

# Young Citizen Volunteers

—10th September 1912—



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## Introduction

Lance-Corporal Walter Ferguson, aged 24, of 14th Royal Irish Rifles died (according to the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) on 8 July 1916, although the marble tablet erected in All Saints Parish Church, University Street, Belfast, by his sorrowing father states he was 'killed in action on 1 July 1916'. It seems very probable that he died a slow and possibly painful death from wounds sustained on 1 July and in captivity because he is buried in Caudry Old Communal Cemetery which was then in German-held territory.

Walter's family did not learn of his death immediately. They sought news of him in the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* of 18 July 1916:

*No news has been received regarding Lance Corporal Walter Ferguson (14596) YCV's since before the Big Push and his relatives, who reside at 2 Collingwood Road, Belfast, are very anxious about him and would be grateful for any information. In civil life he was a bookbinder ...*

News from the Front often trickled home agonizingly slowly. For example, the *Northern Whig* of 27 July 1916 reveals another Belfast family anxious to learn the fate of their son, also a lance-corporal in 14th Royal Irish Rifles and a member of the YCV:

*Rev'd John Pollock (St Enoch's Church), 7 Glandore Park, Antrim Road, will be glad to receive any information regarding his son Lance-corporal Paul G Pollock, scout, Royal Irish Rifles (YCV), B Company, who had engaged in the advance of the Ulster Division on 1st July last, and has been 'missing' since that date.*

Twenty-one year-old Paul G Pollock is listed on CWGC website as having been killed on 1 July 1916. Like William McFadzean, the YCV's most famous member, Paul Pollock has no known grave and is one of the 72,000 casualties – 'these intolerably nameless names' – of the Somme offensive commemorated on Sir Edwin Lutyens' massive Thiepval Memorial to the Missing. The Belfast newspapers were still publishing casualty lists relating







*The Ulster Tower, Thiepval*

to 1 and 2 July 1916 in August.

The 1911 Census affords us a snapshot of the pre-war Ferguson family. Walter had already become a bookbinder. William Henry Ferguson (aged 55 in 1911) was a coal vendor. Sarah Jane Ferguson (aged 50), W. H. Ferguson's wife, was Walter's stepmother. In 1911 Walter's older sister Agnes (aged 25) still lived in the parental home, as did Walter's younger brother Joseph (aged 17). Agnes was a seamstress and Joseph was a cabinet maker. Mary Cunningham (aged 38), Mr Ferguson's sister-in-law, also lived at 2 Collingwood Road. She too was a seamstress.

The following year, Walter, together with his father and younger brother, signed the Ulster Covenant at the City Hall. The female members of the household signed the Women's Declaration at All Saints School.

Although, the Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland was formally launched in Belfast City Hall on 10 September 1912, less than three weeks before the signing of the Ulster Covenant and the Women's Declaration, there was no intrinsic connection or relationship between the two events. However, in the years before the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914, it would have been impossible to ignore the unfolding third Home Rule crisis. Inevitably, not least because most of those involved in the leadership of the YCV were



*Edward Carson*

prominent unionists, there was pressure on the YCV to merge with the UVF and in the spring of 1914 the organisation succumbed to that pressure.

On 3 September 1914 Sir Edward Carson, the Unionist leader, addressed the Ulster Unionist Council in the Ulster Hall and told delegates that England's difficulties were not Ulster's opportunity: 'However we are treated, and however others act, let us act rightly. We do not seek to purchase terms by selling our patriotism'.

Carson urged the men of the UVF to 'go and help save their country and their Empire'. They were to go and 'win honour for Ulster and Ireland'.

On 5 September members of the YCV began enlisting in the Army and the organisation became the core and nucleus of the 14th Royal Irish Rifles (Belfast Young Citizens). This publication is intended to serve as an introduction to the story of Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland and the 14th Royal Irish Rifles.

### Establishing a context for the formation of the YCV

On 12 September 1899 the *Belfast News Letter* observed:

*We in Belfast are proud of our city and its many activities. We are in the very front of the race of civic development and industrial progress and we have a laudable ambition to keep there and make our mark as it were.*

At the beginning of the twentieth century Belfast was part of an industrial complex that stretched from Lancashire to Lanarkshire. By 1914 Belfast could boast 'the greatest shipyard, rope works, tobacco factory, linen mill, dry dock and tea machinery works in the world'. In the late- nineteenth





and early-twentieth centuries, Belfast was one of the major industrial powerhouses of the world.

Belfast was the eighth largest city in the United Kingdom. Belfast's population in 1801 was only 19,000 but by 1901 the city's population had risen to 349,180. A decade later the city's population stood at 386,947. Belfast was generally reckoned to be the fastest-growing city in the United Kingdom



in the nineteenth century. In Europe, Belfast's growth was rivalled only by Budapest.

Two buildings, in particular, symbolized Belfast's burgeoning confidence and its civic pride: St Anne's Cathedral (replacing St Anne's Parish Church) and the City Hall (replacing the eighteenth-century Linen Hall). In 1915, in his book *The Famous Cities of Ireland*, Stephen Gwynn, the Nationalist MP for Galway, wrote of Belfast: '...she is enormously occupied by her present, enormously and justly proud of what her citizens are and what they have accomplished'. It was a perfectly fair commentary on the mentality of the citizens of early twentieth-century Belfast.



On the whole early twentieth-century men and women, apart from those who had embraced Socialism or 'New Liberalism', thought the state ought to have only a minimal role in their lives. They believed that state existed to maintain internal order and defend its citizens from external attack. A more interventionist state was still in its infancy. For example, the state imposed safety rules in factories and prevented women and adult males, in some industries, from working excessive hours. The state also saw to it that children received education up to the age of 13. However, state intervention was increasing in scope in a number of areas. Since 1 January 1909 the state provided a pension for the needy over 70 and since 1913 it helped to insure certain classes of workers against sickness and unemployment. Expenditure on social services had doubled since 1905. While the foundations of the welfare state were being laid in the first decade of the twentieth century, the welfare state did not yet exist as we know it.

The motto of Belfast is '*Pro tanto quid retribuamus*' which is taken from Psalm 116:12 and may be translated as 'What shall we give in return for so much.' It is a sentiment not dissimilar to the one expressed in J. F. Kennedy's Inaugural speech on 20 January 1961: 'Ask not what your





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country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country’. However, at the beginning of the twentieth century the city rather than the state was the focus of citizenship to an extent which it may be difficult for us to imagine. The formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers was in large measure an expression of civic pride. It has its counterpart in the formation of ‘Pals Battalions’ in British towns and cities such as Accrington, Barnsley, Bradford, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Salford and Sheffield in the early days of the Great War.

### The importance of order and discipline

Another strand contributing to the formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers – strongly evident in the Revd T. W. Davidson’s letter in the *Belfast News Letter* of 7 May 1912 – was the belief that it would fill the vacuum in young men’s lives between late adolescence and settling down to the responsibilities of marriage and children. The Boys’ Brigade (founded in Glasgow by William Alexander Smith in 1883, with the first BB company in Ireland being established in St Mary Magdalene’s in Donegall Pass in December 1888), the Church Lads’ Brigade (an Anglican organisation founded in 1891) or the more recently formed Boy Scout movement (founded in 1908 by Robert Baden-Powell) catered for adolescents but many felt that nothing existed for those who had ‘graduated’ from these organisations.

F. T. Geddes, the man who first conceived the idea of the YCV, claimed that sociologists regarded ‘the period between 18 and 25’ as ‘the most critical in a young man’s life’. Adults at the beginning of the twentieth century would have been strongly of the opinion that these young men needed order and discipline in their lives.



William Alexander Smith



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### The failure to extend the territorial force to Ireland

Although the British ultimately succeeded in defeating the Boers in the Second Boer War (1899-1902), the first months of the war were humiliating and the tide only began to turn in 1900, mainly as the result of committing huge numbers of troops to the conflict and, to some extent, employing tactics which Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the future Liberal Prime Minister, denounced as ‘the methods of barbarism’. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the Army had rarely faced opposition more serious than troublesome tribesmen armed with spears. The hard-riding and sharp-shooting Boer commandos brutally highlighted the Army’s deficiencies. A. J. Balfour’s Conservative Government responded by creating a Committee of Imperial Defence but achieved comparatively little else. In 1905 Richard Haldane became Secretary for War in the incoming Liberal Government. A successful lawyer and a brilliant academic philosopher, he quickly absorbed the ideas of contemporary German and French military theorists and got down to work to reforming the Army right away. In September 1906 he established a General Staff on the German model. France and Germany had huge conscript armies, whereas the United Kingdom had only a small professional Army, recruited through voluntary enlistment. The prospect of conscription was a horror not to be contemplated by a Liberal like Haldane, so he set about creating a more professional Army consisting of a six-division-strong British Expeditionary Force that could be deployed in Europe within fifteen days. In 1908 he created the Territorial Force (which in 1921 became the Territorial Army) consisting of fourteen infantry divisions and fourteen mounted yeomanry brigades to supplement the regular Army. To the consternation of many in Ulster, the legislation



Richard Haldane





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Londonderry

establishing the Territorial Force did not extend to Ireland, for reasons which went unstated but which one might guess.

This fact provided a very strong impetus to the formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers. Ulstermen were affronted because they were inheritors of a strong military tradition dating back to the Plantation. In the early days of the Plantation the British settlers were obliged to be able to defend themselves. Their military prowess was brutally put to the test by the Irish rebellion of 1641. In 1688 and 1689 the British settlement again had to resort to arms to avoid extinction. Again their mettle was tested at Enniskillen and Londonderry. In the eighteenth century volunteers sprung into existence to oppose Commodore Thurot's brief seizure of Carrickfergus in February 1760 and again after the raids of American privateer John Paul Jones in Belfast Lough in April 1778 and then to meet the perceived threat of French invasion in the late 1770s and early 1780s. Military service to a great many Ulstermen and to a great many Ulster families had become as natural as breathing.

In the formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers may be discerned a strong desire to create a military unit which in due course would be adopted by the War Office and be absorbed into the Territorial Force. To the intense and bitter disappointment of many, the offer was rebuffed and what they wished



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for did not happen before the outbreak of the Great War. After a fashion that was what did happen in September 1914 when the YCV became the 14th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles.

### 'The past is a foreign country'

A century ago the United Kingdom was not a full-blooded democracy. Women did not have the vote at all. Only 60% of adult males were on the parliamentary register before the First World War. The right to vote was based on a householder or occupancy franchise. On the whole, people did not regard the existing arrangements as undemocratic. The principal radical grievance was that there was no limit to the number of votes a property owner could possess as long as they were cast in different constituencies. Those who possessed the vote valued it, a point evidenced by the fact that there was a much higher level of turnout in the two elections of January and December 1910 than in the elections of 2005 and 2010. People then believed in 'representative democracy'. These days some voices are raised in favour of 'participatory democracy'.

At the beginning of the twentieth century citizenship was intrinsically bound up with the ability to bear arms in the defence of the state. Thus, in the General Election of December 1918, at the end of the Great World War soldiers younger than 21 were given the vote because they had fought for their country. Conscientious objectors, on the other hand, were deprived of the franchise because they had failed to act as good citizens. Before the Great War one argument deployed against extending the franchise to women was that women could not be expected to bear arms. Women over 30 secured the vote in 1918 because they had proved themselves by undertaking a wide range of work previously performed only by men during the war, thereby prompting a significant shift in men's perception of women and their entitlement to the franchise. 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there', the striking opening line of L. P. Hartley's novel, *The Go*



*Between* (1953), perceptively makes a point that ought to be at the forefront of our minds when we consider the past.

### Floating the concept

The formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers was the brainchild of Fred T. Geddes, a prominent member of the Belfast Citizens Association. In 1912 he was one of the two joint-secretaries of the Belfast Citizens Association for Clifton and Duncairn wards in north Belfast. He was also a member of the Central Presbyterian Association, an organisation based in Church House in Fisherwick Place which provided a mix of recreational, sporting, social and religious activities for young men and women, not all of whom would have been Presbyterians. Geddes does not appear in the Belfast street directory for 1912 but he does feature in the Belfast street directory for 1920 where he is listed as being general business manager of the Irish Temperance League and as resident at 34 Hopefield Avenue.

Geddes set out his proposal for a Young Citizen Volunteer Corps in letters in the *Northern Whig* and the *Belfast News Letter* on 6 May 1912. At this stage (and for exactly a month) the identity of the author remained concealed behind the initials 'FTG'.

### The response

The proposal elicited a supportive letter in the *Belfast News Letter* and the *Northern Whig* on 7 May from the Revd W. S. Kerr, Rector of St Paul's Parish Church in York Street, a future Dean of Belfast and the first Bishop of Down & Dromore. It was also warmly endorsed by the Revd T. W. Davidson, Minister of Lynn Memorial Methodist Church on the Oldpark Road.



Revd W.S. Kerr



The former wrote:

*'There is room for instruction to the young men of the city in the principles of civic administration, in information as to the industries and progress of the city, the history of its representative citizens, and the duties of citizenship, etc.'*

In his letter published in the *Belfast News Letter*, the Revd T.W. Davidson observed:

*Everyone in touch with the young life of our city knows that there is an hiatus between the period when membership ceases in the Boys' Brigade and Boy Scouts' movements and the period of responsible manhood. The years from 18 to 25 are the years when, from the civil point of view, young men sit loose to the claim of public life. This is a serious loss, not only to the youth of the city, but also to the civic life of our time.*

One letter-writer to the *News Letter* signing himself as 'MGW' on 8 May found the idea of a 'non-sectarian' and 'non-political' movement among 'our young men' attractive. He wished them to have the opportunity of realising the best in each other, 'apart from any feeling of difference in religion or political faith'. He concluded: 'If this new idea fructifies, may it be in the direction of a union of "the best for the highest"'.

A second correspondent to the *News Letter*, 'A Young Citizen', on 11 May opined that 'such an organisation will fill a long felt want'.

A third contributor calling himself 'Volunteer' on 13 May regarded evening classes, religious societies, guilds and libraries as 'all very well' but he knew of 'no better past-time than a corps of this kind'. He claimed to know 'lots of young men who would give all they had to be in a corps of this kind'. 'Trade' thought the proposal was 'an admirable one which should not be allowed to drop'.

Admittedly, some correspondence contended that this perceived need was already being met by other organisations – the YMCA, the Central Presbyterian Association and Old Boys' Associations – but overwhelmingly





the response remained positive. 'FTG' welcomed the support he had received in the *Belfast News Letter* of 17 May.

### The first meeting in City Hall

The response to Geddes' proposal was sufficient to prompt the summoning of a meeting in the Lord Mayor's Parlour on 6 June 1912 to consider the formation of 'a Young Citizens' Volunteer Corps'. The then Lord Mayor, Rt Hon. R. J. McMordie, who had succeeded Gustav Wilhelm Wolff as the MP for East Belfast in the second election of 1910, presided. Geddes outlined his scheme and for the first time the originator of the concept was publicly identified.



R.J. McMordie,  
Lord Mayor of Belfast

The attendance at this meeting was overwhelmingly professional and not so much middle class as upper middle class in composition. Among those present were Major Fred Crawford, Major Cunningham JP, Lieutenant Colonel W. E. C. McCammond JP, W. Joseph Stokes, G. W. Ferguson JP, E. J. Elliott, J. E. Dawson, E. M. Reid and Dr J. D. Williamson JP.

**Major Fred Crawford** was a significant figure in the Ulster Unionist Council and would become the Ulster Volunteer Force's Director of Ordnance and chief gunrunner.

**Major Fred A. Cunningham JP** was a solicitor in Donegall Street and lived in a house called Somerset, Fortwilliam Park.

**Lieutenant Colonel W. E. C. McCammond JP** was an officer in the 3rd battalion RIR and lived at Innisfayle, Donegall Park.

**W. Joseph Stokes** was a successful linen merchant, a prominent Unionist and a leading Freemason, who lived at Creswick, Malone Park.

**G. W. Ferguson JP** was an architect with an office in Royal Avenue and



resided at Carnamenagh, on the Antrim Road.

**E. J. Elliott** was a linen manufacturer with premises in Bedford Street. His home was The Towers, 2 Donegall Park Avenue.

**J. E. Dawson** was secretary of the Belfast Industrial Development Association, which was located at 29 Queen Street.

**E. M. Reid** was a joint-secretary, with Fred T. Geddes, of the Belfast Citizens Association for Clifton and Duncairn wards in north Belfast.

**J. D. Williamson JP** was a surgeon and lived at 189 Albertbridge Road.

According to the *Belfast News Letter* of 8 June there was agreement as to the desirability of forming 'a Young Citizens' Volunteer Corps'. This was proposed by G. W. Ferguson and seconded by E. M. Reid. It was also agreed that a committee should be formed with the power to co-opt others. It was furthermore agreed that Geddes and H. G. Stevenson were to act as the committee's convenors.

Like Geddes and E. M. Reid, Herbert G. Stevenson was heavily involved in the Belfast Citizens Association and the organisation's secretary. He lived at 531 Ormeau Road.

The involvement of several members of the Belfast Citizens Association and especially the use of the word 'citizen' in the title of the new organisation would strongly suggest that the idea for the formation of 'a Young Citizens' Volunteer Corps' had its origins within the membership of the Belfast Citizens Association.

### A second meeting in the City Hall

The newly established committee did not 'wait to let the grass grow under their feet', as William of Orange is alleged to have said in June 1690. It met in the Lord Mayor's parlour on 12 June to formulate a scheme for a 'Young Citizens' Volunteer Corps'.





Councillor Gilliland, a vigorous man, a founder member of the Ulster Society of Architects and a councillor for Victoria Ward, presided, in the absence of the Lord Mayor, and Geddes submitted a comprehensive set of rules. These were approved unanimously, with a few minor alterations, and it was agreed to place them before a public meeting, to be called by the Lord Mayor. The *Northern Whig* of 13 June 1912 reported that the convenors of the committee could be contacted at 7 Chichester Street.

### The launch of the Young Citizen Volunteers

The Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland was formally launched at a meeting, chaired by the Lord Mayor, in the Great Hall of the Belfast City Hall on 10 September 1912.

Although the Ulster Covenant and Women's Declaration were signed on 28 September 1912, the formation of the YCV had no connection with the events of Ulster Day or this stage of the third Home Rule crisis.

The Lord Mayor, R. J. McMordie MP, became the President of the YCV but he died on 25 March 1914, more or less at the height of the internal debate surrounding the future direction of the YCV. McMordie's comments at the launch may not have been entirely in keeping with the YCV's 'non-sectarian' and 'non-political' ethos when he observed:

*In times of difficulty men had to carry their guns while they followed the plough ... the nation or people that had lost the fighting instinct was sure to be swamped by others who possessed that instinct.*

The following day (11 September) the *Northern Whig* was extremely enthusiastic about the formation of the organisation:

*The Young Citizen Volunteer movement had a splendid send off last night... In most countries all citizens are trained in the use of arms, and in a moment of danger they are able to respond to the call of duty. However anxious our people*



10 September 1912, Belfast City Hall

*may be to fight for the flag they are not trained to do so. This is a source of constant peril to the nation. Every healthy man should be able to take his part in defending his country. If the Young Citizen Volunteer movement succeeds - and it deserves to succeed - the national gain will be considerable.*

The *Belfast News Letter* of the same date was equally enthusiastic and noted: 'The large banqueting hall was well occupied by fine specimens of the young manhood of the city'. The *News Letter* put the number of young men present at 2,000.

The Volunteer Executive consisted of seventy members, who might be fairly described as 'the Great and the Good' of early twentieth-century Belfast. Many lent their support and offered their good will but did not take a close day-to-day interest in the work of the organisation.

Thomas Sinclair, the organiser of the Ulster Unionist Convention of 1892 and author of the Ulster Covenant, headed the printed list. B.D.W. Montgomery, the Belfast businessman and secretary of the Ulster Club, who suggested the Scottish Covenant of 1581 as a model for the Ulster Covenant was also a member. Fred Crawford, the Larne gunrunner was a member, as was George S. Clark, the shipbuilder, briefly the Unionist MP for North Belfast and chairman of the Ulster Unionist Council's special



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subcommittee already overseeing the acquisition of arms to resist Home Rule. If George Clark, the co-founder of Workman, Clark & Company, represented shipbuilding, J. Milne Barbour, brother-in-law of the *Titanic's* designer and future Northern Ireland Cabinet minister, as owner of William Barbour Linen Thread Company of Hilden, the largest linen thread manufacturers in the world, was one of those who represented the textile industry, and James Mackie represented engineering, the third pillar of Belfast's industrial prowess. Robert Meyer, the Town Clerk of Belfast, and F. W. Moneypenny, the Lord Mayor's private secretary, were members. Belfast City councillors were well represented. So too were men with military experience. Membership was drawn widely from Belfast's industrial and commercial elite and from families steeped in Unionism since the 1880s. Francis Joseph Bigger stands out as a conspicuous nationalist. (Please turn to the Appendix for the full list of names.)



Thomas Sinclair

### The organisation takes shape

Despite the YCV's full name, it never extended beyond Belfast. However, the name clearly reflected the aspiration that the organisation would not be confined to Belfast. There were apparently plans to form battalions in Londonderry, Fermanagh and elsewhere.

The aims and objectives of the YCV were:

- To develop a spirit of responsible citizenship and municipal patriotism by means of lectures and discussions on civic matters
- To cultivate, by means of a modified military and police drill, a manly



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physique, with habits of self-control, self-respect and chivalry

- To assist as an organisation, when called upon, the civil power in the maintenance of the peace



Geddes emphasized that the YCV was unique and expressed the hope that the YCV would receive Government support and encouragement.

Local companies of between 30 and 50 were to be formed, each under a captain and honorary major, with a lieutenant and staff sergeant to every 10 members. Six or more companies formed a battalion and a battalion council was formed from the officers of the companies. They in turn appointed



YCV Football Team





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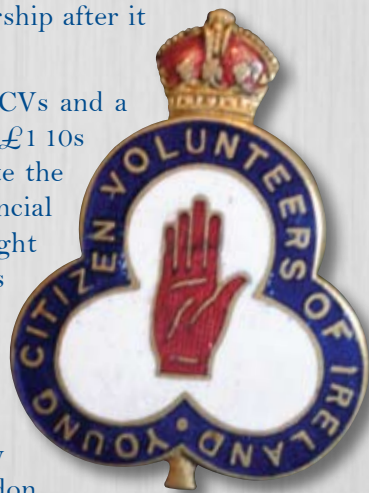
annually a battalion president, vice-presidents, honorary chaplains, honorary treasurer and executive. Eight companies, A to H, were established before the outbreak of the Great War.

### Membership

Membership was open to anyone aged between 18 and 35 who was over 5 feet in height and who could present 'credentials of good character'. The YCV's constitution aspired to the organisation being 'non-sectarian and non-political'.

The YCV's bye-laws stated: 'Members shall not, as such, take part in any political meeting or demonstration; nor shall they wear the uniform of the Corps if attending a political meeting'. While some Roman Catholics joined, the membership was overwhelmingly Protestant. The YCV also attracted some members from the Jewish community and – more surprisingly – from the Society of Friends (or Quakers). In his book *Carson's Army* (Manchester, 2008), Timothy Bowman has suggested: 'It seems likely that the YCV retained some middle-class Catholic membership after it became incorporated into the UVF'.

Each member was to pay 2s 6d on joining the YCVs and a further 6d per month. The members also had to pay £1 10s in monthly instalments for their uniforms. Despite the fact that this represented a fairly substantial financial outlay, in the course of a few weeks seven or eight hundred young men enrolled. The organisation's membership fee may have served to make the organisation's membership largely middle class. Ramsay Colles' *History of Ulster* (London, 1919) records: 'This was a body composed largely of young business men ... In general type it closely resembled units of the standing of the London



Membership Badge



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Scottish or the Artists' Rifles; and a very large number of its members subsequently obtained commissions [during the Great War]. However, the organisation's perceived middle class profile perhaps is exaggerated. It did not, for example, prevent Thomas Carnduff, the working-class poet, joining the Cliftonville Company of the YCV.

### Drilling

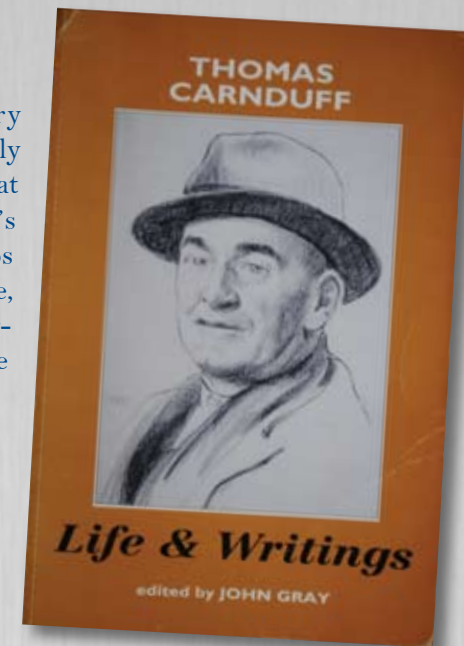
A YCV member was expected to attend weekly drills and learn by means of a 'modified military and police drill, single stick, rifle and baton exercises, signalling, knot-tying and other such exercises'. There were significant financial penalties for missing drill. The acquisition of knowledge relating to 'life-saving and ambulance work' was also deemed desirable. In October 1912 the Markets Committee of Belfast Corporation sanctioned the use of St George's Covered Market in May Street as a drill hall for the Belfast Battalion of the YCV. The drill nights started on Monday 14 October and continued each week on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from 8.00 to 10.00 pm.



St George's Market

Carnduff described his involvement in the Cliftonville Company of the YCV in his autobiography:

*The drill instructors were all ex-soldiers. I joined up with the Cliftonville Company. Most of the officers were still on the reserve of the regular army. A fife-and-drum and bugle band was*





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*formed. We paid for, and were issued out with uniform: silver grey cloth with dark blue facings and silver regimental badges displaying a three-leaved shamrock with the [Red] Hand of Ulster embossed on the centre.*

*We were soon licked into shape, similar to a British territorial infantry battalion of today. Lt-Colonel Chichester, an Irish Guards reserve officer, took over command, with Major Kerr-Smylie [the chairman of the Northern Whig and the Unionist MP for North Antrim from January 1910 to 1922] and Captain Harry Mulholland [the third son of the 2nd Lord Dunleath and a future Speaker of the Northern Ireland House of Commons] as second and third officers. We made a brave show on our first route march through the city streets. But we carried no firearms, which caused much comment.*

### Colonel Robert Peel Dawson Spencer Chichester

Originally the YCV Committee approached a Major Ferrar to command the YCV but he declined the honour. The Committee then secured the services of Colonel Robert Peel Dawson Spencer Chichester, a member of one of Ulster's most prominent and historically significant families. Chichester insisted on a free hand with regard to the military side of the organisation, an expansion in the size of companies, the early purchase of rifles, and the appointment of additional instructors. He contributed £100 to YCV funds and paid for the YCV band's instruments. Ultimately he contributed over £260 to the organisation, not an insignificant amount of money a century ago because £1 in 1912 would be worth £85 today.

Chichester was the grandson of the 4th Marquess of Donegall, the family which had once been the proprietors of Belfast, and, if not a direct descendant of Arthur Chichester, James VI & I's Lord Deputy in Ireland between 1604 and 1615 and one of the principal architects of the Plantation of Ulster, certainly a member of the same family.

Chichester had attained the rank of Major in the service of the Irish



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Guards. He had fought in the British Central Africa Campaign between 1897 and 1900. He had fought in the Boer War between 1899 and 1901. He commanded the 6th Battalion, Middlesex Regiment between 1904 and 1913. In 1901 he married Dehra Ker Fisher, better known as the formidable Dame Dehra Parker (the surname of her second husband), the longest-serving woman MP in the Northern Ireland House of Commons and Northern Ireland first and only female Cabinet minister. Chichester was briefly the MP for South Londonderry in 1921.



Colonel Chichester

### Education

Although taken very seriously, drill and the acquisition of military skills were not the YCV's sole preoccupation. Education also played an important role in the YCV's programme of activity. Lectures were arranged on themes such as citizenship and Belfast history.

On 10 December Francis Forth, the principal of the Belfast Municipal Technical Institute, addressed the YCV and extolled the virtues of hierarchy, 'well-ordered and intelligent discipline', and 'self-sacrifice and courage'. Forth illustrated his case by discussing *Faithful unto Death*, a celebrated mid-Victorian painting by Sir Edward Poynter, which depicted a Roman sentry (in 79AD) standing at his post while Vesuvius erupted and Pompeii was engulfed in lava in the background. Forth held up the Roman sentry's example of faithfulness to duty and courage as one to be emulated by members of the YCV. Poynter, first Slade Professor at University College London and subsequently Director of the National Gallery, was married to Agnes MacDonald, one of four remarkable sisters with strong family connections with Ballinamallard, County Fermanagh. Alice was the





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mother of Rudyard Kipling, Louisa was the mother of Stanley Baldwin, the future Conservative Party leader and Prime Minister, and Georgina was the wife of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, another leading nineteenth-century painter.

On 13 March 1913 the Belfast Battalion paraded to the Municipal Technical Institute (a building closely modelled on the War Office in Whitehall), where they heard a lecture delivered by E. J. Elliott on the subject of citizenship. Frank Workman, the High Sheriff, presided. Workman was one of the founders of Workman, Clark & Company, 'the wee yard', and the YCV's Honorary Treasurer. After the lecture Colonel Chichester proposed a vote of thanks to the speaker and this was seconded by J. A. Thompson. According to the *Northern Whig* of 17 March, this was the first time the Volunteers wore their new uniforms in public.



*Belfast Municipal  
Technical Institute*

However, according to the *Belfast News Letter* of 4 April 1913, the first time the YCV wore their new uniforms in public was at a concert in the Ulster Hall held on 3 April under the auspices of the 1st (Belfast) YCV Battalion. On this occasion the News Letter was probably in error but it did accurately observe that the uniform was similar to that worn by some of the territorial regiments in England.

On 8 May 1913 five hundred members of the Belfast YCV Battalion, led by Colonel Chichester, marched from St George's Market to the Municipal Technical Institute to attend a lecture on 'The History of Belfast' by Robert Meyer, Belfast's Town Clerk. The lecture was accompanied by 'a splendid series of limelight views, the lantern being manipulated by A. R. Hogg', the prolific photographer whose work constitutes an invaluable record of life in Belfast between the late 1880s and the 1930s. Among those present were Captain Daley, Samuel T. Mercier JP, John Tyrrell JP, John S. Shaw JP, G. W. Ferguson JP, James A. Thompson, G. R. Black, Joseph Davison, Alexander Cooke, W. J. Stokes, F. C. Forth and H. G. Stevenson. Apologies



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were received from Rt Hon Thomas Sinclair DL, Sir Thomas Dixon Bart JP, the High Sheriff Frank Workman, J. Milne Barbour DL, H. H. Graham JP, Fred W. Ewart, E.J. Elliott, Kirker Robb, William McMullan and Hugh Smiley. The names of both those present and those who sent apologies constitute a veritable 'who's who' of Belfast's social, cultural and political elite.

During the course of 1913 it was proposed that the YCVs place themselves at the disposal of the government. However their approach to government was spurned.

### The suggested merger with the UVF

The formation of the YCV coincided with the unfolding of the Third Home Rule crisis. The organisation was formed a little over a fortnight before the signing of the Ulster Covenant on 28 September. The Ulster Volunteer





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Force was formed at the end of January 1913. Prior to becoming part of the UVF there clearly was cooperation. This is evidenced by the participation of the YCV in a review of the Belfast Division of the UVF at Balmoral on Saturday 27 September 1913.

As the Home Rule crisis unfolded there was mounting pressure on the YCV to merge with the UVF and in March 1914 the leadership proposed a merger. In retrospect, this would seem to have been almost inevitable since most of the YCV leaders were prominent unionists. Nevertheless the proposal generated a surprising degree of controversy. For example, Leon McVicker, the managing director of Cantrell & Cochrane, was profoundly unhappy. Although a member of the UVF, McVicker wished the YCV to remain 'non-political' and 'non-sectarian'. Absorption by the UVF would compromise and undermine the organisation's credibility. Recognising the



Senior Non Commissioned Officers



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existence of the problem, he tentatively suggested that YCV members could be granted 'leave of absence' for the duration of the Home Rule crisis and resume active membership when the crisis had been resolved.

At a meeting of the Volunteer Council on 2 April Geddes proposed a resolution, seconded by Captain Mitchell, which stated:

*That the Office Bearers and Council of the YCV of Ireland deeply regret that they were not consulted prior to the recent amalgamation of the 1st Battalion YCV, with the Ulster Volunteer Force, and they take this opportunity of informing the public that it was done without their authority and consent.*

Carnduff offers us a succinct account of this episode from the perspective of the rank-and-file membership:

*Some eight hundred volunteers paraded in St George's Market where Colonel Chichester proposed we join forces with the UVF, threatening to resign on the spot if the majority refused. The vote was practically unanimous and the Young Citizens ceased to be an independent force.*

### The merger proceeds

It seems that some YCVs resigned but, as Carnduff noted, the vast majority did not and the merger went ahead. The YCV became a battalion of the Belfast Regiment of the UVF on the 17 May 1914.

Even before this, Carnduff records that on the evening of Friday 24 April 1914 the YCVs were summoned to report at Ormiston House, Chichester's home. Ormiston House had previously been the home of Edward Harland and then Lord Pirrie.

*A cordon of volunteers was placed round the grounds and patrols sent out along the roads to intercept any inquisitive policeman and cut the telephone wires in*







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Balmoral review

*the district. Eventually a lorry arrived and rifles and ammunition were soon transferred to the cellars of the house.*

This incident relates to the Larne gunrunning and is an account of YCV's part in the full-scale mobilisation of the UVF which coincided with the landing of Major Fred Crawford's cargo at Larne, Bangor and Donaghadee.

In the early summer of 1914 the UVF staged a public demonstration in Belfast and the Young Citizen battalion played a prominent role on that occasion. According to Carnduff:

*The Young Citizen battalion, being the most advanced in military training, was ordered out on a route march through the central thoroughfares of the city. We were to parade fully armed with rifles and bayonets, as well as a machine gun detachment. The city was full of rumours on the morning of the route march. There were whispers that operations on a warlike scale would commence that day. But the authorities merely stood by.*



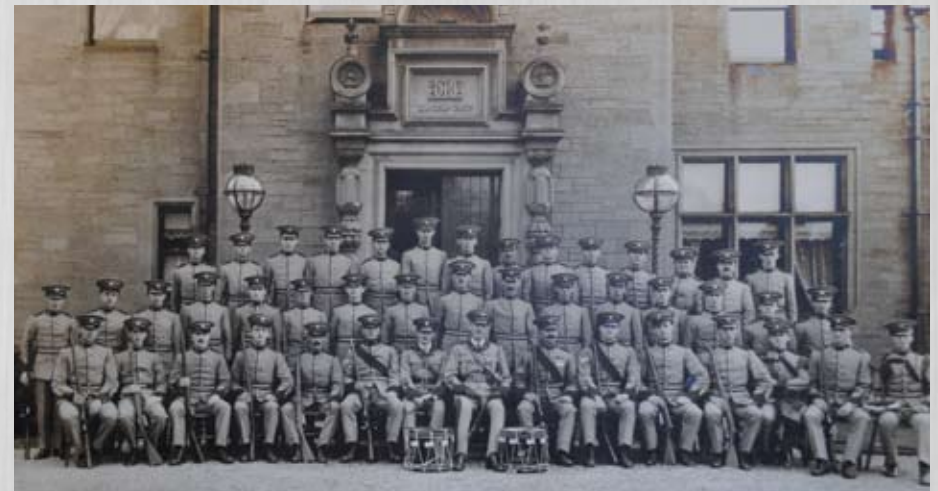
## The Young Citizen Volunteers



*Headed by Colonel Chichester and Major Kerr-Smylie, mounted on chargers, and led by our regimental band, we made a brave show in our silver grey uniforms and rifles and bayonets glinting in the hot sun of a summer's day. Bringing up the rear, guarded by a strong escort, was a brace of machine guns mounted on tripods and bogies.*

On 6 June 1914 the YCV marched to Balmoral and was reviewed by Carson.

As the YCVs entered the Balmoral Showgrounds, according to the *Belfast News Letter*, they were accorded a rapturous reception from the 25,000-strong crowd. Welcoming the decision of the Young Citizens to join forces with the UVF, Sir Edward said: 'We give them a most hearty welcome. They will find in your ranks men with the same ideals, men with the same loyalty towards their King, and the same determination to uphold the rights of their country'.



YCV members at "Ormiston"





Although the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* on 8 June 1914 endorsed the YCV's stance, the Irish News editorial of the same date reminded the YCV that they had once claimed to be 'non-political' and 'non-sectarian'.

## The Great War

With the outbreak of the Great War the third Home Rule crisis receded into the background and on 5 September members of the YCV began enlisting, becoming the 14th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles. On 3 October 1914 the battalion had a strength of 17 officers and 1,038 other ranks. Half the recruits came from outside the battalion's natural recruiting area (i.e. Belfast): 20% came from elsewhere in Ireland, 29% from Great Britain and 1% from overseas, principally the United States. The Ulster Division was authorised formally on 28 October but had begun to take shape quite some time before that date, its three constituent brigades being created in mid-September. The 14th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles formed part of the 109th Brigade. Unfortunately, Carnduff is not available as a source for this phase of the YCV's history because he served in the Royal Engineers.



## Preliminary military training

The Brigade received its preliminary training at Finner, between Ballyshannon and Bundoran in County Donegal. Finner camp consisted of tented accommodation. As the winter of 1914-15 was particularly severe, being especially cold and wet, the ground around the tents was turned into quagmire. Living under canvas in such adverse conditions inevitably resulted in a lot of illness. There were an alarming number of deaths for a division 'at home' (i.e. in the United Kingdom). Hence, the YCV had to be hurriedly moved to Shane's Castle, Randalstown, in January 1915.

By the spring of 1915 the Division had completed its preliminary training and the Division was brought together for a parade in Belfast on 8 May (the day after the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German U-boat) prior to departing Ulster's shores. At 12.30 p.m. 17,000 troops of the Division were called to attention and inspected at Malone by Major General Sir Hugh McCalmont. Then the Division marched to the City Centre through streets bedecked with flags and bunting, greeted by friends and relatives brought in from all over Ulster by special trains. At the City Hall the Division marched



Finner Camp, Co Donegal





Ulster Division Parade, May 1915

past the Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress and Carson. It took the Division one hour and forty minutes to pass the City Hall. The YCVs made a special impression with their military bearing.

## Further training in England

Early in July the Division was shipped across the Irish Sea to continue training at Seaford in Sussex where the emphasis was on tactics and manoeuvres on the South Downs.

While the Ulster Division was training at Seaford, military lodges were established under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orange Lodge of England for the duration of the war. Five lodges were formed initially but each battalion in the division ultimately acquired its own lodge. Members of 14th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles formed Young Citizen Volunteers LOL 871.

Although the Ulster Division as a whole made a favourable impression on the people of Sussex, according to Captain Spender, the membership of the YCV battalion was 'especially favoured by the fairer sex of Sussex' on account of



reports that they were 'all sons of ministers of religion'.

In September the division was then moved to Bordon and Bramshott for official musketry and machine gun training.

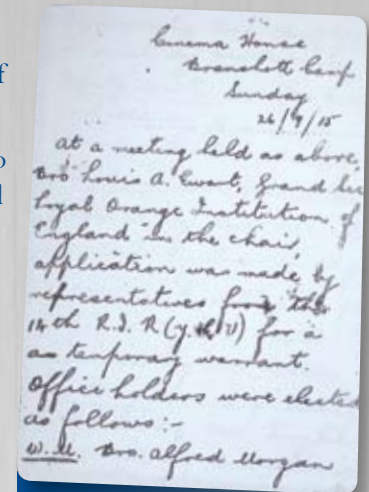
## France

In early October 1915 the Division was transported over to France, the YCVs travelling aboard the *Empress Queen*, an old Isle of Man paddle steamer. One member of the YCVs, Billy McFadzean wrote to his family: 'You people at home make me feel quite proud when you tell me "I am the soldier boy of the McFadzeans." I hope to play the game and if I don't add much lustre to it, I certainly will not tarnish it'.

The YCV disembarked at Le Havre on 6 October and proceeded to Amiens. They were first attached to the 48th Division in the Fonquevillers sector and then on 4 November transferred to the 12th Brigade temporarily, rejoining their original brigade in December.

In the early spring of 1916 the Ulster Division assumed responsibility for what until then had been the quietest part of the British front line: a sector in the hitherto aptly named *département* of Somme, Somme being derived from the Celtic 'samara', meaning 'tranquil'.

The YCVs were not best pleased at being nicknamed 'the Young Chocolate Soldiers', on account of their comparatively privileged backgrounds, by the rest of the 109th Brigade. They were not very popular either with the other four Belfast-based battalions. They all contended the YCVs were given 'soft jobs'. Nevertheless, in May 1916 the YCV won a brigade competition testing military skills but, more impressively, as Wilfrid Spender noted,



Minutes of the first meeting of LOL 871



## The Young Citizen Volunteers



the YCV managed to repel a German raiding party in April, a feat the neighbouring 29th Division, the so called 'Incomparables' and veterans of Gallipoli, failed to emulate.

### The Battle of the Somme

On 1 July 1916 the 109th Brigade was allocated the assault on the southern flank of the Schwaben Redoubt, a parallelogram of trenches, dugouts and fortified machine guns, occupying the highest ground south of the river Ancre, a tributary of the Somme. The Derrys (the 10th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers) and the Tyrones (the 9th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers) were to go over the top in the first wave. They were to advance to the fourth line of the German trenches, which they were to hold. The YCVs and the Donegal and Fermanagh men (the 11th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers) were to follow them. The Donegal and Fermanagh men were to consolidate the 'Crucifix', a vital trench junction on the southern slope of the Schwaben Redoubt. Together, the YCVs and the Donegal and Fermanagh men were to consolidate the first three lines of trenches against which the Derrys and the Tyrones had led the attack. Then the YCVs and the Donegal and Fermanagh men were to attack the fifth German line.

As Cyril Falls recorded in *The History of the 36th (Ulster) Division* (London, 1922):

*The 11th Inniskillings and the 14th Rifles, as they emerged from [Thiepval] wood were literally mown down, and 'No Man's Land' became a ghastly spectacle of dead and wounded.*



## The Young Citizen Volunteers



Jim Maultsaid, a U.S. citizen who had joined the 14th Rifles, kept a diary throughout the war. He wrote of the beginning of the Battle of the Somme:

*We surge forward. Bayonets sparkle and glint. Cries and curses rent the air. Chums fall, some without a sound – and others . . . Oh, my God! May I never hear such cries again!*

*There goes the YCV flag tied to the muzzle of a rifle. That man had nerve! Through the road just ahead of us we had crossed the sunken road.*

*We could see khaki figures rushing the German front line. The Inniskillings had got at them.*

As well being a diarist and an accomplished athlete, Jim Maultsaid was a talented artist and an illustrator of *The Incinerator*, the YCV's magazine which was produced for and by the men in the trenches. Some of his illustrations appear in Philip Orr's much admired *The Road to Somme: Men of the Ulster Division tell their story* (Belfast, 1987). Maultsaid was wounded on 1 July.



Martin Middlebrook, in preparing his classic and ground-breaking oral history entitled *The First Day on the Somme* (Harmondsworth, 1971), interviewed veterans of the YCVs to superb effect. Two quotations from L/Cpl J. A. Henderson, interviewed by Middlebrook, memorably capture the sheer horror of the Somme. Middlebrook virtually concludes his book by quoting Henderson as saying:

*'I made up my mind that, if I ever got out of it alive, there wasn't enough gold in the Bank of England to get me back again.'*





Earlier in the book Middlebrook quotes Henderson's observations about the men of the West Riding Territorials who late in the day were sent to relieve the hard-pressed Ulster Division: 'As I was coming out I met the relieving troops moving up. I have never seen such a look of terror on the faces of human beings.'

The role of the Ulster Division at the Battle of the Somme is obviously a subject which requires extended treatment elsewhere.

### William McFadzean VC

Even before the men of the Ulster Division went over the top on 1 July 1916 William Frederick McFadzean, the YCV's most famous member, had performed a selfless and heroic act which was to win him a posthumous Victoria Cross.

McFadzean was born 9 October 1895 in Lurgan and was baptised in First Lurgan Presbyterian Church. He was the eldest son of William, a linen yarn salesman who had been born in Dundalk, County Louth, and Anne Pedlow McFadzean, a Lurgan lady. William had three younger brothers and a sister.

Later the family moved to Belfast (where the three younger children were born) and lived at Rubicon, Cregagh. From school records, it is known that he entered Mountpottinger School in Belfast on 13 April 1904 and was enrolled in the Third Class. He left the school on 12 August 1908 and attended the Trade Preparatory School in Belfast. He was an enthusiastic junior member of Collegians Rugby Club and was on the staff of Spence, Bryson & Company as a clerk before enlisting on 22 September 1914. Perusal of the casualty lists of the 14th Rifles in the Belfast newspapers in July 1916 confirms that a high proportion of YCV members were similarly involved in the linen trade.



Standing six feet tall, McFadzean became a 'grenadier' or a 'bomber' in the battalion because of his height. On the morning of 1 July 1916 before 'zero hour' he was busily equipping himself to undertake his role as a 'bomber'.

The award of Private McFadzean's VC was gazetted on 26 September 1916. The citation succinctly explains how he won his VC:

*For most conspicuous bravery near Thiepval Wood, on 1st July, 1916. While in a concentration trench, and opening a box of bombs for distribution prior to an attack, the box slipped down into the trench, which was crowded with men, and two of the safety pins fell out. Private McFadzean, instantly realising the danger to his comrades, with heroic courage threw himself on top of the bombs. The bombs exploded, blowing him to pieces, but only one other man was injured. He well knew his danger, being himself a bomber, but without a moment's hesitation he gave his life for his comrades.*





## The Young Citizen Volunteers



William's comrades laid the body carefully aside, hoping that he would receive a decent burial later. However, William has no known grave and is commemorated on the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing, Pier and Face 15A and 15B.

King George V presented Private McFadzean's VC to his father at Buckingham Palace on 28 February 1917.

### Epilogue

In February 1918 three battalions of the 109th Brigade were disbanded: the 14th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles, the 10th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and 11th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Brigadier General W. F. Hessey, GOC of the 109th Brigade, said that it was 'the most heart-rending business' and that 'the men were simply heartbroken'.

The disbanded battalions were replaced by the 1st Battalion of Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (drawn from 29th Division) and 2nd Battalion of Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (transferred from 32nd Division). Such restructuring of brigades and divisions flowed from the heavy and unrelenting slaughter on the Western Front.

However, before disbandment the YCV managed to participate in two



## The Young Citizen Volunteers

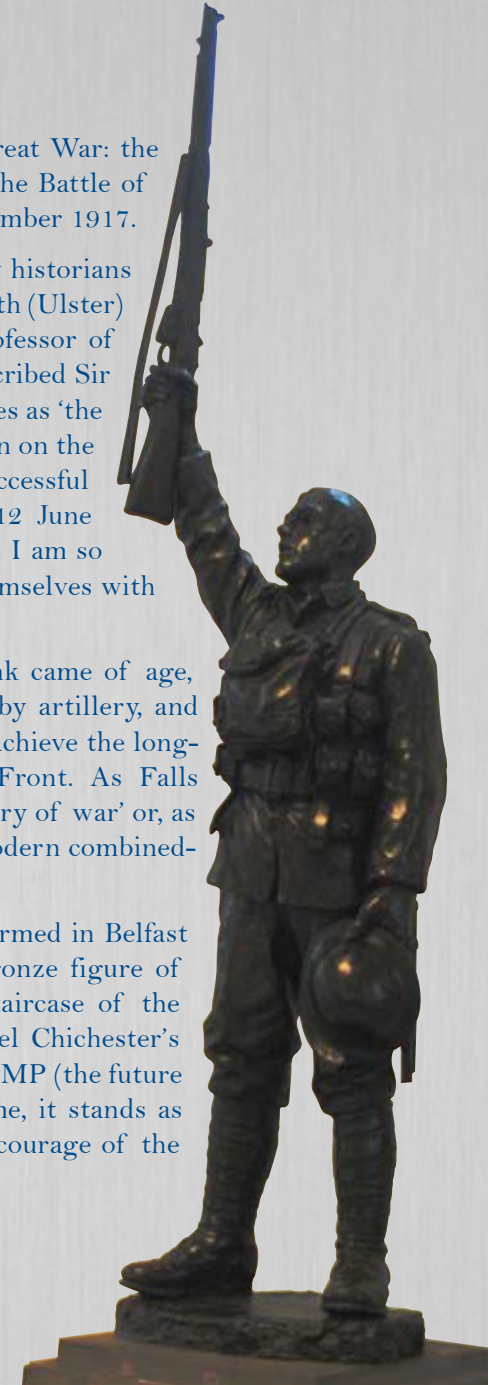


of the most significant battles of the Great War: the Battle of Messines on 7 June 1917 and the Battle of Cambrai in late November and early December 1917.

Cyril Falls, one of the finest British military historians of the twentieth century, author of the 36th (Ulster) Division's official history and future Professor of the History of War at Oxford, justly described Sir Herbert Plumer's great victory at Messines as 'the first completely successful single operation on the British front' and 'the most perfect and successful example of the limited offensive'. On 12 June 1917 Wilfrid Spender wrote to Lillian: '... I am so glad that the Ulstermen have covered themselves with fresh glory and without much loss'.

Cambrai was the battle in which the tank came of age, demonstrating that the tank, supported by artillery, and in close cooperation with infantry, could achieve the long-sought breakthrough on the Western Front. As Falls observed: 'it opened a new era in the history of war' or, as we might say today, it marked the first modern combined-arms battle.

As the Young Citizen Volunteers were formed in Belfast City Hall, it is appropriate there is a bronze figure of a YCV soldier, standing on the East Staircase of the City Hall, which was unveiled by Colonel Chichester's widow on 1 July 1924. As Mrs Chichester MP (the future Dame Dehra Parker) observed at the time, it stands as a reminder to future generations of the courage of the YCVs who fell 'for King and Country'.







## APPENDIX: The Volunteer Committee

Rt Hon. Thomas Sinclair DL  
Sir W Crawford JP  
J. Milne Barbour DL  
G. S. Clark  
R. H. Reade DL JP  
Lt-Col. W. E. C. McCammond JP  
Major W. Baird  
Major F. Crawford  
Major F. A. Cunningham JP  
Captain J. Ferguson  
Captain J. R. Mitchell  
Dr W. A. Wadsworth JP  
Cllr Dr J. D. Williamson  
Geo. Andrews JP  
Harold A. Barbour  
S. D. Bell  
Fras. J. Bigger, MRIA  
W. H. Chiplin  
Alexr. Cooke  
Geo. Crawford

J. Carroll Culbert  
J. E. Dawson  
C. W.S Drean  
E. J. Elliott  
F. W. Ewart  
R. B. Fair  
G. W. Ferguson JP  
W. Fulton  
W. Garrett  
R. G. Greale  
Wm Gibson MD



Cllr W. J. Gilliland JP  
R. E. Herdman JP  
S. J. Hutchinson  
Hugh C. Kelly  
R. H. Kinahan  
James Mackie  
John Malone  
H. S. Martin LDS  
F.W.L. May  
Ald. S. T. Mercier JP

A. W. Metcalf  
Robert Meyer (Town Clerk, Belfast)  
J. H.D. Millar  
R. A. Mitchell LL.B  
B.D.W. Montgomery  
F. W. Moneypenny MVO  
Charles McMaster  
Henry Joy McCracken  
Leon McVicker  
Cllr Wm Mullan  
E.M. Reid  
Cllr H.Riddle MIME  
G. V. Roberts  
Kirker Robb  
W.D. Ryell  
John Sinclair  
W. Joseph Stokes  
James A. Thompson  
M.H. Turnbull LL.B  
Cllr J.C. White  
A.G. Wilson JP  
James Wood



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