



A Rededication Service for

**Private William McCann
1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers**

**15:00 hours on Wednesday 10 July 2024
CWGC Stasegem Communal Cemetery, Belgium**

**Service conducted by The Reverend Jason Clarke MBE CF
Chaplain to 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment**

Private William McCann

Private William McCann was born in Baillieston, in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1896. He was one of 8 children born to Patrick McCann and his wife Catherine. His son, William, was born on 24 April 1915.

Private McCann enlisted into The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. He joined 2nd Battalion on the Western Front on 10 June 1915. For reasons now unknown, he served under the alias of Private Patrick McCann, a name shared by his father and one of his elder brothers. His brother, Private Patrick McCann, was killed on 3 May 1917 whilst serving with 2nd Battalion The Royal Scots and is commemorated on the Arras Memorial.

Private William McCann saw action on the Somme in 1916 and during the Battle of Messines and the Third Battle of Ypres, in 1917. During the German Spring Offensive 2nd Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers took heavy casualties and on 14 April 1918, most of the battalion was absorbed into 1st Battalion. On 24 June 1918, Private McCann was listed as having been wounded.

By October 1918 the static fighting associated with the Western Front, which had kept the British Army in Belgium within the Ypres Salient since 1914, had lifted, and Allied forces were advancing. On 19 October 1918 the town of Kortrijk was liberated.

The War Diaries of 1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers record that on 20 October 1918 they moved to an assembly position around 1.5 kilometres directly north of Kortrijk. At 06:00 hours a barrage started and at 08:30 hours the battalion moved forward and crossed the River Lys, assembling around a kilometre north of Stasegem. From here they advanced again. On 21 October, the day of Private McCann's death, the battalion was relieved from the frontline. They had lost 7 other

ranks killed and 50 wounded during this period. Private McCann, aged 22, was amongst those killed.

Private McCann's body was buried in Stasegem Communal Cemetery as an unknown soldier of 1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers. As he was missing, Private McCann was commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial. However, new research has shown that this is in fact his grave and the headstone has now been changed to reflect this. Today we will remember Private McCann and his grave will be rededicated.

Within Stasegem Communal Cemetery, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains a plot of 23 graves of Commonwealth casualties of the First World War, all buried by the Burial Officers of the 29th Division between October and November 1918. At the time of their burial three of the casualties could not be named, but with the identification of Private William McCann only one grave remains 'Known Unto God'.

Call to Worship

I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

St John 11 v 25-26

We have come to this place to recognise and commend to God the mortal remains of our brother in arms Private William McCann, of 1st Battalion The Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who gave his life in battle near Stasegem on 21 October 1918.

Today we accord William the dignity and respect that he is due and commend him to the mercy and grace of God our redeemer and judge, and in the hope and life given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ who died for us.

All May the Peace of the Lord be always with you,
And also with you.

Bidding Prayer

We meet in the presence of God, to commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom justice and peace.

We come to pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror. We come to remember with thanksgiving and sorrow Private William McCann, and all whose lives, in World Wars and conflicts, past and present, have been given and taken away.

All **Amen.**

Scripture Reading

Read by an Embassy Representative

Romans Chapter 8 v 31-35, 37-39 (NRSV)

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son but gave him up for all of us, how will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ who died, or rather, who was raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?

No, in all these things we are more than victorious through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Reading

Read by Group Captain Ret'd Clive Montellier OBE
AHd JCCC & MOD Medal Office

John Chapter 6 v 37-40 (NRSV)

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away; for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me but raise it up on the last day.

This is indeed the will of my Father, that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life; and I will raise them up on the last day.'

This is the word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Reading

Read by Captain Johnathan Cowan
1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment

The Soldier's Grave

by William Barnes

The warrior, when he sinks to rest,
By many a grateful tongue is blest;
His decent grave demands a sigh
From everyone that passes by.
Tread lightly on the hallowed soil
Where he is resting from his toil.
And think upon the woes he bore
When you were couched in peace before.

Remember all the toil and pain
He suffered in the long campaign,
And how he fainted on the way
While untrod leagues before him lay;
How oft he saw his fellows fall
Where gleamed the sword, and flew the ball.
But now in a celestial band,
He triumphs in a happier land.

Address

The Act of Dedication

So let us now bless and dedicate this grave as the final resting place of the mortal remains of Private William McCann.

O God, whose Son Jesus Christ was laid in a tomb:
Bless and dedicate, we pray, this grave as the place where the body of your servant William may rest in peace, in the knowledge that he now abides in your glory through the merits of your Son, who is the resurrection and the life; who died and is alive and reigns with you now and for ever.

The Exhortation

Read by Captain Johnathan Cowan
1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.

All **We will remember them.**

The Last Post

Played by Lance Corporal Barry Norton
1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment

Silence**The Reveille****Oft in the Stilly Night**

Played by Pipe Major William Mitchell
1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment

Kohima Epitaph

Read by Captain Johnathan Cowan
1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment

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

Laying of Wreaths

Prayers

Eternal God, in your wisdom and grace you have given us freedom through the lives of your departed servants. We thank you for the life of Private William McCann and his comrades and for those who loved them. We thank you for your goodness and mercy that followed him all the days of his life and his ultimate faithfulness to the tasks to which you had called him.

May God give peace:

All **God give peace.**

We pray for all who have died or suffer as a result of conflict. Those whose lives are disfigured by war or terror. For service men and women, for civilians, for those held captive, each one remembered by and known to God.

May God give peace:

All **God give peace.**

We pray for peace-makers and peace-keepers; those who seek to keep this world secure and free; for all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace.

May God give peace:

All **God give peace.**

Finally, we pray for all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return.

May God give peace:

All **God give peace.**

All **Amen.**

A Prayer for the Armed Forces

Almighty God, stretch forth your mighty arm to strengthen and protect the armed forces: grant that meeting danger with courage and all occasions with discipline and loyalty, they may truly serve the cause of justice and peace; to the honour of your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Trusting in the compassion of God, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

The Blessing

Support us, O Lord,
all the day long of this troublous life,
until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes, the
busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over and our
work is done.

Then, Lord, in your mercy grant us a safe lodging,
a holy rest, and peace at the last;
and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy
Spirit, be upon you and those whom you love and
remember this day and for evermore.

All **Amen.**



The Ministry of Defence, through the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, is responsible for the research, identification and burial of all British casualties worldwide.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cares for the graves, memorials, records and memory of the 1.7 million Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two World Wars.

© Crown Copyright/JCCC – 2024