

Local Voices

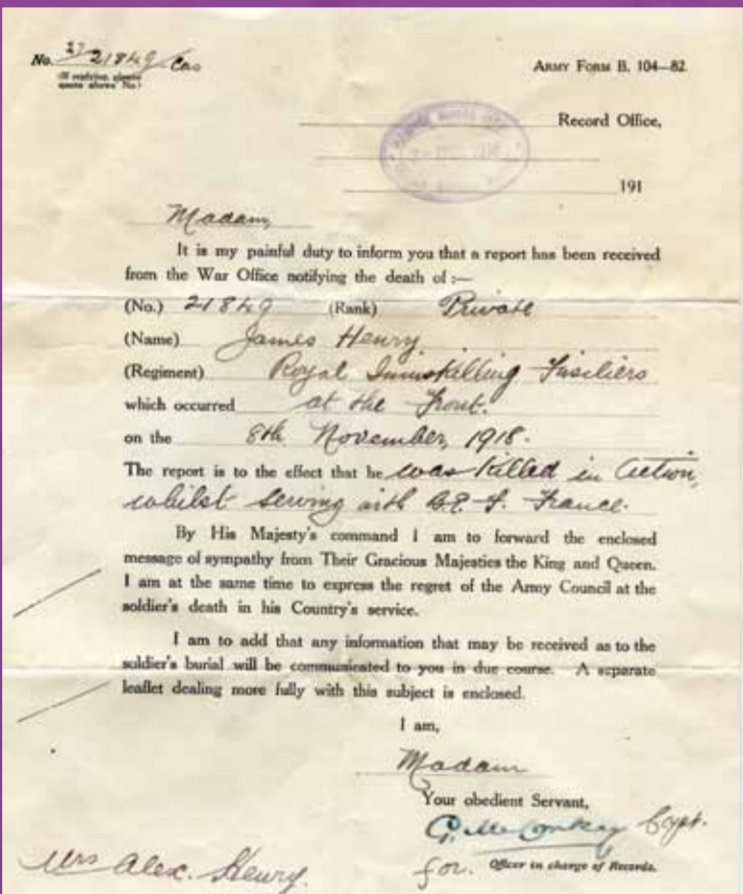


Private James Henry Memorial Plaque. Memorial Plaques commemorated soldiers, sailors, airmen and a few hundred women who died as a direct consequence of their service during World War I. The first plaques were being produced in December 1918 and over a million were distributed from 1919 into the 1920s. Courtesy of Coleraine Museum

After Armistice

Even as Armistice was being celebrated, telegrams were still arriving to report the loss of more young men. In Dervock the decision to commemorate servicemen was taken immediately after Armistice. In December 1918 a public meeting in Limavady resolved to build a war memorial including a library, reading and recreation rooms.

The proposals for battlefield memorials, local civic war memorials and church memorials would only be realised from late 1919 onwards with Stranocum having probably the first public war memorial in Ulster. The poppy as a symbol of Remembrance was first used in 1921.



Telegram bearing the stamp of the Records Office, Islandbridge, Dublin dated 3rd December 1918. It was then received by Mrs Henry informing her that her son had been killed at the Front on the 6th November 2018, three days before Armistice. Private Henry's sister Georgina kept all his letters and papers safe and passed them onto her children George Leighton and Isabel Trueller (nee Leighton), who handed them over to Coleraine Museum.

Demobilisation of the British Army would begin on the 4th December but was extended on the Western Front until 17th January 1919, as troops continued to move into surrendered territories. Samuel Meake of Benwarden, a prisoner of war who had been forced to work in the sulphur mines, was released after Armistice but died two weeks after returning home.

Christmas card of 36th (Ulster) Division Christmas Greetings, 1918. "The end in sight". Cartoon on front by R. Warrall. Signed inside from Jim. Courtesy of Coleraine Museum.



Originally known as the Golf & Hydropathic Hotel it changed its name around the end of the 19th century to the Golf Hotel. It later became Castle Erin and is now demolished. Courtesy of Coleraine Museum



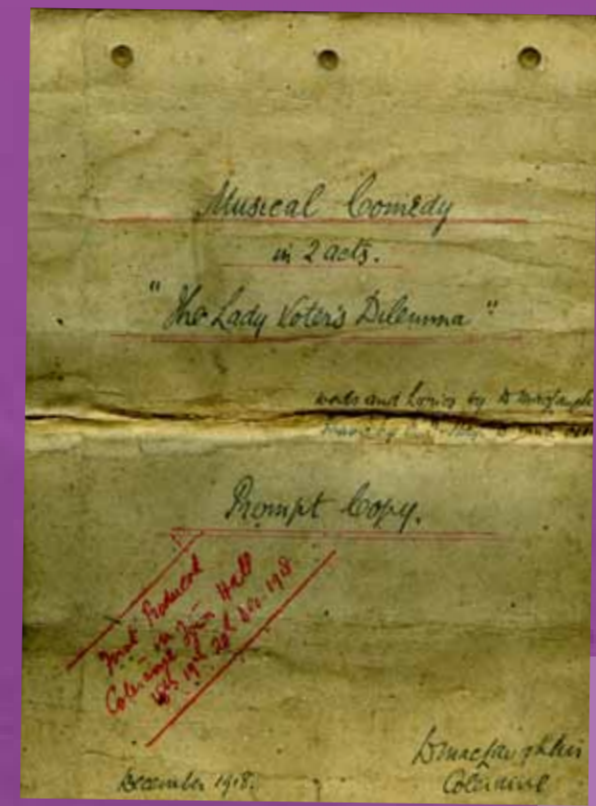
Watercolour by J.W. Carney for illuminated address presented to F. Wright on his promotion in the Ulster Bank. Courtesy of Coleraine Museum

Demobilisation and Returning Soldiers

There were difficulties facing some discharged soldiers attempting to resume 'normal' life. Samuel Hoey of Union Street, Coleraine had joined up in 1914. Back home in Coleraine he was caught stealing money under the influence of alcohol. A conviction would have jeopardised his military pension. He was discharged without a formal criminal record under the First Offenders Act.

The old Golf Hotel in Portrush was converted into a convalescent home for discharged soldiers and sailors. It opened in early October 1918 to provide temporary rest and recuperation for injured veterans who would be expected to recover sufficiently to find employment. Appeals were made to members of the local community for supplies such as farm produce, tobacco, games and hens. Fund-raisers were held to provide a piano and other items.

A meeting was held in Coleraine Town Hall in July 1918 to organise a local branch of the Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Soldiers. The aim of the Federation was to bring together soldiers and sailors discharged during or after the War, and those suffering bereavement as a result of the War. It also attempted to enlist the support of employers and unions. At a meeting in Coleraine in October 1918, a resolution was unanimously passed that the proposed separation allowance was inadequate to meet the needs of soldiers' dependents, and a call was made for the government to increase both these and pensions.



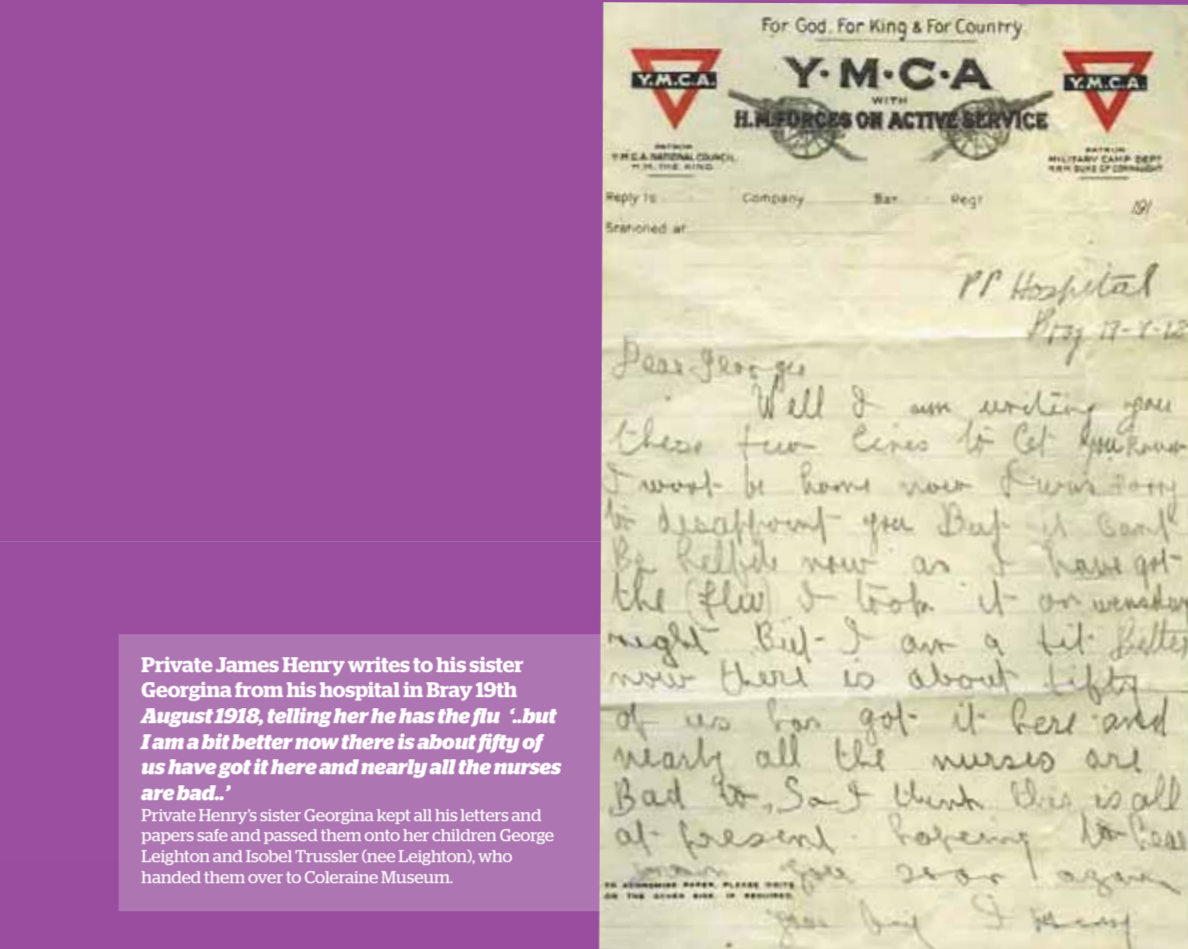
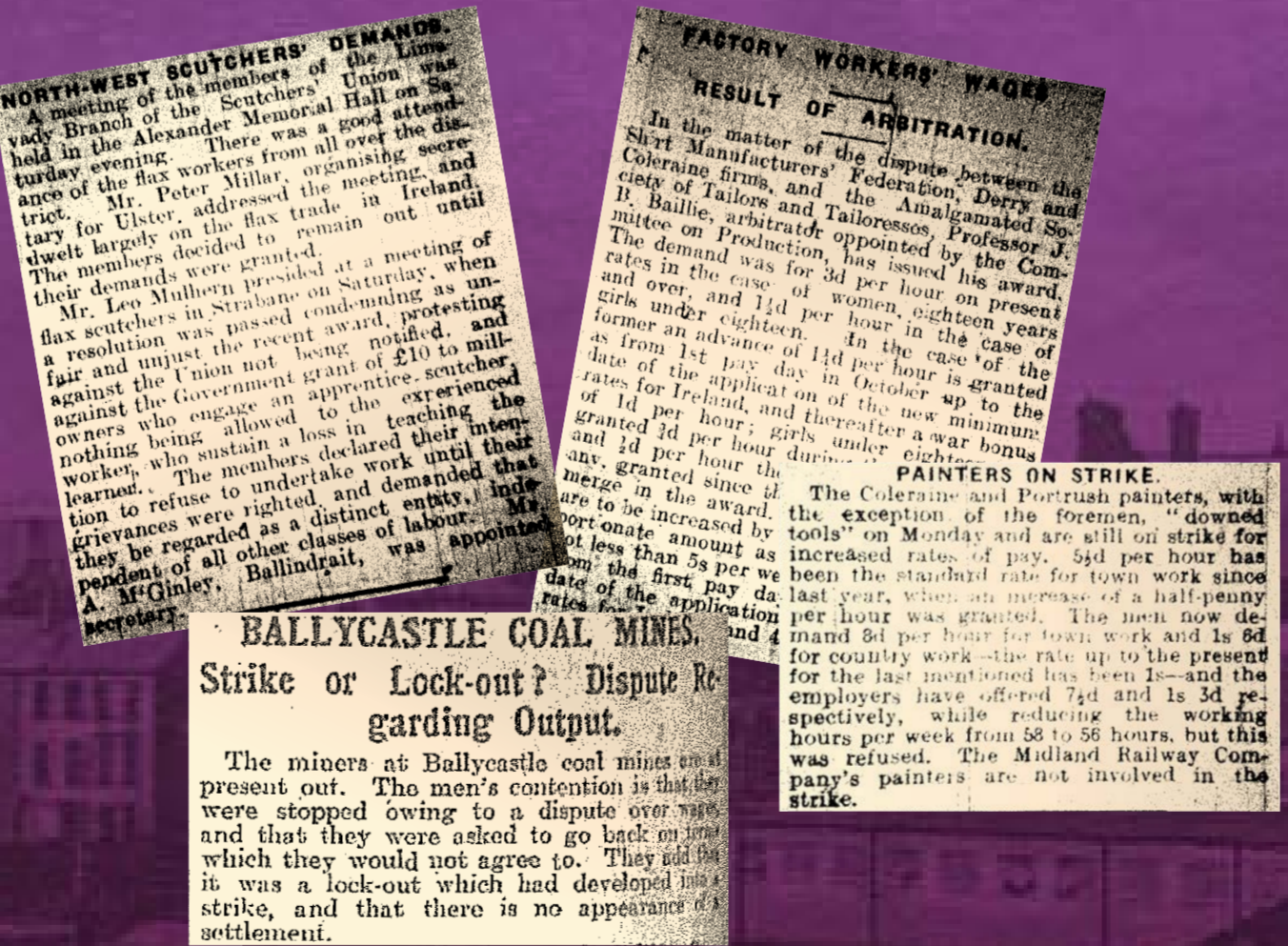
Suffrage/Female Participation

1918 was a significant year for women with the passing of the Representation of the People Act on 6th February, which gave the right to vote to women over 30 who fulfilled minimum property requirements. Another 1918 landmark was the Parliament (Qualification of Women) Act passed on the 21st November which allowed women to stand for election to parliament. The voting registers doubled in Ireland causing a degree of uncertainty in predicting the outcome of the December general election, and efforts were made by Nationalists and Unionists to capitalise on the votes of women. The War had given women opportunities that would not otherwise have been open to them. May Traill from Ballylough was put in charge of an electrical plant at the power house of the government rolling mills near Southampton, a position never before held by a woman in the UK.

Lady Voter's Dilemma. A musical comedy with words and lyrics by Daniel MacLaughlin. First produced in Coleraine Town Hall December 1918. The plot hinged on the demand for voters and the tensions resulting from suffrage movement. Courtesy of Coleraine Museum

The Labour Movement

The Irish Labour party stood aside in the General Election of 1918, however this was a period of much discontent for workers across the country. Meetings were held with the aim to establish unions, impose tariffs on imported goods, address long standing drainage issues or discuss issues related to pay and conditions. Strikes were recorded or threatened and arbitration over wages occurred.



Private James Henry writes to his sister Georgina from his hospital in Bray 19th August 1918, telling her he has the flu...but I am a bit better now there is about fifty of us have got it here and nearly all the nurses are bad. Private Henry's sister Georgina kept all his letters and papers safe and passed them onto her children George Leighton and Isabel Trueller (nee Leighton), who handed them over to Coleraine Museum.

Influenza

In 1918 a pandemic known as 'Spanish Influenza' (H1N1 virus) arrived in Ireland. More than 20,000 people are reported to have died in Ireland in 1918-1919. While estimates of those killed across the world vary, it is clear that many more people died from the flu epidemic than during the whole of World War I (approximately 20 million). It was first detected in Ireland in the late spring and summer, and appeared again in the autumn and winter.

Influenza

The Coleraine Chronicle and other local papers issued a steady stream of reports of the disease and its impact including:

August, Coleraine: a shortage of doctors was reported.

December, Ballycastle: two local women, Mrs S. J. Lyle and Miss Boyd (Brynmawr), who had trained with St John's Ambulance Society, volunteered to stand in for Ballycastle nurses who had contracted the disease and were unable to work. There were 11 influenza patients in the infirmary and fever hospital, and the two women did both day and night duty on several occasions, with patients who were seriously ill.

December: warning of the dangers of confined public gatherings, was circulated in at least six English newspapers.

After a dance in Bushmills thirty-one cases of flu had to be treated in two days.

December: Mr Acheson, originally from Coleraine, had been working in Sunderland before joining the army. He had died from war wounds leaving a wife and seven young children. His widow and youngest child died from influenza, leaving their other six children as orphans. Mr Acheson's brother-in-law in Portrush and his former employer in Glasgow, arranged to adopt the children.

December: Mrs Douglas of Roselick, Portstewart, lost three children to influenza and another Roselick family also lost two children.

General election

Keen to make the most of his strong position at the end of the war, Lloyd George called an election on the 14th December 1918, although the count was delayed until the 28th to allow time for ballot papers from soldiers still overseas. With the passing of the Representation of the People Act in February 1918, the electorate had more than doubled and for the first time all men over 21 and women over 30 with basic property rights could vote. In Ulster the Unionist Party remained dominant.

A combination of the conscription crisis and events connected with the May arrests and the aftermath, contributed to an increase in Sinn Fein support, leading to their victory, with 73 seats, over the Irish Parliamentary Party, holding onto only 6 seats. The Unionists won 26 seats and Lloyd George's Conservative Party won a landslide victory.



For North Antrim Patrick McCarty (on the left) Marjough Sinn Fein would be defeated by Unionist Major P. Kern-Saunders. For North Londonderry Hugh Anderson Coleraine Unionist would defeat P. McGilligan Coleraine Sinn Fein. For South Londonderry Denis Henry (on the right) Coleraine Unionist would defeat Louis Walsh Sinn Fein and the IPP candidate. Images left courtesy of McCarty family. Image right: © National Portrait Gallery, London.

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