



Michael John Donoghue
7020301

Michael John Donoghue 7020301
13 Platoon 'C' Company
1st Battalion London Irish Rifles
Royal Ulster Rifles





Dedicated to those who fought alongside my father.

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I also thank Laura Sweeney. Many of the photos in the Photo chapter were donated by her.

To my wife, Pam, who encouraged me to put this book into print. And to my son Stephen who put his expertise to work with the digital editing.

Patrick Michael Donoghue May 2017

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INTRODUCTION

After my Dad passed away my sister and brother shared with me a collection of his writings and sundry other items.

Included in those items was a map of Italy, a detailed drawing of a Vickers Machine Gun, various photos, a small brown New Testament Bible, and a red-bound diary.

The diary was dated 1969. It was full of notes my father had made (what he thought of politicians, what music to listen to, literary quotes, etc.). Scattered throughout the diary were notes of his memory of the war.

Dad rarely spoke of the war. In fact I can only remember two occasions when he did. One was when he was captured by the Germans during a night patrol in the desert. He had been told that the German soldiers had been ordered not to take prisoners and the only alternative was death. Fortunately, for him and his crew, the Germans showed compassion and set them free. The second time was when he told the story of an Italian battalion surrendering to a platoon of British soldiers.

Dad enlisted in 1940 and fought in North Africa, Sicily and Italy (there are also photos of him in India and Greece but I have no idea as to why he was there).

He came home with a piece of shrapnel in his skull which triggered epileptic fits at unpredictable times - riding his motorbike, while in the attic, playing cricket. His brothers and sisters all agreed he was not, both physically and mentally, the same man as before the war.

I bless my mother's cotton socks for keeping us all together.

This book contains my father's words.

SOLDIERS



CATANIA JULY 17th 1943
(At the foot of Mount Etna, Sicily)

FEAST OF DEATH.

I am dressed for the occasion.
You see my bandoliers that cross my shoulders,
like the coloured chains of Christmas.
You see the grenades, like party balloons,
that hang from my belt.
The submachine gun strikes an incongruous note,
although we could make believe it was my fairy wand.
So let us go, my friends, to the party,
and perhaps we will meet the Master of Ceremonies -
Death!

DAWN

An infantry unit in a combat zone.
Men, who had spent the night, in various stages of rest,
anxiety and terror, lonely fear, begin to stir.
In the dim, misty dawn, harsh, unharmonized sounds
blend into a raucous symphony.
Coughing, spitting, farting and belching.
Noses being blown and the sound of urine hitting the leaves and stubble.
The rattle of steel against steel,
and the sound of clothing being shaken.
Curses bubbling from dry, sour throats.
No gratitude for the nights rest,
because they fear the day that has dawned.
All this sound - and where else would you hear a sound like it.
The footsoldiers reveille!

PSYCHIATRISTS.

In the army we called them 'trick-cyclists'-
for a very good reason.

I stood in front of three of these eminent gentlemen,
with poison from a head wound oozing from my scalp,
and shivering with malaria.

And these very observant gentlemen asked,
"Well soldier, how about rejoining your battalion?"

SOLDIERS.

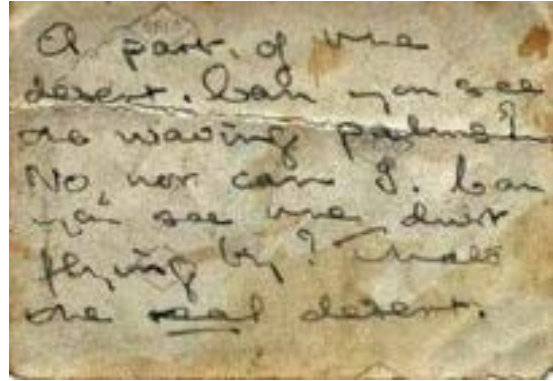
We are the unwilling
Sent by the unqualified
To do the unacceptable
For the ungrateful.

THE PAY.

When I was in the army (1940-45)
and our rumblings and mutterings
about the microscopic pay we received
(in my case five shillings -and oh joy!
sometimes seven shillings and sixpence a week),
were investigated by higher authority,
we were told that we were the highest paid
soldiers in Europe,
in comparison with the French, Germans,
Italians, Belgians, etc.



NORTH AFRICA



A part of the desert. Can you see the waving palms? No, nor can I.
Can you see the dust flying by? That's the real desert.

Iraq 1942 (from Basra).
Memories of "The Garden of Eden!"
Kurna (Al-Qurna?).
A filthy little village, where the Euphrates joins the Tigris.
Oil seeps through the filthy mud.
Jaundice, fleas, mosquitos.
Arabs that hate us, as we despise them.
The enervating heat of day,
and the bitter cold of night.
Foul smelling camels -
scorpions that give sport by sprinkling a ring of petrol around them,
and watching them bite themselves to death in the blazing arena.
I've tried to solve a riddle,
if you wish to know it - well,
if Kurna is the Garden of Eden,
then where the fuck is Hell!

ITALY



A SLEEP ON A MOUNTAIN

A personal remembrance.

We trudged, slipped and strained up, ever up.

A mule track, sometimes only a few feet wide.

Night, freezing, misty, yet the sweat poured from us.

An enemy m/g opens up,

the Italian muleteers run to safety.

Some of the mules fall off the track.

Stumbling and cursing with our loads, m/g's, rifles,

all the paraphernalia for killing men who had
the emblem 'Gott mit uns' on their belt buckles.

So, he was with them too!

Yet still we murdered each other.

I have never found the answer, and gave up God -
that was the easiest solution to my problem!

After some hours we were allowed to halt.

And as we crouched there, slowly freezing,

I felt around and found a blanket rolled round a body,
who I presumed was one of our men.

I gradually pulled the blanket around me
for a little warmth.

Then, not long after, we were ordered
to move up the mountain.
The man who I had shared the blanket with was
a young German, with most of his head missing!
Yet I felt nothing,
only grateful for the warmth of the blanket!
As we staggered up, ever higher, ever colder,
a tall l/c was shot in the shoulder.
It was only a flesh wound, yet he died a few hours later.
Another soldier gradually went mad with fear.
Cursing obscenely, crying and muttering,
shouting and then screaming.
He had to be clubbed with an m/g butt.
The Germans opened up with star shells
and then came the mortars and m/g's.
We crouched beneath the rocks, sweating and freezing,
feeling certain that every bullet was directed at us,
and that rock and shell splinters were searching for us.
So we spent the night, climbing and lurching,
every limb crying with pain and exhaustion.
Our faces crusted with frost
and dirt mingled with our sweat.

ROLL CALL



The writing on the rear of this photograph reads....
An old snap from Iraq, 1942.
Sorry there's only half of me.
Of the fellows in the picture with me, there are now three of them dead,
two are prisoners, and three have been wounded.
Am I lucky!

Regimental Sergeant Major Johnny Kearns

Officers.	Sergeants.
Capt Gallacher	Pat Sweeney
Bonham-Carter	John Galvin
Granville Adams	Freddy Norris
John Gates	Bill Parfitt
MacNamara	Danny Kinnard
Good	Jack Murphy
Menzies	Tom "Ginger" Hedges
	Billy McClelland
	Ted Lucy
Corporals.	Lance Corporals.
"Steve" Donoghue	"Horse" Walters
Dick Pamplin	Ernie Pinnock
	Fred Smythson
	Tom Goodenough

Riflemen.

Joe Brankin

Billy McKeown

Ernie Pile

Pat McAllister

Jack Taylor

"Dick" Whittington

Fred D'Arcy

Alf Bowler

"Orrie" Carter

Sean Rankin

Sammy McGee

"Johnnie" Johnson

Tommy Cavanagh

Riflemen.

Joey Smith

Harry Driscoll

Ted Racine

Bill Brown

Johnny Rafferty

Jimmy Cole

Freddy Hunt

George Bowen

Billy McComish

Dicky Knowles

Jimmy "Red" Nolan

Dicky Nolan

Alby Bowler

PHOTOS

In May of 2007 I received an email from Laura Sweeney enquiring as to whether my web page site was still active. The reason for her enquiry was that her grandfather, Pat Sweeney, was listed on the ROLL CALL page. Laura was kind enough to send me some photos and lo and behold it would appear that her grandfather and my father were close friends. The first four photos contain both Pat and my father.



Pat and Dad



Pat (left) and Dad (right)



Pat (second from left) and Dad (centre)



Dad (front left) and Pat beside him



Dad (far right)



Dad (centre)



Pat (far right)







MEDALS



Left to right ... Defence medal, 1939-45 War medal, 1939-45 Star, Africa Star, Italy Star

He was also awarded a medal by the Americans which the British Army wouldn't let him accept.

OLD ARMY SONGS



Mario Lanza II (Dad loved the opera)

SOLDIERS SONG 1914-1918.

Where are the lads of the village tonight?
Where are the lads we know?
They're not in Piccadilly or Leicester Square!
No my boy, no not there.
They've taken a trip to the continent
With their rifles and their bayonets bright.
Facing danger gladly,
Where they're needed badly,
That's where they are tonight.

FRED KARNOS ARMY.

We are Fred Karnos Army
A sorry lot are we,
We cannot march, we cannot fight,
What fucking good are we?
And when we get to Berlin
The Kaiser he will shout,
"Mein Gott, Mein Gott
What a fucking fine lot
Are the British Arm-y!"

LILI MARLENE

(I can still hear Dad singing this in Italian)

Underneath the lantern by the barrack gate
Darling I remember the way you used to wait,
'Twas there that you whispered tenderly
That you loved me, you'd always be
My Lilli of the lamplight,
My own Lilli Marlene.

Time would come for roll call, time for us to part
Darling I'd caress you and press you to my heart
And there 'neath that far off lantern light,
I'd hold you tight, we'd kiss "good-night,"
My Lilli of the lamplight,
My own Lilli Marlene

Orders came for sailing somewhere over there,
All confined to barracks was more than I could bear;
I knew you were waiting in the street,
I heard your feet, but could not meet,
My Lilli of the lamplight,
My own Lilli Marlene.

Resting in a billet just behind the line,
Even tho' we're parted your lips are close to mine;
You wait where that lantern softly gleams,
Your sweet face seems to haunt my dreams,
My Lilli of the lamplight,
My own Lilli Marlene.

MADAMEMOISELLE.

Mademoiselle she bought a cow
Parley-voo
To milk the brute she didn't know how
Parley-voo
She pulled the tail instead of the tit
And covered herself all over with - milk?
Inky pinky parley voo.

1914-1918 MARCHING SONG.

The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling

For you but not for me.

The angels they sing ting-a-ling-a-ling

They hold the goods for me.

O death where is thy sting-a-ling-a-ling

O grave thy victory?

The bells of hell go ting-a-ling-a-ling

For you but not for me.

UNKNOWN

When the bloody war is over

Oh how happy I shall be,

When I get my civvy clothes on

No more soldiering for me.

No more crying out for furlough

No more bribing for a pass,

You can tell the sergeant-major

To stick his passes up his arse.

QUOTES and SAYINGS



My Fathers diary was dotted with quotes and sayings.
Here are a few

And this, I think, was his favourite

Illegitimi non carborundum.
Freely translated - Don't let the bastards grind you down.

Wo! Ngi hudelwa yi hubulu.
Alas! I have been excreted on by a raven.
Zulu

Quos Deus vult perdere, pris dementat.
Whom God would destroy He first makes mad.

Er ist vom tode gezeichnet
The mark of death is upon him.

Nothing doth more hurt a state
than that cunning men pass for wise.
Bacon

If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome;
If you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent;
If you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe.

A statesman is a politician who places himself at the service of the nation.
A politician is a statesman who places the nation at his service.

When you go home,
tell them of us, and say,
for your tomorrow,
we gave our today.

Translated from the Greek, and linked with the historic stand of Greeks and Spartans at Thermopylae in 480 BC against superior Persian forces.

(This is also used as the Kohima epitaph, the battle that took Dad's brother Bertie's life ... India 1944)

AFTER THE WAR



Who is this puny man,
that walks the earth,
with an infantrymans crouch.
The shoulders bowed,
that once carried the instruments
of staccato death.
Who died and died
and yet still lived
to view his suffering
with a cynical eye.
Who lives despite them,
and not by their approval.
To be a hero tis simple enough;
you must be dead!
Yet he lives,
to his own reproach,
not a hero, a fleeting fame,
but a man who was,
and yet is not,
judged,
in his frailty.

