Uniting Workers’ Memories
Experience and Legacy of World War 1

Mary Muldowney
Oral history – questions of class and gender?
Hidden from history
The elephant in the room
Commemoration not celebration
The aims of the project

The aims of the project were to:

- Explore the impact of the war on working class communities and how it is remembered
- Examine specifically trade union aspects of attitudes to Ireland’s involvement in the war
- Illustrate that World War 1 affected all parts of Ireland
Participation in the project

UNITE members were asked to indicate if they were willing to give an interview or to lend diaries, letters, photographs or other memorabilia from the First World War years.
Contributors to Uniting Memories project

Interviewees: Northern Ireland
- Eric Harvey
- Daniel Lee
- Jimmy Nixon

Interviewees: Republic of Ireland
- Fergus Farrell
- Liam Murray
- Jimmy Whelan

Lenders of memorabilia for display at Irish Policy Conference, May 2015
- Brian Nelson
- Jimmy Nixon
- Robert Scott
WOMEN OF IRELAND

YOUR POWER IS GREAT
YOU MANAGE THE HOUSEHOLD

If you want to shorten the WAR and escape excessive taxation

I. AVOID WASTE
II. SAVE MONEY
III. BUY WAR LOAN, OR LODGE SAVINGS IN BANK
They didn't understand the issues of Home Rule and all the associated matters with that but I thought it was interesting, certainly from our family point of view was that my grandfather Lee was so politically motivated by Redmond, who from what I can understand of it went along with the promise from the British, the Liberal Government as it was at the time, that if they helped them in the Great War as it was called, then Home Rule was on the cards and they would be given it and presumably my grandfather bought into that. (Daniel Lee)
The sons of my grandfather - he had two sons as well as my father, Edmund and one of the two sons, David joined the British Army in the '14-18 War and then there was a younger brother than David and he went to join the British Army as well. Quite a number of them down South joined the British Army in the '14-18 War. ... Two of the lads ended up in the British Army and one of them was killed - it was Jimmy, James was killed, who was younger. He shouldn't have been in the Army. The other one survived it (Eric Harvey)
It was kill or be killed so you know my father went out to kill Germans and he had no hatred in his heart for Germans, he was in a situation where he was conditioned to do it almost by society and by the training. ... This was the first industrial war and it had industrial capability in terms of they liked to say subduing the enemy, killing the enemy and injuring the enemy. They had Lewis guns, they had machine guns which were highly developed at the time and other heavy guns plus gas and people died on an industrial scale, which wasn't the situation it was before that. Not even the Boer War or the Crimean War, this was something brand new and the tactics were hopeless - lions led by donkeys, as the phrase goes. (Liam Murray)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regiment Name</th>
<th>Recruiting area</th>
<th>Battalions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Royal Irish Regiment</td>
<td>Tipperary, Wexford Waterford, Kilkenny</td>
<td>July: 2(^{nd}) Battalion&lt;br&gt;Sept: 6(^{th}) Battalion</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Royal Munster Fusiliers</td>
<td>Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare</td>
<td>Sept: 1(^{st}) and 8(^{th}) Battalions</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Connaught Rangers</td>
<td>Galway, Sligo, Mayo, Roscommon, Leitrim</td>
<td>Sept: 6(^{th}) Battalion</td>
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<td>The Inniskilling Fusiliers</td>
<td>Omagh, Fermanagh, Donegal, Derry</td>
<td>July: 1(^{st}) and 2(^{nd}) Battalions&lt;br&gt;Sept: 9(^{th}), 10(^{th}) and 11(^{th}) Battalions</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Royal Irish Rifles</td>
<td>Belfast, Down, Antrim, Tyrone</td>
<td>July: 1(^{st}), 2(^{nd}), 8(^{th}), 9(^{th}), 10(^{th}), 11(^{th}), 12(^{th}), 13(^{th}), 14(^{th}), 15(^{th}) and 16(^{th}) Battalions&lt;br&gt;Sept: 7(^{th}) Battalion</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Royal Irish Fusiliers</td>
<td>Monaghan, Armagh, Cavan</td>
<td>July: 1(^{st}) Battalion&lt;br&gt;Sept: 9(^{th}) Battalion</td>
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<td>The Leinster Regiment</td>
<td>Offaly, Meath, Louth, Laois</td>
<td>Sept: 7(^{th}) Battalion</td>
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<td>The Royal Dublin Fusiliers</td>
<td>Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, Carlow</td>
<td>July: 1(^{st}) and 2(^{nd}) Battalions&lt;br&gt;Sept: 8(^{th}) and 9(^{th}) Battalions&lt;br&gt;Nov: 10(^{th}) Battalion</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Irish Guards</td>
<td>All Ireland</td>
<td>Sept: 1(^{st}) and 2(^{nd}) Battalions</td>
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<td>The Tyneside Irish/ Northumberland Fusiliers</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>July: 1/24(^{th}), 2/25(^{th}), 3/26(^{th}), 4/27(^{th}) Battalions</td>
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The nation must be taught to bear losses. No amount of skill on the part of the higher commanders, no training, however good, on the part of the officers and men, no superiority of arms and ammunition, however great, will enable victories to be won without the sacrifice of men's lives. The nation must be prepared to see heavy casualty lists.

- Field Marshal Douglas Haig, June 1916
There was a lot of military people [in the family] but you see people joined the Army, whether it was in the First World War or the Second World War or in between the Wars or after the Wars, a lot of people joined the Army because there was no work and because they needed to feed the house anyway. Some of them maybe even thinking, some of the younger ones thinking 'well if I'm not in the house it's a mouth less to feed and I might be able to send back a few bob'. (Jimmy Nixon)
He was very quiet and he obviously wasn't in the best because of the shell shock. He might have been healthy all right; it was his head, I think. He was very withdrawn and I kind of got the impression that you are better off staying out of wars, you know? ... I've no time for war really but I think that it's unavoidable because it's part of some people's nature to go to war to - and part of people who run countries - to go to war to gain advantage and all the countries seem to be stricken with that. There are very few countries that you would say are definitely pacifists. (Fergus Farrell)
In my granny’s house were photographs of my grandad in his uniform and he was in the Irish army before for a while and Micky in his British uniform. I remember that. I don’t, at that time I didn’t realise a reluctance to talk about the world war as opposed to 1916 and I remember what Micky did as being – I was never ashamed of it, I didn’t feel any need – but as I got older I seen the attitudes to the wearing of the poppy and things like that, which I didn’t understand before. ...

The Menin Gate has all the names on it of the people that died and all that and there's books there you can look up the names of, I don't know whether it's all the people that fought, and there's also the place where the President and the Queen opened the big tower and that has all the Irish people's names. (Jimmy Whelan)