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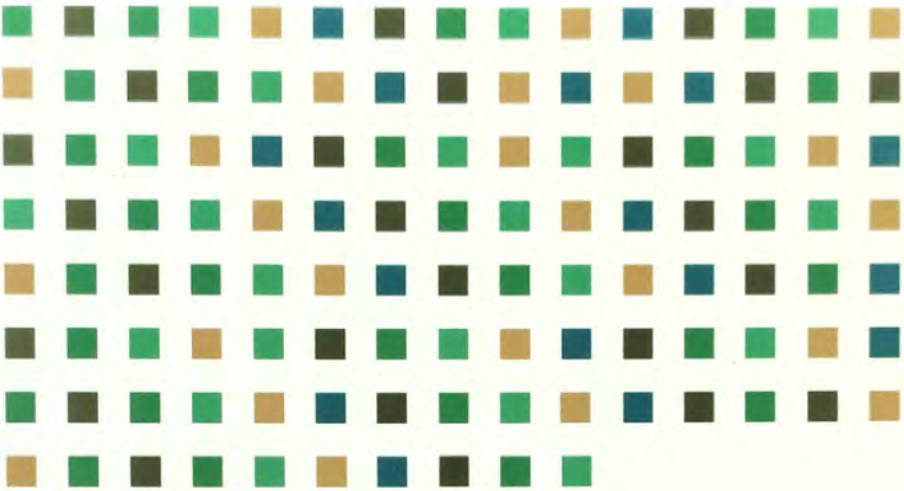


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The Irish Baptist Historical Society

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of the Baptist Churches in Ireland.

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Editorial

The meetings of the Historical Society in 2016 covered topics that were varied, interesting, informative and inspirational.

2016 marked the centenary of the Battle of the Somme and, in March, Professor Philip McCormack, who is a former Baptist Pastor and has been a Chaplain in the Army for twenty years, gave an in-depth analysis of the Somme and the soldiers who fought there, addressing the question 'For God and Ulster?'. Professor McCormack was able to explain how the social consciousness and spiritual awareness of people in 1916 was very different from what it is today and those who fought at the Somme did so with a strong conviction that it really was 'For God and Ulster'.

In May, Pastor Rea Grant presented the History of Lisnagleer Baptist Church which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2016. Pastor Grant, who pastored the church from 1967-1976, traced the history of the church from 1866 when the work was started in Lasnagleer by Baptists who were the 'remnant' of a church which previously existed in Donaghmore. Many interesting incidents in the life of the church and the many individuals who served the church in official and unofficial roles were referred to with gratitude to God.

One of the major contributions to launching the Protestant Reformation was the publication of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, the *'Novum Instrumentum omne, diligenter ab Erasmo Rot. Recognitum et Emendatum'* in 1516. Erasmus's Greek New Testament made a major impact on the academic world and was used as the primary source-text for Martin Luther to translate the New Testament into German for the first time in 1522 and also as the primary source-text for William Tyndale to translate the New Testament into English for the first time in 1526. In October, Dr Peter Firth commemorated the 500th anniversary of Erasmus's Greek New Testament by presenting a fascinating account of the man, his work and the impact he made on the development and progression of reformed religion.

The topics addressed in 2016 and the research, preparation and presentations by our speakers were all very much appreciated by Society members and friends.

John Gault

About Our Contributors

Rev Prof Philip J McCormack MBE BD MTh PhD (QUB) PhD (Cran) CF

Philip McCormack is a 54 year old Baptist minister, married to Karen and they have one son, Aaron. He is a senior chaplain in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department and a Visiting Professor of Practical Ethics at the University of Worcester. After leaving school Philip did a four-year apprenticeship in engineering at Harland & Wolff Shipbuilders, working there as a centre-lathe turner for 10 years. After taking voluntary redundancy, he studied at the Irish Baptist College and then received a call to the pastorate of Carryduff Baptist Church, serving as their minister for 4 years. In 1997, he became a chaplain in the Army and has served in Bosnia, UNFICYP, Kosovo and Afghanistan. Professor McCormack holds doctorates from Queen's University Belfast and Cranfield University.

Rea Grant

Rea Grant was born and brought up in the Waterside area of Londonderry where he attended the Baptist Church in Fountain Street. Following a period of study at Belfast Bible College he went to work with the Irish Baptist Home Mission in Waterford and then in Stonepark where he was involved in planting Enniskillen Baptist Church. He took up the pastorates of Cookstown and Lisnagleer Baptist Churches in 1967, staying until 1976 when he was called to be Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland. Alongside that demanding role he pastored churches in Ballykeel, Millisle and Donaghadee. His last pastorate was in Tobermore from which he retired in 2006. He now lives in Conlig with his wife Ruth. They have six children and sixteen grandchildren. In recent years he has taken to writing NT devotional books.

Peter Firth BD PhD

Peter Firth is a tutor at the Irish Baptist College (IBC) where his main responsibilities are teaching New Testament and Biblical Languages. He is married to Lindsey and together they have four children. Prior to joining the teaching staff at IBC in 2010, Dr Firth was involved in pastoral ministry, including a period at Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh, and a number of years as Pastor of Comber Baptist Church. His interests include reading, walking and watching his daughter, Bethany, swim.



The Battle of the Somme:

For God and Ulster?

Philip McCormack

Introduction

It is important to remember that history can be something of a battlefield; it is always contended and is hugely contentious. One of the issues facing any student of history is the simple fact that there is no possibility of encountering history except through some mediated form. For example, even one's own personal history is mediated; we cannot access our own personal history except through our own memories. Memories can be very fluid. They can change and can become modified as time goes by. The subject of this paper is contentious. If the argument presented is different to that expected, it is hoped that the reader will recognise that different positions can be taken. You must judge whether or not the arguments presented have sufficient evidence to warrant the weight placed upon them and the conclusion drawn. Although this paper will strive to adhere to the normal academic protocol of impartiality, it is important to recognise that both author and reader will not approach the subject in a totally detached and disinterested manner. Each will have deeply held beliefs, which in turn may reflect cultural influences. The writer comes from a Unionist tradition and while every attempt has been made to remain objective, the accusation of unconscious bias can nevertheless be brought against any claim for objectivity. The reader should be conscious of this caveat.

This paper will consider whether the motto 'For God and Ulster' was mere political rhetoric or an expression of deeply held beliefs drawn from a worldview that has steadily been replaced since 1912. It is composed of three distinct but related sections. The first section, *'A Brief introduction to the Battle of the Somme'*, provides a concise overview of the strategic context within which the battle must be located, the

role played by the 36th (Ulster) Division and how the opportunity created by the initial success of the Ulstermen was lost. In *'For Ulster: Citizens not Consumers'*, the key argument will be made that those who signed Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant shared the same civic spirit as those who signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776. In 1912 the idea of the civic duty and obligation of the citizen underpinned the signing of the Ulster Covenant by tens of thousands whereas, by the late twentieth century, the duty of the citizen had been supplemented by the rights of the consumer. The third section *'For God: Covenant and Hope'* will explore the close relationship between religious freedom and citizenship. It will consider how the Ulster Covenant drew heavily on the idea that those who signed it were following the example of their forbearers. It will also reflect on how the Christian gospel offered a theology of death that provided both families and soldiers with hope in the face of death.

A Brief Introduction to the Battle of the Somme

To understand the background to the Battle of the Somme, one must first consider the strategic context. In February 1916 the German Army launched a major offensive against the French at Verdun.[1] The German Chief of the General Staff, General Erich Georg Anton von Falkenhayn, designed a plan (Code named Judgment) that would in his own words *'bleed France white'* and in doing so, change the course of the war. Falkenhayn chose Verdun because of its resonance within the French psyche. He believed that the French could not allow the various forts (20 major and 40 smaller) to fall because of the national humiliation such a major loss would entail. In a letter to Kaiser William II, Falkenhayn said that:

> *'The string in France has reached breaking point. A mass break-through – which in any case is beyond our means – is unnecessary. Within our reach there are objectives for the retention of which the French General Staff would be compelled to throw in every man they have. If they do so the forces of France will bleed to death.'* [2]

Verdun would become the longest battle of the First World War and one of the bloodiest battles in history. If Falkenhayn's plan had succeeded, it is unlikely that the United Kingdom would have been strong enough to have fought Germany by itself, at that time. While American involvement would prove critical to the overall war effort, American troops did not become actively involved as an effective military force on the Western Front until the Spring of 1918. The situation at Verdun and the effect upon the French Army is one of the primary strategic reasons why the British and French General Staffs launched the action at the Somme. In simple terms it was to ease pressure upon the French Army suffering at Verdun.

The Battle of the Somme began on 1 July 1916 and would become one of the

bloodiest battles in human history. By the end of the offensive on 18 November 1916, 1,000,000 men would be injured or killed. 430,000 of this number were from Commonwealth countries, with approximately one third of this number killed. It is difficult for many living in the twenty-first century to comprehend not only the sheer magnitude of the numbers involved but the nature of the men who were prepared to participate in such a battle and do so with distinction.

The idea that the Battle of the Somme was a tactic to ease pressure elsewhere on the battlefield may appear an appalling thing to those living in the twenty-first century. It has, nevertheless, been a common military tactic throughout history. For example, the Headquarters of the British Army Task Force in Helmand Provence, Afghanistan 2009, was based at the main Forward Operating Base (FOB) at Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital. Intelligence reports had indicated that a large insurgent force had infiltrated the city suburbs and were preparing a major assault on the Task Force HQ. As a prelude to an attack several smaller Afghan Police and Army checkpoints/ compounds, which acted as a protective screen, had been overrun by insurgents, killing the police and military personnel stationed in them. In order to protect the city and the FOB, the Task Force Commander took the decision to deliver a first strike against a known enemy stronghold. At the same time American Special Forces launched an air assault deep into another main enemy stronghold in the Marjah District. The combined attack was so successful that the planned assault upon the Task Force HQ by the insurgent force was abandoned. Taliban fighters launched another attack against the city of Lashkar Gah in October 2016. [3] While the first day of the Battle of the Somme

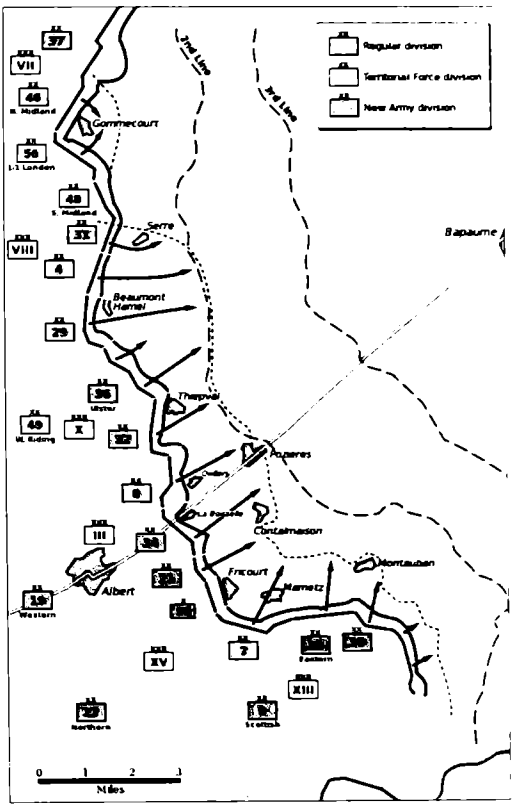


Figure 1

Image taken from
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:British_plan_Somme_1_July_1916.png (accessed 09.02.16)

was a bloody disaster for the British, the overall outcome did achieve its primary strategic purpose of keeping the French Army engaged in the war as an effective military force. The German High Command was expecting an attack of some kind, what they were not expecting was the scale and sophistication of the combined British and French attacks around the Somme.

The image in *Figure 1* offers an impression of the laydown of British Forces on 1 July 1916. The Battle of the Somme is deeply ingrained within the cultural heritage and psyche of Ulster; it is entirely reasonable, therefore, that the focus is upon the 36th (Ulster) Division. It is important, however, to recognise that it was only one of some twenty-five divisions that took part in the battle. The British had five army level formations on the Western Front in WW1. The British lead for Battle of the Somme was the Fourth Army commanded by General Sir Henry Rawlinson (4* General). Formed on 5 February 1916, it was comprised of 5 Corps (III, VIII, X, XIII and XV).



Figure 2

Each Corps had either four or five divisions. X Corps commanded by Lieutenant-General Thomas Morland (3* General) was comprised of five divisions (12th, 25th, 29th, 32nd and the 36th Division). The 36th (Ulster) Division was commanded by Major-General Oliver Nugent (2* General). In the WW1 a British Division had somewhere between 12,000 and 18,000 men. The 36th (Ulster) Division was



Figure 3

composed of three Brigades, the 107th, 108th and 109th. On 1 July 1916, the division had twelve infantry battalions.

Figure 2 [5] offers a simple depiction of how the 36th(Ulster) Division was deployed immediately prior to 1 July. The108th Brigade was on the left flank and the 109th faced the German trench system to the front of Thiepval Wood. The 107th Brigade acted as the divisional reserve. The plan of attack for both the 108th and 109th Brigades looks relatively straightforward, at least on paper *(Figure 3)*. The famous Schwaben Redoubt was an interrelated series of trenches (500-600 yards long, 200 yards wide) and machinegun posts and lay to the front of Thiepval Wood; it was a major objective for the 109th Brigade, along with elements of the 108th and 107th Brigades. The story has been frequently told that one of the reasons why the Ulstermen were initially successful in the early hours of the battle was that they disobeyed orders and moved beyond their line of departure before the artillery bombardment had ceased. This is not true. Maj Gen Nugent ordered them to move forward under the cover of the artillery so that they could have an edge in 'the race for the parapet'. The British would later perfect the idea of the creeping barrage, to devastating effect, but Nugent's direction predated this tactical development. The Ulstermen attacking the German lines in front of Thiepval Wood were amazingly successful and took the first enemy trench with few casualties. The bombardment on

German positions in this area of the front had been relatively successful; this was not universally the case across the entire British area of responsibility. The French artillery bombardment, in contrast, was significantly more successful in their area and was largely the result of a greater ratio and concentration of artillery pieces in relation to the area under attack.

The Ulstermen fought through the German defensive positions and successfully took the Schwaben Redoubt, one of the few unmitigated successes on an otherwise terrible day across the entire British line of attack. Unfortunately, the situation on their left and right was dreadful with British forces suffering horrendous casualties. Lacking reinforcements and the force ratio necessary to exploit their tactical gains, the situation deteriorated for the Ulstermen who were increasingly exposed to withering fire from three sides. It is at this point that a fateful and poor strategic decision is made. The GOC of the 36th Division, Maj Gen Nugent, asked the X Corps Commander, Lt Gen Morland, to commit the Corps reserve to consolidate and exploit the gains made by the Ulstermen. It was highly likely, given the number of German reinforcements available at this time, that the Corps reserve would have been able to push through the forward elements of the Ulstermen and the remaining German defenders. Having successfully consolidated this advance, they would have been

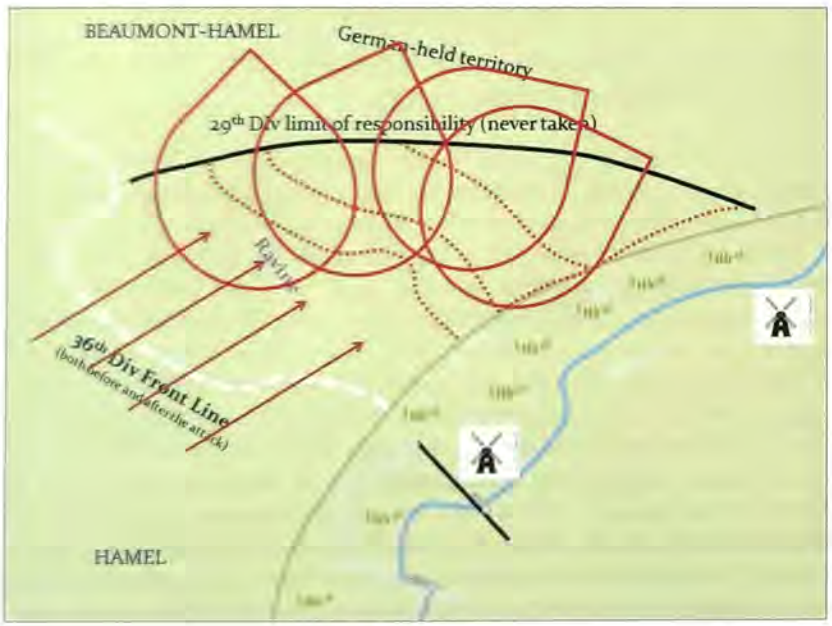


Figure 4

able to sweep around behind the village of Thiepval and capture it from the rear. Tragically, Morland chose to ignore the request from Nugent, deciding to stick with the original plan. Instead of seizing the opportunity, forged by the men from Ulster, Morland reinforced tactical failure. Had Morland committed the Corps reserve to exploit the success at the Schwaben Redoubt, it is likely that Thiepval would have been captured, which in turn would have significantly reduced the horrendous casualties that befell the Division as a result of this failure to capitalise on battlefield success.

The 108th Brigade did not have the success its sister brigade initially had on 1 July 1916. The terrain facing them on the left hand side of the River Ancre was quite a narrow, ravine-type area, with a distinct marshy stretch between the river and the edge of the Division's left flank *(Figure 4)*.[6] The Newfoundland Regiment, an infantry regiment in the 88th Brigade of the 29th Division, was immediately on the left of the Ulstermen. They had been given the task of advancing at Beaumont Hamel. The Newfoundlanders, who had distinguished themselves at Gallipoli, suffered 90% casualties before they had moved 50-60 yards. Their tragic advance became an enduring symbol of their valour and sacrifice, *'with the events of that day forever seared into the cultural memory of the Newfoundland and Labrador people.'* [7] The German machine gun emplacements were not taken. Personal accounts of the soldiers who fought on the left flank spoke of the machinegun fire being so intense that it was almost like a mist of rain. Except it was not rain; it was an incredible intensity of live rounds cutting a swath through the Newfoundlanders and Ulstermen.

The modern, pervading mythology is of *'Douglas Haig & Co as cold-blooded slaughterers of innocent lambs.'* [8] It abides as a haunting image of British soldiers being *'led like lambs to the slaughter'*, [9] and immortalised in the TV series Black Adder Goes Forth.[10] Modern historical research, however, has cast doubt on the accuracy of this.[11] For example, Thiepval was taken two months later. It is abundantly clear that lessons had been learnt from the experience of the Ulstermen moving forward under cover of the artillery barrage. In September 1916 tanks were used for the first time in battle; the presence of just two tanks made a significant difference to knocking out the machinegun emplacements left untouched by the artillery barrage. One of the most important developments following the disaster of the first day of the Battle of the Somme was the insistence of commanders to be allowed to go forward so that they could exercise command closer to the actual battle. The fog of war is well known and anyone who has been in battle will understand that information can be imprecise and sketchy. In September 1916, the CO responsible for capturing the village of Thiepval, actually located his headquarters in the centre of the village so that he could exercise better command and control.

Four Victoria Crosses were awarded to soldiers and officers of the 36th (Ulster) Division: Capt Eric Norman Frankland Bell, VC (9th Batt. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers);[12] Lt Geoffrey St George Shillington Cather, VC (9th Batt. Royal Irish Fusiliers);[13] Pte William Frederick McFadzean, VC (14 Batt. Royal Irish Rifles);[14] Pte Robert Quigg, VC (12th Batt. Royal Irish Rifles).[15] In only two days of the Somme offensive the Division suffered some 5104 casualties of who approximately 2069 died. Although the Great War cost the 36th (Ulster) Division 32186 men killed, wounded or missing, it is the Division's exploits at the Battle of the Somme that gives a deeply ingrained societal memory shape and substance. Winston Churchill stated that *'The record of the Thirty-Sixth Division will ever be the pride of Ulster'*?

For Ulster? Citizens not Consumers

One of the key arguments in this paper is that the social context in Ulster in 1914 was radically different to the one we inhabit in the twenty-first century. Those who supported the formation of 36th (Ulster) Division and those who fought in its ranks are closer in spirit, in terms of world-view, to those who signed the Declaration of Independence in America in 1776, than we are to our fellow countrymen and women who rallied to the defence of their country in 1914. The societal change that has taken place since 1914 has been radical and profound. Not every social change has been negative. For example, the advances in medicine, health and social care should be celebrated, along with the widespread improvement in access to and delivery of education and the vast improvement in housing provision. The immense social changes in the quality of life for UK citizens are a direct result of the First and Second World Wars. How the state has interacted with its citizens has been in a process of evolution over the last three hundred years and this evolution was directly influenced by the sacrifices made by citizens in two World Wars. These issues will be explored in this section.

Average life expectancy at birth for a male in 1901 was 34 and 49 for a female, whereas in 2001 it had risen to 77 for a male and 81 for a female.[16] These numbers are significant, especially when we consider the vast numbers of volunteers who signed up to fight for their country in 1914. It is important to remember that there were three British Armies in the First World War. The first was the Professional Army, which the Kaiser called *'that contemptible little army'*.[17] Compared to continental armies, the Regular British Army was small at some 128,000 men. The second was Kitchener's Army, which was essentially a volunteer army risen between 1914 and 1916. The third was the conscript Army; required because of the enormous casualty rates and because Britain had taken a much larger, leading role against Germany. Hundreds of thousands of young men responded to the call for volunteers and did so in an age which life expectancy for a man was 34. It is also striking that 3 Divisions

were raised from Ireland: the 10th (Irish) Division was the first to go into action and distinguish itself at the battle of Gallipoli; the 36th (Ulster) Division; and the 16th (Irish) Division, largely drawn from Redford's Volunteers.

Philip Bobbitt maintains that there have been various manifestations of the 'state'.[18] His argument is essentially that the concept and nature of the state evolved over time adapting to meet the challenges and demands it encountered. He defines the various stages of the state as the: Princely State, Kingly State, Territorial State, State Nation, Nation State and Market State.[19] The purpose of the Territorial State was managing the state effectively and securing its borders; this offers some explanation for many of the wars in the nineteenth century. In contrast, a major role for the State Nation was the forging of national identity and this is something that can be detected in the memorials erected by many nations at the end of the First World War. The emphasis for the Nation State is the provision of welfare. Many of the promises made to UK citizens following the end of World War 1, regarding better welfare provision, were never fulfilled. The General Election, 5 July 1945, marked a watershed in British politics. Winston Churchill, the successful wartime leader was defeated by Clement Attlee's Labour Party. The establishment of the welfare state is evidence of a determined desire by the British public that the state take better care of its citizens. Towards the later part of the twentieth century the Nation State evolved to the Market State. The key requirement for the state now becomes the maximization of choice and opportunity for its citizens.[20] Royal Dutch Shell Scenarios sought to illustrate the transformation as follows:



South Africa Memorial



Australia Memorial



Canada Memorial

> *'The gradual transition from the Nation State to a Market State model implies a redefinition of states' fundamental promises, towards maximisation of opportunities for companies, investors, civil society and citizens rather than of the Nation's welfare.'*[21]

The reasons why men have fought in war are numerous.[22] This paper will focus upon one specific reason: the forging of national identity.



Ulster's
Solemn League and Covenant.

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are underwritten, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V., humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland. ¶ And in the event of such a Parliament being forced upon us we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognise its authority. ¶ In sure confidence that God will defend the right we hereto subscribe our names. ¶ And further, we individually declare that we have not already signed this Covenant.

The above was signed by me at _____
"Ulster Day." Saturday, 28th September, 1912.

_____

God Save the King.

Figure 5

This can be clearly seen in the memorials of dominion nations (South Africa; Australia; Canada). The Canadian memorial at Vimy Ridge is a declaration that Canada is an independent, sovereign nation. It is a physical statement of national identity. To understand something of Australian national identity one only has to stand at ANAZ Cove in Gallipoli and study the terrain the ANAZ soldiers battled as well as a determined enemy. The character of an independent Australia was forged in war. The forging of national identity through war is an important lens through which we should view the establishment of the Ulster Tower at Thiepval.



Figure 6

This is contentious ground. I want to argue that the Ulster Tower is not simply a memorial to the soldiers who fought and died in France; it is much more. The memorial was not built in Ulster but on the battlefield. It would, therefore, have been extremely difficult, if not financially impossible, for the average Ulster family to have visited the Ulster Tower. The Ulster Tower is about identity, the identity of a new nation. The story of the 36th (Ulster) Division is inextricably bound up with the signing of the Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant on 28 September 1912, also known as Ulster Day *(Figure 5)*. Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant was carefully constructed and drew upon the imagery of other important documents from the past: The (Scottish) National Covenant,[23] February 1638; and the (American) Declaration of Independence, 4 July 1776. The citizens of the UK owe a significant debt to the Scottish Covenanters. The Covenanters were not perfect, but their determined resistance to the notion that the state could tell citizens what to believe or how to practice that belief was a foundational component underpinning the religious liberty and the civic freedoms every citizen in the UK enjoys today. The imagery of the period is emotive. At Vimy Ridge, for example, Mother Canada is depicted weeping for her dead *(Figure 6)*. The representation of Ulster as a female, forlorn, armed and willing to defend herself is hugely provocative *(Figure 7)*. The implication is quite clear; if Ulster was forced to stand alone, she would defend herself. This is part of the background to the creation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Cyril Falls in his book *The History of the 36th (Ulster) Division*,[24] written just a few years after the war, explains that the UVF was deliberately designed as a formed military body, styled upon the regular army. This was done with the express intention of avoiding behaviour that could devolve into fractious civil war. The uniforms, weapons and formed nature of the battalions/companies of the UVF *(Figure 8)* were all designed to reinforce the idea that the UVF in 1913/4 was a disciplined military unit and not an undisciplined band of militia. There is a direct link between the creation of the UVF in 1913/14 and the famous painting of the men of the 36th (Ulster) Division going over the top on 1 July 1916 *(Figure 9)*.



Figure 7



Figure 8 *UVF in 1913/14*

Underpinning this political/military movement is a principle that has faded from public consciousness: social contract theory. The political freedoms and civil liberties that underpin our way of life are derived from the idea that it is the responsibility of citizens to choose the nature of the country they wish to live in, its laws and forms of government. Each citizen has certain inalienable natural rights. These are not granted by government; rather it is the responsibility of government to ensure and protect those inalienable rights. The foundation of Western liberal democracy is based upon the idea that each citizen has the inalienable right to life and liberty. While this language might appear alien in the twenty-first century, the belief that rights inferred duties and obligations would have been very familiar to those who signed Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant. In his book, *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill notes that:

> *'there are also many positive acts for the benefit of others, which he [the citizen] may rightfully be compelled to perform; such as to give evidence in a court of justice; to bear his fair share in common defence, or any other joint work necessary to the interest of society of which he enjoys the protection'.*[25]

It is important to recognise that the creation of the UVF should be interpreted in relation to the duty of the citizen to their perception of what 'common defence' meant in their social context. The rising of the 36th (Ulster) Division was funded essentially by private donors, not by the state; most of the Division's ambulances were provided by the people of Ulster. A fundamental tenant of the belief system of this age was that, as citizens, each individual had a duty, an obligation, to the society that they were part of.

This belief, this modern concept of the individual, is, of course, heavily influenced by Reformed Theology. In his book *A Short History of Ethics*, Alasdair MacIntyre states, in relation to the sixteenth century, that *'there appears a figure that is absent from the moral theories in periods when Plato and Aristotle dominate it, the figure of "the*



Figure 9

The charge of the Ulster Division, Somme, 1 July 1916 by James Beadle

Individual" '.[26] When Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the doors of the University of Wittenberg, 500 years ago, he was seeking to encourage discussion on the matter of indulgences. He was not seeking to lay the foundation of what would become modern democracy, nevertheless, Reformed Theology provided a biblical, theological and philosophical framework from which modern liberal democracy would emerge. Luther's rediscovery of the Biblical truth of justification by faith set the basis for a worldview/theology/philosophy from which the individual would eventually emerge as the primary social unit. Man's relationship with God was not dependent upon his family, neighbourhood, tribe, town, and city or church. A person must stand alone before God and be held to account for his/her own life.

The call to arms in 1914 must be set in the context of the reasonable duty and obligation of the citizen. For the people of Ulster and Ireland it offered a very specific lens through which the very idea of citizenship could be viewed. Those who had joined Redford's volunteers but who then decided to fight as part of the British Army were hoping for the exactly the same thing as the men who joined the 36th (Ulster) Division: that their display of citizenship would influence how England would view their particular cause.

The following popular poem from the period captures this idea perfectly:

> What of the men of Ulster?
> Hark to the armèd tread
> As they turn their back on the Province
> And face to the front instead
>
> The sword half drawn on her own behalf
> In Ulster's Red Right Hand
> Will leap from the scabbard and flash like fire
> For the common Motherland
>
> And wherever the fight is hottest
> And the sorest task is set,
> **Ulster will strike for England -**
> **And England will not forget.**

It is likely that the men who went off to fight in France and the families who stayed at home would have been familiar with this poem. It offers a useful reference point for understanding what it meant to be a citizen.

At the beginning of the twentieth century people understood themselves as citizens. The phrase *'for Ulster'* is not rhetoric. It was a deeply held conviction for the people who supported the 36th (Ulster) Division and those who joined it. Towards the end of the twentieth century we see the rise of the citizen-consumer with the emphasis on the centrality of the consumer. It is entirely reasonable for individuals as consumers to understand their rights and to enjoy greater choice than at any time in human history. The radical change suggested at the beginning of this section is that an evolution has taken place from a primary focus upon the duties and obligation of the citizen to the rights of the consumer with a commensurate decline in an understanding of the duties and obligations of citizenship.

For God? Covenant and Hope

In this section the focus will be upon the *'For God'* part of the UVF's motto; I have given this the subtitle of *'Covenant and Hope'*. This of course takes us back to Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant. Those who composed this document sought to emphasise the close relationship, at least from their perspective, between the ideas of religious freedom and citizenship. The Solemn League and Covenant begins with the following statement:

> *'Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship ...'*

Many of the hundreds of thousands who signed this covenant did so using their own blood; and this is not a myth. For hundreds of thousands of people, there was an unmistakable link between civil and religious freedom. Freedom is directly involved in the nature of relationships that can be created and maintained. This is social contract theory once again and it is not difficult to see strong echoes of the (Scottish) National Covenant of 1638. As a Baptist, I am a non-conformist and hold the deeply held belief that it is not the business of Government to tell me what to believe or how to practice my faith. This is why I resist the New Atheist agenda, which would have religion banished from the public square and made a purely 'private', 'at home' matter. It is why I published a paper called *'In Defence of Liberty'* in the *British Army Review*. In the modern age there has been an organic link between civil and religious freedom and citizenship.

After stating that the signatories of the covenant were *'loyal subjects of His Gracious Majesty King George V'* it proceeds to say:

> *'... humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn Covenant.'*

Those who signed this Covenant were convinced that they were being consistent with earlier generations and whose faith was now being cited as a convincing example. One of the practical strengths of this particular covenant, and it is likely Carson had this in mind when helping to design it, was that a signatory could easily fold it and carry it with him in his wallet. Unlike the (Scottish) National Covenant which was a much larger document in comparison. Thomas Jefferson also drew heavily upon Christian theology in the Declaration of Independence:

> *'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ...'*

In an increasing secular age this use of language and public confession of Christian faith may seem disconcerting or striking but it was not to those who fought in the American Revolutionary War or to those who signed the Ulster Covenant.

Perhaps one of the biggest differences between the beginning of twentieth century and the twenty-first century is that those who signed the covenant had a theology of death that came directly from Christianity. With the average life expectancy of a male in 1901 at 34, it is not a surprise that many sought and found hope in the Christian gospel. Death was a regular feature of daily civilian life and it was a well-known reality in war. The military historian Richard Holmes noted that regardless of the century or the historical snapshot of human involvement in warfare chosen, *'death and wounds are an inseparable part of battle, and confront the soldier in a myriad guises'.*[27] Christopher Coker observed that *'death was once the overriding theme of literature ... death in battle had meaning in such a world. In our world it doesn't'.*[28]

One of the things that frustrated me as a Chaplain, having served in Afghanistan during Summer 2009, is that death, for many, is meaningless. Death is only meaningless, I would contend, if it is taken it out of a context in which it can have meaning. The image of the British soldier as victim has a powerful history. The enduring mythology of the First World War 'Tommy' as a victim endures to this day in modern Britain. It continues to remain both influential and resistant to a disinterested, critical study of historical evidence. Harry Patch's frequent assertion that war is nothing more than murder, chimes well with the popular image of the British soldier being led into a pointless oblivion. The danger is that a twenty-first century, largely secularist framework can be laid upon the motivations of those who signed up to fight in the First World War and those who supported them. A theology of death was a lived reality for the average person in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Christian belief that Christ had conquered death and that death had lost its sting provided a genuine hope that transcended death. Today the New Atheist invites us to imagine that we are living in a universe that is ultimately pointless, meaningless and purposeless. Humanity is, consequently, an insignificant speck on an irrelevant rock in a universe that will ultimately run out of momentum leading to its heat death.[29] If the universe is indifferent to the whole of life on earth, there can be no ultimate meaning. The choice today is stark: insignificant pointlessness, or purpose and hope.

Those who supported the creation of the 36th (Ulster) Division and those who signed up to fight lived in a world that was deeply Christian. The following is an extract from a soldier's letter, based in France, to his family back in Ulster:

> *'I remember one Sunday evening...we were holding an open air service behind the wood...in the middle of the service the birds around us started to sing and the preacher told us to be quiet and listen. All we could hear was the birds singing. After a while he said that the birds had praised their Maker better than he could and asked us to repeat the Lord's Prayer and we went back to the trenches ... What I'm trying to tell you is that you can get close to God anywhere*

> *and anytime. Some of us in the 36th lived close to death and God at the same time.'* [30]

The Division deployed with chaplains drawn mainly from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, the (Anglican) Church of Ireland and they were supported in France by two Roman Catholic Chaplains.[31] However, one distinguishing feature of the 36th Division is the number of preachers that were embedded within the Division. These were ordinary people, those who had been local preachers and those who would have spoken in Mission Halls back in Ulster. Another distinguishing feature was how many of the soldiers regularly read their Bibles. According to Cyril Falls, who served with the Division in France,

> *'The General commanding the 4th Division, to which the 36th was attached for instruction after its arrival in France, spoke of his astonishment at finding so many Ulstermen reading their Bibles.'*

Falls recalled:

> *'... it was not uncommon to find a man sitting on the fire-step of a front-line trench, reading one of the small copies of the New Testament which were issued to the troops by the people at home. The explanation was that, on the one hand, religion was near and real to them; on the other, that they were simple men. They saw no reason to hide or disguise that which was a part of their daily lives'.* [32]

Christian worship was a regular part of soldier's life in France, conducted by the official Army chaplains and by those recognised as local preachers. One of the popular hymns sung in these meetings, according to Philip Orr was:

> *'When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more,*
> *And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;*
> *When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,*
> *And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.'* [33]

The men of the 36th (Ulster) Division understood that they faced the prospect of death; intermittent shelling meant that death was always a present reality. By 1916 the reality of trench warfare would have been well understood by the men of Ulster. Hymns like the one cited above, offered hope, a theology of hope based on the Christian gospel. The Christian faith of many men of the Division was one of their distinctive marks. They are frequently referred to as *'the Calvinists from Ulster'*; and even had cultural sensitivity instruction as part of their preparation for deployment to France. There was a genuine attempt, on behalf of the higher command, to explain to the Ulstermen that when they arrived in France and Belgium they would see lots of

crucifixes dotted all over the countryside but that they should not be offended as this was part of the local way of life. It is striking that this cultural sensitivity instruction was thought necessary but, then, almost all of the histories record the Christian faith of the Division.

While it may seem oddly strange to some in the twenty-first century, those who signed up to fight with the 36th (Ulster) Division and those who supported them believed that there was a direct relationship between their civic duty and their religious liberty. For the signatories of Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant, this religious liberty had a price; it was a price that thousands were prepared to pay. Like the Scottish Covenanters who raised an army to resist the army of Charles 1,[34] hundreds of thousands of citizens in Ulster were prepared to raise an army to defend what they believed was their religious and civic liberties and freedoms.

Conclusion

Those who supported the creation of the 36th (Ulster) Division and the men, who fought so magnificently on 1 July 1916 at the Battle of the Somme, are closer in spirit to those who signed the American Declaration of Independence in 1776 than we are to them. The same concepts of the duty and obligation of citizen underpin both the American Revolutionary War and the creation of all three of the divisions from Ireland and the 36th (Ulster) Division in particular. The phrase *'For God and Ulster'* is not mere political rhetoric ... it based upon deeply held beliefs. Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant was, therefore, more than political rhetoric; it appealed to deeply held Christian beliefs. A profound understanding of the duties and obligations of the citizen, underpinned by the hope the Christian gospel offers, provides a framework through which we in the twenty-first century should view the men from Ulster who fought and died at the Somme. The motto *'For God and Ulster'* is derived from a substance that many in our consumerist age would have genuine difficulty in comprehending.

◈ ◈ ◈

Annex A

Order of Battle

On the first day of the Somme the Fourth Army comprised:

◊ **III Corps** ... commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir William Pulteney
1st Division
8th Division
12th (Eastern) Division
19th (Western) Division
23rd Division
34th Division

◊ **VIII Corps** ... commanded by Lieutenant-General Aylmer Hunter-Weston
(transferred to Reserve Army on 4 July)
4th Division
29th Division
31st Division
48th (South Midland) Division

◊ **X Corps** ... commanded by Lieutenant-General Thomas Morland
(transferred to Reserve Army on 4 July)
12th (Eastern) Division
25th Division
32nd Division
36th (Ulster) Division
49th (West Riding) Division

◊ **XIII Corps** ... commanded by Lieutenant-General Walter Congreve
3rd Division
9th (Scottish) Division
18th (Eastern) Division
30th Division
35th Division

◊ **XV Corps**
7th Division
17th (Northern) Division
21st Division
33rd Division
38th (Welsh) Division

Notes

1 See, RT Foley, *German strategy and the path to Verdun. Erich von Falkenhayn and the development of attrition, 1870-1916* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

2 See, *http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-one/battles-of-world-war-one/the-battle-of-verdun/* (accessed 09.02.16)

3 See, *http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-37609384* (accessed 09.02.17)

4 See Annex A

5 Figures 2-4 are based upon the maps in P Orr's book, *Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2008).

6 The overlay of cones in this figure is only to offer, for illustrative purposes only, some idea of the interlocking nature of the German machinegun fire.

7 See, *http://www.heritage.nf.ca/first-world-war/articles/beaumont-hamel-en.php* (accessed 09.02.17)

8 J Winter, 'Setting the Framework' in, J Winter and E Sivan (eds), *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p10

9 NA Sørensen, 'Remembering the Great War', in *Narratives of Remembrance*, ed., M Børch (Odense: Odense University Press, 2001), p37

10 This TV series is perhaps the only access many young people have of the image of the First World War.

11 Sørensen, 'Remembering the Great War', p56

12 His citation reads: *'For most conspicuous bravery. He was in command of a Trench Mortar Battery, and advanced with the Infantry in the attack. When our front line was hung up by enfilading machine gun fire Captain Bell crept forward and shot the machine gunner. Later, on no less than three occasions, when our bombing parties, which were clearing the enemy's trenches, were unable to advance, he went forward alone and threw Trench Mortar bombs among the enemy. When he had no more bombs available he stood on the parapet, under intense fire, and used a rifle with great coolness and effect on the enemy advancing to counter-attack. Finally he was killed rallying and reorganising infantry parties which had lost their officers. All this was outside the scope of his normal duties with his battery. He gave his life in his supreme devotion to duty.'*

13 His citation reads: *'For most conspicuous bravery near Hamel, France, on 1st July, 1916. From 7pm till midnight he searched 'No Man's Land', and brought in three wounded men. Next morning at 8am he continued his search, brought in another wounded man, and gave water to others, arranging for their rescue later. Finally, at 10.30am, he took out water to another man, and was proceeding further on when he was himself killed. All this was carried out in full view of the enemy, and under direct machine gun fire and intermittent artillery fire. He set a splendid example of courage and self sacrifice.'*

14 His citation reads: *'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 the 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.'*

15 His citation reads: *'For most conspicuous bravery at Hamel, France, 1st July, 1916. He advanced to the assault with his platoon three times. Early next morning, hearing a rumour that his platoon officer was lying out wounded, he went out seven times to look for him under heavy shell and machine gun fire, each time bringing back a wounded man. The last man he dragged in on a waterproof sheet from within a few yards of the enemy's wire. He was seven hours engaged in this most gallant work, and finally was so exhausted that he had to give it up.'*

16 Data taken from *www.sociology.org.uk/sc_shop_pdf/sc?AS4QA_family_e.pdf* (accessed 29.02.12)

17 See *http://www.firstworldwar.com/atoz/oldcontemptibles.htm* (accessed 10.02.17)

18 P Bobbitt, *Terror and Consent* (London: Penguin, 2008), p190-191

19 Ibid. The State Nation is contemporaneous with the start of the nineteenth century, the Nation State with the late Victorian period to the late twentieth century and the Market State with the end of the twentieth and the start of the twenty-first century. This framework offers a little more precision than the terminology of pre-modern, modern and post-modern periods used earlier to describe the major philosophical developments in the last four centuries. The transition between the State nation and the Nation State took place within that period philosophers would normally describe as the high watermark of modernity (modern) and the gradual rejection of its meta-narratives and the authority structures that are associated with that period.

20 Ibid

21 *Shell Global Scenarios to 2015: The Future Business Environment Trends, Trade-Offs, and Choices* (London: Shell International Limited, 2005), p18

22 See R Holmes, *Acts of War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003)

23 See, *http://reformationhistory.org/nationalcovenant.html* (accessed 10.02.17)

24 C Falls, *The History of the 36th (Ulster) Division* (Belfast: McCaw, Stevenson & Orr, 1922)

25 JS Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Penguin Classics, 2010). *On Liberty* was first published in 1859

26 A MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1989). See chapter 10 for a fuller account.

27 R Holmes, *Acts of War* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003) p176. His chapter 'Pale Battalions' provides an excellent survey of the soldier's experience of the reality of death and injury on the battlefield.

28 C Coker, *The Warrior Ethos: Military Culture and the War on Terror* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p55

29 This is based upon the second law of thermodynamics.

30 P Orr, *Road to the Somme*

31 M Snape, *The Royal Army Chaplains' Department 1796-1953: Clergy Under Fire* (Woodbridge: Biydell, 2008), p234

32 Falls, *The History of the 36th (Ulster) Division*, pp16–17

33 P Orr, *Road to the Somme*

34 See, *http://bcw-project.org/church-and-state/sects-and-factions/covenanters* (accessed 14 Feb 2017).



The History of Lisnagleer Baptist Church, 1866-2016

J R Grant

Introduction

In 1970 a history of the Church, based on local records held by the Church and by the Baptist Union of Ireland, was written by Pastor J R Grant. It was presented to the Church on its 104th Anniversary, on the weekend of Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 December 1970 when David P Kingdon, Principal of the Irish Baptist College, Sandown Road, Belfast, was the visiting preacher.

2016 marks the 150th Anniversary of the Church which was constituted in 1866, the building being opened in 1870 and we now have great pleasure in presenting another history, an expanded edition of the 1970 version, this time based on the succession of pastors who ministered during the past 150 years. On this occasion, it is entirely appropriate to salute those pastors who have served the Church since 1976 in grateful acknowledgement of their faithful ministries. Those who are still with us have very kindly contributed brief personal reminiscences of their service in Lisnagleer and, for doing so, we thank them most sincerely. It adds a large amount of personal interest to this edition.

Very Early Days

Lisnagleer Baptist Church, with its tidy churchyard, is situated three miles from Dungannon. A sign-post on the main Dungannon to Cookstown Road enables the visitor to find the Church easily. The centenary of the building was celebrated in December 1970 by a weekend of special services.

The congregation, however, was marking its 104th birthday, having been formed in 1866. At that time, it was said to be the only Baptist Church in Co Tyrone. In May 2015, however, references were found to churches at Mullycar (1740-1966) and Knockconny (1807), both in Co Tyrone. The churches at Dungannon (1884) and Gortmerron (1894) were also formed before the century ended. [1]

The Baptists who came to Lisnagleer in 1866 may be described as the 'remnant' of a Church which previously existed in Donaghmore. A manse and place of worship owned by that Church are still standing although sometime prior to 1866 these buildings were sold as the Church had died out. It had, in those days, been a Campbellite Church whose pastor, a Mr Hurt, was also a noted herbalist. Campbellism teaches that baptism is the means of regeneration and therefore is essential to salvation. Such teaching may explain the demise of the Donaghmore Campbellites and the interest of a 'remnant' in a Biblical Doctrine of Baptism.

The founding members of Lisnagleer Church first met in a farmhouse in the townland of Mullaghmore about two miles from Dungannon on the Donaghmore Road. This group of eight or nine earnest Christians next met at Backford, Donaghmore, in a loft described by one writer as a small two-storey house owned by Robert McLean. God blessed their efforts to make the Gospel known, and as the work grew they moved into a hall, now known as the Lecture Hall, in the same village. That building was the former Campbellite Church.



Backford, Donaghmore



Campbellite Church

The congregation next moved to Lisnagleer and met in a wooden hut across the road from the present building in a field owned by people with the name of Maguire and (in 1970) by Mr John Wilson. Lisnagleer Baptist Church was formally constituted in 1866 with eleven members. The work prospered and with the continued increase of the numbers came also the need for a suitable leader to take care of the cause.

First Things First!

An application was forwarded to the Central Committee of the British and Irish Baptist Home Mission in 1866 and the leaders of the work in Ireland were so favourably

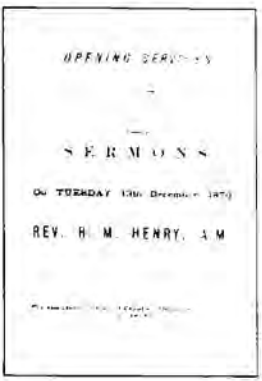
impressed with the progress that they nominated Pastor John Dickson to the oversight of the Church. Under his leadership, the members embarked on the erection of the present building on a site given by a certain Wm Foster.

Plans were drawn by Mr John Donnelly, a Roman Catholic stonemason, who lived on the farm beside the Church. The builder was another local man, Adam Hunter of Drumconnor ... a very good stonemason.

The Church was built of stone from Carland Quarry, located about a mile away, and, complete with porch and vestry, cost £300.

The opening was on Tuesday 13 December 1870 with services at *'12 o'clock, noon, and half past six o'clock, evening'*. Sermons were preached by Rev R M Henry AM, of Belfast. Collections were taken up after each sermon in order, if possible, to render this place of worship 'Free of Debt'. Collections that day amounted to £25 which almost cleared the debt. A little footnote on the handbill added tactfully:

> *'Contributions from those unable to attend will be thankfully received by J Dickson, Pastor, or Mr W Irwin, Donaghmore.'*


OPENING SERVICES

SERMONS

On TUESDAY 13th December 1870

REV. R. M. HENRY, A.M.



The appearance of the Church (from 1870)



The interior layout
Note the oil lamps either side of pulpit

The Trust Deeds

Most church members never think of these important documents even once in their lifetimes. The Pastor and Office-bearers ought to know what they contain. The sober fact is that their importance cannot be stressed too much. The Deeds supply much useful information about the constitution of the Church, not least in safe-guarding the

right of the Church to the exclusive possession and use of its own premises.

> *'The Trusts permit the said place of worship or meeting house or premises to be used as a place of Public Religious Worship by the society of Protestant Dissenters called Particular or Calvinistic Baptists.'*

... so we have an indication of the calibre and doctrine of the foundation members.

Participation at the Lord's Table

> *'Though it is expressly intended that the Society assembling in the said Meeting House shall at all times be confined in the choice of a minister or Pastor to persons of the Denomination aforesaid, yet it shall be lawful for the members of the said Society for the time being if they shall so choose to admit to the Table of the Lord's Supper any person or persons professing repentance toward God and Faith in their Lord Jesus Christ although such persons shall not be of the denomination aforesaid.'*

Regular Revision of the Church Roll

Following the Church Opening, a Members' Meeting was held on 1 January 1871. The Church Roll registered 22 members. From that date onwards the Church Roll bears the words *'added', 'resigned', 'separated'* which show that firm discipline was maintained. This entry appeared sometime in 1875:

Discipline as Bearing on Absentees from Church Worship

1 That members of this Church absenting themselves without sufficient cause from the Meetings of the Church for worship on the first day of the week shall be dealt with as offenders against Scriptural precedent as given in Acts 2:42 and as transgressors of the divine injunction Hebrews 10:25.

2 When members are unavoidably absent on the first day of the week, that the Church should know as soon as possible that there is sufficient cause for their absence; so that the absent ones may not be regarded as transgressors but may have the sympathy and prayers of the rest of the Church.

3 In no case should more than three weeks, at longest, be allowed to lapse without the Church's care for absence being manifested by looking after them. Diligence in such matters is enjoined by Hebrews 12:15.

PART ONE 1866 – 1967

1 Pastor John Dickson, 1866–1891

Born in Broughshane, Co Antrim, in 1836, John Dickson decided to study for the gospel ministry during the 1859 Revival. He entered Magee College, Londonderry and was a student on its roll in the first year of its existence, although it was in Glasgow University that he completed his collegiate education. He came to Donaghmore in 1866 and bought a small farm in the townland of Crieve, about half-a-mile from the future site of the Lisnagleer Church, and it was to this house he brought his bride, Miss Stevenson, a member of a long-established Coalisland family. There were no children of the marriage. Mr Dickson kept a few cattle on the farm and had a servant boy called Robert John McFadden who lived in the neighbouring townland of Claggan.



The Dickson Farm at Crieve

A capable pastor and a man of indefatigable zeal and boundless energy, John Dickson was described by a contemporary as

> *'an evangelist whose labours extend ten or eleven miles in every direction, and who preaches at 18 different stations to congregations of between 20 and 200 persons'.*

Ten years after the Church was opened the membership had risen to 40, the Sunday School had 100 scholars and 6 teachers and there were 12 preaching stations. Normal congregations filled the chapel each Sunday.

It is interesting to note that by the end of the century there were Baptist Churches to be found at Dungannon (1884) and Gortmerron (1894). Here and there in the

Lisnagleer Minute Books in after-years there is mention of the involvement of the hard -working Lisnagleer Pastors in both of these Churches. When Pastor Dickson was leaving the district to become pastor of the Coleraine Church it was no surprise that Lisnagleer and Dungannon joined in his farewell service on 26 October 1891.

He seems to have set his heart on establishing a Baptist witness in the County Town of Omagh and so, from 28 December 1879 to 1 January 1880, he and Rev John Taylor of Tandragee had a mission there. Mr Dickson reported:

> ... *'weather unusually severe ... attendance satisfactory ... had pleasure of baptizing a young disciple in an adjoining river in the afternoon of New Year's Day!'*

The Baptist Association elected him as President for 1880. The subject of his Presidential Address was: *'The Bible as the Christian's Tabernacle of Testimony and Land of Promise'* and it is recorded in full in the October Magazine of that year. The address ends with the following verse ... lines by Robert Pollok, a Scottish religious poet (1798–1827), which reflect Mr Dickson's love for the Scriptures:

> *The Book, this Holy Book, on every line,*
> *Mark'd with the seal of high divinity,*
> *On every leaf bedew'd with drops of love*
> *Divine, and with the eternal heraldry*
> *And signature of God Almighty stamp'd*
> *From first to last; this ray of sacred light,*
> *This lamp, from off the everlasting throne,*
> *Mercy took down, and in the night of time*
> *Stood, casting on the dark her gracious bow;*
> *And evermore beseeching men*
> *With tears and earnest sighs, to read, believe and live.*

Two large marquees were in the custody of Rev Dickson for use in evangelistic missions. He reports 250 people attending a mission at Tamnishkenny, near Rock, in August/September 1880 and a mission at Milltown, Dungannon, held during September/October 1883, was attended by 600 on some occasions. Another Tent Mission was in progress at Mulnagore and *'as many as 500 were sometimes present on Sunday evenings'*.

Mr Dickson had the help of Mr Wainwright, Stockton-On-Tees, Mr Taylor, Tandragee, Mr Phillips and his son from Grange and Mr Simpson from Belfast. Although Mr Simpson was blind, this didn't hinder him maintaining an itinerant evangelistic ministry around the country.

The interesting thing is that while these missions were in progress those who were converted were baptized in Lisnagleer. Baptisms reported were as follows:

October 3rd ... five; 17th ... three; 20th ... three; 21st ... one; 22nd ... one; November 1st ... four; 4th ... one.

That season a mission was also held at Tulnagee, in the Carndaisy district, near Moneymore.

The Church report for 1887 mentions the fruit of Sunday School work:

> *'From the Sunday school five young friends joined the membership of the Church during the past year - one of them not yet eleven years of age.'*

Spiritual concern for the young people was expressed in the arrangements made for 12 July 1883 ... and presumably thereafter:

> *'A social meeting was held in Lisnagleer on July 12th designed principally to keep the young people of the congregation from being tempted to join in any party processions usual on that day.'*

> *'No less than seven speakers took part, one of them taking as his theme the number "Twelve" in Scripture with respect to the twelve tribes, the twelve stones in the high priest's breastplate, the twelve apostles, the twelve foundations and twelve gates in the New Jerusalem'*

John Dickson's labours as pastor, evangelist, magazine editor, plus a large amount of deputation work in England and Scotland on behalf of the work in Ireland, must have required the stamina of Goliath! In addition to his local workload he served the denomination as Editor of the Irish Baptist Magazine from 1882 until June 1886.

It is little wonder that in 1888 he had a serious breakdown in health and recuperation required several months in Portrush. The Church had a 'Welcome Home' for the good man and his wife in January 1889.

With John Dickson's assistance, the Dungannon Church was formed in 1884 and thereafter the most cordial relationship existed between it and Lisnagleer.

In 1891 he received a unanimous call to the Church at Coleraine which he accepted and so a notable ministry of more than 25 years came to an end. Members and friends of Lisnagleer and Dungannon gathered, in Dungannon, on 26 October at 6.30pm for the 7th Annual Meeting of that Church and there John Dickson received

from his many friends in the district an *'address and presentation to their friend'*. Wm James Morrow, treasurer of Lisnagleer, presented Mr Dickson with a 'purse of sovereigns'.

The leading impression that I have gained in the course of completing this edition of the Church's history is that Dungannon prospered because Lisnagleer, who then had 60 members, suffered.

After three years' ministry at Coleraine, John Dickson died on Saturday evening, 29 September 1894, aged 58. He was interred in the family burying ground at Broughshane.

> *'A thorough missionary and a good scholar'* who *'loved his work well'*
> ... *'a faithful and efficient pastor'* ... *'an admirable preacher'*

... these were some of the epitaphs used by his friends to describe John Dickson. During his 25 years in Lisnagleer there were about 140 baptisms and 120 members were added to the Church.

2 Pastor James W Pearce, 1891

The next pastor was another Irish Baptist College graduate, James W Pearce, who came to Lisnagleer from Cork in 1891. The Church continued to flourish and seven years later membership had reached an all-time high of 73.

Several things during his ministry are worthy of note. He seems to have been an ardent Temperance worker and formed a Lisnagleer Band of Hope and Temperance Society which, after two years, had 61 members and a year later had over 100 pledged abstainers.

In 1893 the Baptist Churches gave their opinion about 'Home Rule' and on behalf of the Church Pastor Pearce wrote:

> *'It is the perfectly unanimous opinion of the members of the Baptist Church and congregation of Lisnagleer, Co Tyrone, that the Government of Ireland Bill of Mr Gladstone, if passed and carried out, would be productive of discord, ruinous to commerce, a source of bitter strife and bloodshed and a curse to our country, subjecting Protestants everywhere to insult and, wherever possible, to intolerance and boycotting.'*

Our brother adds:

> *'I have been five or six years in Ireland and only know two Protestants who are Home Rulers. Many Roman Catholics who have anything to lose are as strongly opposed to it as we are. I was once a Gladstonian!'*

In 1894 the chapel was painted and extra stables erected in the churchyard. In the same year, the Church decided to build a manse and on Friday, 19 October, a Harvest Thanksgiving Service was held *'which proved a decided success numerically and financially'*. The collection was devoted to the Manse Fund and the new manse, erected in 1896, in Donaghmore, at a cost of £500 was a very fine stone building.



The new manse in Donaghmore

Early in the same year Pastor Pearce went on a trip to the Holy Land with Mr Brown of Donaghmore, returned in March, *'passed into the holy land of matrimony on 6th April'* (so reads the *Irish Baptist*) and he and his bride were the first occupants of the new house.

The Pearces moved to Brannockstown at the end of April 1898. Thereafter his name appears in Phibsboro', Limerick and other centres. He seems to have been an agent of the Irish Baptist Home Mission who moved around under the direction of the Committee wherever his help was needed.

3 Pastor J G C Irvine, 1898–1901

Pastor J G C Irvine came to Lisnagleer in 1898 after holding pastorates in London and Canada. It is due to his research and careful records that we have so much information about the beginnings of Lisnagleer. (In 1970, his map of the churchyard was still being used for our burial records.) It is not known where he moved to when he left, sometime in 1901.

4 Pastor William Pringle, 1901–1904



Wm Pringle, a Tyrone man, followed in 1901. He married a Miss Annie Patterson of Scotch Street, Dungannon, and later they moved to the USA. He seems to have had good friends in other denominations and on his fourth anniversary, in 1904, Rev D Manderson, Minterburn Presbyterian Church, and Rev Henry Shire, Senior Methodist Minister, Dungannon, preached at the services on 28 August.

5 Mr William Cowden, 1905

William Cowden served the Church for a year. He had been a student at the Irish Baptist College and following the completion of his studies was appointed by the Home Mission Committee to serve Lisnagleer as a pastor. Absence of documentation prevents us from recording the length of his stay but we do know that he was succeeded by Pastor Burt Sharp who commenced six years of ministry in 1907.

6 Pastor Burt Sharp, 1907–1913

It is thought by some, that Burt Sharp had much of the calibre of the first pastor. He was an Englishman and, prior to coming into the ministry, was a photographer and artist of no mean ability, winning a Gold Medal in 1889 and a Bronze Medal in 1891. Patronized by Her Majesty the Queen, he had studios at 79 West Street, Brighton.



Pastor Sharp



The Sharp Family



Cyril Sharp

The circumstances which brought him to Ireland are not known but he came to Belfast and was instrumental in forming the Church at Bloomfield in 1903, labouring there

with much acceptance for several years before coming to Lisnagleer in 1907. (The Bloomfield Church was dissolved in 2014.)

He had a family of six children, three boys and three girls. One day his son David took his father's horse and a borrowed cart to fetch some peat-mould from the bog for his mother's flower garden. The horse shied at the white flowers in the bog and both horse and cart fell into a water hole. No help was at hand as the local farmers were all at the market and the horse, which could not be rescued, had to be shot.

This was a heavy loss to Mr Sharp. Mr Thomas McCorkell, the Church Secretary, opened a *'relief fund'* and in a notice in the *Irish Baptist* appealed to all readers to *'at once'* send *'simply a sixpence'* to defray the cost of a new horse, adding that *'in the work here a horse is a necessity'.*

Burt Sharp was a very active pastor. As well as the Church Services at 12 noon and 6 o'clock every Sunday, a Prayer Meeting and Bible Study each Wednesday at 7.30pm, he had the following outstations:

Stughan	3rd Sunday in Month	7.30 pm
Drumballyhue	4th Sunday in Month	6.30 pm
Mullaghnahinch	5th Sunday in Month	6.00 pm
Donaghmore	Every Tuesday	8.00 pm
(Lisnagleer	*Every Wednesday*	*7.30 pm)*
Cady	Every Thursday	7.30 pm
Drumm	3rd Thursday in Month	7.30 pm

He was also a regular visitor to the fairs at Pomeroy, Stewartstown, Rock and Moy where he preached the Gospel in the open-air.

In 1910, the Sharp family suffered a sad bereavement. Cyril Sharp, a young man who had the prospect of a brilliant career in the Civil Service, died in Dublin at the early age of 21. He is buried in the churchyard just beside the entrance to the New Hall.

Pastor Sharp resigned from the Lisnagleer pastorate in July 1913, leaving in sad circumstances because, having reached 62 years of age, he had become a very sick man. He had hoped to remain in Lisnagleer until his death and be laid to rest beside his son Cyril. Although hardly fit to travel he went to his sister's home in England where, after three months' intense suffering, patiently borne, passed into the presence of the King.

When Burt Sharp came to Lisnagleer there were 44 members but his successor entered upon lean times. There were just 22 members and he reported: *'We have only the Sunday morning service here just now'.*

7 Pastor Isaac P Bell, 1913

Mr Isaac Bell enters the Lisnagleer story via Dungannon. He had been a student at the Irish Baptist College in Dublin and, having graduated, he was open to receive a call to the pastorate of one of our Churches.

> *'At a church meeting held on Sunday 9 March 1913 the Dungannon Church took a unanimous decision to call Pastor Isaac Bell to the pastorate of the church, rendered vacant by the resignation of Pastor Thomas Warwick'.*

Another minute reads:

> *'Pastor Bell accepted the invitation of the Dungannon Church and commenced his ministry on Sunday 4 May 1913.'*

Our date for Pastor Bell's pastorate here (1913) is about right. In spite of his enthusiasm for hard work he found it utterly impossible to continue as pastor of the Church at Dungannon while spreading himself rather thinly over four other Churches. Unfortunately there are no sources in Lisnagleer or the Baptist Association commenting on his pastorate here. The date or the circumstances that led to his leaving Lisnagleer and accepting the pastorate of Tandragee Church are not known.

8 Pastor Albert M Quigley, 1914–1918

Pastor Quigley had responsibility for Dungannon, Knockconny and Mullycar Churches. Although called by Lisnagleer, and installed there as minister in 1914, Dungannon seems to have claimed him because in their Church's report for 1916 the writer states: *"In May Pastor Quigley left here to take up the work at Lisnagleer"* (!) to which he had actually been called in September 1914. About nine months later he informed the church that he had written to the Irish Baptist Home Mission Committee asking that he might be relieved of some of the work over which he had been placed by the Committee

His renewed interest and increased efforts were well rewarded because, in 1916, the Lisnagleer membership had increased to 33 and six months later, in 1917, he wrote of the work being re-organized:

'The Gospel meeting at night (which had been discontinued for a long time) has now an average attendance of sixty.'

Pastor Quigley's ministry in Lisnagleer and her sister Churches was during the World War 1 years when, in common with all other denominations, the majority of young men joined the Armed Forces. Coupled with high unemployment in Co Tyrone, incomes plumetted and small Churches had difficulty making ends meet.

On Thursday nights during the winter months, Pastor Quigley used to arrange Lantern Lectures in the old Campbellite Church in Donaghmore. A Mr Tommy Totten wrote in 1970 to say that when he was a boy in Donaghmore he used to operate the Lantern for Mr Quigley. He related that the pastor emigrated to the USA but that he kept in touch with the Totten family when they moved to Belfast to live in Cliftonpark Avenue. On one occasion the pastor mailed an American newspaper in which there was a report of the opening of a new church building which Pastor Quigley had planted.

Sadly Pastor Quigley died a short time after this event whilst still a comparatively young man. According to Mr Totten, Mr Quigley was from Dublin.

9 Pastor George McKillen, 1919–1922

Pastor George McKillen came to Dungannon, Lisnagleer and Mullycar in 1919. The big event of 1920 was the presentation of a BSA motorcycle - a gift from the Churches to him. It cost well over £100 ...

'... a project taken up most enthusiastically, and subscribed to most generously by the members and friends of Dungannon, Lisnagleer, Gortmerron, Knockconny, and Mullycar Churches'.

The presentation was made at Lisnagleer on 12 March 1920.

The second big event was the Pastor's marriage to Miss Margretta (Gretta) Macartney who, like her husband, came from Upper Tully near Kells in Co Antrim. Following the happy event the Churches assembled again, this time in Dungannon, on Monday, 26 July 1920, and presented the happy couple with a matching sidecar for the motorcycle!



The famous BSA motorcycle photographed at Tobermore (the rider is not George McKillen)

When Pastor McKillen moved to Tobermore in 1922, the Church at Lisnagleer had 20 members. It would seem that he had a ministry of about 10 years in Tobermore, Carndaisy and Upperlands before he died in tragic circumstances on 22 October 1931 at 40 years of age, leaving a widow and five children whose ages ranged from 10 years to 18 months.



The McKillen family in Tobermore shortly before his death
The children's names were Ruth, Anna, Jean, Osmond and Eileen

** A further tribute to the life and work of George McKillen is included in Appendix 2 **

10 Mr J Jeffrey, 1923–1928

From July 1923 to the end of 1928 Mr J Jeffrey ministered in Lisnagleer and Dungannon and we are still reaping the benefits of his talent. He gave lessons to our late organist (then Miss Jean Morrow) and she in turn has rendered the Church very faithful service.

Mr Jeffrey was a bachelor. It is said that he got around the hard way by pedalling an old bicycle that was about ready to fall apart. At most services, he played the pedal organ and really preached his heart out. He was an earnest pleader with sinners and saw many remarkable cases of conversion during his stay at Dungannon.

In March 1927 Captain Robert Dagnall (Church Army) conducted a mission in Lisnagleer which lasted six weeks. He returned in November and stayed for four weeks. Memories of these meetings linger yet in the minds of many of our senior members who were converted at that time of divine visitation. It is recorded that the building was crowded in every part ... even the preacher only had standing room in the pulpit where he was surrounded by children.

11 Pastor William Weir, 1929–1932



Pastor William Weir, came to Dungannon and Lisnagleer on 17 June 1929 and, in the report for that year, wrote of Lisnagleer – *'membership of 23 due to strict revision of the roll'*.

He was a bachelor and his sister Mary came with him as his housekeeper. He lived at Empire Avenue, Dungannon and was the first pastor of both churches to own a car.

Under Mr Weir's guidance the building received some attention and, in November 1930, was reopened after extensive renovations - a new ceiling had been fitted. On that occasion a tablet was unveiled in memory of Mr & Mrs James Arnold, two of the founder members of the Church and teachers in the Lisnagleer School. Tobermore called again and claimed Mr Weir in 1932.

12 Mr F G H Sleath (Evangelist), 1932

Mr F G H Sleath was a young man of about 20 years of age, an evangelist from Co Longford, who served the Church in 1932 before later joining the Church Army.

13 Pastor Samuel Ruddock, 1935–1942

Mr Ruddock was called to Dungannon Church in 1935. He had been pastor of East End Baptist Church in Belfast and responded positively to Dungannon's call, remaining there until 1942. They were difficult years for the pastor and the members with average attendances of 13 on Sunday mornings and not many more in the evenings. He didn't use the pulpit ... in fact, he had a reading desk made and gathered all the members to one side of the Church.

There is no record of Mr Ruddock's service in Lisnagleer. Most likely whatever assistance he gave the Church was on an *ad hoc* basis. When he left in 1942 he was succeeded by Pastor W J Rowell (in Dungannon). Mr. Rowell's dates in Lisnagleer were 1939 – 1945 so Mr Rowell was in Lisnagleer for a short time before becoming pastor in Dungannon.

The late Dr Joshua Thompson compiled a complete list of former students of the Irish Baptist College when it was located in Dublin (ie pre-1964). The name of Samuel Ruddock appears on that list as follows:

SAMUEL RUDDOCK *Harcourt Street Church, Dublin 1912-15; Assistant Pastor HBC 1915-18; Ballykeel 1920-22; East End, Belfast 1922-29; Strandtown, Belfast 1929 -1934; Dungannon (& Lisnagleer) 1935-42; Ballynahinch 1942-1948; Tutor at the Missionary Training School, 3 Fitzwilliam St. Belfast for a while before returning to Strandtown where he was pastor until his death in May 1963.*

He was Minutes Secretary at the Baptist Union Assembly in Belfast in the late 1950s. Not only did he keep the minutes, but he read them immediately afterwards, requiring only a short time to complete the final sentences before reading them for formal acceptance by the Assembly. His skill with his pen and words was most impressive.

14 Mr Tom Moffett BTh (Evangelist), 1934–1937



Another evangelist, Mr T Moffett BTh, served Dungannon and Lisnagleer from 1934 to 1937. He was born in Belfast, circa 1905, one of a family of twelve children. The family home was in Dunvegan Street in the Ravenhill district of Belfast and his father, John was a labourer in the shipyard.

Tommy Moffett pursued his theological studies in America, where he was one of a number of Ulster students. Professor Rev J R Mantey PhD, DD at the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Chicago, said that the Ulstermen were among his best students.

Returning to Ireland he accepted a call to the pastorate at Lisnagleer in 1934 and resigned in 1937. In 1938 he was called to the Church at Grange, Co Antrim where he served until 1941. [2]

15 Mr Joseph Wilson, 1937

In 1937, Joseph Wilson was with the Church for a short time. He hailed from Ahoghill district of Co Antrim and had formerly been a Covenanter.

16 Pastor W J Rowell, 1939–1945

When Pastor Ruddock left Dungannon in 1942, Pastor Rowell was in charge of the Lisnagleer Church. His appointment began in 1939 when he came to Lisnagleer from

Athlone and he married during his ministry here.



Like the first minister of Lisnagleer, he responded, in 1945, to a call from the Coleraine Church where his ministry lasted until his retirement. His later years were marked by the loss of his voice which meant complete silence on his part. He was a most gracious believer ... a conscientious and godly man.

17 Pastor William H Rea, 1946–1967

In 1946 Pastor W H Rea came from Limavady and his ministry was to continue until April 1967.



Mr Rea was keen to establish a Baptist witness in Cookstown and, a few years after coming to the district, the Baptist Church was formed there. That was in 1953 and in 1959 it opened its own premises at Burn Road. The Cookstown Church is certainly a monument to the labours of Pastor Rea.

In view of the new work in Cookstown, the manse at Donaghmore was sold and another manse purchased at Oldtown Street, Cookstown ... but Pastor Rea did not neglect Lisnagleer.

Within the Church building various alterations were made. The pews were moved to the centre of the building, thus making an aisle up either side and literally 'uniting' the congregation, which in his early days was very small. A screen was erected at the rear of the pews inside the entrance to prevent draughts. Gas lighting and heating were installed and new walls and gates were erected in the churchyard.

A new clock and carpeting were installed at that time and before leaving, in 1967, Mr Rea arranged for the fitting of a new ceiling and the installation of electric lighting, both of which were in order when the new Pastor (J R Grant) arrived in July 1967 to take charge of the Cookstown and Lisnagleer Churches.

Pastor & Mrs Rea were helpmeets to each other. They both invested themselves in caring for the Lisnagleer Church and congregation for 21 years and were eventually laid to rest in the churchyard, very close to the main entrance to the Church Hall.

Alex Morrow was a faithful secretary and deacon at Lisnagleer for many years and, at the Church's Centenary in 1966, a new communion table and chair were presented in his memory by his widow Sarah and his family.

We deeply regret not having records from which to comment in detail about Alex and Sarah Morrow ... all that remains is an excellent photograph of them and their (adult) family.



Alex Morrow and his wife Sarah with their large family all of whom grew up at Lisnagleer Church, Sunday School and the Lisnagleer Primary School.

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PART TWO 1967 – 2016

18 Pastor J R Grant, 1967–1976

Rea Grant had served with the Irish Baptist Home Mission in Co Waterford and Co Fermanagh since 1962 before accepting unanimous calls to the Churches at Cookstown and Lisnagleer in 1967 and he is glad to report that the young people gave him an encouraging start to his ministry and, together, the (then new) BYF did some interesting and worthwhile things.

With regard to the churchyard and the church premises he was a 'hands-on' man and gladly reported that the men folk did their best to come alongside and help in whatever way they could.

Two memories will bear telling: one Saturday when we were digging a septic tank system (on the left as you approach the church door) we came close to a fatality when we hit running sand and one of our deacons needed all the men who were present that day to pull him out. Happily, George Walker survived the experience and lived for many years afterward.

The other memory is equally vivid, but for different reasons. If 'Meals on Wheels' is mentioned, at least some of the men of JRG's age will remember Mrs Steenson appearing with a wheel-barrow with all was needed for mid-day refreshments on board. Good grub travelled in that wheel-barrow and we were kept well-fed. She has since gone to her reward.

In 1970, Pastor Grant reported that there were 31 members in Lisnagleer and a full church programme was maintained. The services each Sunday were held at 12.30pm and 5.30pm in order to co-operate with the time of the evening service in the Cookstown Church at 7pm.

About 45 attended the Sunday morning service and about 60 attended the late evening service. The Sunday School was rather small with three teachers and 16 scholars. Since November 1969 the evening service on the first Sunday of each month was changed to 8.15pm so that a service in Moree Orange Hall could be well supported.

Changes of various kinds were made at that time. Electric heating was installed and the old furnace room was converted into toilets and a kitchen. With the initiative of the BYF and the help of many friends a new piano and a Hammond organ were purchased.

To mark the centenary of the building, a new hall and vestry were erected at rear of the church building and these have since proved very useful. The church was completely re-decorated inside, a new pulpit and platform were added and the baptistery was renovated and tiled.

Many gifts were received ... two chairs to match the Communion table, a flower table, a wall-text complete with spotlight, a desk-light for the pulpit, a desk for the vestry, a hymn-board, new cups and saucers and a substantial contribution towards chairs for the new hall. The old stables were given a badly needed face-lift and a concrete floor

laid in them. More than £1,500 was spent on these improvements and, at our request, the Tyrone County Council erected a direction sign to the Church at Agharan cross-roads.

Over the years many people have given Lisnagleer long and faithful service, not least Mrs Jean McKernan, the organist, who, by 1970, had served the Church for more than 30 years; the secretary, Mr W G Steenson, and the treasurer, Mr Fred Morrow (like his father before him), had served the Church as deacons for more than 30 years. Our other deacons Mr George Walker and Mr Cecil Turkington had both served more than 13 years.

Pastor Grant believes that his nine years in Lisnagleer and Cookstown Churches were among the happiest and most fulfilling of his life. When he accepted appointment to the position of Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1967 it was a step of faith but the Lord who had sustained him in pastoral work also sustained him in administrative work for the next 19 years.



The Grant family when leaving Cookstown in 1976.
L to R: Irene, Ian, JRG, John, Ruth with Janet, Elaine, and David.

** The following contributions were made by the pastors who succeeded **
** Pastor Grant and I am grateful to each of them for sharing their reminiscences **

19 Pastor Richard G Rennie, 1976–1984

Pastor R G Rennie succeeded Pastor Grant in 1976. With a membership of 42, the Church embarked on the erection of a new manse at Corkhill, Rock, Dungannon and this was duly completed in July 1978 at a total cost of £26,000.



The New Manse at Corkhill

In 1991, the Church's 125th Anniversary, Mr Rennie reported that the Church had three deacons and one elder, the longest serving of whom was Mr Fred Morrow. He was Church treasurer and had been in membership for over 50 years. Mr W G Steenson had transferred to Cookstown after serving as a member and secretary for over 50 years. For the first time in the history of the Church, an elder, Mr David McFarland was elected. Our organist, Mrs Jean McKernan, had served the Lord in that capacity for over 50 years.



Pastor Richard Rennie and the Lisnagleer Office-bearers

Front Row L to R: Mr Fred Morrow, Pastor Rennie & Mr W. G Steenson
Back Row: L to R: Mr Samuel Benson, Mr David McFarland,
Mr George Walker & Mr Cecil Turkington

Missions were conducted in Moree Orange Hall in 1975 and 1976 and, since then, a monthly service was held there at 8pm on the second Sunday of the month.

Other services were held as follows:

Sunday Morning Worship	11.30am
Evening Service	6.30pm
Mid-Week Prayer Meeting and Bible Study	Wednesday at 8pm

Mr Rennie left Lisnagleer in 1984 to take up the pastorate of the Church at Portrush.

20 Pastor John Birnie, 1984–1990

The Induction Service was on 14 Sept 1984. It was chaired by Pastor Clifford Morrison with charges to the Pastor by Alfie Orr and to the Church by J A Smyth.



The spacious manse was ideal for John and Dorothy and their five children whose attendance at the local Lisnagleer Primary School afforded immediate links with many neighbouring families in the area.

Membership grew a little, to 46, over those years with several coming to faith through the witness of the Church. The office-bearers were: David McFarland (elder); Samuel Benson, Kenneth Campbell, Kenneth Kerr, Fred Morrow, George Walker and Johnny Wilkinson (deacons).

A number of evangelistic missions were organized, including several in the church building, one in a portable hall in Donaghmore which was the 'birthplace' of the Church, and one in the same portable hall erected near Pomeroy for the purpose, at which the late Jim Henry preached. (Pastor Birnie preached at the others). Regular systematic door-to-door (or farm-to-farm!) visitation was carried out by JB, enhanced during the summer by visiting BYE teams (see below).

A youth work, meeting on Friday evenings, was commenced in late 1984. This attracted somewhere between 20 and 30 young people each week, many of whom were collected in a church minibus, purchased to assist in this and in other aspects of young people's work. The BYF was carried on faithfully by Kenneth Campbell (deacon) after Mr Birnie left, fulfilling a valuable role in reaching young people and nurturing young believers.

A 'Young Marrieds' meeting was initiated and met monthly in the manse for fellowship, Bible study and group discussion. This proved to be a popular and useful innovation.

Each summer from 1985 to 1990 BYE teams were invited to help with summer outreach in the area. These teams of young people stayed in the manse for anything up to ten days, the spaciousness of the manse again proving to be extremely useful. As part of each summer's outreach a week-long Children's Holiday Bible School was organized and conducted in the same portable hall used for missions and, in the first summer, numbers grew from 65 to 98 over the five days. This annual event attracted children from the surrounding rural area and from the villages of Pomeroy, Newmills, and Donaghmore and it grew each year so that by 1990 numbers averaged 110 with a midweek peak that year of 119.
John was given the opportunity to teach Religious Education in the Royal School, Dungannon, on two days each week from the spring term of 1985 until the summer term of 1990. This was an invaluable opportunity to influence and instruct young people ... it was also a real boon when it came to his door-to-door visitation as it opened opportunities to talk to parents he met on his visitation.

For the Birnie family, one very special aspect of the years spent at Lisnagleer was the warmth and kindness of neighbours which led to an unforgettable night in early September 1990 when they packed Mulnagore Orange Hall to say a 'community farewell'.

21 Pastor Billy Reid, 1991–2003

The first Saturday of March 1991 was the occasion of the induction of Billy Reid as Pastor of Lisnagleer. He had previously served in Larne Baptist Church for over 16 years, first as a member of staff of the Irish Baptist Home Mission and then as pastor.



Pastor Billy Reid and his wife, Honor, with Pastor Grant (BUOI Secretary) at the Induction Service

There was tension in the community at that time ... a period known in Northern Ireland's history known as 'The Troubles'. During Pastor Reid's first year, a terrorist shooting incident close to the Church resulted in the deaths of a local father and his son and this heightened the tension in the area. The Church, however, had good standing in both sections of the community despite the political tensions. This was due to the fact that there was a long-established congregation and also to the excellent work and efforts of Pastor Reid's predecessor, Pastor Birnie, among all sections of the community.

This was also the era in which Baptist Youth began the work of what is known as *'The Amazing Journey'*. This was a ministry to children of primary school age with the help of local churches. Lisnagleer became enthusiastically involved early in this ministry with visits to several primary schools in the area. This work found wide acceptance in schools, with both pupils and teachers, as the children were taken on a journey through the Bible.

A major renovation project on the church building, lasting about two years, was also undertaken. At one point, all that remained of the actual church building was the four walls. During this time the Church met in what was known as the lower hall, previously the stable block. God honoured the efforts of the congregation and a more comfortable and attractive meeting place was re-opened in October 1999.



Lisnagleer Baptist Church 2016





Interior Views: *... from the Porch* *... and from the Pulpit*

In the lead-up to the year 2000 there was much discussion among our churches, as well as in the media generally, about how the new millennium would or should be celebrated. Lisnagleer joined with the Baptist Churches in Dungannon, Gortmerron and Knockconny to mark the new millennium with a gospel outreach, the planning for

which began about two years earlier. Joint prayer meetings were held as were various youth events and homes in the areas surrounding the four Churches were visited in a programme of door to door evangelism with literature. This all proved a rich time of fellowship. The outreach culminated in April 2000 with two weeks of Gospel activities which went under the title '*Time 2 Change*'. Peter Anderson, John Blanchard and Derek Cleave of the Christian Ministries team were engaged as main speakers and other speakers included Gerald Titmus and Pastors Clive Johnston and Billy Young.

The Pastor's annual report for Lisnagleer Church, presented at the AGM on 21 February 2001 records,

> *'During the two weeks of intense efforts in the four Churches we reckon that between 500 and 600 unconverted people sat under God's Word in at least one event. Over 200 'Ultimate Question' booklets were requested. Each of the four Churches reported that at least one person with connections to it, either professed faith, or was restored to the Lord.'*

During Pastor Reid's ministry, Mrs Jean McKernan, who by that time had been organist for over 65 years, retired from her post thus completing a remarkable period of faithful service.

Mr Reid left Lisnagleer in October 2003 when he accepted a call to Tandragee Baptist Church.

22 Pastor Kyle Warren, 2004–2007

Pastor Warren writes:



I was inducted to the pastorate of Lisnagleer on 30 July 2004 after serving previously for two years as the Assistant Pastor of Londonderry Baptist Church. The first Sunday of my pastorate was very memorable in that not long after I had finished preaching my first sermon as the new pastor I received the sad news that Jean McKernan had passed away. She had been a very faithful member and musician in the Church for many years. Thankfully however, there were more weddings than funerals during my time in Lisnagleer.

In 2005 and 2006 Baptist Youth Evangelism teams were brought to the Church to coincide with the Holiday Bible Club week. These were very busy weeks (and noisy as 8-10 teenagers were staying in the manse!) but thoroughly enjoyable. The congregation appreciated the presence of so many young people helping with the worship, youth activities, and outreach and accompanying me on my weekly visits to elderly members who sadly were no longer able to attend the services.

Also in 2006 a week of mission was held to mark the Church's 140th anniversary. The four previous surviving pastors were asked to preach on consecutive nights and I concluded on the Friday night. Both the ministry and attendance were excellent throughout the course of the week and Lisnagleer members and indeed many from the local community were delighted to renew fellowship with Pastors Grant, Rennie, Birnie and Reid. It should also be mentioned that there continued to be a very active Youth Fellowship and Ladies Fellowship during my years in Lisnagleer, although the Sunday School was small with six pupils. A Men's Fellowship was commenced and the attendance at this remained positive over a sustained period.
A very encouraging aspect of my time in Lisnagleer was that I gradually was able to develop positive relationships with the principals and staff of many schools in the surrounding area, including some Roman Catholic schools. This culminated in *'The Amazing Journey'* being brought to several schools by the Church in September 2007. The whole Church played their part in this endeavour and it was wonderful to see the children, teachers and even a Roman Catholic priest listen so attentively to the oral and visual presentation given about the lives of characters in the Bible and the message of the Gospel. The feedback from the schools was extremely positive and many children requested copies of the New Testament.

In 2007 I left Lisnagleer to become pastor of Lantara Baptist church in Ballymena. At the time of writing I have been pastoring in Templemore Hall in East Belfast for three years.

I trust that the Lord will bless Lisnagleer Baptist Church in the days that lie ahead and faithful souls will have the assurance of the words written on the wall behind the pulpit that *'The Lord will give strength unto His people.' (Psalm 29:11).*

23 Pastor Winston Jordan, 2008–2013

Pastor Jordan writes:

I have been associated with Lisnagleer Baptist Church for many years and particularly since the mid-1980s when Pastor John Birnie was pastor and I was serving on the staff of Baptist Missions.



I recall getting to know some of the Lisnagleer people when we were moving mission halls from one area to another and maybe doing some running repairs between missions. You can imagine that we had a great day's 'craic' when erecting a mission hall at a housing estate in Omagh with Pastors Jim Smyth, John Birnie and Alfie Orr and other men from neighbouring Churches, including Lisnagleer.

Those were the days! Having got to know the Church in that way I was asked occasionally to preach at the Sunday services.

Towards the end of 2007 I preached more regularly on Sundays and also at the mid-week services on Wednesdays. In 2008 I was asked to conduct all the Sunday Services and Bible Studies and Prayer Meetings on Wednesdays. I was also responsible for visitation and the Men's Fellowship once a month from autumn to spring. My appointment at that time was not permanent and could be ended either by the Church or by me at any time so that the Church could meet and hear prospective pastors.
In 2009 my wife Anne and I, together with our son David, became members of the Church and a short time later I was appointed as elder.

I was asked to continue in all the above ways until a permanent appointment was made and so, for the most of six years, I was the pastor in all but name. In the last year, I preached on two Sundays each month until a pastor was called. I enjoyed the country style Church ... they were my kind of people.

24 Pastor Jonathan Rea, 2013–2016

Pastor Rea writes:

Pastor Rea was formerly a Pastor/Missionary with the Gospel Mission of South America, serving for more than seven years in Santiago, Chile. Feeling that the Lord was calling his family home to continue in pastoral work he returned to Northern Ireland in May 2012. He is married to Carolina, a daughter, Noemi (18yr) and a son, Timothy (10yr).

In October 2012, he received a call to the pastorate at Lisnagleer and, having accepted the call, he was inducted in January 2013.

On the second Sunday of his new pastorate Mr Rea had the joy of welcoming six new members into the fellowship which brought the membership total to 38. In addition, two more members have been brought in.

The attendance has increased to around 45-50 on a Sunday morning and on Sunday evening 35-45 are present. We thank God for the unsaved friends who have been attending the Sunday night services.

In the evening of every third Sunday of the month we hold a Special Evangelistic Meeting which is well attended. On the first occasion there were about 90-100 present. Each month we have singers or someone to testify and the service is followed by a cup of tea and time of fellowship. This meeting has been running for more than two years with an average attendance of 40-70.

In September 2014 a two-week mission was held in a barn on the Sloss family farm. We called this venture *'The Mission on the Hill'* and we thank God for the good number who attended, especially for the number of unsaved friends who came. During the two weeks we had about 30 unsaved friends and neighbours in attendance. As a fellowship we thank God that He is still working in this area. We can say 'Ebenezer' *(hitherto has the Lord helped us)* as we look back at the faithfulness of God during the last 150 years and we can say 'Jehovah-Jireh' *(the Lord will provide')* as we look to the future knowing that our God is still on the throne and that He is able.



The Rea Family
Carolina, Timothy, Noemi, and Jonathan

While this history was in the course of preparation Pastor Rea announced that he had accepted a call to Glengormley Baptist Church and would be moving at the end of July 2016.

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Appendix 1

Lisnagleer Primary School



Lisnagleer Schoolhouse in its better days!
Across the road the New Primary School, opened in 1961, can be seen.

A history of the Church would not be complete without mention being made of the Lisnagleer School. In its present condition it is a melancholy sight ... now a ruin standing at the crossroads.

A school at Lisnagleer may have begun between 1824 and 1826. Correspondence of Primate Beresford of Armagh mentions ten schools in the Civil Parish of Donaghmore in 1824 but Lisnagleer is not listed.
It appears in the appendix to the 1826 Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education as one of 18 schools in the Civil Parish of Donaghmore. The entry is as follows:

> LISNAGLEER: Hugh Sharkey RC, a pay-school. Teacher's Income, £14 12s 9d. A good house, cost £40. Protestant Return: 2EC, 28 Presbyterian, 30 RC. 39 male. 21 female RC Return: DITTO. Assisted by Kildare Place Society and London Hibernian Society. Mr Foster built the house and gives £3 2s 9d per annum and Rev James Graham, £1 per annum to the master.

At that time three societies for the provision of Christian learning were active in the Parish.

1 The Association for the Provision of Christian Knowledge;
2 The London Hibernian Society;
3 The Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland - afterwards known as the Kildare Street Society.

Pastor W H Rea (in an article in the *Irish Baptist* of June 1961) reported that Lisnagleer School closed in 1961. Founded in 1826, or thereabouts, it had functioned through the greater part of the 19th century and for two-thirds of the 20th. In the early years Mr W J Morrow (father of the Church treasurer of the same name) was the Manager.

Several old photographs from the school have survived, for which we are grateful.



The whole school with the teachers: Master and Mrs Parke circa 1925.
The second girl from the left in the second row is Jean Morrow (later Mrs. McKernan) who was the church organist for 65 years. Master Parke and his wife were members of Lisnagleer Church.

The Tyrone Education Authority erected a new school at Lisnagleer Crossroads in 1961 and the old school building was made available for week-night meetings.

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Appendix 2

A Tribute to Pastor George McKillen (1891–1931)

... 'Mr Great-Heart':

Dungannon, Lisnagleer, Gortmerron, Knockconny and Mullycar Churches, Co Tyrone, (1919–1922)

Tobermore, Carndaisy and Upperlands Baptist Hall, Co Londonderry, (1922–1931)

Pastor J R Grant writes:

Recently the Secretary of the Irish Baptist Historical Society contacted me to ask if I would revise a history of Lisnagleer Baptist Church which I had written in 1970 when the Church celebrated its centenary (albeit four years late). I searched my files at home, other sources in the Baptist Association Offices and, in the course of doing all this, I came across a fund of information about Pastor George McKillen which I felt conscience-bound to preserve and bequeath to later generations of Irish Baptists.

I wasn't a contemporary of the late Pastor George McKillen, Tobermore, as he is remembered. He had lived and laboured and died very tragically all of 10 years before I was born.

Both my parents, however, came from Co Antrim and it was inevitable that I heard his name mentioned periodically. It was only when I was Pastor of Tobermore that the like of the late Pastor Robert Boggs and others were an education to listen to as they reminisced from time to time.

But there was a closer relative of Pastor McKillen in Tobermore Church who served the Lord alongside me in his rôle as Church Secretary.

I refer to Mr George McKee whose mother, Ruth, was the first child and daughter of Pastor and Mrs McKillen. Between George and his aunt Eileen Hayburn (the youngest McKillen daughter) I received considerable help in putting this story together.

In the process of time Ruth McKillen married Mr William McKee who was a butcher in Maghera and, as it happened, his family was in membership of Tobermore Church. Their son George is a grandson of the late Pastor who died suddenly and tragically, at 40 years of age, on 24 October 1931.

Mrs McKillen, known as Gretta, was left to rear five children whose ages ranged from 10 years to 18 months. Their names were Ruth, Anna, Jean, Osmond and Eileen. Although a *McKillen Memorial Fund* was set up almost immediately after his death for the support of the family, the corpus of the fund was never very substantial. Had it not been for their mother's resourcefulness and initiative the family was barely saved from very hard times. She found a house in Ballymena and for many years kept several boarders in order to make ends meet.

Gretta survived her husband by 56 years until her death on 16 February 1987, aged 74. For logistical reasons George McKee never knew his grandfather but he has very cherished memories of his grandmother McKillen.

George's family was one of many generations of McKillens who farmed at Upper Tully, not far from Moorfields, Ballymena on the main Ballymena to Larne line. His father was Matthew McKillen who had been a teacher for some years before taking up farming full time. His mother was formerly Jane Foster.

George was the eldest boy in the family one of five boys and two girls. After leaving school he was employed in Cameron's Hardware Shop in Ballymena. This photograph shows him as a tall, slim and neat young man.



George McKillen as a young adult

This is probably how he looked when he served in the Belfast City Mission and afterwards when he was a student at the Irish Baptist College in Dublin.

Attending a mission conducted by Rev F C Gibson of Dublin, he was brought to see that the Lord was calling him to preach the gospel. The Lord was already preparing his heart for fulltime Christian service as an evangelist, so he lost no time in approaching the Belfast City Mission about a situation in its fine work. He was accepted and laboured for several years in the Ballymacarret area of the city.

Somewhere in his spiritual development he came to see the truth and meaning of Believer's Baptism and began to see that his future work would be among the people called Baptists and so he was admitted as a student at the Irish Baptist College, at that time located in Dublin.
Writing about George's college days the late Pastor L E Deens wrote a strange-sounding sentence about him: he said:

> *'my own outstanding impression is of how hard one found it to regard him as a man!'*

In the following paragraph, Mr Deens explains himself.

> *'Every inch a man in physical build and spiritual power, yet to the end he was a boy at heart. He radiated brightness and enthusiasm, and there was something delightfully attractive about his cheery laugh and gay spirits and unfailing good humour. Certainly there was nothing of the doleful Christian about George. He found life good, and those who came in contact with him could not but see it.'*

Mr Deens continued:

> *'One of my most vivid memories of him is the way he stepped into the ring at the open-air meeting at the Portstewart Convention one night some years ago to give his testimony. The youthful figure, bareheaded, with the wind playing through his hair, the eager smiling face, the simple, unaffected straight-forward words - I retain to this day a clear impression of it all.'*

Having completed his studies at the Irish Baptist College George was available to serve wherever the Committee directed him. He was sent by the Committee of the Irish Baptist Home Mission to Dungannon, Lisnagleer and Mullycar in 1919.

Right from the start George showed himself to be a hard worker in the Churches at Tobermore and Carndaisy and in the Baptist Hall in Upperlands a short distance from Maghera on the Kilrea road. A report in the *Irish Baptist* of December 1931 has a paragraph which reads as follows:

> *'The work done as a regular service by Mr McKillen is almost past belief for in addition to preaching in Tobermore on Sundays, morning and evening, he preached in the afternoon at Carndaisy, twelve miles away in the direction of Moneymore. On weekdays he conducted a meeting in Carndaisy, one in Upperlands and two in Tobermore – one for the children and one for adults. His visitation of the large area indicated was a heavy task and yet he found time to undertake a great deal of committee work for the denomination and to engage in other*

> *preaching efforts as opportunity arose. No wonder his passing has left an ache in many hearts; no wonder that many feel they have lost a friend whose place will be hard to fill; no wonder that there was so great a demonstration of sympathy with the bereaved family, in the large concourse attending the loved remains to the last earthly resting place; no wonder we were silent in amazement at the inscrutable ways of Divine Providence.'*

Pastor J W S Fraser, then Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland, noted in his tribute in the December 1931 magazine:

> *'Through his initiative, the Churches at Magherafelt (1926) and Coagh (1928) came into being, while the hall at Upperlands is a memorial to his diligence in the service of the Lord.'*

What were the circumstances of his death? Again, we will trust our reporter in the *Irish Baptist* article.

> *'On Sunday, 18 October, he preached four times as usual; on Monday he was about his ordinary work enjoying his usual good health; on Tuesday an affection of the throat gave his some slight discomfort. It developed rapidly, in spite of medical attention and on Thursday afternoon, 22 October, our brother was at home with the Lord.'*

His death certificate recorded *'acute oedema of the trachea'* as the cause of death.

George McKillen had a ministry of about nine years in Tobermore, Carndaisy and Upperlands until his death on 22 October 1931.



Called to Higher Service

He was buried very close to the centre of the cemetery in Kells and Connor. Even with such scanty directions it is not difficult to find his grave. My wife and I found it within ten minutes of our arrival. There you will find it, a well-kept plot with a very clean and legible headstone. There George McKillen, his wife Gretta and their daughter Anna are waiting the Day of Resurrection.



Notes

1 *'120 TOGETHER'*, ABCI Publication 2015, p 8

2 I am indebted to Norman S Wilson BA, BD, MA(Ed), LLB, BCL(Oxon) for his research and writing of his masterly history of Grange Church. See:
N S Wilson, *'Grange Baptist Church, Co. Antrim: A Bicentenary History 1811-2011'*, 2011, pp215-219



AUTHOR'S NOTE

The first part of this history was published in Volume 4 (1971/72) of the Journal of the Irish Baptist Historical Society (pages 5–21).

A NOTE TO ALL WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFE-KEEPING OF LOCAL CHURCH RECORDS

Please remember that you are the custodian of any records in your current possession. Such documents remain the property of the Church even if, in the first instance, you purchased them for the church's use. When you vacate office any church records that are in your possession should be hand over to the office-bearers who still hold office.

This history of the Church begins in 1866 and continues to 2016 so this edition is the only complete record of the History of Lisnagleer Church. Copies have been lodged with the Church Secretary, for safe-keeping on the church premises, and with the Secretary of the Irish Baptist Historical Society.





Erasmus and the Greek New Testament

Peter Firth

Around five hundred years ago, a series of events occurred in close succession which would profoundly affect the course of human history, the face of Europe and especially the place of the Bible in the lives of millions of ordinary men and women.[1]

The events in question were as follows:

The Fall of Constantinople

On 29 May 1453, after a siege lasting almost seven weeks, the capital city of the Byzantine Empire finally capitulated to the forces of the Ottoman army. Prior to the invasion, large numbers of monks and scribes fled from the city and its surrounding area and moved into Europe. Trench, in his comments on these migrants, noted:

> *'Some ... brought with them treasures of price, and such as made their welcome secure. Besides a living familiarity with the Greek tongue they brought with them manuscripts of Greek authors hitherto unknown.'* [2]

After centuries in which the Greek language had been virtually unknown in the West there now occurred a new impetus to study the ancient language. Later, in 1458, the University of Paris became the first university in Europe to offer a course on ancient Greek.

The Invention of the Gutenberg Printing Press



Until the middle of the fifteenth century, every book produced in Western Europe was copied by hand. However, all that was to change when Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz, Germany, developed a technique of setting individual letters in line inside a metal framework, coating them with ink and impressing these on paper. The result was the Gutenberg Printing Press and the development revolutionized communication. It was now possible to disseminate literature more quickly and more cheaply. The first major work to come off the press (1454-55) was a magnificent edition of the Bible, known as The Gutenberg Bible.[3] The text used was the Latin Vulgate.

The Voyage of Columbus to the New World

In 1492, Christopher Columbus reached the New World having previously set sail early in August of the same year from Palos, Spain, with three small ships ... the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the *Nina*. On 12 October, the expedition reached land, probably Watling Island in the Bahamas. Later that month, Columbus sighted Cuba (which he thought was mainland China) and in December the expedition landed on Hispaniola. He established a small colony there with 39 of his men. The explorer returned to Spain with gold, spices, and 'Indian' captives in March 1493 and was received with the highest honours by the Spanish court. Columbus later went on to lead three further expeditions. Such exploits served to advance the already growing spirit among men for adventure and the desire to move beyond historical borders and boundaries.



Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses



On the 31 October 1517, Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Within three weeks Luther's criticisms were printed on several printing presses throughout Europe. Approximately one hundred thousand copies were distributed and the Protestant Reformation was born.

The Publication of *Novum Instrumentum Omne*



Some twenty months to the day, prior to Luther posting his *Ninety-Five Theses*, a further event took place. On 1 March 1516, Erasmus of Rotterdam published a work entitled *Novum Instrumentum Omne* ('a whole new instrument').[4] It included the first published New Testament in Greek and its production, together with the previous events, would dramatically change the course of Church development within Western Europe and beyond, and profoundly influence the study and translation of the Bible for generations to come.

To mark the five hundredth anniversary of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, this paper will seek to answer the following questions:

- ◊ Who was Erasmus?
- ◊ How did his Greek New Testament come about?
- ◊ What are some of its key features?
- ◊ What has been the lasting legacy of Erasmus' work so far as Bible translation is concerned?

THE AUTHOR



Desiderius Erasmus was one of Europe's most famous and influential scholars. He rose from humble beginnings to become one of Europe's greatest thinkers and the man who defined the humanist movement in Northern Europe. Born in 1466, in Rotterdam, Holland (with many noting his probable birthdate as 27 October), Erasmus was contemporaneous with Martin Luther (1483-1546). He was the second son of Roger Gerard, a Catholic priest. His mother, Margaret, was the daughter of a physician. Both were unmarried at the time of his birth.

Erasmus' formal education began at the age of four or five years old when he was sent to a school in Gouda, a town near Rotterdam. Later, aged nine, his father sent him to a prestigious Latin Grammar School where his natural academic ability soon

blossomed. However, during his late teens both his parents died from the plague and Erasmus was put into the care of guardians. In his early twenties (1487) he entered the Augustinian monastery at Steyn near Gouda and took monastic vows a year later. The monastic routine with its harsh rules and strict methods did not suit him well but he did enjoy spending time reading in the library. His fondness for literature together with the fact that he was a contemporary of Luther has led one historian, R Bainton, to comment:

> *'Luther entered the monastery to save his soul by good works; Erasmus to enlighten his mind by good books.'* [5]

Yet, unlike Luther, Erasmus never renounced his monastic vows. He did, however, acquire a papal dispensation later on that allowed him to live outside the monastery and to put off the habit of his order.

In 1492 Erasmus became an ordained priest but his life was to take a dramatic change when he became a secretary to Henry de Bergen, the bishop of Chambrai (France). The bishop was particularly impressed with Erasmus' Latin skills and the appointment would later allow Erasmus to travel to Paris to study classical literature and to develop his Latin skills. When he did eventually arrive in Paris, it was not long before Erasmus gained a reputation as an excellent scholar and lecturer. He made a strong impression on many of his students and one in particular, William Blount, Lord Mountjoy. He went so far as to establish a pension for him. This very generous act enabled Erasmus to adopt a life of an independent scholar moving from city to city tutoring, lecturing and corresponding with some of the most brilliant thinkers of Europe. In 1499, he travelled to England and met Thomas More and John Colet, both of whom would have a great influence on him.

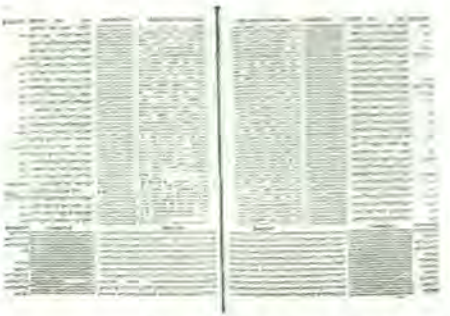
Over the next 10 years Erasmus divided his time between France, the Netherlands, Italy and England, writing some of his finest works. In the early 1500s, he was persuaded to teach at Cambridge and lectured in theology. During this time he wrote *The Praise of Folly* - a satirical examination of society in general and the various abuses of the Church. He did not care very much for many of the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. His great concern was to see priests and scholars turning to and studying the original languages of the Bible. His cry *'Ad Fontes!'* "[back] to the sources" (lit. "to the fountains") was matched by a personal quest to master the Biblical languages himself. Already fluent in several languages and the best Latin scholar in Europe at the time, he began to study Greek at the age of 32 and eventually went on to become the best ancient Greek scholar of the sixteenth century in Western Europe.[6]

When the Protestant Reformation erupted Erasmus found himself becoming increasingly embroiled in intellectual debates over theological and religious issues.

This lasted some ten years. Although he agreed with many of Luther's criticisms of the Catholic Church, he did not embrace Luther's radical approach. Luther, for his part, remained uneasy about him. Later, in 1536, whilst making preparations for a move to the Netherlands, Erasmus fell ill and eventually died from dysentery (12 July). Despite remaining loyal to the Church of Rome, Erasmus did not receive the last rites and there is no evidence that he asked for a priest. The Catholic Church rejected much of his work for its critical attitude and the moderation shown towards those who held different beliefs. Later, at the Council of Trent (1545 and 1563), the Church considered all his writings heretical and banned anyone from reading them.



Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros



The opening of Exodus 2 from the Complutensian Polyglot Bible

THE PRODUCTION OF HIS GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

The story behind the production and publication of Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum Omne* is closely related to the story of another Bible, the *'Complutensian Polyglot'*. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Cardinal Primate of Spain was Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros. He was a highly-respected leader within the Roman Catholic Church and a man of great personal wealth. Ximenes wanted to help revive the languishing study of the Scriptures and came up with the idea of producing a polyglot Bible which later would be known as the Complutensian Polyglot Bible.[7] In pursuit of his goal, Ximenes undertook with the help of various scholars to provide accurate printed texts of the Old Testament in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and the New Testament in Greek and Latin. The Bible would also include the Aramaic Targum of the Pentateuch (Targum Onkelos) and an interlinear Latin translation of the Greek Old Testament.

Work started on the project in 1502 and by 1514 the New Testament was completed and printed. However, several more years would pass before anything was published as work on the Old Testament was still ongoing. This was eventually finished in 1520 at which time Ximenes secured the Pope's imprimatur which allowed the work published. Yet, for some inexplicable reason, publication was delayed another two years.



During this period an enterprising printer by the name of Johann Froben of Basle (Switzerland) heard about the project and saw an opportunity to publish an edition of the Greek New Testament quickly. He decided to approach his friend Desiderius Erasmus to see if he would be interested in carrying out the work. Froben's proposal appears to have been transmitted on 17 April 1515. Upon securing Erasmus' agreement, work quickly began in October of that year and was completed in February 1516, six years ahead of the Complutensian Polyglot. A second edition was later published in 1519. Altogether some three thousand, three hundred copies of these two editions were printed and three further editions followed in 1522, 1527 and 1535. By the time of Erasmus' death over three hundred thousand copies of his Greek New Testament had been printed. By comparison the first and only edition of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible (which comprised six large volumes) amounted to a total of six hundred copies.

SOME KEY FEATURES OF THE WORK


NOVVM IN

Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum Omne* was a diglot, a bilingual edition with each page consisting of two columns: the Greek text in one column and a revised Latin translation in the other. In total, the book was made up of over a thousand pages and included an appendix with a vast number of notes. Since he could not find a Greek manuscript that contained the entire New Testament, he based his work he used a small number of different manuscripts of New Testament. Most of the text, however, was based on two rather inferior manuscripts both dating around the twelfth century. These were used as printer's copies.

The entire work was a hasty production. Erasmus himself admitted,

'I have got through six years of work in eight months.' [8]

As pages were being put through the printing press corrections were being made. The result was that hundreds of typographical errors were made in the first edition. In this respect, F A J Scrivener, the nineteenth century New Testament scholar famously said of the first edition, it is *'the most faulty book I know'*. [9]

TEXTUAL DIFFERENCES

Compared to the modern critical text, a number of key textual differences stand out in Erasmus' text.

In Acts 9:5, for example, Erasmus' text includes Jesus saying to Saul, *'It is hard for you to kick against the goads'*. This is lifted right out of Acts 26:14 where Paul recounts his own conversion experience, but it is not found in Acts 9 except by way of one Latin manuscript. Rather than omitting the saying, Erasmus seems to have inserted it into the Greek to match the Latin at this point.

Another example is in Revelation 22. When it came to verses 16-22 of chapter 22, the last leaf of the manuscript that Erasmus used was missing. To get round this problem he had to back-translate these seven verses from the Latin. However, in the process he created 17 textual variants that have not been found in any other Greek manuscripts since, except those that were based on his published text. The most significant variant is found in v19 where Erasmus uses the expression 'book of life' instead of 'tree of life'. No ancient Greek manuscripts says 'book of life' except for a couple written after Erasmus' published text.

The most significant difference, however, and the one which caused Erasmus most problems with Roman Catholic scholars was the omission of the Trinitarian formula in 1 John 5:7-8.[10] This gave rise to charges of heresy especially from Catholic leaders in Spain and Belgium.

The formula occurs in the New King James Version (see underlined words)

> **KJV 1 John 5:7-8** [7] *For there are three that bear record <u>in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.</u>* [8] *<u>And there are three that bear witness in earth</u>, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.*

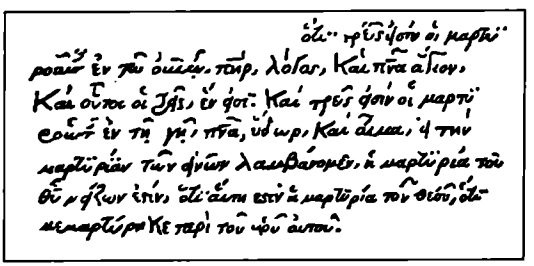
The English Standard Version omits it.

> **ESV 1 John 5:7-8** [7] *For there are three that testify:* [8] *the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.*

Erasmus' reply to his critics was that he could only print what was in front of him. Both his first and second editions therefore did not contain the formula. However, a year after his second edition was released a manuscript with the formula in it was found (produced) by a scribe working at Oxford University by the name of 'Roy' (Froy).[11] Erasmus never actually saw the manuscript but he did include the formula in his third edition, a move which appeased the anger of some of his opponents.

In terms of the history of Bible translations it should be noted that because Martin Luther based his German New Testament on Erasmus' second edition, the history of the German Bible has not had the problem of the Trinitarian formula of 1 John 5:7. On the other hand, however, the English Bible produced by Tyndale was based on the third edition which has it. Moreover, since Erasmus' third edition became the basis for the Greek New Testament used by the King James translators it therefore retains the formula.

To date, the *Comma Johanneum*, is found only in nine late manuscripts and, of these, four have it in the text and five have it in the margin notes which are much later than the text. It does not occur in any ancient versions except the Latin (but not until about the 8th century). Also significant is the fact that the text is not mentioned in any of the early church councils that affirmed the Trinity.[12] In 1881 when the Revised Version was produced the committee of scholars who worked on it came to the conclusion that the formula came to the conclusion that the formula was not part of the original text. [13]



Facsimile of a portion of I John containing the Comma, as it appears in Codex Montfortianus, a 13th century miniscule. [14]

ERASMUS' LEGACY

When we reflect on Erasmus' legacy, as far as Bible translation is concerned, it is indeed impressive. The text of his Greek New Testament became the basis for all Protestant translations for the next three hundred years. In addition, it stands behind virtually all Greek New Testaments until 1831 and behind all European language based translations until 1881 when the Revised Version was produced (except, of course, for the Vulgate). Moreover, it lies behind Tyndale's New Testament (1525) and has thus influenced the many English translations that have followed Tyndale's right up to an including the King James Version. Conservative estimates suggest that ninety per cent of the King James Version is Tyndale.

The ironic element in all of this is that Erasmus' more pressing concern when he agreed to Froben's proposal was not to produce a Greek translation so much as to find a means whereby he could publish his own Latin translation of the New Testament. For Erasmus, the provision of a Greek text was more an afterthought and yet, today it is the Greek New Testament that is remembered and celebrated.

Finally, in the preface of the first edition Erasmus expressed something of his desire in making his work available to the public. His wish was that *'the boy behind the plough would know about the Scriptures and the women kneading bread in her house would know about the Scriptures.'* That longing would be expressed again some years later (albeit in a somewhat adapted form) by another great linguistic scholar, William Tyndale. In response to a priest who openly attacked his beliefs, Tyndale famously said, *'If God spare my life, before very long I shall cause a plough boy to know the Scriptures better than you do!'* Did Tyndale have in mind the words of Erasmus before him when he uttered those words? We do not know. What is clear, however, is that Christians today owe an enormous debt to the labours of both men and indeed to all scholars who work tirelessly to ensure that the sacred text is made available to all, regardless of language, gender, age, ethnicity and social background.

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Notes

1 The following events are identified by D Wallace, in his lecture, *'Erasmus and the Publication of the First Greek New Testament'* delivered at Houston Baptist University, 2016.

2 R C Trench, 1879, *'Lectures on Medieval Church History'*, MacMillan & Co, London, p n405.

3 Also referred to as *'the Forty-Two Line Bible'*.

4 Its title was changed to *Novum Testamentum Omne* with the second edition and the name continued.

5 Quotation cited in Holder, R W 2009, *'Crisis and Renewal: The Era of the Reformation'*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, p52

6 It should be noted that the average life span of the European man at that period was in the mid-forties. Erasmus also began to study Hebrew but never really mastered it.

7 The term Complutensian refers to the name of the town where the scholars met. Complutum (today's Alcalá de Henares) is a city near Madrid.

8 Wallace, *'Erasmus and the Publication of the First Greek New Testament'*.

9 Wallace, *'Erasmus and the Publication of the First Greek New Testament'*.

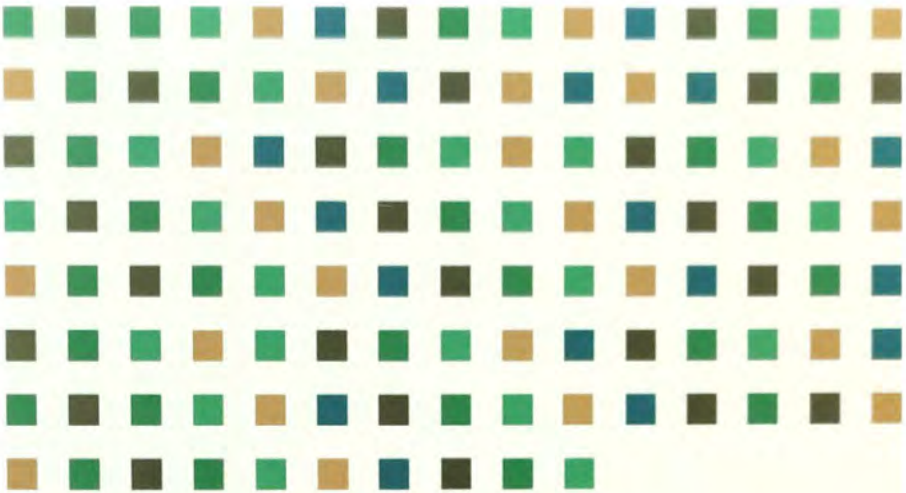
10 This is sometimes referred to as the *Comma Johanneum* or the Heavenly Witnesses. The term 'comma' means a short clause.

11 This manuscript known as Codex 61 (or *Montfortianus*) is today kept in Trinity College, Dublin.

12 Even though they did not have it, they still affirmed the Trinity by inferring it from the teaching of other parts of the New Testament.

13 The Revised Version was based on a Greek text by Westcott and Hort (19th century). This text largely stands behind *most* English New Testament translations.

14 Reproduced from T H Horne, *'An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures'*, Vol 1, p 241, Robert Carter and Bros, NY, 1854



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