

Armistice Talks Programme

The following talks are free to attend and will take place in the Riverview Room at Enniskillen Presbyterian Church starting at 7.30pm each night.

Monday 5th November

ENNISKILLEN, THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE ARMISTICE by Seamas Mac Annaidh

The war with Germany was supposed to be all over by Christmas, the Home Rule bill had been passed and was due to come into effect after the war, but nothing worked out how anyone had expected. Events in Ireland and on the Continent during those four tragic years led to change at local, national and international levels and even Enniskillen was a changed place for returning soldiers who had survived the horrors of Gallipoli and the Somme. For most of them things would never be quite the same again as local historian Seamas Mac Annaidh will reveal.

Tuesday 6th November

KITE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR by Ciarán May

One of the more unusual aspects of World war one was the use of kites in the battle for aerial reconnaissance. By 1914 the aeroplane was still in its infancy but the need for aerial photography of the quickly expanding world war was insatiable. One of the numerous solutions was to use a kite to lift a camera or indeed, a man with a camera. Cameras were heavy and still very rudimentary but kite aerial photography which had been invented in the 1880s was by now something of an exact science. Both the French and Canadian armies had kite platoons, such was the belief and need in this form of photography. What would the soldiers have thought seeing a kite soaring high above battlefields, would it have gave them a moment of freedom from the carnage around? Femanagh kite aerial photographer Ciarán May gives a visual talk about this rich and little known part of WW1 history and how he keeps this unique style of photography alive today.

Wednesday 7th November

BATTLEFIELD MUSIC DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR by Alvin Mullan

Cambria, Gallipoli and Passenchendaele are all famous World War One battles but they are also the titles of marches composed by the men who served in the Corps of Drums of the British Army. In this talk we learn about the men who left these shores with their bugle, fife and drum and fought for King and Country.

Thursday 8th November

IRISH AMBULANCE TRAINS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR by Charles Friel

Enniskillen-born railway historian Charles Friel brings us the hidden stories of two Ambulance Trains which operated in Ireland. One train, provided by the Great Northern Railway (Ireland), was based in Belfast while the other, based in Dublin, came from the Great Southern and Western Railway. The Ambulance Trains brought casualties from (usually) the North Wall in Dublin or Queenstown to hospitals near their homes. This fully illustrated talk will use many diagrams, maps and photographs, including some very recent discoveries, to tell the story of what was often called 'The Hospital Train' and the journeys they made.

Friday 9th November

REMEMBRANCE NOW AND THEN: ENNISKILLEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MEMORIAL WINDOW by Gordon Brand & Richard Watson

Enniskillen Presbyterian Church's First World War memorial stained glass window lists fifty-nine men and four women who served during that awful conflict. They were all volunteers, and the total of sixty-three is a remarkable figure from a relatively small number of families. Nine men were killed and sixteen men were wounded. Gordon Brand and Richard Watson will speak about the artist, George Hillyard Swinstead, and the history of his painting, 'White Comrade', on which the window is based. They will tell the story of the making of the window, and look at some of the detail which is not usually noticed from the pews, before relaying the 'unveiling' by Sir James Craig on Sunday, 10th April, 1921. The sacrifices made by all will be reflected by the histories of some of those listed.