

ON THE BRINK

The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 Project

PRO / ANTI HOME RULE

LOCAL WOMEN

COMMEMORATION

CATHERINE ANNE SWEETENHAM TRENCH

Born in 1877, Catherine was the daughter of Sir Thomas Lecky, Greystone Hall Limavady. In 1905 she married Frederick Charles Bloomfield Trench. Trench, born in Portarlington, King's County (now County Laois), was first commissioned into the Londonderry Artillery in 1899. During the Home Rule Crisis, Captain Trench with J C B Proctor, helped form the Limavady Ulster Volunteer Force.

At the outbreak of World War One, Trench was commissioned as Captain into the 10th Service Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (Derry volunteers), becoming Major early 1915. From the beginning of the War, Mrs Trench was organising and raising funds for comforts for soldiers, especially the Derrys.

In 1915 Trench was court martialled, but awaiting the outcome, he disappeared. He had gone to London and enlisted as a private in the 14th (City of London) Battalion (London Scottish) under the name of Bloomfield from Tipperary. On 25th May 1916, 5746 Private FC Bloomfield eventually went to France. He was reported missing, believed killed in action, on 1st July 1916. His body was never recovered.

Mrs Trench continued to support the 10th Battalion. She also started a fund for the dependents of soldiers and another for Prisoners of War. During this time she sought information as to whether her husband was dead or taken prisoner. After the War she was involved with the Soldiers Pensions Committee. To honour Mrs Trench who had worked so hard to raise funds to support local soldiers with the local Prisoners of War Fund. In 1920, she would be invested as a Member, Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) for her services. Significantly, Mrs Trench was the first woman to be awarded in this way; women and civilians were not eligible before the war.

*'...Mid many cares and sorrow great, When mourning sore a loving mate Who fell a victim to the hate
Of German pride*

Your efforts never did abate For Britain's side...'

by "the Dungiven Poet" on occasion of Mrs Trench being awarded the honour (MBE) for her great services to our soldiers.'



Mrs Trench with returning Prisoners of War at Alexander Hall Limavady
Courtesy of private collection

In March 1919, a group of young men in Limavady, met to consider setting up a memorial flute band, with the suggested name of the Trench Memorial Band. The band would commemorate those of their peers who had fallen in World War One and to honour Mrs Trench of Greystone Hall, who had worked so hard to raise funds to support local soldiers with the local Prisoners of War Fund. The group included discharged soldiers who felt especially grateful for Mrs Trench's efforts. On Armistice Day 1920, the Trench Memorial Band played patriotic airs through the streets.