

## Researching your Military ancestors

It is likely that you will discover a relative with a military or police connection when researching your ancestors in Co. Kildare given its martial history. Throughout the ages Irishmen have served in the armies of Great Britain and the Commonwealth; and in the armies of other European nations like France, Spain, and Italy (the Papal Army), and the United States of America. There were numerous British Army barracks in Co. Kildare, one of which, the Curragh Camp, is used by the Irish Army today. The availability of the records for the different military forces varies. The most commonly used records are those of the British armed forces and the Irish Defense Forces.

### British military records

The existence of extensive British military records means that it should be possible to obtain information on a military ancestor. To do this, you need to have some precise information on the person in question, such as an army service number, or the name or location of the unit in which they served. If you do locate your ancestor in military records, you may discover a great deal of information about them. Some forms of military record are very extensive and may provide the most complete single description of an ancestor you are ever likely to find. The information can include: a trade before enlisting; father's occupation; age; a full physical description, including height, colour of eyes and complexion; military history, including length of service and conduct; details of any medals obtained; and also, date and reasons for discharge.

If your ancestor was killed while in service, information may be easier to locate. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) has a list of all servicemen who died during WWI and WWII while serving in the British or Commonwealth forces. Civilians killed in German bombing raids are also recorded. These records can provide information like age, burial place, next of kin and names and addresses of parents. Please see [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)

The UK National Archives website [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) contains many records, including Medal Rolls and Medal Index Cards. These include the service number, rank, regiment, unit and sometimes dates in theatre of war. However, be advised that the medal cards are not easy to interpret. A large amount of this material is now available via subscription websites such as [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) and [www.findmypast.ie](http://www.findmypast.ie). The Ancestry owned website [www.fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) has extensive collections of British and USA military records.

All British military and police records are held in the National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond Surrey, TW9 4DU, England. If you are unable to visit it is possible to commission a member of the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives to undertake a search of the records on your behalf. [www.agra.org.uk](http://www.agra.org.uk)

The following are sources pertaining to locally raised militia and yeomanry in Co. Kildare.

Dowling, M.G. (ed.) *Millicent Legion of Yeomanry orderly book*, in *JCKAS*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (1953), pp. 211-219.

FitzGerald, Lord Walter. *County Kildare Cavalry in 1796* [note], in *JCKAS*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (January 1903), pp. 65-66.

Snoddy, Oliver. *The Volunteers, Militia, Yeomanry and Orangemen of Co. Kildare in the 18th Century*, in *JCKAS*, Vol. XV No. 1 (1971), pp. 38-49.

Thompson, F. Glenn. *The Kildare Rifles 1855-1881* [note], in *JCKAS*, Vol. XVI No. 4 (1983-84), pp. 374.

### **Irishmen who died in World War I**

'Ireland's Memorial Records' contains the names of Irishmen in Irish and British regiments of the British Army (and some for other services) who died in WWI. It was published in 1923 by the Irish National War Memorials Commission and is available in many libraries. A facsimile copy is available at Kildare Local Studies, Genealogy and Archives (KLSGA). It can also be accessed via [www.findmypast.ie](http://www.findmypast.ie). The 49,900 entries (not all are Irish) provide the name, regimental number, rank, place and date of death, and in the majority of entries, place of birth. Where place of birth was recorded some 590 men were listed as being from Co. Kildare. The number of Irish born included is about 30,000 men. However, not all those who died are included and the CWGC site is more comprehensive.

*Remembrance, The World War I Dead of Co. Kildare* was published in 2021 by KLSGA, supported by the County Kildare Decade of Commemorations Committee. It lists those who died during WWI or following it, while in the service of the British and Commonwealth armed forces, the British Mercantile Marine or the American Army. Details included (where known) are service number, rank, unit, date and place of death, burial place, place of birth, names of parents and spouse, and any other supplementary information, i.e., medals awarded, place of attestation, etc. The book is available in all local Co. Kildare libraries.

### **Soldiers' Wills (1899-1918)**

These are an important historical record of some of the Irish men who served in the British Army. They can be accessed on the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) website at [www.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.nationalarchives.ie). There are over 9,000 wills of enlisted and non-commissioned soldiers from Ireland who fought in the British Army in WWI and in the South African War 1899-1902. They were encouraged to make wills to simplify the settling of their affairs in the event of their death. It was not compulsory. As most of the soldiers were unmarried, in most cases the beneficiary was a mother, father, siblings or fellow soldiers. A will form was provided which recorded the name, rank, regiment and regimental number of the soldier, the name and address of the person to whom he wished to bequeath his possessions, his relationship to that person, and the names of witnesses. Also included in the collection are 29 wills of soldiers who died in the South African War 1899-1902. Unlike the wills of soldiers of WWI these consist of letters to their families.

### **Medal Index Cards**

These will let you research the medals your ancestor was entitled to, as well as their rank and service number. It is a useful way of researching ancestors who survived WWI. You may also find details of what theatre of war they served in, and the date on which they entered that theatre. A record of service and any medals awarded may also be recorded. Fees apply to download a record.

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/medal-index-cards-ww1.htm>

### **1914-1918. Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Medal Rolls**

A roll of individuals in RDF entitled to British War medals and Victory medals. Includes name, rank, and regimental no. Some entries also contain remarks and details of previous units. WO 329-1712. National Archives UK.

### **Committee on Claims**

The files of the Committee on Claims on behalf of British ex-servicemen from 1927-8 cover the demands of WWI veterans for improvements on housing and unemployment relief in Ireland. They include numerous testimonies from veterans and British Legion branches throughout the Free State. (NAI)

**British Army Personnel Records and Family Interest Enquiries - Historical Disclosures** Family members wishing to access a full British army service record of a soldier who died after 1920 may write to: Army Personnel Centre, Historical Disclosures, Mailpoint 555, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow, G2 8EX, United Kingdom. Records of service prior to that, such as WWI records, are held at the UK National Archives, Kew.

**British Navy Personnel Records and Family Interest Enquiries** - For UK service records dating from 1924 onwards, next of kin should write to Director of Naval Personnel, Naval, Disclosure Cell, Mailpoint G-2, Room 48, West Battery, Whale Island, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 8DX. Records of service prior to 1924 are held at the UK National Archives, Kew.

**British Air Force Personnel Records and Family Interest Enquiries** - To request Royal Air Force service records, next of kin should write to: RAF Disclosures Section, Room 221B, Trenchard Hall, RAF Cranwell, Sleaford, Lincs. NG34 8HB, United Kingdom. Records from WWI and earlier are held at the UK National Archives, Kew.

### **Irish military records**

The Irish Defence Forces were formed after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in December 1921. The Military Archives includes the Bureau of Military History archives, and contains extensive sources such as witness statements from those who were active in the War of Independence (1913-21); Medal files containing applications for 1916 and War of Independence service medals (available to next of kin or relatives only); photographs, files, reports of IRA and crown forces operations, intelligence documents, etc. In addition, the internment records of captured anti-treaty activists can be consulted, which includes lists of prisoners in the Newbridge and the Curragh internment camps. For the 1939-45 period there are files and membership rolls for the Local Defense Forces. Records of servicemen throughout the years are also available on request.

The Military Archives are located at Cathal Brugha Barracks, Rathmines, Dublin 6. Access is by appointment only, although much of the collection, including the witness statements from 1913-21, including the relevant contact details, can be accessed at [www.militaryarchives.ie](http://www.militaryarchives.ie)

### **The Bureau of Military History (1913-1921)**

The Bureau of Military History was established in 1947. Its objective was *'to assemble and co-ordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the*

*movement for Independence from the formation of the Irish Volunteers on 25th November 1913, to the 11th July 1921'.*

Over the following eleven years 1773 witness statements, 334 sets of contemporary documents (including pamphlets, photographs, letters, dispatches, drawings and sketches, posters, legal documents, newspaper clippings, commemorative publications, and various ephemera), 42 individual photograph collections, 210 photographs of action sites during Easter Week taken subsequently by the Air Corps, 12 voice recordings, and a collection of press cuttings were assembled by the Bureau. Kildare Local Studies, Genealogy and Archives has a bound volume of most of the Co. Kildare witness statements, courtesy of the Military Archives. The Bureau is contained within and assessed through the Military Archives and all records are accessible from [www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/](http://www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie/)

### **Military Pensions**

Applications for military service pensions by those who saw active service before the establishment of the Free State are contained within the collections of the Military Archives. The pension was based on their rank on 11 July 1921 or on the 1 July 1922 whichever was greater.

### **Irish Army Medal Applications 1916-1921**

Applicants for medals for services during the Irish War of Independence are available to relatives only. Requests for searches can be made in writing to: Veterans' Allowances Section, Department of Defence, Renmore, Co. Galway.

### **The National Army 1922 Census**

The Military Archives has digitised and made available online the National Army census compiled on 12th/13th November 1922. The census returns contain details on recruits and are useful in pinpointing where units were based. The attestation form records the regimental number, rank, corps, surname, first name, age, home address, number on pay book, date and place of attestation, married or single status, religion, and name and address of next of kin. It is searchable by first name, surname, age and location. The census includes about 30,000 troops.

In Co. Kildare the census was taken at all Army barracks and other establishments, including the Curragh, the Military Hospital, Stewart Barracks, Keane Barracks, Ballyfair House and the Mechanical Transport Division, as well as at Athy, Naas, Newbridge and Monasterevin. Kildare men would also have served in other locations around the country. It can be accessed at

[www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections/irish-army-census-collection-12-november-1922-13-november-1922/map](http://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections/irish-army-census-collection-12-november-1922-13-november-1922/map)

### **War of Independence Internees**

The NAI has card indexes of 1916 internees and of hunger strikers during the War of Independence period. The Witness Statements are also available

## Books and Regimental Histories

**D'Alton, John. King James's Irish Army List 1689**, in two volumes is available at Kildare Local Studies, Genealogy and Archives, and to download from [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie) Using his extensive manuscript collection D'Alton published the "King James's Irish Army List 1689," which contains information on the lineage, honours and achievements of families both in Ireland and abroad. As many of the original sources used in compiling the list are no longer extant it is a valuable source for Irish family research. It contains details of old Irish families, Scots-Irish families, and other settler families, tracing the family history of those who remained settled in Ireland as well as including information on the families and history of the original Wild Geese. The clan histories listed often go back several generations and provide the origins and dates of arrival of settler families from England and Scotland.

**Durney, James. *The Civil War in Kildare*. Mercier Press, Cork. 2011.**

Contains several lists of Co. Kildare republican internees in Newbridge Camp; a list of Co. Kildare republican women prisoners; a list of claims for compensation in Co. Kildare for 1922-3.

**Durney, James. *The War of Independence in Kildare*. Mercier Press, Cork. 2013.**

Contains a list of Kildare men in Frongoch Internment Camp, Wales, in 1916; lists of officers and men of local republican units.

**Durney, James. *Interned. The Curragh internment camps in the War of Independence*. Mercier Press, Cork. 2019.**

Contains a list of Kildare men in Hare Park and Rath Internment Camps in 1920-1; profiles of officers and men of local republican units.

**Hogarty, Patrick. *'The old toughs.' A brief history of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, 2nd Battalion, 1911-1918*. Dublin, 2001.**

Contains a list of officers and men of the 2nd Battalion who died during World War I, with name, address, rank, regimental number, date and whereabouts of death. Sixty-seven entries relate to Co. Kildare.

**Hogarty, Patrick. *A brief history of the Blue Caps, the 1st Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. 1914-1922*. Dublin, 2005.**

Contains a list of officers and men of the 1st Battalion who died during World War I, with name, address, rank, regimental number, date and whereabouts of death. Fifty-five entries relate to Co. Kildare.

**Raeseide, Archie. *The Congo 1960. The first Irish United Nations peacekeepers*. Arderin, Portlaoise. 2004.**

Contains a list of 689 officers and men, and their army service number, of the 32nd Battalion and 711 men of the 33rd Battalion who served in the Congo in 1960-1. Many were from Co. Kildare.

**Curragh Camp Occupants** – A list of Irish Army soldiers (many with spouses), as well as female clerical and teaching staff, living in quarters at the Curragh Camp and Kildare Artillery barracks from 1924-1984. Compiled by Tommy Sweeney. The

quarters are divided as follows and can be found at [www.curragh.info/articles/articles.htm](http://www.curragh.info/articles/articles.htm)

Curragh Camp:

- Pearse Married Quarters
- McDonagh Married Quarters
- McDermott Married Quarters
- Ceannt Married Quarters
- Clarke Married Quarters
- Connolly Married Quarters
- Plunkett Married Quarters

Kildare Barracks:

- Magee Married Quarters