnight before the Battalion got into the selected spot—an old line of captured German trenches in front of Lone Tree.” This, as is well known to all regimental historians, was a mark of the German guns almost to the inch, and, unfortunately, formed one of our dressing-stations. At a moderate estimate the Battalion had now been on foot and lively awake for forty-eight hours; the larger part of that time without any food. It remained for them merely to go into the fight, which they did at half-past two on the morning of the **27th September** when they received “verbal instructions to push forward to another line of captured German trenches, some five hundred yards, relieving any troops that might happen to be there.” It was nearly broad daylight by the time that this disposition was completed, and they were much impressed with the permanence and solidity of the German works in which they found themselves, and remarked jestingly one to another, that “Jerry must have built them with the idea of staying there for ever.” As a matter of fact, “Jerry” did stay within half a mile of that very line for the next three years and six weeks, less one day. They had their first hint of his intentions when patrols pushed out from Nos. 2 and 3 Companies in the forenoon, reported that they were unable to get even a hundred yards ahead, on account of rifle-fire. Men said, long afterwards, that this was probably machine-gun fire out of the Bois Hugo; which thoroughly swept all open communications, for the enemy here as elsewhere had given ground a little without losing his head, and was hitting back as methodically as ever.

The attack of their Brigade developed during the course of the day. The four C.O.'s of the Battalions met their Brigadier at the 1st Grenadier Guards Headquarters. He took them to a point just north of Loos, whence they could see Chalk-Pit Wood, and the battered bulk of the colliery head and workings known as Puits 14 bis, together with what few small buildings still stood thereabouts, and told them that he proposed to attack as follows: At half-past two a heavy bombardment lasting for one hour and a half would be delivered on that sector. At four the Second Irish Guards would advance upon Chalk-Pit Wood and would establish themselves on the north-east and south-east faces of it, supported by the 1st Coldstream. The 1st Scots Guards were to advance echeloned to the right rear of the Irish, and to attack Puits 14 bis moving round the south side of Chalk-Pit Wood, covered by heavy fire from the Irish out of the Wood itself. For this purpose, four machine-guns of the Brigade Machine-gun Company were to accompany the latter battalion. The 3rd Grenadiers were to support the 1st Scots in their attack on the Puits. Chalk-Pit Wood at that time existed as a somewhat dishevelled line of smallish trees and brush running from north to south along the edge of some irregular chalk workings which terminated at their north end, in a deepish circular quarry. It was not easy to arrive at its precise shape and size, for the thing, like so much of the war-landscape of France, was seen but once by the men vitally concerned in its features, and thereafter changed outline almost weekly, as gun-fire smote and levelled it from different angles.

The orders for the Battalion, after the conference and the short view of the ground, were that No. 3 Company (Captain Wynter) was to advance from their trenches when the bombardment stopped, to the southern end of Chalk-Pit Wood, get through and dig itself in in the tough chalk on the farther side. No. 2 Company (Captain Bird), on the left of No. 3, would make for the centre of the wood, dig in too, on the far side, and thus prolong No. 3's line up to and including the Chalk-Pit—that is to say, that the two companies would hold the whole face of the Wood.

Nos. 1 and 4 Companies were to follow and back up Nos. 3 and 2 respectively. At four o'clock the two leading companies deployed and advanced, "keeping their direction and formation perfectly." That much could be seen from what remained of Vermelles watertower, where some of the officers of the 1st Battalion were watching, regardless of occasional enemy shell. They advanced quickly, and pushed through to the far edge of the Wood with very few casualties, and those, as far as could be made out, from rifle or machine-gun fire. (Shell-fire had caught them while getting out of their trenches, but, notwithstanding, their losses had not been heavy till then.) The rear companies pushed up to thicken the line, as the fire increased from the front, and while digging in beyond the Wood, 2nd Lieutenant Pakenham-Law was fatally wounded in the head. Digging was not easy work, and seeing that the left of the two first companies did not seem to have extended as far as the Chalk-Pit, at the north of the Wood, the C.O. ordered the last two platoons of No. 4 Company which were just coming up, to bear off to the left and get hold of the place. In the meantime, the 1st Scots Guards, following orders, had come partly round and partly through the right flank of the Irish, and attacked Puits 14 bis, which was reasonably stocked with machine-guns, but which they captured for the moment. Their rush took with them "some few Irish Guardsmen," with 2nd Lieutenants W. F. J. Clifford and J. Kipling of No. 2 Company who went forward not less willingly because Captain Cuthbert commanding the Scots Guards party had been adjutant to the Reserve Battalion at Warley ere the 2nd Battalion was formed, and they all knew him. Together, this rush reached a line beyond the Puits, well under machinegun fire (out of the Bois Hugo across the Lens—La Bassee road). Here 2nd Lieutenant Clifford was shot and wounded or killed—the body was found later—and 2nd Lieutenant Kipling was wounded and missing. The Scots Guards also lost Captain Cuthbert, wounded or killed, and the combined Irish and Scots Guards party fell back from the Puits and retired "into and through Chalk-Pit Wood in some confusion." The C.O. and Adjutant, Colonel Butler and Captain Vesey went forward through the Wood to clear up matters, but, soon after they had entered it the Adjutant was badly wounded and had to be carried off. Almost at the same moment, "the men from the Puits came streaming back through the Wood, followed by a great part of the line which had been digging in on the farther side of it."

Evidently, one and a half hour's bombardment, against a country-side packed with machine-guns, was not enough to placate it. The Battalion had been swept from all quarters, and shelled at the same time, at the end of two hard days and sleepless nights, as a first experience of war, and had lost seven of their officers in forty

minutes. They were reformed somewhat to the rear along the Loos–Hulluch road. (“Jerry did himself well at Loos upon us innocents. We went into it, knowing no more than our own dead what was coming, and Jerry fair lifted us out of it with machine-guns. That was all there was to it *that day*.”) The watchers on the Vermelles water-tower saw no more than a slow forward wave obscured by Chalk-Pit Wood; the spreading of a few scattered figures, always, it seemed, moving leisurely; and then a return, with no apparent haste in it, behind the wood once more. They had a fair idea, though, of what had happened, and guessed what was to follow. The re-formed line would go up again exactly to where it had come from. While this was being arranged, and when a couple of companies of the 1st Coldstream had turned up in a hollow on the edge of the Loos–Hulluch road, to support the Battalion, a runner came back with a message from Captain Alexander saying that he and some men were still in their scratch-trenches on the far side of Chalk-Pit Wood, and he would be greatly obliged if they would kindly send some more men up, and with speed. The actual language was somewhat crisper, and was supplemented, so the tale runs, by remarks from the runner addressed to the community at large. The demand was met at once, and the rest of the line was despatched to the near side of the Wood in support. The two companies of the Coldstream came up on the left of the Irish Guards, and seized and settled down in the Chalk-Pit itself. They all had a night’s energetic digging ahead of them, with but their own entrenching tools to help, and support-trenches had to be made behind the Wood in case the enemy should be moved to counter-attack. To meet that chance, as there was a gap between the supporting Coldstream Companies and the First Guards Brigade on the left, the C.O. of the 2nd Battalion collected some hundred and fifty men of various regiments, during the dusk, and stuffed them into an old German communication-trench as a defence. No counter-attack developed, but it was a joyless night that they spent among the uptorn trees and lumps of unworkable chalk. Their show had failed with all the others along the line, and “the greatest battle in the history of the world” was frankly stuck. The most they could do was to hang on and wait developments. They were shelled throughout the next day, heavily but inaccurately, when 2nd Lieutenant Sassoon was wounded by a rifle bullet. In the evening they watched the 1st Coldstream make an unsuccessful attack on Puits 14 bis, for the place was a well-planned machine-gun nest—the first of many that they were fated to lose their strength against through the years to come. That night closed in rain, and they were left to the mercy of Providence. No one could get to them, and they could get at nobody; but they could and did dig deeper into the chalk, to keep warm, and to ensure against the morrow (September 29) when the enemy guns found their range and pitched the stuff fairly into the trenches “burying many men and blowing a few to pieces.” Yet, according to the count, which surely seems inaccurate, they only lost twenty dead in the course of the long day. The 3rd Guards Brigade on their right, sent in word that the Germans were massing for attack in the Bois Hugo in front of their line. “All ranks were warned,” which, in such a situation, meant no more than that the experienced, among them, of whom there were a few, waited for the cessation of shell-fire, and

the inexperienced, of whom there were many, waited for what would come next. (“And the first time that he is under *that* sort of fire, a man stops his thinking. He’s all full of wonder, sweat, and great curses.”) No attack, however, came, and the Gunners claimed that their fire on Bois Hugo had broken it up. Then the Brigade on their left cheered them with instructions that Chalk-Pit Wood must be “held at all costs,” and that they would not be relieved for another two days; also, that “certain modifications of the Brigade line would take place.” It turned out later that these arrangements did not affect the battalions. They were taken out of the line “wet, dirty, and exhausted” on the night of the 30th September when, after a heavy day’s shelling, the Norfolks relieved them, and they got into billets behind Saily-Lebourse. They had been under continuous strain since the 25th of the month, and from the 27th to the 30th in a punishing action which had cost them, as far as could be made out, 324 casualties, including 101 missing. Of these last, the Diary records that “the majority of them were found to have been admitted to some field ambulance, wounded. The number of known dead is set down officially as not more than 25, which must be below the mark. Of their officers, 2nd Lieutenant Pakenham-Law had died of wounds; 2nd Lieutenants Clifford and Kipling were missing, Captain and Adjutant the Hon. T. E. Vesey, Captain Wynter, Lieutenant Stevens, and 2nd Lieutenants Sassoon and Grayson were wounded, the last being blown up by a shell. It was a fair average for the day of a debut, and taught them somewhat for their future guidance. Their commanding officer told them so at Adjutant’s Parade, after they had been rested and cleaned on the 2nd October at Verquigneul; but it does not seem to have occurred to any one to suggest that direct infantry attacks, after ninety-minute bombardments, on works begotten out of a generation of thought and prevision, scientifically built up by immense labour and applied science, and developed against all contingencies through nine months, are not likely to find a fortunate issue. So, while the Press was explaining to a puzzled public what a far-reaching success had been achieved, the “greatest battle in the history of the world” simmered down to picking up the pieces on both sides of the line, and a return to autumnal trench-work, until more and heavier guns could be designed and manufactured in England. Meantime, men died.

# Appendix 7 Lessons Learned from Battle of Loos

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More than 61,000 British casualties were sustained in this battle. 50,000 of them were in the main fighting area between Loos and Givenchy and the remainder in the subsidiary attacks. Of these, 7,766 men died. Casualties were particularly high among Scots units. Many New Army units, rushed into a battle area for the first time only a matter of days after landing in France, were devastated. A significant proportion of the remaining pre-war regular troops were lost, and more than 2,000 officers were killed or wounded. This irreplaceable asset in experienced men and leaders was a most serious loss to the army. The New Army units that had taken part in a major action for the first time had suffered heavily - but had shown without doubt that they were worthy soldiers.

There were many points of learning at the tactical level:

- Intelligence about the newly-strengthened German positions was not available or given insufficient attention
- No surprise was achieved; the blowing of mines well before the attack placed the enemy on the alert
- Smoke screens were effective; cloud gas was not. Its behaviour proved unpredictable
- The duration and weight of the British bombardment was insufficient to break the German wire and breastwork defences, or to destroy or suppress the front-line machine-guns. German artillery and free movement of reserves were insufficiently suppressed
- Trench layouts, traffic flows and organisation behind the British front line did not allow for easy movement of reinforcements and casualties
- British grenades were of poor design and manufacture and were easily outranged by the enemy ones
- It soon became impossible to tell precisely where British troops were; accurate close-support artillery fire was impossible; RFC observation was very limited due to poor weather
- The New Army Divisions fought bravely but were clearly not yet trained to a sufficiently high fighting standard as a formation; they would need a period of familiarity with war conditions and could not be reliably deployed 'straight off the boat'
- The withdrawal of cooks to Divisional control was a disaster, with many men going hungry to battle.

From a strategic viewpoint, Loos showed that even with those tactical weaknesses, it was possible to *break into* the most strongly defended German positions (although casualties were inevitably high). Commander of First Army, Sir Douglas Haig, was adamant that a fleeting opportunity to *break*

*through* the enemy lines had been lost because of mishandling of the reserves. They had arrived too late to provide the punch that was necessary.

# Appendix 8

## Irish National Volunteers

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Volunteers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Volunteers)

The **National Volunteers** was the name taken by the majority of the [Irish Volunteers](#) that sided with [Irish Parliamentary Party](#) leader [John Redmond](#) after the movement split over the question of the Volunteers' role in [World War I](#).

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### Origins[\[edit\]](#)

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The National Volunteers were the product of the Irish political crisis over the implementation of [Home Rule](#) in 1912–14. The [Third Home Rule Bill](#) had been proposed in 1912 (and was subsequently passed in 1914) under the British [Liberal](#) government, after a campaign by [John Redmond](#) and the [Irish Parliamentary Party](#). However, its implementation was delayed in the face of mass resistance by [Irish Unionists](#). This had begun with the introduction of the bill into Parliament, when thousands of unionists signed the "[Ulster Covenant](#)", pledging to resist Home Rule. In 1913 they formed the [Ulster Volunteers](#) (UVF), an armed wing of [Ulster Unionism](#) and organised locally by the [Orange Order](#); the Ulster Volunteers stated that they would resist Home Rule by force.<sup>[1]</sup>

In response, Nationalists formed their own paramilitary group, the [Irish Volunteers](#), at a meeting held in Dublin on 25 November 1913; the purpose of this new organisation was to safeguard the granting and implementation of Home Rule.<sup>[2]</sup> It looked for several months in 1914 as if civil war was imminent between

the two armed factions, with the British Army [known to be reluctant to intervene](#) against Ulster armed opposition to Home Rule's coming into operation. While Redmond took no role in the creation of the Irish Volunteers, when he saw how influential they had become he realised an independent body of such magnitude was a threat to his authority as leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, and therefore sought control of the organisation.

[Eoin MacNeill](#), along with [Sir Roger Casement](#) and other leaders of the Irish Volunteers, had indeed sought Redmond's approval of and input in the organisation, but did not want to hand control over to him. In June 1914, the Volunteer leadership reluctantly agreed, in the interest of harmony, to permit Redmond to nominate half of the membership of the Volunteer Executive;<sup>[3]</sup> as some of the standing members were already Redmond supporters, this would have given him control over the Volunteers. The motion was bitterly opposed by the radical members of the committee (mostly members of the secret [Irish Republican Brotherhood](#)), notably [Patrick Pearse](#), [Sean MacDermott](#), and [Eamonn Ceannt](#), but was carried nevertheless to prevent a split. With the support of the Irish Party the Volunteer organisation grew dramatically.

## Great War split<sup>[edit]</sup>

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Following the outbreak of [World War I](#) in August, and the successful placement of the Home Rule Act on the statute books (albeit with its implementation [formally postponed](#)), Redmond made a speech in [Woodenbridge, County Wicklow](#) on 20 September, in which he called for members of the Volunteers to enlist in an intended Irish Army Corps of Kitchener's [New British Army](#). He pledged his support to the [Allied cause](#), saying in his address:

*The interests of Ireland — of the whole of Ireland — are at stake in this war. This war is undertaken in the defence of the highest principles of religion and morality and right, and it would be a disgrace for ever to our country and a reproach to her manhood and a denial of the lessons of her history if young Ireland confined their efforts to remaining at home to defend the shores of Ireland from an unlikely invasion, and to shrinking from the duty of proving on the field of battle that gallantry and courage which has distinguished our race all through its history. I say to you, therefore, your duty is twofold. I am glad to see such magnificent material for soldiers around me, and I say to you: "Go on drilling and make yourself efficient for the Work, and then account yourselves as men, not only for Ireland itself, but wherever the fighting line extends, in defence of right, of freedom, and religion in this war".<sup>[4]</sup>*

Redmond's motives were twofold. Firstly, he felt it was in the future interest of an All-Ireland [Home Rule](#) settlement to support the British war cause, joining together with the [Ulster Volunteers](#) who offered immediate support by enlisting in the [36th \(Ulster\) Division](#). Secondly, he hoped that the Volunteers, with arms and training from the British, would become the nucleus of an Irish Army after Home Rule was implemented.<sup>[5]</sup> He reminded the Irish Volunteers that when they returned after an expected short war at the end of 1915, they would be an army capable of confronting any attempt to [exclude Ulster](#) from the operation of the Government of Ireland Act.

Militant nationalists reacted angrily against Redmond's support for the war, and nearly all of the original leaders of the Volunteers grouped together to dismiss his appointees. However, the great majority of the Volunteers supported Redmond, and became known as the National Volunteers.<sup>[4]</sup>

## Recruitment for World War I<sup>[edit]</sup>

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See also: *[Ireland and World War I](#)*

The vast majority of the Volunteer membership remained loyal to Redmond, bringing some 142,000 members to the National Volunteers, leaving the [Irish Volunteers](#) with just a rump, estimated at 9,700 members.<sup>[6]</sup> Many other Irish nationalists and parliamentary leaders, such as [William O'Brien](#) MP, [Thomas O'Donnell](#) MP, [Joseph Devlin](#) MP, and [The O'Mahony](#), sided with Redmond's decision and recruited to support the British and Allied war effort. Five other MPs, [J. L. Esmonde](#), [Stephen Gwynn](#), [Willie Redmond](#), [William Redmond](#), and [D. D. Sheehan](#), as well as former MP [Tom Kettle](#), actually joined Kitchener's [New Service Army](#) during the war.

Many Irishmen enlisted voluntarily in [Irish regiments](#) of the New British Army, forming part of the [10th \(Irish\)](#) and [16th \(Irish\)](#) Divisions. Out of a National Volunteer membership of about 150,000, roughly 24,000 (about 24 battalions) were to join those Divisions for the duration of the war. Another 7,500 joined reserve battalions in Ireland.<sup>[7]</sup> The National Volunteers were therefore a minority among the 206,000 Irishmen who served as volunteers for the British Army in the war, and so failed to constitute a nascent Irish Army as Redmond had hoped.<sup>[8]</sup> Recruiting for the war among the National Volunteers, after an initial burst of enthusiasm, proved rather sluggish. According to historian Fergus Campbell, "most of the members of the National Volunteers were farmers' sons, and members of this social group were reluctant to join the colours".<sup>[9]</sup> A police report of late 1914 commented: "Though the large majority of the nominal National Volunteers approve of Mr. Redmond's pronouncement, only very few will enlist".<sup>[10]</sup> A contemporary writer felt that, "at the back of it was a vague feeling that to fight for the British Empire was a form of disloyalty to Ireland."<sup>[11]</sup>

Moreover, Redmond's hopes for an Irish Army Corps were also to end in disappointment for him. Instead, a New Army 16th (Irish) Division was created. The Division was largely officered by [Englishmen](#) (an exception was [William Hickie](#), an Irish general), which was not a popular decision in nationalist Ireland. This outcome was in part due to the lack of trained Irish officers; the few trained officers had been sent to the 10th Division, and those still available had been included into [Sir Edward Carson's 36th \(Ulster\) Division](#). In addition, Redmond's earlier statement, that the Irish New Army units would return armed and capable of enforcing Home Rule, aroused [War Office](#) suspicions.<sup>[12]</sup>

## The National Volunteers after 1914<sup>[edit]</sup>

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The war's popularity in Ireland and the popularity of John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party were badly dented by the severe losses subsequently suffered by the Irish divisions. In addition, the postponement of the implementation of Home Rule damaged both the IPP and the National Volunteers.

The majority of the National Volunteers (over 120,000 or 80%) did not enlist in the British Army. John Redmond had intended that they would form an official home defence force for Ireland during the War, but the British War Office balked at arming and training the Irish nationalist movement.<sup>[13]</sup> Military historian Timothy Bowman has described the situation as follows: "While Kitchener saw the UVF as an efficient military force and was prepared to offer concessions to secure the services of UVF personnel in the British army his view of the INV was very different. The INV were, even in comparison to the UVF, an inefficient military force in 1914, lacked trained officers, finances and equipment. Kitchener was certainly not inclined to, as he saw it, waste valuable officers and equipment on a force which, at best, would relieve Territorial units from garrison duties and, at worst, would provide Irish Nationalists with the ability to enforce Home Rule on their own terms."<sup>[14]</sup>

In fact, the National Volunteers fell into decline as the war went on. Their strength fell to around 100,000 by February 1916,<sup>[15]</sup> and moreover their companies tended to fall into inactivity. In many cases, this was put down to a fear of conscription being introduced into Ireland should they drill too openly.<sup>[15]</sup> For this reason, British sources reported by early 1916 that the National Volunteers as a movement were "practically dead" or "non-existent".<sup>[15]</sup>

The National Volunteers' other problem was a lack of leadership, as many of its most committed and militarily experienced members had enlisted in Irish Regiments for the war. As a result, the RIC (police) report on them concluded: "It is a strong force on paper, but without officers and untrained, it is little better than a large mob".<sup>[16]</sup> They staged a very large rally, of over 20,000 men, on Easter Sunday 1915 in Dublin's Phoenix Park, but their Inspector General, Maurice Moore, saw no military future for the organisation: "They cannot be trained, disciplined or armed, moreover, the enthusiasm has gone and they cannot be kept going... it will be of no practical use against any army, Orange or German."<sup>[17]</sup>

By contrast, the smaller but more militant Irish Volunteers increased in both numbers and activity as the War went on. The numerical increase was modest, from 9,700 in 1914 to 12,215 by February 1916, but they trained regularly and had kept most of the Volunteer weaponry.<sup>[15]</sup> By March 1916, the RIC was reporting that the Irish Volunteers, "are foremost among [nationalist] political societies, not by reason of their numerical strength but on account of their greater activity".<sup>[15]</sup> In April 1916, a faction within the Irish Volunteers launched the Easter Rising, an armed insurrection centred in Dublin aimed at the ending of British rule in Ireland. During the Rising, one unit of the National Volunteers (in Craughwell, County Galway), offered its services to the local RIC to help suppress the rebellion in that area.<sup>[18]</sup>

The rebellion was put down within a week by the British Army (including Irish units such as the Dublin Fusiliers). In its aftermath, and especially after the Conscription Crisis of 1918 in which the British Cabinet had planned to impose conscription in Ireland, the National Volunteers were eclipsed by the Irish Volunteers, whose membership shot up to over 100,000 by the end of 1918.<sup>[19]</sup> John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party was similarly overtaken by the separatist Sinn Féin party in the general elections in December 1918.

After the [Armistice](#) in November 1918, around 100,000 Irishmen, including the surviving members of the National Volunteers who had enlisted, were demobilised from the British Army.<sup>[20]</sup>

[Irish Republicanism](#) had now displaced constitutional nationalism as represented by the Irish Parliamentary Party, leading to the [Irish Declaration of Independence](#) and the [outbreak of armed conflict against the British](#) (1919). The Third Home Rule Bill was never implemented, and was repealed by the [Government of Ireland Act 1920](#) (the Fourth Home Rule Bill), which [partitioned Ireland](#) (1921).

# Appendix 9

## Information on Irish Guards during World War 1

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available from <http://www.forces-war-records.co.uk/>

Irish Guards During the First World War, the Irish Guards were deployed to France and they remained on the Western Front for the duration of the war. During the course of the war, the Regiment was awarded 406 medals 4 of which were Victoria Crosses and lost over 2,300 officers and men.

### 1st Battalion

04.08.1914 Stationed at Wellington Barracks as part of the 4th (Guards) Brigade of the 2nd Division.

13.08.1914 Mobilised for war and landed at Havre and engaged in various actions on the Western front including;

1914

The Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, The Battle of the Marne, The Battle of the Aisne, First Battle of Ypres.

1915

Winter Operations 1914-15, The Battle of Festubert.

20.08.1915 Transferred to the 1st (Guards) Brigade.

1915

The Battle of Loos

1916

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, The Battle of Morval,

1917

The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, The Battle of Pilkem, The Battle of the Menin Road, The Battle of Poelkapelle, The First Battle of Passchendaele, The Battle of Cambrai 1917.

1918

The Battle of St Quentin, The Battle of Bapaume, The First Battle of Arras 1918, The battles marked, The Battle of Albert, The Second Battle of Bapaume, The

Battle of Havrincourt, The Battle of the Canal du Nord, The Battle of Cambrai 1918, The pursuit to the Selle, The Battle of the Selle, The Battle of the Sambre. 11.11.1918 Ended the war in Assevent, N.E. of Maubeuge, France.

#### 2nd Battalion

18.07.1915 Formed at Warley Barracks

17.08.1915 Mobilised for war and landed at Havre, joining the 2nd (Guards) Brigade of the Guards Division.

1915

The Battle of Loos

1916

The Battle of Flers-Courcelette, The Battle of Morval,

1917

The German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, The Battle of Pilkem, The Battle of the Menin Road, The Battle of Poelkapelle, The First Battle of Passchendaele, The Battle of Cambrai 1917.

08.02.1918 Transferred to the 4th (Guards) Brigade of the 31st Division.

1918

The Battle of St Quentin, The Battle of Bapaume, The First Battle of Arras, The Battle of Estaires, The Battle of Hazebrouck, The Defence of Nieppe Forest.

20.05.1918 Transferred to the G.H.Q. Reserve

11.11.1918 Ended the war in Criel Plage, S.W. of Le Treport.

#### 3rd (Reserve) Battalion

1914 Formed at Warley Barracks as 2nd Reserve Battalion.

July 1915 Became 3rd (Reserve) Battalion and remained at Warley Barracks.

#### 4th (Extra Reserve) Battalion

04.08.1914 Stationed at Kilkenny and then moved to Queenstown

May 1915 Moved to England at Gosport.

Sept 1915 Returned to Ireland at Fermoy

May 1916 Moved to Queenstown

April 1918 Returned to England as part of the Irish Reserve Brigade at Larkhill.

#### 5th (Service) Battalion (Pioneers)

29.08.1914 Formed at Clonmel as part of the First New Army (K1) in the 29th Brigade of the 10th Division and then moved to Fermoy and Longford.

May 1915 Moved to England based at Basingstoke and then became a Pioneer Battalion of the 10th Division.

07.07.1915 Embarked for Gallipoli from Liverpool via Mudros.

07.08.1915 Landed at Suvla Bay and engaged in various actions against the Turkish Army including;

The Battle of Sari Bair, Capture of Chocolate Hill, Hill 60.

30.09.1915 Evacuated from Gallipoli to Mudros due to severe casualties from combat, disease and harsh weather.

06.10.1915 Deployed to Salonika and engaged in various actions against the Bulgarian Army including;

The Battle of Kosturino, The Retreat from Serbia, Capture of the Karajokois, Capture of Yenikoi, Third Battle of Gaza, Capture of the Sheria Position, Capture of Jerusalem, Defence of Jerusalem, Tell 'Asure.

01.04.1918 Transferred to the 52nd Division.

10.04.1918 Embarked for France from Alexandria arriving at Marseilles

17.04.1918.

31.05.1918 Transferred to defence the Lines of Communication.

14.07.1918 Transferred to the 50th Division at Arques la Bataille near Martin Eglise S.E. of Dieppe and engaged in various actions on the Western front including;

The Battle of the St Quentin Canal, The Battle of the Beaurevoir Line, The Battle of Cambrai 1918, The pursuit to the Selle, The Battle of the Selle, The Battle of Valenciennes.

11.11.1918 Ended the war at Semousies north of Avesnes.

#### 6th (Service) Battalion

06.09.1914 Formed at Clonmel as part of the Second New Army (K2) in the 16th Division.

Mar 1915 Moved to Fermoy absorbed 250 men of all ranks from one company of the Guernsey Militia.

Sept 1915 Moved to Aldershot.

Dec 1915 Mobilised for war and landed at Havre and engaged in various actions on the Western Front including;

1916

The Battle of Guillemont, The Battle of Ginchy.

1917

The Battle of Messines, The Battle of Langemark.

1918

The Battle of St Quentin, The Battle of Rosieres,

09.02.1918 After heavy losses the Division was return to England to reconstitute but the Battalion was disbanded in France at Saulcourt near Ephey, with the remaining personnel transferred to the 2nd and 7th Battalions.

7th (South Irish Horse) Battalion

01.09.1917 Formed in France from the dismounted 1st and 2nd South Irish Horse.

14.10.1917 Transferred to the 49th Brigade of the 16th Division.

1918

The Battle of St Quentin, The Battle of Rosieres,

18.04.1918 Reduced to cadre.

26.06.1918 Reformed with 500 men of all ranks from the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 250 men from the Royal Munster Fusiliers and 85 men from the Royal Irish Regiment.

04.07.1918 Transferred to the 21st Brigade of the 30th Division.

1918

The Battle of St Quentin, The actions at the Somme Crossings, The Battle of Rosieres, The Battle of Kemmel Ridge, The Second Battle of Kemmel Ridge, The Battle of the Scherpenberg, The capture of Neuve Eglise, The capture of Wulverghem, The Battle of Ypres, The Battle of Courtrai.

11.11.1918 Ended the war at Ellezelles east of Renaix, Belgium.

8th (Service) Battalion

25.05.1918 Formed in France from the 2nd Garrison Guard Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment as part of the 178th Brigade of the 59th Division.

20.06.1918 Transferred to the 121st Brigade of the 40th Division.

13.07.1918 The title of 'Garrison' dropped and engaged in various actions on the Western Front including;

The Final Advance in Flanders, The Battle of Ypres.

11.11.1918 Ended the war at Lannoy south of Roubaix, France.

1st Garrison Battalion

02.08.1915 Formed at Dublin and then moved to Holyhead.

06.09.1915 Embarked for Egypt from Devonport, Plymouth arriving at Mudros.

Oct 1915 Supplied working parties to be sent to Suvla Bay.

05.02.1916 Deployed to Egypt where it remained.

2nd (Home Service) Garrison Battalion

Mar 1916 Formed at Dublin.

April 1918 Became 2nd Garrison Guard Battalion.

18.04.1918 Went to France joining the 178th Brigade of the 59th Division.

25.05.1918 Became the 8th Garrison (and then Service) Battalion and the Division engaged in various actions on the Western Front including;

The Battle of Albert, The general final advance in Artois and Flanders.

[Click here for more information on Irish Guards](#)

Battalion: 2nd Battalion

Commemorated: Britain

5 Millbridge Court,

Mill Lane,  
Naas,  
Co. Kildare.  
27<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Mr Dornic Kearney,  
Regimental HQ, Irish Guards

Re: Lance Cpl Michael Colclough, 6908

Dear Mr Kearney,

I write in relation to seeking your assistance in finding a photograph and any other records you might have for my great uncle Michael Colclough, who died on 1 October 1915:

COLCLOUGH, Michael Joseph. Lance-Corporal, Irish Guards, 2nd Battalion, 6908. Born: Navan, about 1891. Son of James and Margaret Colclough, Kells Road, Navan. Father's occupation: Gatekeeper, Railway. Served in Navan Irish National Volunteers. Enlistment location: Drogheda, Co. Louth. Died of wounds, France & Flanders, 1 October 1915. Age: 24. Memorial: IV.H.4; Etaples Military Cemetery.

I am very keen to obtain a photograph of Michael, as none exists, and I understand that there may be a regimental photograph? Also it would be great to get his full military record.

I am very lucky, as he served in the same Battalion as Rudyard Kipling's son John, and I have found lots of information in "The Irish Guards in the Great War Volume 2", including details of the second battalions journey to The Battle of Loos.

I have a number of questions which remain open:

- No birth records has been found for Michael. Is his birth cert on the Army record, and if not, would he have had to produce it to verify his age upon enlistment?
- Why would he have enlisted in Drogheda, rather than his local Navan?
- What would have happened once he enlisted - would he have immediately transferred to Warley Barracks?
- What size was the second Battalion around October 1915, given that it was only formed officially in July 1915?

Any help you might be able to give in relation to piecing together the information on Michael would be greatly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely

---

Dr. Shane Colclough