

Remembering Private Edward Kelly

7th/8th Battalion Royal Irish
Fusiliers

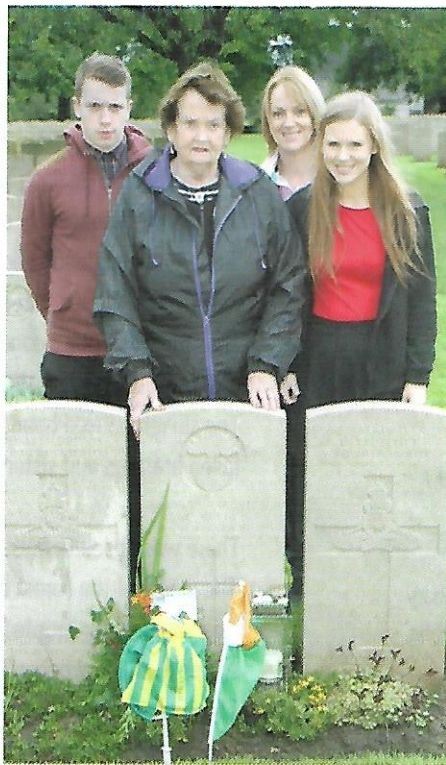
Nuala Dineen-Campbell

It was 1983, I was a teenager at a Station mass in Granny's house in Corglancy, Co. Leitrim. Granny being Margaret (Maggie) Kelly, married to Willie, or better known as 'The Long Pat's'. As was usual, when the mass was over food, tea and something stronger was served. I was sent 'up to the room' to get a whiskey for someone. I stopped to read a scroll that hung on the wall, I had never seen it before. I was filled with wonder. Who was this person, and why I had I never seen this before? It was about a man who was killed in the First World War.

Granny told me it was her brother. I was amazed, despite my interest in history and the family tree, my granduncle Edward, or Eddy as Granny referred to him, was never mentioned before. Granny wasn't sure where in France he was killed but she thought he had a grave. The scroll had been on the wall of the 'home house' since it had been received all those years ago. There was evidence of the edges having been whitewashed and they were a little frayed but it was in really good condition.

I set about trying to find out more about Eddy. I felt he had been abandoned and couldn't understand why. Over the following decades it became obvious that Eddy wasn't the only son, brother, father, husband or grandfather who was forgotten. The lack of respect and gratitude is still felt by some with these young lads being seen as disloyal, and betrayers of Ireland. Such disrespect is evident when one looks for example at the monument to those who died in WWI in Killarague church that has been subject to vandalism on a number of occasions and covered in symbolic green paint.

I would like to tell you a little about Eddy. He was born on Sunday 26th November



■ 3 generations at Uncle, Great Uncle and Great-Great Uncle Eddy's grave. 22.08.2014

1893 and was the oldest of a very large family living in a townland of Leitrim called Treenadulla. His mother was Alice and father James. Being the oldest and needing to earn money to keep the smaller children, Eddy went to work in the mines of Scotland. We can only guess why he joined the army, it could have been encouragement from his pals, from the church, to get



■ Nuala Dineen - 1st visitor to Eddy's grave 22.08.1984

out of the dark mines or simply the need to send money home. Whatever the reason, Eddy joined the Royal Irish Fusiliers in Glasgow - I am unsure when exactly as the majority of his records were destroyed in World War 2.

From my research it seems Eddy fought in the most horrific battles of the war. He survived the Somme. He went home to Treenadulla on leave. Granny (Maggie) remembered shining the buttons on his uniform and he gave her a 'whole penny', a lot of money in those days. Maggie was the youngest and at 7 years old remembered Eddy did not want to go back to The Front. Who can blame him after the horrors he had seen. He had a friend who was also on leave in the area and the army sergeant from Dromahair came to 'escort' them both to the train. These memories stayed with her until she passed away in 1995 at the age of 84.

Eddy was mortally wounded on August 16th 1917 in the Third Battle of Ypres, better known as Langemark or Passchendaele. He was evacuated by stretcher bearers and passed down the line from aid post to collection station and then by ambulance to Brandhoek. At Remy Sidings Dressing Station he was sent for surgery but passed away six days later on Wednesday, August 22nd 1917. There are no surviving medical records, however, Maggie remembered that he was shot through the lung. He was 23 years old. Eddy left a heartbroken family behind. His mother Alice was distraught when the telegram was delivered, it was said she could be heard crying fields away.

There was no internet in 1983 but through letter writing to the British Embassy and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, I discovered Eddy had fought, died and was buried in Belgium. I first found and visited Eddy's grave on the 67th anniversary of his death, 22nd August 1984. Granny and my mum, Mamie, had given me silk roses to place on the grave should I find it. It was the most amazing feeling. I felt I knew this young lad, he was only a little older than I was at that time. To know that I was the first family member to visit and put flowers on his grave was humbling and so emotional. When it was time to leave I was heartbroken, I felt I was



■ Eddy - Pvt E. Kelly 1939

leaving him behind. The funny thing is, every time I visit, I have the same feelings. When I returned home the first question from my mum was 'did you find the grave'. Everyone was so hopeful and emotional at the thought. We went to tell Granny and she cried, rather sobbed, the whole evening. She cried for weeks with sorrow and joy that although Eddy had died, he was not forgotten, he had flowers from her and she had photographs of his grave.



■ Soil from home in Treenadulla, Leitrim by niece Mamie and great grand niece Siomha. 22.08.2014

Over the years I have put flowers and soil from his home in Treenadulla, stones from granny's grave, family photographs, lanterns, Leitrim flags, granny's rosary beads and other mementos on his grave to show Eddy and those that visit the cemetery how much he is still loved and remembered by his family in Ireland.

In 2014, my husband, daughter and son took my mum for her first visit at the age of 84. She returned in 2015 for the 100th anniversary of her cousin James (Jimmy) McNiff Duffy who is buried in a Military Cemetery only 11 kms from Eddy. Jimmy was born in Lisacoghil, Co Leitrim and won the Boston marathon in 1914 before he enlisted in the Canadian army. He was killed on 23rd April 1915. He was 24 years old.



■ Eddy's 100th Anniversary 22.08.2017

I, and my family, visit Eddy and Jimmy regularly and have been honoured to lay a wreath at the Menin Gate on both their 100th anniversaries: Jimmy's in April 2015 and Eddy's in August 2017. The tradition and memories will carry on, as my own children have visited often and will continue to do. They also feel emotionally attached to Eddy and Jimmy.

Our world is the place it is, because of them. We will always keep them in our memories.

For Eddy and Jimmy with love always,
Nuala (Dineen-Campbell).
Granny - Margaret (Maggie) Kelly
My mum his niece - Mamie Dineen
My husband - Stephen Campbell
My daughter - Síomha Campbell
My son - Branán Campbell

SNIPPET

TWO LOVES OF THE BUTTERCUP



PATRICK KELLEGHER grew up in Bornacoola on the County Longford/Leitrim border, and he now lives in Manchester City in the UK.

Patrick has recently written a lovely book entitled— 'The Two Loves of the Buttercup. It is the first in the series "to peep its tiny head out excitedly, to catch its first glimpses of the world". This is a tale of a beautiful buttercup who is adored by the wind and loved by the rain... but who will she choose?

It is a love story to connect you with the simplicity of the natural world, and the wondrous web of creation to which we are all bound.

The Two Loves of the Buttercup is a modern day fable, lovingly illustrated by Irish artist Caitriona Sweeney.