

# THE NEARLY FORGOTTEN

*Conor Nyhan*<sup>1</sup>



*This paper examines the World War I military history of four men from the Clonakilty area. Three of the men never returned home, dying in active service, and were lost with no known resting place, while the fourth returned to what was initially a somewhat hostile reception in his hometown. In telling their individual stories, we remember all those from the Clonakilty area who served in the war, many never to return.*

## **Family Connections**

The four men discussed in this article were related: James and Daniel Nyhan were brothers, while William Kingston and Charles Nyhan were second cousins to both the brothers and to one another. These men each shared, on their paternal side, a pair of great-grandparents: Daniel Nyhan and Margaret Collins from Ballinspittle (Fig. 1). Between 1801 and 1821 Daniel and Margaret had seven children, including Daniel (grandfather of James and Daniel Nyhan), Mary Jane (grandmother of William Kingston) and Cornelius (grandfather of Charles Nyhan).

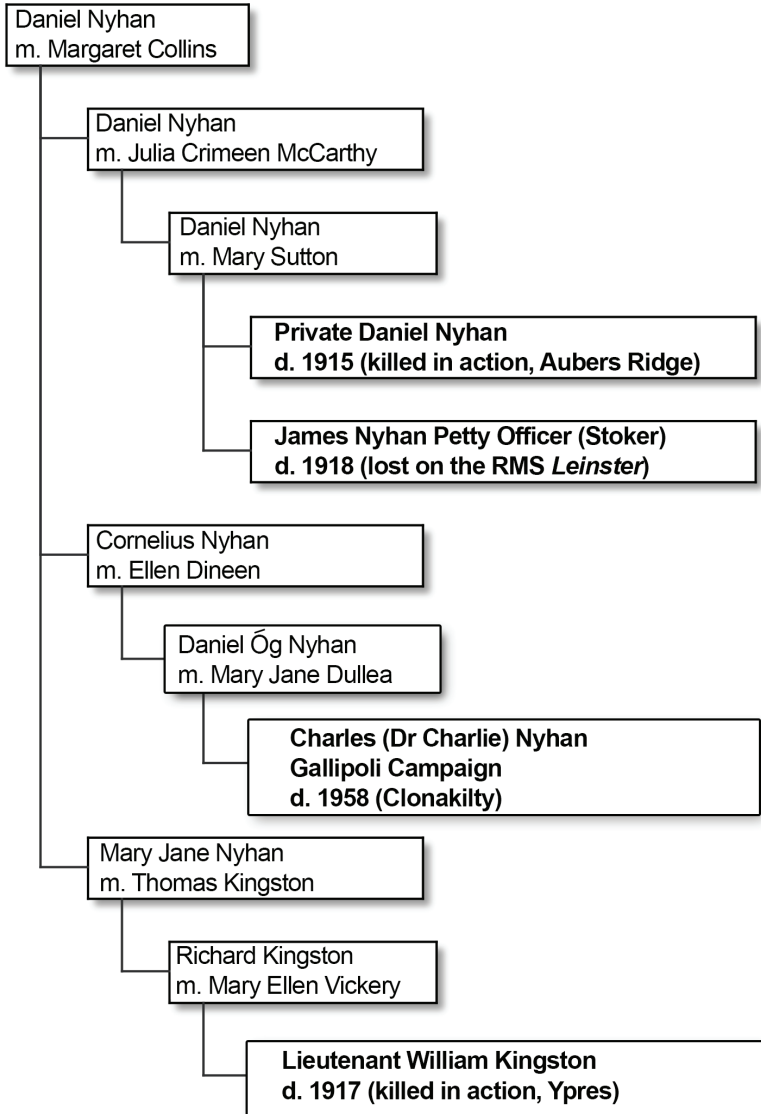


Fig. 1: Simplified pedigree chart for James and Daniel Nyhan, William Kingston and Charles Nyhan.

## **James and Daniel Nyhan: Brief Family Background**

James Nyhan (c. 1885–1918) was a petty officer in the Royal Navy and his brother, Daniel (c. 1895–1915), was a private in the British Army. Their parents were Daniel Nyhan and Mary Sutton who were married in the Roman Catholic church, in Clonakilty, on 7 February 1880.<sup>2</sup> Six boys and five girls were born to the couple in the next seventeen years, James being the fourth child and Daniel being the youngest son.<sup>3</sup> At the time of the 1901 census, the family were living in the townland of Mountain Common, in Ardfield parish, but by the time of the 1911 census they had moved to the nearby townland of Muckruss. Their mother, Mary, tended to the house and family, while their father, Daniel, worked as an engine driver at the barytes mine in Muckruss.<sup>4</sup> In 1901, their eldest brother, John, was also employed as a miner and two other older brothers, Patrick and Thomas, were of working age and employed at a local mill.<sup>5</sup> John, like James, later joined the Royal Navy.<sup>6</sup>

Their paternal grandparents were Daniel Nyhan and Julia Crimeen McCarthy (see Fig. 1). Their grandfather, Daniel, moved from Dromgarraff, near Ballinascarty, to Ardfield around 1833 where he farmed in the townlands of Ballyluck and Dunnycove.<sup>7</sup> In 1835, he married Julia, with whom he had nine children.<sup>8</sup> She died in c. 1858 and Daniel was remarried in 1860 to Kitty Hegarty, of the same parish, with whom he had six children.<sup>9</sup> James and Daniel's maternal grandparents were John Sutton (a stone mason) and Ellen Barrett, from Chapel Street, and later of Patrick Street, Clonakilty.<sup>10</sup>

## **Private Daniel Nyhan and the Munsters**

The Royal Munster Fusiliers, commonly called 'Munsters', were formed during the military reforms of 1881 when the 101<sup>st</sup> Regiment of Foot, 104<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot and local militia units in Munster were joined together. The regimental depot was located at Ballymullen Barracks, Tralee.<sup>11</sup> Probably in the beginning of 1915, Daniel Nyhan enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Munsters (service no. 6132).

## **The Battle of Aubers Ridge**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Munsters landed in France on 13 August 1914 and remained on the Western Front until the end of the war.<sup>12</sup> On the evening of

8 May 1915, the troops of Munsters lined up at a wayside shrine, at Rue du Bois, near Aubers Ridge. Their chaplain, Fr Francis Gleeson, on horseback addressed the crowd and gave a general absolution to all present.<sup>13</sup> A painting, by Italian artist Fortunino Matania, depicts this scene (Fig. 2).<sup>14</sup> It is among the most famous images of the World War I period; in it Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Rickard – who died the following day – is also portrayed.



Fig. 2: *The Last General Absolution of the Munsters at Rue du Bois* by Fortunino Matania.  
Kind permission and copyright: British Library Board, *The Sphere*, 27 Nov. 1916.

On 9 May 1915, the goal of the campaign by the Allied forces was to break through the German line north of Arras and to secure the heights of Lorette Spur to the north-west and other high ground to the east.<sup>15</sup> The principal attack was made by the Tenth (French) Army, with two supporting incursions on the flanks. The British bombardment began at 5:00am by pounding the German barbed wire with shrapnel, while German howitzers shelled the British trenches.<sup>16</sup> Just over thirty minutes later, the British infantry, including the Munsters, left the trenches. They had to cross a narrow, 100m expanse;

however, almost immediately they came under heavy gunfire. Many of those who set out into no man's land were immediately cut down; nevertheless, several groups of soldiers reached the German frontline only to be shot or taken prisoner. At 6:00am, the British were ordered to withdraw but hundreds found themselves stuck in no man's land unable to advance or retreat.<sup>17</sup>

This was a catastrophic day for the Royal Munster Fusiliers: 389 were killed of which 19 were of officer rank.<sup>18</sup> In what can only be described as human slaughter, in total over 11,000 British soldiers died during the encounter.<sup>19</sup> Private Daniel Nyhan, not yet twenty years old, lost his life that day. His body was not recovered from the stretch of land referred to as 'no man's land'. In January 1916, the *Cork Examiner* reported: 'Killed in action on the 9<sup>th</sup> May, Private Dan Nyhan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Batt., RMF, youngest son of Daniel Nyhan, Muckcross, Clonakilty, aged 19 years. Deeply regretted by his sorrowing parents, brothers and sisters. RIP'.<sup>20</sup>

Along with over 13,400 other soldiers, Private Daniel Nyhan is commemorated at Le Touret Memorial located near Aubers Ridge. Their names are listed on panels, arranged by regiment, rank and alphabetically by surname.<sup>21</sup> The name D. Nyhan is inscribed on panel 43 (Fig. 3). No photograph of Daniel Nyhan is known to this author.

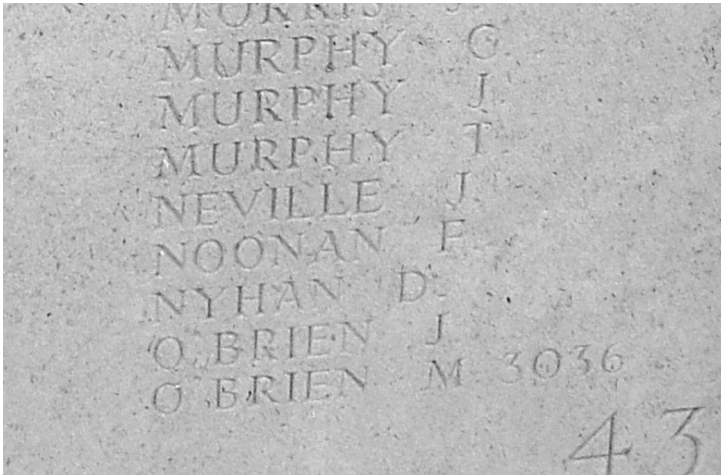


Fig. 3: Le Touret Memorial in Richebourg, panel 43. Photo kind permission and copyright: Jean Prendergast of the Royal Munster Fusiliers Association.

## James Nyhan and the Royal Navy

James Nyhan joined the Royal Navy (service no. 307621) in November 1904 and is described as 5'8" tall with dark brown hair, grey eyes and a fresh complexion.<sup>22</sup> He was a petty officer (stoker) and had survived the Battle of Jutland – against the Imperial German Navy – off the coast of Denmark in 1916.<sup>23</sup> It was the largest naval battle and only full-scale clash of battleships during World War I. The ratio of British to German casualties was 2:1 but both sides claimed victory.



Fig. 4: This photograph of James Nyhan appeared in the *Cork Examiner*, 10 Oct. 1919, on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death.

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## RMS *Leinster*

In the autumn of 1918, James Nyhan was on leave and had returned home to spend time with family and friends in the Clonakilty area.<sup>24</sup> In order to return to his naval ship, the HMS *Prince* – which was berthed in Glasgow – he boarded the RMS<sup>25</sup> *Leinster* in Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire), Co. Dublin on 10 October. By this stage, on the Western Front, the German Army was retreating under constant pressure from the Allies. The Germans had, earlier that month, requested peace terms with US President Woodrow Wilson and the war would be over within a month. However, this conclusion did not come soon enough for over 500 people on board the *Leinster*.

Shortly before 9:00am on 10 October 1918, the *Leinster* departed from Carlisle Pier, Kingstown and was bound for Holyhead, on Anglesey, Wales. She carried 771 persons, including a crew of 77, and was commanded by Captain William Birch, a Dubliner who had settled in Holyhead. There were also 22 postal sorters, from Dublin Post Office, working in the ship's postal sorting room and 180 civilian passengers, mostly from Ireland and Britain.<sup>26</sup> The vast majority on board were military personnel from Ireland, Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United States. Most, like James, were returning from, or going on, leave.

Shortly before 10:00am, about 25km from Kingstown, a torpedo approached from the port (left) side but narrowly missed the ship. Soon after, a torpedo struck the port side where the mailroom was located. It exploded, blowing a hole in the port side and this explosion travelled through the ship, also blowing a hole in the starboard (right) side.<sup>27</sup> A number of casualties were sustained. In an attempt to return to port, the *Leinster* turned 180°. The ship's speed had been reduced significantly and she began to sink slowly. While the lifeboats were being launched, a torpedo struck the starboard side. Consequently, the *Leinster* sank almost immediately, bow first.<sup>28</sup>

Many on board were killed during the sinking while those that survived clung to rafts and flotsam in the rough sea; many more died while awaiting rescue.<sup>29</sup> Eventually, numerous ships arrived on the scene and the survivors were taken to Victoria Wharf, Kingstown. Medical personnel, rescue workers and some 200 ambulances attended to the survivors.<sup>30</sup> In the days that followed, some of the bodies were recovered from the sea.<sup>31</sup> Officially 501 people died in the sinking, making it both the greatest loss of life in Irish maritime history and the highest casualty rate on an Irish-owned ship.<sup>32</sup> More recent research has revealed the names of 540 casualties.<sup>33</sup> One of those was James Nyhan, aged thirty-four. James had been fourteen years in the Navy at the time of his death.<sup>34</sup> The following week, this report appeared in the *Cork Examiner*:

A Clonakilty Victim: It is feared that a young sailor, James Nyhan, of Muckcross, near Clonakilty, is another victim of German brutality. He was at home on leave with his parents and family, and left last Wednesday, and was a passenger on the ill-fated *Leinster* when the

awful catastrophe occurred. No trace or tidings have been received of him. His sisters went and searched the hospitals and morgue in Dublin, and made most minute inquiries, and no account of him, so it is presumed he is amongst the lost. He had a brother killed in France shortly after the commencement of the war. The greatest sympathy is expressed for his sorrowing and grief-stricken parents, family, and numerous friends.<sup>35</sup>

While James' body was never found, an anchor was recovered from the wreckage of the *Leinster* and is displayed at Dún Laoghaire as a permanent memorial to all those who lost their lives when it sank.<sup>36</sup> Plymouth Naval Memorial was erected to commemorate over 23,000 members of the Royal Navy who died during World War I and II, and who have no known grave (Fig. 5).<sup>37</sup> The name James Nyhan appears on panel 27.<sup>38</sup>



Fig. 5: Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon.



## UB-123

The submarine that sank the *Leinster* was *UB-123*, captained by Oberleutnant Robert Ramm. About eight days after the *Leinster* tragedy, *UB-123* was positioned north-east of the Orkney Islands and probably hit a mine. Consequently, all thirty-six crewmen were killed and their bodies were never recovered (see Fig. 6).<sup>39</sup> Plans are underway to commemorate the centenary of the sinking of both the *Leinster* and *UB-123* in October 2018.<sup>40</sup>



Fig. 6: Photograph of what is believed to be the crew of *UB-123* who perished in the North Sea just over a week after sinking the *Leinster* (Photo: <http://www.ww1medals.net>).

## William Kingston: Brief Family Background

William Kingston (c. 1892–1917), a second lieutenant in the British Army, was the third son of Richard Kingston and Mary Ellen Vickery, a well-known and respected Methodist family. Married in 1884, there were six children born to the couple: five boys and one girl.<sup>41</sup> Mary Ellen came from one of the well-known Vickery families of Bantry (Vickery's Hotel). Richard ran the family farm in the townland of Madame, near Ballinascarty;<sup>42</sup> he was the ninth son

in a large family of eleven children born to Thomas Kingston JP<sup>43</sup> (Madame House) and Mary Jane Nyhan (Dromgarraff, see Fig. 1).



Fig. 7: This photograph of William Kingston appeared in *Irish Life*, 'Our Heroes', 5 Oct. 1917. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Helen, grandniece of William Kingston.

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## Lieutenant William Kingston and the Munsters

William Kingston joined the Inns of Court Officers Training Corps in November 1915 and subsequently received his commission into the Royal Munster Fusiliers.<sup>44</sup> He enlisted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the Munsters and was attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Irish Rifles.<sup>45</sup> In December 1915, the Ballinascarty notes in the *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser* made reference to his departure: '2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant W. Kingston left by 10.15 train on Sunday morning for London. He got a hearty send-off'.<sup>46</sup> In the spring of 1917, William wrote a letter to his brother Thomas George, in which he refers to the type of weapon which would, just five months later, cost him his life:

I don't think the Germans are short of shells, judging by what they sent over to us at any rate. It was bang, bang etc. ... Not to mind the machine guns and rifle fire ... I am attached to the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Irish Rifles along with three other officers from Aghada. Altogether there are nine Munster

officers in the Battalion so it is more an R.M.R. now than R.I.R. I suffer a little concussion from the shell that knocked me over. I'm afraid that it affects my hearing but it will soon be well again, I hope.<sup>47</sup>

## Third Battle of Ypres

In the summer of 1917, William Kingston fought in the Third Battle of Ypres. Ypres, in the Flanders region of Belgium, was the principal town within striking distance of the British lines and the site of three major battles: First Ypres (October–November 1914), Second Ypres (April–May 1915) and Third Ypres (31 July–6 November 1917). The first stage of the Third Battle of Ypres is specifically called the Battle of Passchendaele. In the weeks preceding Passchendaele, the British shelled and wiped out entire villages in the area but the powerful German defence endured. On 31 July, the Allies launched a renewed assault on German lines near Ypres. The first day of the attack coincided with the heaviest rainfall in many years and Passchendaele became infamous not only for the brutal fighting and scale of casualties but also for the sea of mud in which many soldiers drowned before firing a single shot.<sup>48</sup> In terms of weather, the summer of 1917 was one of the worst in decades; heavy and persistent rain made British successes virtually impossible. The British war-poet Siegfried Sassoon summed up the suffering with this simple but haunting epitaph: 'I died in hell – (They called it Passchendaele)'.<sup>49</sup>

On the opening day of Passchendaele, William's comrade, Robert Kelly Pollin, from Belfast, died in action.<sup>50</sup> Robert had composed his will just four days earlier, leaving all his possessions to his father. William and John Kemmy Boyle, a Catholic from Dublin, served as the witnesses to his last will and testament (Fig. 8).<sup>51</sup>

William survived the Battle of Passchendaele and for his gallantry and bravery under fire he was awarded the Military Cross.<sup>52</sup> He was 'mentioned in despatches',<sup>53</sup> along with John Kemmy Boyle; this was an honour afforded to servicemen who had shown bravery in the field or had accomplished some notable achievement. The following appeared in the *London Gazette*.

2nd Lt. William Kingston, R. Muns. Fus., Spec. Res. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty under trying circumstances. During a

1102

27-7-17

I wish all my property, real and personal, to be given to my Father  
J. M. Pollin, Esq., Saunton Avenue  
Belfast.

Robt. K. Pollin 2/45  
4th (att 1st) R. I. Rifles.

W. Kingston 2 Lt } Witnesses  
3rd R. Mun. Inv. }  
J. C. Co. 63rd Inf. }  
7th R. I. Rifles. }

Fig. 8: Will of Robert Kelly Pollin, note William Kingston is co-signature/witness. Photo kind permission and copyright: Deputy Keeper of Records, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

determined hostile counter-attack, when the troops on his right were forced to withdraw under heavy fire, he drove the enemy out of our line, and having reorganised his platoon, held the line against another counter-attack, displaying fine personal gallantry and leadership.<sup>54</sup>

The second stage of the Third Battle of Ypres is specifically called the Battle of Langemarck and began in August 1917. William was then attached to the 7<sup>th</sup>

Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles, which operated under the command of the 48<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 16<sup>th</sup> (Irish) Division.<sup>55</sup> On 5 August, the battalion moved into a reserve position east of Ypres; on 8 August they advanced to Frezenberg just north-east of Ypres; on 15 August they moved forward again, ready to return to the frontline and, in the early hours of 16 August, they arrived at their assembly position.<sup>56</sup>

On 16 August, the 19<sup>th</sup> Bavarian Infantry Regiment shelled the Allied forces, resulting in significant numbers of casualties. There were two machine gun posts directly in the path of William's battalion. As the battalion advanced, it encountered numerous German dugouts. At a location referenced D.26.c.3.7, an attempt was made to undertake a flanking manoeuvre to circumvent other dugouts; it was precisely at this site that William Kingston engaged with a machine gunner against whom he used his revolver.<sup>57</sup> These were the last moments of his young life, the injuries he sustained proving fatal. He was just twenty-five years old; his body was never recovered. The remainder of his platoon was knocked out by a shell. His comrade, John Kemmy Boyle (above) was also wounded on 16 August. He was later promoted to the rank of captain, but was wounded again in 1918; the injured 21-year-old was captured by the Germans and died in a POW camp, just days before the armistice.<sup>58</sup>

In September 1917, the *Irish Times* wrote:

Mr. T. G. Kingston ... has received intimation from the War Office that his brother, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant W. Kingston, MC, Royal Munster Fusiliers, is wounded and missing since August 16<sup>th</sup>. His commanding officer writes of him: 'He was a splendid fellow, who did most excellent work with his battalion, and we all miss him very much'.<sup>59</sup>

The *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser* added:

In the town [Clonakilty] and district the intelligence was heard with feelings of the most sincere regret and sorrow. He was one of the most straightforward young men it was possible to meet, honourable and manly in all his ways. He made a host of friends in Clonakilty, where he was a great favourite, and to these and his numerous relatives in the district, the unwelcome tidings of his death came as a great shock.

Like many another poor Irishman, he has made the supreme sacrifice, happy in the knowledge that he was laying down his life in a just and righteous cause. A great cause is worthy of great sacrifice.<sup>60</sup>

The loss of life suffered in the Third Battle of Ypres was horrendous with half a million men, from both sides, dying for a territorial gain of just 8km.<sup>61</sup> On 25 July 1923, William's mother, Mary Ellen, then living with her sons, Thomas George and Richard, in Wicklow, applied for William's medals.<sup>62</sup> On panel 143-4, Lieutenant William Kingston is commemorated at Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium.<sup>63</sup> It is the site of the largest Commonwealth war cemetery featuring the names of almost 12,000 soldiers who fought in the Ypres region in World War I (Fig. 9).



Fig. 9: Tyne Cot Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and Memorial to the Missing, Belgium.

## **Charles Nyhan: Brief Family Background**

Charles Nyhan (1884–1958) – known locally as Dr Charlie – was the eleventh child born to Daniel Óg Nyhan and Mary Jane Dullea, from Dromgarraiff, near Ballinascarty, who bore fourteen children in total. They were Roman Catholics and farmers.<sup>64</sup> Mary Jane was from the townland of Knockatlowig, near the village of Rossmore. Charles' paternal grandparents were Cornelius Nyhan and Ellen Dineen (see Fig. 1).

## **Dr Charlie and the Royal Army Medical Corp**

Charles Nyhan registered as a medical student in Queens College Cork (now University College Cork) in November 1902 at eighteen years of age and completed his final examination on 25 June 1907.<sup>65</sup> The prescribed training duration, both academic and practical, was then fifty-seven months and involved examinations in Cork, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Shortly after achieving this qualification, he travelled to Abergavenny in Wales where he practiced as a medical doctor and surgeon with an established practitioner. It appears that he initially enlisted in the British Army as an infantry officer in c. 1913.

Charles enlisted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the Monmouthshire Regiment and was made second lieutenant in June 1914.<sup>66</sup> At the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914, Charles was ordered, by wire, to join his unit at its depot in Abergavenny.<sup>67</sup> Shortly afterwards, he applied for a transfer to the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) and was successful. In spring of 1915, he was promoted to the rank of captain while serving in the Welsh Casualty Clearing Station.<sup>68</sup> Charles kept a wartime diary (1914–17); much of the following discussion is based on extracts from that diary.<sup>69</sup>

## **Gallipoli**

The Gallipoli Campaign, also known as the Dardanelles Campaign, took place on the Gallipoli peninsula in the Ottoman Empire (modern-day Turkey) between 25 April 1915 and 9 January 1916. The objective was to secure the sea route to Russia and capture the capital of the empire, Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul). Charles travelled on board the SS *Huntsgreen* to Suvla

Bay, on the Aegean coast of Gallipoli.<sup>70</sup> He disembarked in early August and in his diary, on 21 August 1915, on the beach at Suvla Bay, he described the early exchanges of the campaign:

A fine morning with a gentle breeze. A stray shell comes our way. At 2pm the great battle for the hill on our front commences. Bang goes a gun from a warship in the bay. The signal is given and a hundred bangs rent the air at once. From land and sea the flaming mouths of over one hundred guns could be seen belching forth shells on the hillside immediately in front. The noise was simply deafening. The sight of the hill was somewhat awful to behold as shells by the hundred burst all over it ... As an officer aptly described it, it looked like a vision from hell.<sup>71</sup>

Charles treated the wounded in the hospital clearing stations located behind the frontline. In the chain of casualty evacuation, the casualty was usually first removed to a Regimental Aid Post (RAP) which was located close to, or just behind, the frontline; there basic first aid was administered. If the soldier was fit to return to the frontline he would do so, otherwise he was carried by stretcher to an Advanced Dressing Station (ADS) located around 350–550m further back. The Main Dressing Stations (MDS) were typically 1.5km further back and casualties were carried to these stations on horse-drawn or motorised transport (field ambulances).<sup>72</sup> An MDS had the capacity to hold casualties for up to a week and was equipped with the facilities necessary to undertake life-saving operations. The seriously wounded were finally passed back to Casualty Clearing Stations (CCS). In the case of Gallipoli these were marquee tents situated on, or near, the beach under the flag of the Red Cross; often these tented structures were within range of enemy shellfire.<sup>73</sup> In Gallipoli, the seriously wounded were usually then conveyed to hospital ships in the bay itself. In Suvla Bay, Charles gained vast experience treating the injured and the surgical expertise he amassed during this time proved a great advantage in his career on returning home.

Charles noted that dysentery was the principal cause of depletion to the army.<sup>74</sup> During Gallipoli, Charles suffered two bouts of severe dysentery and was relieved from his post to recover. He was evacuated first to Malta and then



## The Nearly Forgotten

to Osborne House, on the Isle of Wight. Following his recuperation, he took command of 3/3<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Field Ambulance in Cardiff, under his old friend Major Cory (i.e. Sir Thomas of Suvla Bay).<sup>75</sup> A photo of 'Captain Nyhan of the RAMC' appeared in the *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser*, in November 1915; the newspaper reported that he seemed 'quite recovered from his illness, contracted at the front' and that 'Dr. Charlie is an immense favourite in his native district ... everybody is glad to see him in his old good form and buoyant spirits again'.<sup>76</sup>

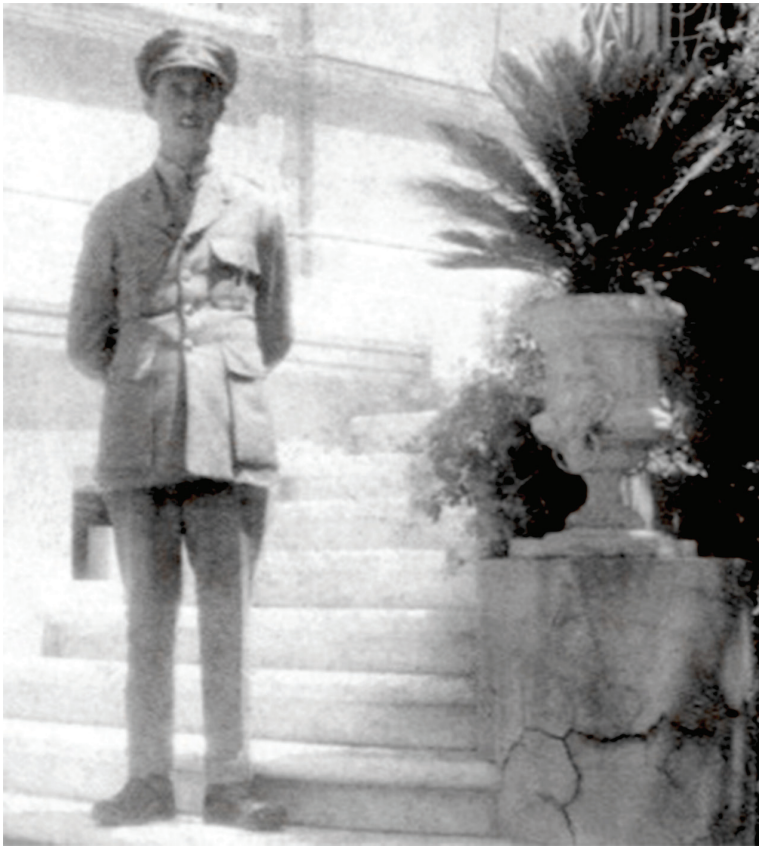


Fig. 10: Captain Charles Nyhan, *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser*, 27 Nov. 1915.

In terms of medical demands, World War I was a war like never before. At the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the principal infantry weapon was the muzzle-loading musket; it could fire up to four shots a minute. In contrast, during WWI, machine gunners were capable of firing 600 rounds a minute, which wreaked havoc in the body: twisting tissue and splintering bone.<sup>77</sup> However, there were also significant medical advances at this time. For example, blood transfusions were administered for the first time and wounds were treated with antiseptic solutions of sodium hypochlorite, thereby dramatically increasing the chances of survival. On 19 August 1915, Charles wrote: ‘One man was shot through the top of his right lung and bronchial tubes. He lives still, though life must be agony to him’.<sup>78</sup> Fighting on farmland fertilised by manure meant that wounds quickly became infected; consequently, gangrene was rampant.<sup>79</sup> Leg and arm injuries were the most common injuries on the battlefield and amputation was often necessary. On 19 August 1915, Charles noted: ‘Today we do an amputation of the Rt [*sic*] thigh for a man who had his leg badly shattered by the fire of his own rifle’.<sup>80</sup> At the beginning of the war about eighty per cent of soldiers with broken legs died of their injuries. However, the Thomas splint, introduced in c. 1916, vastly improved the recovery rate resulting in over eighty per cent of survivals.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, the medical services found it difficult to cope with the sheer volume of casualties in Gallipoli and disease was rife, aided not least by the ever-present flies. Charles noted on 27 August 1915:

The fly pest is still as bad as ever. It is interesting to watch a pot of jam being put on the table. Immediately it is opened there is a struggle between the flies and ourselves as to who gets the bigger share.<sup>82</sup>

The Gallipoli Campaign ultimately failed, ending in stalemate, with over 100,000 lives lost on both sides with over twice that suffering life-changing injuries. In May 1916, Charles sailed from Devonport to Alexandria to join the Sinai and Palestine Campaign. From Cairo, he was ordered to Bir el Abd via Wardan Camp and Moascar Camp, Ismailia. He took part in the Battles of Romani (3–5 August 1916), Maghaba (23 December 1916) and Rafa (9 January 1917), as well as the First and Second Battles of Gaza (March–April 1917). In May 1917, he became ill again with amoebic dysentery and returned to Cairo, where his diary ends.<sup>83</sup>

## After the War

Charles returned to Clonakilty after the war and established a general practice (GP). However, Ireland had changed in the intervening period and in some parts he was greeted with a very hostile reception. Like many returning servicemen he was a victim of circumstances and timing. For his own safety, he travelled to Wales and lived for some time with his sister until a more favourable atmosphere permitted his return (probably in c. 1919).

By nature a strong character, he was known to challenge those who viewed him as being sympathetic to the 'old enemy' due to his military involvement.<sup>84</sup> Family-lore suggests that he kept a revolver close to him for some time after returning to Clonakilty and occasionally fired warning shots to put manners on those who aggravated him. He was proud of his contribution during the war and wore his British Army greatcoat on occasions walking the streets of Clonakilty.<sup>85</sup> In 1920, the *Cork Constitution* refers to him in the context of an incident involving his brother-in-law, Barth Murphy from Timoleague:

Dastardly Outrage: Anti-Sinn Féin Society: On Wednesday morning, at about half-past 12 o'clock, Mr. B. Murphy, principal teacher, Timoleague, was dragged from his bed by masked and armed men, brutalised and driven away in a car. His abductors wanted to know the whereabouts of a man called Whelton, who supposedly had been kidnapped by 'Sinn Féiners'. Murphy did not know and was let go. Murphy was a brother-in-law of Major C. Nyhan, Dispensary Medical Officer, Clonakilty, who was invalided from the army at the end of last year, after going through the war from start to finish.<sup>86</sup>

In 1924, Charles married Julia O'Sullivan from Clonakilty at the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Cork City.<sup>87</sup> Julia and her siblings Kitty and Patrick (who died in early adulthood) were the children of Pat O'Sullivan and Mary Crowley, who were well-known vintners in the town. The family were living at no. 47 Sovereign Street (now Pearse Street) in 1911.<sup>88</sup> Mary died when her children were still young; some time later, Pat was remarried to Tess Hayes from Glandore. The couple lived at the Retreat on Inchydoney Road and did not have any children. The O'Sullivan family owned a number of public

houses in the town, including the Quay House (now Fiddler's Green), Boyle Square (now the Winery) and another located on Patrick Street.

Charles and his wife Julia resided at Romani (now Kenny's Veterinary Surgery), on Strand Road (now Wolfe Tone Street) in Clonakilty.<sup>89</sup> Charles loved dogs and kept greyhounds for a time at their home. His surgery was located upstairs in what is now no. 49 Pearse Street, while Mr Hoskins ran the chemist's shop on the ground floor (now Gallwey's Pharmacy). Despite initial hostilities, Charles persevered in his hometown and operated as a successful GP for many years.



Fig. 11: Nyhan family pictured at their home in Strand Road, Clonakilty. Back row (L to R): Julia Nyhan née O'Sullivan, Charles Nyhan and Dan Nyhan. Front row (L to R): Jerry Nyhan with the dog and Francis (Frank) Nyhan with one of their two Pekingese cats. Photo courtesy of the late Tom Sheehy, Wolfe Tone Street.



Fig. 12: Nameplate of Dr Charles Nyhan, Surgeon, which hung on the wall outside what is now Gallwey's Pharmacy, 49 Pearse Street, Clonakilty. Photo courtesy of Bill Gallwey who found the nameplate in the attic of the premises.

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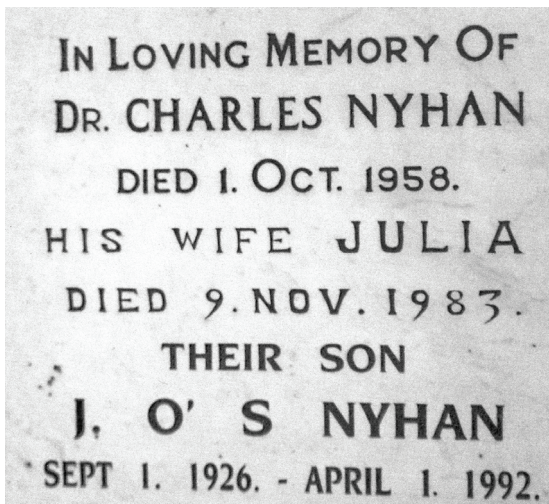


Fig. 13: Inscription on Charles Nyhan's headstone at Kilnagross cemetery. Photo: author.

Charles had a reputation for his fearsome temper and blunt, single-mindedness. He frequently drove in the middle of the road, expecting everyone else to move out of his way. He refused to pay his taxes and every year he argued his case in court before eventually paying. Charles never forgave Churchill for the fiasco at Gallipoli and he blamed de Valera for everything else!<sup>90</sup> Even today, many people in Clonakilty and the environs remember his direct style – he didn't mince his words! Humorous stories, of which there are many, are still often recounted. Dr Charles Nyhan died in 1958, aged seventy-four and is buried in Kilnagross. His wife, Julia, survived him by twenty-five years.

## **Conclusion**

World War I, the Great War of 1914–18, resulted in the deaths of thousands of Irishmen who fought with the Allied forces; this left an indelible mark on every town and village in Ireland. These were honourable men from all walks of life and when they failed to return home, their families were left mourning in silence without a funeral to organise or a grave to tend.<sup>91</sup> The Nyhan brothers and William Kingston made the ultimate sacrifice. Those, like Charles Nyhan, who survived the war, returned to a much-changed Ireland. All those who fought in the war did so in order that succeeding generations might experience the freedom we take for granted today.<sup>92</sup> Their sacrifice was immense and should be remembered. The Nyhan and Kingston families still live in the locality today.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge the following who contributed material in the preparation of this paper: Elizabeth Helen and her father Dick Kingston, the late Tom Sheehy, Alan and Alec Mann, Vivienne Nyhan, Jean Prendergast, Jim and Anne Nyhan (Cardiff), the Munster Fusiliers Association and the Western Front Association. Also thanks to the editor for her valuable guidance, time and comments during the final preparation.

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### (Endnotes)

- 1 This author is a collateral descendent of the four men discussed in this paper.
- 2 Cork and Ross Church Records, CR-RC-MA-62037, Cork & Ross. Clonakilty, p. 4772.00530.

## The Nearly Forgotten

- 3 Census of Ireland, 1901 and 1911, <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie>. By the 1911 census, one of their eleven children had died.
- 4 Census of Ireland, 1901 and 1911.
- 5 Census of Ireland, 1901.
- 6 James Nyhan (son) pers. comm.
- 7 Cork and Ross Church Records confirms birth of Daniel Nyhan (3/12/1850) at Ballyluck. Will of Daniel Nyhan, 1873, confirms farm holdings at Ballyluck and Ardfield.
- 8 Cork and Ross Church Records, CR-RC-MA-43251, Cork & Ross. Rathbarry and Ardfield, p. 4771.00342.
- 9 Sonny Nyhan, Ardfield branch, pers. comm.
- 10 Census of Ireland, 1901. Ellen was one of at least nine children.
- 11 'A brief history of the Royal Munster Fusiliers', *Royal Munster Fusiliers Association*, <http://www.rmfa92.org> [accessed 01/05/2015]; 'Royal Munster Fusiliers', *National Army Museum*, <http://www.nam.ac.uk> [accessed 01/05/2015].
- 12 In 1914, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Munsters took part in the retreat from Mons, the First Battle of Ypres and the defence of Givenchy; in the years that followed, it was active in the Battles of Aubers Ridge and Loos (1915), Somme (1916), Passchendaele (1917), Somme (1918) and also in the final advances of 1918, see 'A brief history of the Munster Fusiliers'.
- 13 'Rue du Bois 8<sup>th</sup> May 1915', *Royal Munster Fusiliers Association*, <http://www.rmfa92.org> [accessed 01/05/2015].
- 14 This painting appeared first in *The Sphere*, 27 Nov. 1916.
- 15 Le Maner, Y. *The Battle of Aubers Ridge*, <http://www.remembrancetrails-northernfrance.com> [accessed 02/05/2015].
- 16 Le Maner, *The Battle of Aubers Ridge*, Baker, C. 'The battle of Aubers', *The Long Long Trail: The British Army of 1914–1918, for family historians*, <http://www.1914-1918.net> [accessed 02/05/2015].
- 17 Le Maner, *The Battle of Aubers Ridge*, Baker, 'The battle of Aubers'.
- 18 Baker, 'The battle of Aubers'.
- 19 Le Maner, *The Battle of Aubers Ridge*, Baker, 'The battle of Aubers'.
- 20 *Cork Examiner*, 14 and 15 Jan. 1916.
- 21 Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), <http://www.cwgc.org> [accessed 01/04/2015].
- 22 James Nyhan: Naval Service Record, no. 307621, ADM/188/502, Image Reference: 103, *War Office Records*, National Archive, Kew, United Kingdom.
- 23 *Cork Examiner*, 19 Oct. 1918.
- 24 *Cork Examiner*, 17 Oct. 1918.
- 25 Royal Mail Steamer.
- 26 Lecane, P. 2005. *Torpedoed! The R.M.S. Leinster Disaster*. Cornwall; Lecane, P. 'The

- sinking', *RMS Leinster*, <http://www.rmsleinster.com> [accessed 01/04/2015]; Find A Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com> [accessed 01/04/2015].
- 27 Lecane, 'The sinking'.
- 28 Lecane, 'The sinking'.
- 29 When the *Leinster* had set sail earlier that morning, the weather was fine but the sea was rough following recent storms; that morning a number of Royal naval ships off Holyhead returned to port due to stormy conditions, see Lecane, 'The sinking'.
- 30 Lecane, 'The sinking'.
- 31 Some 144 military casualties from the sinking of the *Leinster* were buried in Grangegorman Military Cemetery in Dublin.
- 32 Lecane, P. 2004. 'The sinking of the RMS *Leinster*: the international significance'. *History Ireland*, vol. 12; Lecane, 'The sinking'; Find A Grave.
- 33 Lecane, 'The sinking'. A database is currently being compiled.
- 34 *Cork Examiner*, 19 Oct. 1918.
- 35 *Cork Examiner*, 17 Oct. 1918. An anniversary notice to commemorate his death appeared in the *Cork Examiner* the following year, see *Cork Examiner*, 10 Oct. 1919.
- 36 In 2004, divers were unable to locate the second anchor which was intended to be placed in Holyhead as a second memorial. Given that the *Leinster* was a mail-boat, some months short of the ninetieth anniversary of its sinking, on 30 May 2008, An Post issued a stamp to commemorate those who died.
- 37 CWGC, <http://www.cwgc.org>.
- 38 Find A Grave.
- 39 Find A Grave.
- 40 Information regarding the centenary commemorations will be posted on <http://www.rmsleinster.com>
- 41 Census of Ireland, 1901 and 1911.
- 42 Census of Ireland, 1901 and 1911.
- 43 Justice of the peace.
- 44 *Cork Examiner*, 3 Oct. 1916; *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1917.
- 45 Baker, C. 'Into battle: the 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish Rifles attack at Frezenberg, 16 August 1917', *The Long Long Trail*, <http://www.1914-1918.net> [accessed 01/06/2015].
- 46 *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser*, 11 Dec. 1915.
- 47 Letter dated March 1917, courtesy of Elizabeth Helen, grandniece of William Kingston; the letter is now owned by her father, Dick Kingston.
- 48 'The Battle of Passchendaele', 2009, *BBC Newslines*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsline> [accessed 01/06/2015]; 'Battle of Passchendaele: 31 July - 6 November 1917', *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history> [accessed 03/08/2015].
- 49 Sassoon, S. 1919. 'Memorial Tablet (Great War)'. In *Picture-Show*. Dutton.
- 50 'Last will and testament', 2009, *BBC Newslines*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsline> [accessed 10/06/2015]; 'Robert Kelly Pollin biography', 2009, *BBC Newslines*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsline> [accessed 10/06/2015].



www.bbc.co.uk/newsline [accessed 11/06/2015].

51 'Last will and testament', 2009.

52 *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1917; *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 26 Sept. 1917.

53 *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1917.

54 *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 9 Jan. 1918; *Edinburgh Gazette*, 10 Jan. 1918.

55 Baker, 'Into battle'.

56 Baker, 'Into battle'.

57 Baker, 'Into battle'.

58 'Last will and testament', 2009.

59 *Irish Times*, 11 Sept. 1917.

60 *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser*, 15 Sept. 1917. For memorials, see *Cork Constitution*, 26 June 1919; 16 Aug. 1919.

61 'Battle of Passchendaele'; 'The Battle of Passchendaele', 2009.

62 Medal card of Kingston, William, Corps: Royal Irish Rifles Rank: Lieutenant, WO 372/11/178035, *War Office Records*, National Archive, Kew, United Kingdom. The medal card does not record William's service number.

63 CWGC, <http://www.cwgc.org>.

64 Census of Ireland, 1901.

65 *Five Years Course, Final Examination Schedule of Course Study for the Joint Qualification in Medicine and Surgery of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of Edinburgh, and the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow* (no. 4417); *Triple Qualification (TQ) of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow* (no. 4417). Schedules and records sourced from the Library of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

66 *London Gazette*, 3 July 1914.

67 Nyhan, C. 1914–17. 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915', *Army Rumour Service*, <http://www.arrse.co.uk> [accessed 01/06/2015]; Baker, C. 'The Monmouthshire Regiment', *The Long Long Trail*, <http://www.1914-1918.net> [accessed 03/06/2015].

68 'Corps News', 1915, *Journal of the Royal Army Medical Corps*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 1-60, at pp. 49-50; *London Gazette*, 15 June 1915; *London Gazette*, 21 Apr. 1916.

69 Private papers of Lieutenant C. Nyhan, documents 17839, Imperial War Museum, London, see also Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.

70 The SS *Huntsgreen* – a German ship originally called *Derflinger* – was captured by the British in 1914 and renamed, see Edwards, M. 2008. 'SS Huntsgreen', *Roll of Honour*, <http://www.roll-of-honour.com> [accessed 02/06/2015].

71 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.

72 Baker, C. 'The Field Ambulances', *The Long Long Trail*, <http://www.1914-1918.net> [accessed 01/06/2015]; Saleyha, A. 'How did WW1 change the way we treat war injuries today?', *BBC*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk> [accessed 30/06/2015].

- 73 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 74 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 75 Information provided by Alec Mann, son of Francis Nyhan and grandchild of Charles Nyhan, see 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 76 *Cork County Eagle and Munster Advertiser*, 27 Nov. 1915.
- 77 Saleyha, 'How did WW1 change the way we treat war injuries today?'.
- 78 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 79 Saleyha, 'How did WW1 change the way we treat war injuries today?'.
- 80 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 81 Saleyha, 'How did WW1 change the way we treat war injuries today?'.
- 82 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 83 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 84 Ironically, one of those individuals who appeared to despise Charles Nyhan, after the war, would eventually need urgent medical attention due to a serious accident; knowing Charles had extensive surgical experience he specifically asked for his medical attention (Tom Sheehy and Vivienne Nyhan pers. comm.).
- 85 Information provided by Alec Mann, see Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 86 *Cork Constitution*, 17 July 1920. For a discussion of the kidnapped Whelton man, see Kingston, this volume.
- 87 Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'; *Ireland Civil Registration Indexes*, Jan –Mar 1924, vol. 5, p. 96.
- 88 Census of Ireland, 1911.
- 89 Their house 'Romani' was named after the WWI battle which took place near the ancient town of Romani in Egypt; the battle finally ended the Turkish threat on the Suez Canal. Charles Nyhan took part in the Battles of Romani in 1916.
- 90 Information provided by Alec Mann, see Nyhan, 'The Diary of an RAMC Lt – Sulva Bay 1915'.
- 91 White, G. and O'Shea, B. (eds) 2010. *A Great Sacrifice: Cork Servicemen who Died in the Great War*. Cork.
- 92 White and O'Shea, *A Great Sacrifice*.