

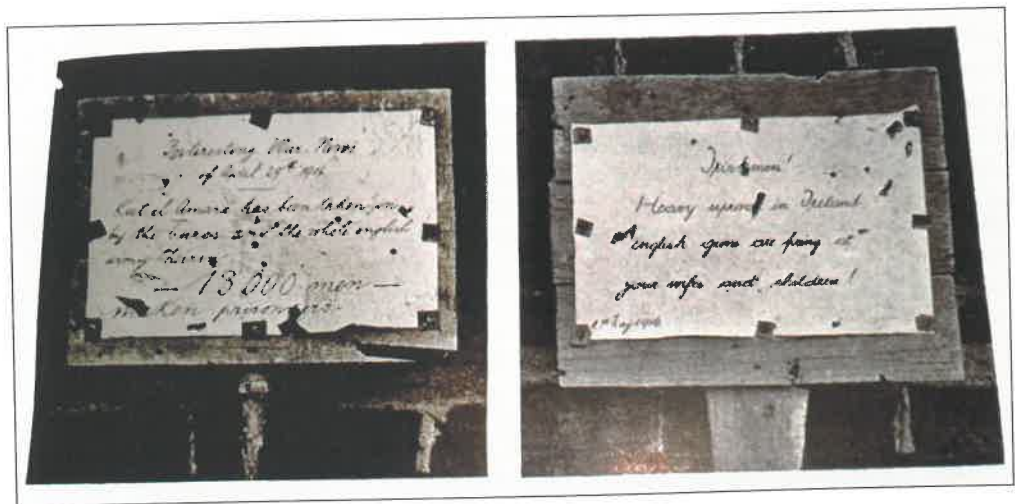
NOTES

German placards, Royal Munster Fusiliers and the 1916 Rising

What might be termed the German dimension of the Easter Rising or Rebellion is well documented but the focus is nearly always on the phrase in the 1916 Proclamation referring to 'gallant allies in Europe' and to the failed attempt to land arms and ammunition in Fenit harbour, Co. Kerry during Holy Week and the arrest of Roger Casement. There is however another interesting aspect of this story.

Shortly after the end of the rebellion the 'gallant allies in Europe,' aware that there were numerous Irishmen serving in the British army, decided to test their loyalty over the disturbances at home, believing that there was a strong possibility that they would revolt. Therefore in early May, in the Hulloch sector, near Lens in Northern France, where the 8th (Service) Battalion of the Royal Munster Fusiliers were in the front line trenches, the Germans tauntingly placed two placards on top of their trenches: one read 'Irishmen! Heavy uproar in Ireland. English guns are firing at your wives and children! May 1st 1916', the second read 'Interesting War News of April 29th 1916. Kut-el-Amara has been taken in by the Turks and the whole english army therein - 13,000 men - taken prisoners'. In response to this the men of the battalion sang the British national anthem 'God Save The King' and then decided to deliver an exceptionally strong fusillade of bullets towards them. It was decided by Major Laurence (Larry) Roche, who was from Dromin, County Limerick, to carry out a raid on the German trenches and retrieve these placards, which was achieved with great success by a raiding party under the command of Lieutenant Biggane from Cork, assisted by Lance Corporal Kemp from Waterford.

Before being presented to King George V on 25 July 1916 in London they were placed on display with other German war trophies in a shop owned by W. M. Kidd, 49, George Street (now O'Connell Street), Limerick. This of course was done with an ulterior motive in mind, by displaying them in Limerick the authorities hoped that it would



German placards captured by 8th Battalion, May 10th, 1916

encourage recruitment. The 8th Battalion had been raised under Army Order 352 of 11 September 1914 at Buttevant Barracks, County Cork and became part the 47th Infantry Brigade of the 16th (Irish) Division, under the command of Lieut.-General Parsons initially and then Major-General Sir William Bernard Hickie, which had been set aside for members of the Irish National Volunteers. It was composed of men that were for the most part recruited from Limerick City and County and was the only regular or service battalion of the regiment where County Limerick soldiers outnumbered those from the more populous County Cork, which was the most striking feature of the battalion. The 8th Battalion trained at Buttevant, Fermoy, Mitchelstown, Kilworth Camp and Templemore before moving to England to complete its training. It proceeded to France on 17 December 1915 and arrived at Le Havre on board the *Empress Queen* the next day.

Around the period of time that the placards were captured and to further highlight the strong connection that the battalion had with Limerick, the nuns of the Good Shepherd Convent in the city made a religious banner depicting the Sacred Heart, which was subscribed for by public donation of not more than one shilling per person. It was then sent to the battalion where Major Larry Roche, who was delighted that the people from his home county had sent the banner, wrote that 'the banner so kindly sent by the good people of Limerick was greatly admired by all that Limerick muscle and brains would yet make the Hun regret their attacks which were considered to be barbarous and furious on civilisation'. This religious banner was apparently found in later years at the home of Major Roche at Dromin and is now exhibited in the museum in Kilmallock town. The battalion also participated in the battles of Guillemont and Ginchy during the month of September the same year and was absorbed by the 1st Battalion Royal Munster Fusiliers on 23 November 1916. Following the establishment of the Irish Free State the Royal Munster Fusiliers ceased to exist, being disbanded on 31 July 1922. The placards are now held in the Imperial War Museum, London.

Tadhg Moloney

A milestone on the Dock Road, Limerick

A milestone, approximately three feet in height, survives on the Dock Road, Limerick on the footpath outside the former Irish Wire Factory near the junction with Summerville Avenue. It indicates that Tarbert is 34 miles distant, and Limerick is one mile distant: however, the distances are indicated in numbers only. Milestones were generally measured to and from significant buildings, usually connected with central or local government and interestingly the former Custom House, now the Hunt Museum, on Rutland Street is exactly one mile from the stone. In the *Irish Historic Town Atlas, No. 21, Limerick*, map 27 shows, in various colours, the growth of the city in different periods of its history. The milestone is marked on this map just beside the roadway, the colour of which indicates that it was built in the period 1840-1900.

There are no buildings between the milestone and the river; it was placed on what was up to 1900 a green-field site. The stone has suffered a lot of wear and tear, but still survives, which hopefully, it will continue to do for many years.



Charlotte Murphy