**Alexander Peoples 15th Btn, Royal Irish Rifles**

Alexander’s birth and early life are surrounded in some mystery and he was apparently in a care home initially. The earliest unconfirmed record is during the 1911 census in Crumlin Road seemingly as a boarder with the Lewis Family at 111 Crumlin Road at the age of 15 working as a Doffer. We do know that Alexander enlisted in the 15th Btn, Royal Irish Rifles in 1914 and served throughout the Great War. After the war he met and married Margaret Jane McClure (born 29th Dec 1897, Father Archibald McClure and Mother Isabella McClure nee Bleakley). The date of Marriage was 13th July 1926 in St Luke’s Church of Ireland. Alexander’s father’s name (deceased) was revealed on the wedding certificate as Stewart. Alexander and Margaret initially lived at Riga Street and then moved to 3 Dhu Varren Crescent, where 3 daughters, Isobel, Helen and Margaret were born. His wife, Margaret, died in 1977 at the age of 80 and Alexander himself died in 1984 at the age of 89.



15th Btn, Royal Irish Rifles, 107th Brigade, 36th Division

On 3 September 1914, just short of a month after Britain had declared war and after much discussion regarding what amounted to a political ‘truce’ with regard to domestic matters, Sir Edward Carson (one of the great political leaders opposing Home Rule for Ireland) made an appeal at the meeting of the Ulster Unionist Council in Belfast, urging the men of the Ulster Volunteer Force to come forward for service in the defence of the British Empire. Despite the fact that many Ulstermen had made their own decisions and had already enlisted, an entire formation known as the Ulster Division was soon raised – and all of its infantry units were based on existing units of the UVF. Thirteen battalions were raised for the three Irish regiments based in Ulster: the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the Royal Irish Fusiliers and the Royal Irish Rifles.

***1914***
August: formed in Ireland as the Ulster Division, with Brigades numbered 1,2 and 3. On 28 August 1914, the Division and its Brigades adopted the titles shown on this page.

***1915***
July: the Division moved to Seaford on the Sussex coast of England. Lord Kitchener inspected the Division there on 27 July 1915, and later remarked to Carson “your Division of Ulstermen is the finest I have yet seen”. Another inspection took place, by King George V, on 30 September. On 3-6 October: the Division moved to France, although the artillery remained in England until November. The Ulster Division initially concentrated in the area around Flesselles, some ten miles north of Arras. Gradually, men were sent in groups for familiarisation with trench warfare conditions, and were attached to the regular army 4th Division for the purpose in the (at this time) quiet are north of the River Ancre near Albert. On 21 October the Division was moved away from the fighting area towards Abbeville, where it spent most of the winter of 1915-16 continuing training. One of the Brigades was attached to 4th Division for several weeks at this time and the artillery finally rejoined.

***1916***
The whole Division finally took over a complete section of the front line on 7 February, between the River Ancre and the Mailly-Maillet to Serre road. Division HQ was at Acheux. In the first week of March, the Division extended its front, the 109th Brigade taking over the sector south of the Ancre, known by the name of Thiepval Wood. The Division remained in the Wesrern Friont in France and Flanders throughout the rest of the war and took part in the following engagements. The Battle of Albert\* in which the Division attacked at the Schwaben Redoubt near Thiepval overwhich the Division fought on 1st July 1916. The Division was relieved on 2 July, having suffered 5104 casualties of who approximately 2069 died.
1917

The Battle of Messines, in which the Division captured Wytschaete
The Battle of Langemarck.
The Cambrai Operations, including the capture of Bourlon Wood

***1918***
The Division was substantially reorganised in February 1918.
The Battle of St Quentin

The Actions at the Somme Crossings
The Battle of Rosieres
The Battle of Messines
The Battle of Bailleul
The First Battle of Kemmel RidgeThe Battle of Ypres
The Battle of Courtrai
The action of Ooteghem

On 11 November the Division was at Mouscron, north east of Tourcoing. It remained there throughout the period of demobilisation. It ceased to exist on 29 June 1919.

The Great War cost 36th (Ulster) Division 32186 men killed, wounded or missing.