# British Journal for Military History

Volume 9, Issue 2, July 2023


Irish Regiments and Soldiers in the Crimean War - their Contribution and Legacy


**David Murphy**



**ISSN:** 2057-0422

**Date of Publication:** 31 July 2023

**Citation:** David Murphy, 'Irish Regiments and Soldiers in the Crimean War - their Contribution and Legacy', *British Journal for Military History*, 9.2 (2023), pp. 67-81.

www.bjmh.org.uk





The BJMH is produced with the support of Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

# Irish Regiments and Soldiers in the Crimean War – their contribution and legacy

DAVID MURPHY*
*Maynooth University, Ireland*
Email: David.Murphy@mu.ie

ABSTRACT
*During the Crimean War (1853-6), five Irish regiments served with the British expeditionary force, while thousands of Irish soldiers served across the British Army in non-Irish regiments. These Irish troops made a significant contribution, and the war was followed with considerable interest in Ireland, encouraging civilians to volunteer to serve as doctors, nurses, and engineers. This article will outline the context of this Irish involvement in the Crimean War and the level of public interest, while also referring to the survival of an awareness of that war in Irish folk memory until well into the twentieth century.*

## Introduction

In the 1930s, a Mr O'Doherty, aged 50, of Ballyhursty, Co. Tipperary, gave testimony to the Irish Folklore Commission. This was recorded by Tessie O'Doherty, a local schoolteacher and probably a relation. Under the title of Local Heroes, Mr O'Doherty gave a brief account of the career of General William Dunham Massy (d.1906) of Grantstown, Co. Tipperary, outlining Massy's service in the Crimea, how he came to be known as Redan Massy and describing him as 'one of the greatest soldiers of the last century'. Mr O'Doherty was referring to events that had taken place around eighty years previously and, indeed, before he had even been born. But, by some means, the key facts pertaining to Redan Massy had been communicated to him during his lifetime. This is one of several references to the Crimean War in the files of the Irish Folklore Commission, illustrating that the war still had some measure of cultural legacy in post-Independence Ireland.[1]

*Dr David Murphy is a Lecturer in the Department of History at Maynooth University, Ireland.

DOI: 10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v9i2.1711

[1] 'The Schools' Collection, Volume 0579, Page 142', Image and data © National Folklore Collection, UCD by Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, UCD is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Accessed 18 April 2023.

On approaching this research subject in the context of a PhD thesis in the mid-1990s, the initial survey indicated that there was a viable topic to be explored here and the early phase of the project focused on the contribution of the Irish regiments in the Crimea. Newspapers of the period indicated that there was a high level of Irish involvement in the war and also a level of support in Ireland. But, apart from occasional articles in *The Irish Sword*, there was simply no literature on the subject. This was a lacuna that the author's PhD research and subsequent book endeavoured to fill and since then there has been further scholarly discussion of the Ireland and the Crimean War.[2] In the context of the current war in Ukraine and frequent mentions of the Crimea, there has also been some journalistic comment on Ireland's historic connections.[3]

At the time of Britain's declaration of war on Russia in 1854, there were eight regiments in the British army that were designated as being Irish. In the army list of the period, they were officially designated as:

4th (Royal Irish) Regiment of Dragoon Guards
6th (Inniskilling) Regiment of Dragoon Guards
8th (King's Royal Irish) Regiment of Light Dragoons (Hussars)
18th (Royal Irish) Regiment of Foot
27th (Inniskilling) Regiment of Foot
86th (Royal County Down) Regiment of Foot
87th (Royal Irish Fusiliers) Regiment of Foot
88th (Connaught Rangers) Regiment of Foot[4]

Of these, the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons, the 8th Royal Irish Hussars, the 18th Royal Irish and the 88th Connaught Rangers served in the Crimea. These Irish regiments formed a part of the initial expeditionary force of

[2]For a more comprehensive account of this subject, see David Murphy, *Ireland and the Crimean War,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002, republished 2014). See also work by Paul Huddie in particular his monograph Huddie, Paul. *The Crimean War and Irish Society*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).

[3]See Ray Burke, 'Spoils of war: Crimean cannons in Irish towns' in *The Irish Times*, 28 November 2022. Also, David Murphy, 'Ireland and the Crimean War: 30,000 soldiers, 22 trophy guns and a banquet', RTE Brainstorm, 26 May 2023. (See: The Irish connections to the Crimean War (rte.ie)). Accessed 20 June 2023.

[4]It is also worth considering other regiments of the time that were Irish but which did not have an Irish designation in their title. For example, the 83rd Regiment of Foot was raised in Dublin in 1793 and, throughout its history had a connection to the city and county of Dublin. In 1881 it became the 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles under the terms of the Childers Reforms.

around 27,000 soldiers. By the end of the war in 1856, further drafts of reinforcements meant that just over 111,300 British troops served in the Crimea.

It should be pointed out that not all of the Irish regiments were predominantly Irish in composition; that depended on where they had been stationed before the war. At the same time, some regiments, which were not designated as Irish, had a significant number of Irish soldiers. Surviving muster records indicate there was a cohort of Irish across all the regiments that served in the Crimea but these muster rolls are numerous, are not digitised, and have only been sampled by scholars thus far.[5] In some regiments, such as the 11th Hussars, which had been stationed in Ireland before the war, the Irish cohort was just 5.6%.[6] In the 8th Royal Irish Hussars, the Irish contingent was 22.75%.[7] In keeping with new research on the Irish regiments in the earlier Peninsular War, the cavalry regiments seem to have had smaller contingents of Irish. The Scots Greys for example, sent 24 officers and 580 troopers to the Crimea. Of these just three officers and 40 troopers were Irish.[8] It was in the infantry regiments, however, that the Irish were more numerous. The 50th (Queen's Own) Regiment of Foot, for example, was stationed in Ireland before the war and had an Irish contingent of around 30%.

Returns of recruits from the 1840s are also indicative. In 1846, of a total number of 23,878 new recruits for the British army, 5,532 were recorded as having been born in Ireland, which is just over 23% of all recruits. In 1847, the Irish numbered 8,188 of a total of 18,632 new recruits to the British army, which is almost 44%. It is no coincidence that these high numbers of Irish recruits coincided with the worst years of the Irish Famine. In the 1850s, it was not uncommon to find long-serving Irish soldiers listed who had joined during these years. The late Professor David Fitzpatrick suggested a total of around 50,000 Irish soldiers in the British army of the mid-1850s.[9] An article in *The Irish Sword* in 1962 offered some very precise figures; 35,516 Irish soldiers serving in the British army in 1854 with 11,997 new Irish recruits in 1855 and a further 12,222 Irish recruits in 1856. Sadly, no source for these figures was indicated

[5]The most focused collection of muster rolls for this period are contained in a grouping in The UK National Archives (hereinafter TNA); WO 14, refers to the "Scutari Depot Muster Books and Pay Lists" which record details of all of the regiment on route to the Crimea. There are 130 volumes in this series.
[6]TNA WO 12/1012-17.
[7]TNA WO 12/844-848.
[8]Royal Scots Dragoon Guards Museum, Edinburgh, MS GB46 G176-9, 'Nominal roll of the officers and men who sailed with the Scots Greys for the Crimea'.
[9]David Fitzpatrick, 'A peculiar tramping people' in W.E. Vaughan, ed., *A new history of Ireland*, vol. v, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 623-61.

in that article.[10] Arriving at an exact number of the Irish who served in the Crimea is difficult, and would require a comprehensive survey of the surviving muster rolls to be conclusive. But a figure of around 30% would seem a supportable estimate and would indicate that more than 30,000 Irish soldiers served in the Crimea.

They were represented at every major engagement of the war; the Alma, Balaclava, Inkerman and the long-running siege of Sevastopol. Due to increasing levels of literacy in Ireland, they have left behind some excellent first-hand accounts of their experiences of the war, including letters, memoirs, and later newspaper interviews. It would be an impossible task to discuss many of these in the context of this article, but a good example is the memoir of James O'Malley of the 17th Foot. Describing the fighting in the siege of Sevastopol, O'Malley later recalled:

> They poured into our trenches but as they came on we gave them the bayonet after discharging the contents of our barrels in their faces. This was one of the bloodiest encounters ever since the earth was cursed by war and, as the enemy again and again charged us, we got so jammed up as to be quite unable to shorten arms and, as we pulled the bayonet out of one man, we dashed the brains out of another with the butt end and, when we could not reach their heads, we struck them on the shins. Some of the men got clinched with the Russians and fists were frequently in use. The Russians must have had frightful loss when we ultimately drove them back, as seventy-eight lay dead right in the trenches to say nothing of those who dropped outside or crawled away to die of their wounds elsewhere.[11]

To the modern ear, such recollections sound brutal in the extreme, but life conditions at that time were harsh for many, and especially so for soldiers on campaign. O'Malley was also writing at the end of his life, so no doubt his account was written with some added drama in the hope of boosting book sales. Yet this general tone can be seen in surviving contemporary letters and it is also evident that some were probably written with hopes of later publication; and during the course of the war we see the increased publication of "letters from the front" in the newspapers. The war was the main news story of the period, and this created huge public interest. The Irish-born journalist, William Howard Russell of *The Times*, more than catered for this need with his colourful dispatches from the Crimea, which were reprinted in Irish newspapers and later in book form. In terms of visual imagery, publications such as *The Illustrated London News* covered the war closely and, due to its dramatic images, this publication saw

[10] J J W. Murphy, 'An Irish Sister of Mercy in the Crimean War' in *The Irish Sword*, v, 21 (1962), p. 251.

[11] James O'Malley, *The life of James O'Malley, late corporal of the 17th Leicestershire Regiment, 'Royal Bengal Tigers',* (Montreal: Desaulnier, 1893), pp. 84-5.

increased circulation in Great Britain and Ireland during this period. For both the musically inclined and the less literate, the war was also the subject of many broadsheet ballads. There are about fifty Crimean ballads preserved in the White Ballad Collection held at Trinity College, Dublin, and covering a range of themes including 'The Russians are Coming', 'War song of the Tipperary Light Infantry' and 'The Battle of Alma'.[12]

As was the case in previous wars, a number of Irish wives accompanied their husbands' regiments to the Crimea. The voices of these army wives have largely been lost to us, and few accounts remain of the experiences of these women. Margaret Kirwan, the wife of a soldier in the 19th Foot, recounted her experiences for a regimental magazine in 1895. Her account of the war, especially the early phase in modern-day Bulgaria, vividly describes the harsh conditions and hard labour endured by these women on campaign:

> We marched on up to Devna and remained for a fortnight. There I bought a little wash tub, and carried my cooking things in it. This was the whole of my baggage which I carried on my head during the march. I also had a water bottle and a haversack to carry biscuits in. The priest and the minister had to carry their own bottles and sacks, like soldiers. On the march the men kept falling out from the heat and they kept me busy giving them drinks. When we got to Monastne, the washing duty of No. 5 Company fell to me; there were 101 men in it and the clothes were brought by its transport horse. I stood in the midst of the stream from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. washing. The Colour-Sergeant would not keep account and some men paid and some did not, so that I was left with very little for my trouble. The men were dying fast of cholera and black fever and were buried in their blankets. No sooner had we moved up country than the Turks opened the graves and took the blankets.[13]

When one thinks of women serving in the context of the Crimean War, it is usually in the context of prominent figures such as Florence Nightingale, Mary Seacole and Fanny Duberley; but there was a further contingent of soldiers' wives that have largely been lost in the record and overlooked. The experiences of the wives who were left

[12]Trinity College, Dublin, White Ballad Collection, OLS/X/1/530-532. The Schools Collection of the Irish Folklore Commission includes other musical references to the Crimean War; 'The Kerry Recruit' appears at least twice in Cork 'The Schools' Collection, Volume 0304, Page 054' and Limerick 'The Schools' Collection, Volume 0502, Page 213'. © National Folklore Collection, UCD by Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, UCD is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Accessed 18 April 2023.

[13]Mark Marsay, 'One woman's story: with the 19th Foot by Margaret Kirwan' in *Newsletter of the Friends of the Green Howards Regimental Museum*, no. 3, (September 1997), pp 14-15.

behind when the regiments left for the Crimea have only received scholarly attention recently. Paul Huddie has identified the difficulties faced by army wives during this period, with many women reliant on poor relief or charitable handouts from organizations such as the Patriotic Fund (PF) and the Central Association for the Aid of Soldiers' Wives on Active Service.[14] What became of women who found themselves to be widows in locations such as Malta and Scutari in Turkey remains a subject for examination. As the war progressed there was an increased need for nurses and many women, Irish women among them, travelled to the east to work in that capacity. These women included a group of Irish Sisters of Mercy who set up a field hospital in the Crimea.[15]

Within the army itself, Irish officers played a significant role, making up as much as 20% of the officer contingent within particular regiments. As might be expected, this demographic was well-represented within the Irish regiments but was by no means confined to them. As early as the seventeenth century, Irish, or Anglo-Irish officers emerged from within the aristocratic and landed classes in Ireland. Their service in the Crimea forms part of a long military tradition that encompassed the wars of the 18 Century, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and colonial wars such as the Anglo-Sikh Wars of the 1840s. Such officers were usually the 'lesser' sons, the sons not destined to inherit the title or the estates, of Irish landed families.

Two Irish generals served in the Crimea and are good examples of this pattern of service. Major-General John Lysaght Pennefather (1800-72) was the third son of the Rev. John Pennefather, treasurer of Cashel Cathedral and he initially served as a brigade commander in the 2 Division. His divisional commander, Lt-General Sir George de Lacy Evans (1787-1870), was the younger son of a landed family with a modest estate at Moig in Co. Limerick. Both generals served with distinction during the war. Within the Irish officer cohort during this period, and indeed over a longer period of history, we see these patterns repeated frequently – the lesser sons emerging from families owning landed estates, the sons of clergymen, and the other professions. It was unusual for the son-and-heir to be represented in these conflicts but there were two Irish examples in the Crimea: Arthur James Plunkett, then using the courtesy title of Lord Killeen, who served in the 8th Royal Irish Hussars as a captain and took part in the Charge of the Light Brigade and survived both the charge and the war. He would later succeed his father to become the Tenth Earl of Fingall; not so lucky was John Charles Henry, Viscount Fitzgibbon, who also served in the 8th Royal

[14]Paul Huddie (2017) Victims or Survivors: army wives in Ireland during the Crimean War, 1854–56, *Women's History Review*, 26:4, 541-554, DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2016.1148502

[15]Maria Luddy, *The Crimean Journals of the Irish Sisters of Mercy, 1854-56,* (Dublin: Desaulnier, 2004).

Irish Hussars as a lieutenant. The Viscount Fitzgibbon was the only legitimate son of Richard Hobart Fitzgibbon, Third Earl of Clare, he also took part in the Charge of the Light Brigade but was listed as missing after the battle and was never seen again. As a result of his death the earldom of Clare was destined for extinction, a process normally associated with families who lost sons during the First World War, although it was obviously a possibility in earlier wars. There were also a series of curious epilogues to the disappearance of the Viscount Fitzgibbon; in 1877, when the 8th Royal Irish Hussars were based in Hounslow, a gentlemen visited the officers' mess and claimed that he was Fitzgibbon. This event was repeated in 1892, when the regiment was based in India when another gentleman, generally matching Fitzgibbon's description, visited the mess. These events caused the family to place a series of notices in newspapers seeking further information but to no avail. The Fitzgibbon story is believed to have inspired Rudyard Kipling's short story 'The man who was'.[16] Interestingly, within the records of the Irish Folklore Commission there is an entry collected as part of the Schools Collection that refers to Lord Clare. Collected by local teacher, Bríghid Bean Mhic Niocaill, from Kilmealy, in Co. Clare, it tells of a group of locals, which included a Crimean veteran, who went treasure hunting on Lord Clare's estate, only to be interrupted by a supernatural whirlwind. Again, we can see local awareness of events that had occurred 80 years previously.[17] It is also worth pointing out that these landed families, associated with the "Great Houses" in Ireland, often became the custodian of letter and journal collections connected to the Crimea, military portraiture, and items of material culture in terms of officers' equipment and sometimes souvenirs that were brought home from the war. Some of this material has since moved to public archives and museum collections, and a small selection of Crimean material can be seen in the 'Soldiers and Chiefs' exhibition at the National

[16]Murphy, David, 'John Charles Henry Fitzgibbon', *Dictionary of Irish Biography online*. Accessed 18 April 2023. A statue of the Viscount Fitzgibbon was erected in Limerick city in 1855 on what was then Wellington Bridge but which was later renamed Sarsfield Bridge. It was flanked by two Crimean trophy guns. This statue was dynamited in 1930. The Third Earl of Clare died in 1864 and the title became extinct.

[17]'The Schools' Collection, Volume 0776, Page 181' Image and data © National Folklore Collection, UCD by Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, UCD is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Accessed 18 April 2023.

Museum, Collins Barracks, in Dublin.[18] However, some material still remains in family collections.[19]

The Crimean War was also the first war in which the Victoria Cross (VC) was issued, and this has since become Britain's highest award for gallantry. The medal was instituted in 1856 but the first recipients were soldiers and sailors who had served earlier in the Crimean War. In total, 111 VCs were awarded for gallantry in this war, the first award going to Master's Mate (later Rear-Admiral) Charles Davis Lucas from Poytnzpass in Co. Armagh.[20] A total of twenty-eight VCs were awarded to soldiers and sailors who had been born in Ireland, providing a testimony to the significant part that Irishmen played in war, not only in the Crimea itself but in the campaign in the Baltic. Many of these men went on to have significant careers and are illustrative of the social cachet associated with Crimean veterans in general and VC winners in particular. Taking just one example, Sergeant Luke O'Connor, who came from Co. Roscommon, was awarded the first VC to a soldier for his actions at the Battle of the Alma, while serving with the 23rd (Royal Welch Fusiliers) Regiment of Foot. He came from a background of dire poverty: born in 1831, in Kilcroy, his family was evicted in 1839 and his parents then decided to emigrate to America. His father died during the Atlantic crossing and his mother and younger brother died of cholera on the family's arrival at Grosse Isle, Quebec. At some point, O'Connor returned to Ireland and enlisted in the army. At the Battle of the Alma (20 September 1854) he was a 23-year-old sergeant and, although wounded, took up the regimental colour when the colour-bearer was killed. He would later be wounded yet again during an assault at Sevastopol in September 1855. O'Connor was one of 62 veterans invested with the VC at a special ceremony at Hyde Park in 1856. He was later commissioned and achieved the rank of major-general, showing a remarkable level of social mobility for someone who had emerged from poverty and had begun his career as a ranker. [21]

[18]National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks, 'Soldiers and Chiefs' Exhibition. For details see https://bit.ly/41vqJb6. Accessed 18 April 2023.

[19]One of the more striking exhibits at the National Museum are the remains of Dickie Bird, a Crimean warhorse that ended its days in Dublin. See Lar Joye, 'Dickie Bird – buried but not forgotten' in *History Ireland*, 27, 6 (2019).

[20]David Murphy, 'Charles Davis Lucas', *Dictionary of Irish Biography Online*, https://doi.org/10.3318/dib.004904.v1. Accessed 18 April 2023.

[21]O'Connor was appointed as Colonel of his old regiment in 1914 and died, in London, in February 1915. He is buried in St Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Kensal Green, London. Richard Doherty & David Truesdale, *Irish winners of the Victoria Cross,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000). David Murphy, 'Sir Luke O'Connor', *Dictionary of Irish Biography online,* https://www.dib.ie/biography/oconnor-sir-luke-a6602. Accessed 18 April 2023.

Yet while O'Connor's later life was one of upward mobility and success, this was not true for all of the Irish VC winners and, indeed, all Irish veterans. Many would end their lives in poverty, and Irish veterans appear in the lists of relief funds and some had significant difficulties due to wartime injuries and mental health issues. . To take just two examples, John Sullivan, a thirty-seven year veteran of the Royal Navy, and John Byrne, formerly of the 68th Foot, both committed suicide after the war. Both were Victoria Cross winners and, in the years immediately preceding their suicides, both suffered from mental health issues due to their wartime experiences. Overall, Irish Crimean veterans appear with depressing regularity on the lists of recipients of charity from organisations such as the Patriotic Fund or the T.H. Roberts Fund, the latter being specifically set up to aid survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade.[22] Despite the efforts of such charities, many veterans ended their lives at the bottom of the social ladder. For example, Private John Smith from Dublin, formerly of the 17th Lancers, received financial aid from the T.H. Roberts Fund and was also placed in employment but nevertheless died in the St Pancras Workhouse in 1899. Similarly, Private Patrick Doolan, formerly of the 8th Royal Irish Hussars, died in poverty in Dublin in 1907. Ironically, Doolan's Crimean Medal came to auction at Sotheby's in 1996, realising £5,290, which was then a record for a Light Brigade medal.[23] Between these two extremes, however, many Irish Crimean veterans would seem to have had reasonably functional lives, returning to former trades, or working in agriculture, while several served in constabulary forces, not only in Ireland but also in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.[24]

In Ireland, it is now obvious that the war was a subject of great contemporary interest and actual excitement. In the context of traditional narratives of Irish history, this could be seen as somewhat surprising, given the proximity of the war not only to the

[22]Thomas Harrison Roberts was a newspaper editor and publisher who issued an open invitation to survivors of the Charge of the Light Brigade to watch the 1897 Jubilee procession from his Fleet Street offices. Shocked at the conditions that some of these men were living in, he organised the T.H. Roberts Fund, which operated until 1911.

[23]*The Irish Times*, 12 April 1996. Another destitute Crimean veteran was Patrick Hanlon who died in February 1909. After the Master of the Waterford workhouse wrote to the Veteran's Relief Fund, Hanlon was buried with military honours not in a pauper's grave but in a 'nice coffin' in St Mary's Churchyard, an hour's walk from the workhouse. See Aoife Bhreathnach, 'A dignified burial: military funerals for paupers, 1908-15'. Accessed 18 April 2023.

[24]For a useful overview of the men of the Light Brigade, that includes some biographical information on every "Charger", see Cannon William Lummis and Kenneth Wynne, *Honour the Light Brigade, a record of the services of officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the five light cavalry regiments, which made up the Light Brigade at Balaclava etc.* (London: J.B. Hayward & Son,1973).

Irish Famine but also to the 1848 Young Ireland rebellion. But surviving accounts and newspaper coverage would suggest that public interest and enthusiasm was widespread. The departure of troops leaving Ireland for the war was covered in the Irish newspapers and these recorded the enthusiasm of the public, many of whom would gather to say farewell to family members in the ranks. One of the earliest regiments to leave was the 50th Foot, which marched through Dublin in February 1854 before moving by train to take ship at Dun Laoghaire (then Kingstown). The *Dublin Evening Post* reported:

> As the regiment proceeded through the streets, the cheering of the populace was again and again repeated, and it is scarcely necessary to add that the waving of numerous white handkerchiefs by the ladies who filled the windows and balconies along the entire line of streets, contributed in no small degree to heighten the enthusiasm of the multitude.[25]

Similar scenes were reported across all of Ireland, especially in the major garrison towns, at key railway stations and ports of embarkation. The Irish newspapers of the period covered the campaign in Bulgaria, and then in the Crimea itself in some detail and this further facilitated public interest. While there were a handful of Irish correspondents in the Crimea working for *The Times* and other British papers, the Irish newspapers sent none of their own, but did republish the reports of William Howard Russell and other correspondents. Public interest was further served by the publication of "letters from the front", written by Irish soldiers. This was a practice that would be repeated during later conflicts such as the Zulu War, the Second Anglo-Boer War and the First World War. Over the two years of the Crimean war, it is also possible to discern a shift in Irish opinion as casualties mounted and it became increasingly obvious that the war was being mismanaged. Again, we see a similar shift in the tone of Irish newspapers in later conflicts but in particular in the context of the First World War. A frequent news item in Ireland during the course of the war was the issue of recruitment. Due to the prolonged nature of the Crimean War, recruits needed to be found to make up for losses. The location of recruitment offices and the movements of recruiting parties are regularly referred to in the Irish papers and, if the pressmen of the period are to be believed, they were successful in drawing in Irish recruits. Regimental records confirm what had become an established pattern for Ireland since the Napoleonic period. Recruits tended to come from the labouring classes but there were also those who left secure positions to serve in the Crimea. There were also many others who served in the Crimea but did not serve in an Irish regiment or, indeed, any type of regiment. It is possible to identify numerous Irish people who volunteered to serve in a civilian or auxiliary capacity as doctors, nurses, chaplains, railway navvies, engineers, transport workers/teamsters and even members

[25] *Dublin Evening Post*, 25 February 1854.

of the Irish Constabulary, some of whom took leave to serve in the Crimea. These are also patterns that later were repeated in the context of the Second Anglo-Boer War and the First World War.

At the conclusion of the peace in 1856, there was public celebration across Ireland and large crowds gathered to mark the end of the war. In Dublin, a large crowd gathered in St. Stephen's Green and this crowd extended down Grafton Street and as far as the River Liffey. In the summer of 1856, a committee was formed to organise a celebratory dinner for the returning veterans. Prominent within the organising committee were Isaac Butt and Patrick O'Brien, both Irish MPs. This dinner would eventually take place on 22 October 1856 in Stack A at George's Dock, a customs clearance warehouse covering over 70,000 square feet. As public interest in the event had grown, the venue had to be moved to this space to accommodate the growing number of the public who wished to buy tickets. Ultimately, 5,000 people would attend the 'Dublin Crimean Banquet', of whom 3,000 were veterans of the war. A considerable amount of food was consumed in what was the largest-ever formal dinner in Ireland. This included over three tons of potatoes, 200 turkeys, 200 geese and 250 legs of mutton. Each veteran was supplied with a quart of porter (beer) and a pint of sherry or port. Alongside those at the dinner in Stack A, thousands more lined the route to cheer the veterans as they arrived, and then remained to cheer them as they departed.[26] As a reflection of public interest in the war and support for Irish soldiers and sailors, the Dublin Crimean Banquet was a key event. That this event was organised within a decade of the Irish Famine is somewhat startling but there appears to have been no voices of dissent or any questions raised at the time. Leftover food was distributed to the Dublin workhouses, and this was perhaps some small recognition of the dire plight of Dublin's poor. In terms of local memory, some traces of the painted decorations were still visible when the author visited Stack A before its renovation in the 1990s. Locally, it was still known as the 'banquet hall' up to the 1980s and today houses EPIC: The Irish Emigration Museum.[27]

There was also a proposal for a national Crimean memorial to be part-funded using the £1,000 left over from the organisation of the banquet. This was to be located in Dublin, but the project never got traction, perhaps in partl due to Crimean trophy guns being made available to any town that requested them. There are twenty-two of

[26]The banquet was covered by Irish newspapers including the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Dublin Evening Mail*, while the *Illustrated London News* reported on it with an illustration. A commemorative booklet was later published entitled *History of the great national banquet given to the victorious soldiers returned from the Crimean War etc* (Dublin, 1858).
[27]It is interesting that Stack A is proximate to a Famine memorial on the nearby quayside. EPIC: The Irish Emigration Museum. https://epicchq.com/. Accessed 18 April 2023.

these Crimean trophy guns surviving in locations around Ireland, which resulted in a pattern of local rather than national memorialisation. Dublin Corporation applied for some of these guns and ultimately was allocated six, which were on public display in front of the Royal Barracks, now the National Museum, Collins Barracks in Dublin. After restoration by the Irish Defence Forces, and some confusion over ownership, they are now located on the main square of Cathal Brugha Barracks in Rathmines - the former Portobello Barracks. Some towns in Ireland received a pair of guns, such as Galway, Waterford, Limerick and Tralee. Others, such as Trim, Ennis and Cobh, received a single gun. There was also a pair of Crimean cannons in Monaghan town, and one in Coleraine, both of which have since disappeared. There are also numerous memorials across Ireland, especially in churches and graveyards, denoting Crimean casualties, or the later passing of a Crimean veteran.[28]

It could be argued that the Crimean veterans who returned to Ireland after the war were, in many ways, living memorials. There is evidence that there was a level of awareness within communities in connection to these men. Several ended their days in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, and when the last Irish pensioners were transferred to the Royal Hospital Chelsea in 1921, there were two Crimean veterans among them. Within census records, it is possible to find people who referred to themselves as 'Crimean pensioners' and this occurs into the early decades of the 20 Century. In the 1901 census, there are two women who described themselves as Crimean pensioners, both widows, and it is specifically noted that one, Maria McNamara from Carlow, then 78 years old, was a widow of the 44th Regiment.[29] Interestingly in the 1911 census, there are four Crimean pensioners noted, one of whom was a widow. One of those listed was James Cushley of Londonderry, then aged 80, who was described as an 'ex-soldier of the Crimea/pensioner'.[30]

What is perhaps more surprising is the number of references in the Irish Folklore Commission to the Crimean War. The Commission was formed in 1935 and was charged with the collection and preservation of Irish folklore material in all forms as a means of preserving and later studying the Irish tradition of oral folklore. Various means of interviewing and collecting stories and traditions were employed and the activity often focused on local schools, facilitated by both teachers and students.

[28]Paul Huddie, 'That woe could wish, or vanity devise': Crimean War memorials in Dublin's Anglican churches' in Lisa Marie Griffith and Ciaran Wallace, eds, *Grave matters: death and dying in Dublin 1500 to the present,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), pp. 77-85.

[29]Maria McNamara, 'Census of Ireland, 1901', National Archives of Ireland. The second widow was Mary Mahoney of Queenstown in Cork. Accessed 18 April 2023.

[30]James Cushley, 'Census of Ireland, 1911', National Archives of Ireland. Accessed 18 April 2023. There were four pensioners in total in 1911, all men, over the age of 76.

Within the collection of the Irish Folklore Commission are numerous references to the Crimean War in material which is particularly interesting and often quite colourful. For several of these entries, the war is the event through which some other event or story is dated and set suggesting it functioned as one of what Guy Beiner refers to as a 'dazzling panoply of complex mnemonic practices', a chronological point in time around which vernacular memory was constructed.[31] In other stories, the period is retold as a time of food shortage, due to the export of agricultural produce. Other testimonies to the commission recalled local individuals joining the army or discussed locals who had been veterans of the war. It is a varied selection of references but that the Crimea was still a reference point for folk memory in the 1930s, in the context of an Ireland that had seen rapid, if not drastic, political and social change, is fascinating. The accounts themselves add further context to the Irish understanding of the Crimean War and illustrate the development of folk memory and local concepts of trauma. To take one example, Samuel Barrett, the schoolmaster at Monkstown in Co. Cork, recorded the origins of a local placename – 'Hullabuloo Corner':

> In the olden days when the Irish regiments were going to the Crimean War they has to come to Monkstown because it was from there they embarked. With the soldiers came their relatives to bid them farewell. After farewells were given the relatives gathered at the above mentioned corner to view the ship as it sailed away. When the ship was disappearing they started to cry and mourn loudly. Sometimes they used caoin and make such noise that the people of the district called the corner Hullabuloo Corner.[32]

In terms of Irish casualties of the war, it is estimated that over 7,000 Irish soldiers and sailors died in the war. Coming so close to the Irish Famine, this represented a significant further layer of national trauma. The practice of intense recruitment within local communities, exacerbated the impact of these wartime casualties. To take one example, records survive of the pre-Famine male population and also Crimean casualties for a number of parishes in Co. Cork, which traditionally provided sailors for the Royal Navy. The parish of Upper Aghada had a male population of 97 in 1841. The parish's Crimean dead numbered 54 men. Similarly, the parish of Farsid's male

[31]Recent work on folk memory in Ireland tends to be led by Guy Beiner's work on 1798. See Guy Beiner, *Forgetful remembrance: social forgetting and vernacular historiography of a rebellion in Ulster,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 2.

[32]'The Schools' Collection, Volume 0390, Page 209', Image and data © National Folklore Collection, UCD by Dúchas © National Folklore Collection, UCD is licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0. Accessed 18 April 2023.

population was 98 in 1841, with a Crimean death toll of 44.[33] The effects of Crimean casualties coming so close after the Irish Famine on these small communities must have been nothing short of catastrophic and suggests a further line of possible research. We tend to view the vast demographic changes and population decline in Ireland, particularly in the West of Ireland, in the context of the Irish Famine and associated emigration. It would be interesting to explore how casualties among the Irish soldiers and sailors serving in 'Queen Victoria's Little Wars' during the nineteenth Century impacted on wider demographic patterns in Ireland.

Irish military history remains an under-researched field of study and this is, sadly, particularly true in Ireland. Since the 1990s, we have seen increasing levels of activity in this area but much of this scholarship has focused on the First World War which was, obviously, a major event for Ireland and the Irish regiments. The earlier and more numerous small wars of the nineteenth century were also formative in this story but are often missed in the wider discussion or, if they are dealt with at all, it is in the sense of examining isolated events. Instead, we should view these nineteenth century conflicts as a part of a longer continuum and in them we can see patterns that were maintained into the twentieth century. There are recurring patterns in terms of the Irish contribution, recruitment, newspaper coverage, public support and civilian volunteering, These continuities can be traced across the wars of this period, from the Crimea, to the Indian Mutiny, to Afghanistan, the Sudan, South Africa, right up to the First World War. The Crimean War was a fundamental episode in the development of these patterns, and also attitudes to military service in Ireland. This issue of the British Journal of Military History discusses the contribution of the Irish regiments up to their disbandment in 1922, but within that long tradition of Irish military service, the Crimean War was a key moment, and the legacy of that war in the public memory up to the 1930s and, in some cases even later into the twentieth century, is testimony to that significance.

[33]National Archives, Dublin, MS 6077, 'Lists of men from Aghada and Whitegate Parishes Co. Cork, serving in the Royal Navy, and lists of those killed or died in the war'.