

## THE ULSTERMAN - IN IRELAND AND CANADA

By Brian McConnell \*

Can you be from County Monaghan, Ireland and called an *Ulsterman* or must you be from Northern Ireland ?

I followed with interest during the Spring and Summer of 2012 newspaper reports from Northern Ireland concerning celebrations to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ulster Covenant. Many of my relatives lived in County Monaghan, Ireland in the early 1900s and some signed the Covenant, including Joseph Clarke.

Joseph Clarke came to Canada with his wife Margaret McConnell in 1924. He operated a successful motor vehicle business and garage in Toronto. In 1935 he was elected Master of Enniskillen Loyal Orange Lodge 387 in Toronto, one of the oldest lodges in Toronto. (1) He was also President of the 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division Old Comrades Association. Later he was elected Mayor of Englehart, Ontario. (2) All this time he was known as an *Ulsterman*, not just by his relatives and friends but by anyone who heard him speak or knew where he was from and what he had done.



**Joseph Clarke**  
**Remembrance Day, Toronto, 1962**

The Ulster Covenant, signed all through the nine Counties of the old province of Ulster on September 28, 1912 had pledged all men to stand by one another in defending their position in the United Kingdom.(3)

PARLIAMENTARY DIVISION *North Monaghan*  
 DISTRICT *Ulster*  
 PLACE OF SIGNING *Drumbliss*

**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 deciding, 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.

NAME	ADDRESS
<i>Robert Wm Flack</i>	<i>Drumbliss, Lutnamard</i>
<i>William Gibson</i>	<i>Mullagranan, Newbliss</i>
<i>Robert Dickson</i>	<i>Mullagranan, Newbliss</i>
<i>Robert Dale</i>	<i>Larne, Newbliss</i>
<i>William J Dale</i>	<i>Edengough, Newbliss</i>
<i>Henry Williamson</i>	<i>Larne, Newbliss</i>
<i>Joseph Clarke</i>	<i>Newbliss</i>

**Joseph Clarke signed at Newbliss, Co. Monaghan**

Support for the union of Ulster and for that matter all of Ireland and Great Britain had a long history among the Protestant community in County Monaghan. In "Shepherding the Monaghan Flock: The Story of First Monaghan Presbyterian Church, 1697 - 1997" by Dr. L.T. Brown it is noted on page 94 that "...on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1886, the Presbytery of Monaghan...protest(ed) in the strongest manner any measure that has as its object the severance of the union as at present existing..."(4)



**Newbliss, County Monaghan in early 1900s**

Joseph Clarke was born in Newbliss, son of William Clarke a ploughman and his wife Sarah, who had seven children and were members of the Presbyterian Church.(5)

As a young man Joseph travelled with his father to Toronto, Canada where many had already moved in the hope of better fortunes and they obtained a small plot of land north of the city. At the outbreak of World War I, however, both returned to County Monaghan, Ireland so that Joseph with his younger brother William could do their duty and enlist together in the Ulster Division in the British Army to fight for King and Country. (6)

Small No. 27/107 No. 11.2 Army Form B. 2075  
**NOTE**—This Certificate is to be issued without any alterations in the manuscript.

Certificate of discharge of No. 23439 *James Clarke*  
 Name *James Clarke*  
 Surname  
 Christian Name in full  
 Unit  
 Regiment or Corps **ROYAL IRISH FUSILIERS**  
 from which discharged  
 \*The unit of the Regiment or Corps such as Field Co. P.E. B.Y. or M.T. A.S.C. etc., is desirable to be stated.  
 Regiment or Corps to which first posted **ROYAL IRISH FUSILIERS**  
 Also previously served in  
 Only Regiment or Corps in which the soldier served since August 6th, 1914, are to be shown. If applicable also space is to be ruled through in lot and included.  
 Special Qualifications (Military) *Machine Gun*  
*Chapman Gun*  
 Medals, Claps, Decorations and Merit in dispatches  
 Has served Overseas as Active Servicer of No. *6*  
 Entered on *Home List*  
 He is discharged in consequence of *being a long & physically fit for War Service. Death 1916. V.I.R.F.*  
 also serving *Two* years *345* days with the Colours and  
*Nil* years *Nil* days in the Army Reserve  
 Date of issue of this Certificate *1918*  
 Description of the above-named soldier when he left the Colours.  
 Year of Birth *1875* Marks or Scars *2 in left leg*  
 Height *5* ft. *6* in *S.W. abdomen*  
 Complexion *Rose*  
 Eyes *Blue* Hair *Dark Brown*

WARNING—If this Certificate is lost a duplicate cannot be issued. Any request for replacement is to be forwarded to the War Office, London, W. 8.

Small No. 27/107 No. 11.2 Army Form B. 2075 (P. 7, C.)

**Discharge Certificate from Royal Irish Fusiliers**

William Clarke, Joseph’s brother was killed in action during the attack at Hamel, in France, on July 1, 1916. (7) Joseph was seriously injured with gunshot wounds to his left leg, stomach, and loss of his right eye. (8)

After service with the Ulster Division, Joseph returned to County Monaghan. He obtained employment at Givens Garage in Monaghan Town and trained to become a motor mechanic.



**Givens Garage, Monaghan about 1922**

Joseph also was active in the Orange Lodge in Monaghan, as were many members of his religious community.



**Joseph seated wearing Orange collar**

In 1924 Joseph became engaged to marry. Before the wedding he received a sign, a Black Hand on paper, meant to be the Red Hand of Ulster but colored black, as a warning. This was common during the period and is mentioned by Anita Leslie, daughter of Shane Leslie of Leslie Castle, County Monaghan, in her autobiography "The Gilt and the Gingerbread" on page 41. She writes that in the summer of 1920 her mother went away with her to Bundoran, the County Donegal resort which had a big hotel but when they arrived "no maids, or waiters remained and over the entrance had been painted a black hand - the Sinn Fein warning to 'Get Out' ".(9)

The day after his wedding Joseph and his wife boarded a vessel in Belfast for Canada. Other relatives and friends had already gone to Toronto and to New York, USA including a brother-in-law, Eddie Quinn, who had served with the 'Black and Tans'. Any connection to the British, especially by military service put you at peril in County Monaghan.

When Joseph arrived in Toronto he deposited his Orange Lodge certificate with Enniskillen L.O.L. 387.



**Banner of Enniskillen L.O.L. 387 of Toronto**

Other relatives soon followed Joseph to Toronto, including his younger brother Fred, and his wife's brother William, and sisters Lillie, and Rachel.

Lillie and her husband moved on to New York City where he had employment and other relatives from County Monaghan were living. Almost every year on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July during the 1930s the relatives and friends from New York would travel north to be with their family and take part in the Twelfth of July celebrations in Toronto.



**Joseph was President of 36<sup>th</sup> Ulster Division Old Comrades Association of Toronto in 1937**

After the Second World War, Joseph had a business opportunity in Northern Ontario and moved to Englehart to take over a Dodge Automobile Dealership along with a garage. In Englehart he was frequently called upon to perform Orange funerals for men who passed away and had belonged to Lodges. As Orangeism declined in popularity he joined the Masonic Lodge and over time learned all of the degrees and became Master of the Lodge. At a meeting once while reciting the Masonic ritual Joe, as he was then known, inadvertently used the Orange ritual that had been known to him since he was a young man in County Monaghan.

Joseph also was active in the Rotary Club in Englehart and became its President as well as becoming President of the Temiskaming T.B. Association.

Joseph believed that he had a civic duty to his country, whether living in Ireland or Canada. He became involved in politics in northern Ontario and was a Director of the Conservative Party. He also became a Member of the Council of the Town of Englehart, Deputy Mayor and then was elected Mayor in 1960.

To Joseph Clarke his handshake was his 'Word' but he also felt a responsibility to help those less fortunate. He traveled to Toronto by train with a friend one time and tried to rent a car to show the friend the city but he was devastated to learn that the rental company would not rent to him without a credit card. They seemed to question his integrity and would not trust him. He convinced the attendant to speak on the phone with an employee at his business in Englehart to get a car.

In the year before Joe passed away in 1968, he was experiencing health problems. He gave his family two lists of people that owed him money. He told them that one list was for them to collect but the other they were to let the people off since they were already having enough financial difficulty. When he was elderly and driving his car he often stopped to pick up hitchhikers, something that caused other members of his family great concern, in case one of the hitchhikers was unfriendly. At Joe's funeral the congregation sang 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. (10) Joseph Clarke tried to be a Christian Soldier and those who knew him knew he was also an Ulsterman from County Monaghan, Ireland.



### Notes:

\* Article with revisions completed by Brian McConnell, grandson of Joseph Clarke, on February 1, 2015. To contact him please email [brianm564@gmail.com](mailto:brianm564@gmail.com)

(1) See Reports of Grand Orange Lodge of Ontario West and also at <http://canadianorangehistoricalsite.com/index-8.php>

(2) See various articles on Joseph Clarke in Temiskaming Speaker Newspaper, published New Liskeard, Ontario, from 1949 - 1968.

(3) See: Ulster Covenant, Sheet No. 8, Parliamentary Division, North Monaghan; Districk: Aghabog; Place of Signing, Drumkeen.

(4) "Shepherding the Monaghan Flock - The Story of First Monaghan Presbyterian Church" by Dr. L.T. Brown, printed by R & S Printers, The Diamond Monaghan, 1997

(5) See: National Archives of Ireland, Census of Ireland, 1911, Residents of a house 64 in Newbliss Town (Newbliss, Monaghan)

(6) Declaration of Passenger to Canada ( Ocean Arrivals Form 30A) completed by Joseph Clarke on April 19, 1924 indicates he previously arrived in Canada in June 1914 and departed in October 1915 to return to Ireland " to join Ulster Division for France".

(7) Military Service Record for William Clarke indicates: CLARKE, Private William 17928. Born Killeevan, County Monaghan. Enlisted into the 9<sup>th</sup> (Service) Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers, in January 1915. To France with 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster Division) in October 1915. **Killed** in action during the attack at Hamel 1 July 1916. 1914-15 Star.

(8) Military Service Record for Joseph Clarke indicates: CLARKE, Corporal Joseph 23239. From Newbliss, County Monaghan. A farmer. Enlisted 6 December 1915 and joined the 10<sup>th</sup> (Reserve) Battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers. **Wounded** by a gunshot to the left leg 2 May 1916 while serving with the Ulster Composite Battalion during the Irish Republican attacks in Dublin. **Wounded** by Shrapnel to the abdomen 5 December 1917 at Marcoing. Evacuated to hospital in England 24 December 1918. Discharged as no longer physically fit for war service due to wounds 15 November 1918. Silver War Badge, number B44339.

(9) "The Gilt and the Gingerbread - An Autobiography by Anita Leslie" , first published, 1981 by Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., London, UK

(10) See article " Englehart loses popular Mayor Joseph Clarke" in Temiskaming Speaker Newspaper, published New Liskeard, Ontario, June 20, 1968