

## Appendix 9 Comunn na Feinne and WW1 1914-18.

Appendix 9 (a) - Dr Small's 1914 Annual Report when war was imminent.

The Society's annual meeting was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1914, with the shadow of war now hanging over the world. This was reflected in the words of Dr John Small, the President.

“It is impossible to concentrate our attention on our own little affairs until we have taken into consideration the momentous happenings of the last six weeks. At the opening of the Hall I ventured to voice the opinion that nowhere and at no time had any Empire so well realized that property and powers were trusteeships, and that just as this fact was realized and acted on, so would the Empire stand or fall. The Empire had learned its lesson not easily or without mistakes; injustice and its punishment: that ‘One for all, and all for one,’ must be its motto. To arrive at that result what means are best? It would appear that patient endeavour to thoroughly learn one's job, and then to do it, is the best. Who is the mastermind who has foreseen and arranged for all this complicated state of affairs? It is inconceivable that any man could have the knowledge without long years of patient work. Secondly, the mind of man cannot be coerced. Hence, full freedom of thought and special and ample discussion while, apparently, in easy times, leading to the enumeration of all varieties of more or less crude, even cheap and often nasty devices to hasten progress, certainly in difficult and dangerous times, leads to the firm rock of a united and free people, who cast aside, as chaff, their various theories, to grasp the sword and to use it strongly against tyranny, no matter in what form or where it comes from. ... Let us conclude in the hope that those of our members who have gone to give their best freely, in the field of war, may come back safe and sound to tell us of new deeds that have kept the Empire. If so be that they have to give all, we will esteem them even more when dead in their country's service than if they lived, and had acquired much wealth. Britain's Army and Navy are what they are because they are thorough and therefore efficient. There is no short and easy way to be so. May we all, living in comfort by virtue of that efficiency, learn the lesson and act on it.”

Appendix 9 (b) - Dr Small's annual meeting Report for second year of WW1.

Comunn na Feinne held its annual meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1915 at the Hall. Dr Small's President's address was given in absentia as Dr Small was “in camp on military duties. This address was read to the members assembled at the Society's Hall.”

“Though away in camp on military duties Dr John Small, the President of Comunn na Feinne, was with the members at their annual meeting through the medium of his presidential address which read:

“The period through which our Empire is passing has no parallel in ancient or modern history. Never before did the various branches of the British race pulsate with such a fervent unison in the pursuit of a cause, or feel more determined to pursue that cause, at whatever cost, to bring to earth the most ruthless, barbarous and treacherous military despotism that has ever disgraced the annals of warfare. All the attributes of civilization and Christianity are mocked by the German war-lords. Never! Never shall the Grand Old Flag – the proud emblem of our nationhood – be trailed in the dust at the behest of a merciless tyrant, is the unanimous voice, the pledged word,

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the sworn purpose of the peoples of the Empire scattered throughout every clime under every form of government. Though it is strikingly characteristic of our race to rest peacefully on our laurels without display, we might, on this occasion, speak of those who heroically fought and those who gloriously died on the field of honour. The names of these shall live until time be no more. Would it not, to speak mildly, be the barest of ingratitude were we not to raise our voices in harmony with those of every land whose sons today are giving their lives in the cause of freedom – co-partners with our own? Shall we refrain from bestowing our best gratitude to the glorious achievements of our countrymen? The warlike spirit of the sons of dear old Scotland is, today, what it has been from time immemorial, adding luster and fame upon ‘the land of brown heath and shaggy wood.’

“Our contributions to the firing line in proportion to numerical strength have been enormous. With pride we record that our Society, headed by the magnificent example of our worthy Chief, Phillip Russell, who offered his services – which were accepted – to the Empire, early in the fray, and was followed by 40 members of Comunn na Feinne, shows clearly that the desire to fight in the cause of freedom is as strong today as it was in the heroic blood that coursed through the veins of those who checked the all-conquering march of the Roman Eagle, and who brought the warlike Danes to their knees, that the same military ardour exists today with undiminished vigour through Scottish veins as it did through those of our ancient and heroic ancestors. For proof of this, let the blood-stained fields of France, Belgium and the Dardanelles, give an answer.”

“May this dreadful ordeal through which we are passing be soon terminated, and a reign of peace and prosperity rule over the war stricken countries.”

Appendix 9 (c) - Honour Board Names of those Comunn na Feinne members on active duty in WW1.

Colonel Alexander Russell	Major John Small	Colonel Phillip Russell
Major Robert A. Ramsay	Captain Niel Leslie Campbell	Captain James B. Leitch
Lieut. William J. Galbraith	Kenneth McCaulay	Alexander Reid
Lieut. William I. McLaughlin	William Tosh*	Alexander Wilson
Robert Campbell	William McIntosh	John McRae
Ralf Fraser	John Fraser	Hugh G. McFarlane
George Volum	Robert Volum	James Smith
Kenneth Wilson	James Niblett	James Jackson
Colin Buchanan	William Murray	George A. Grant
Lieut. David Ross	Callum McLennan	Hugh Harper
Barry Sedwick	William G. Tait	William Wardrop
Malcolm Spencer	Angus Reid	Donald Sayers
Lewis Gray	Alexander T. McNeil	James A. Grieve
Francis McKenzie	Samuel Callander	John G. Colclough

Appendix 9 (d) - Speech by Hon. Donald McKinnon at the unveiling of the Honour Board 4<sup>th</sup> October, 1915 at the Comunn na Feinne Hall.

“Donald McKinnon, after conveying a message of greeting from the Premier, Sir Alexander Peacock, said he felt honoured at assisting in a ceremony of the kind about to be performed. It was one which brought them all into a new sort of relationship. Most of those present, he supposed, were either Scottish or Australians of Scottish descent, and it might be fairly claimed that both these branches of the British Empire had done a great deal in the national crisis to demonstrate their fitness to share in the prosperity of the Empire in the last few years. Scotsmen did not need any eulogy from him. The history of every war in which the Empire had been engaged showed that the difficult work was set down to the men who came from the non-spending side of the Tweed. In the present Great War, Scotsmen had done their part. He would not say that they had done more than the red-haired men from the little island near Scotland, because they know that at all times the Irishmen had shown a wonderful capacity for fighting. But if they had noted events carefully they would notice that the Scots had been put up to every event of the work, and they have performed to the satisfaction of their employers. He had noticed a new slogan ‘marmalade forever,’ and he could not help thinking that there must be a lot of Dundee men in the Regiment that used that battle cry. The fact that the Scots were in the humour to talk marmalade in probably the toughest battle in the war, showed the spirit of the men and their determination to win through. There were people who were inclined to think that we heard more of the performances of the Australian soldiers than they were entitled to. Some from the old country even said they had listened too much to the highly eulogistic accounts of what their soldiers had done in Gallipoli. But there could be no doubt about what our men had done in Gallipoli. One had only to read the English papers to be satisfied at the work our troops whom an English writer had described as probably the best fighting material in the world today. He would claim for the Australians that so far as physique and personal courage were concerned, they had in no way degenerated from the parent stock. About 38 members of Comunn na Feinne had gone to the war, and it was right that their great sacrifice would be commemorated. The members were proud of every one of them, and although there might be some in the audience or elsewhere in Geelong anxious and sorrowful on account of those who had left, still they must have the consolation in that in the great war for the freedom of the world, they had played the men’s part. Whether those men lived or died, their names would always be honoured, and it was right that the Society should have on the walls a reminder of the part they played. As long as the Society lived those names would be held in honour. He was an optimist and glad of the news from the front today. Everybody expected things to be better, because they knew the Empire and the Spirit of the Allies, and they knew that because the fight was for a right cause, that cause must prevail. It was well known that we were not prepared but the brightest features in the whole history of the war was the manner in which the outlying parts of the Empire rallied in the cause of freedom and righteousness. Out of the war, he believed, an era of great prosperity would come to Australia. Notwithstanding the drought and financial trouble, he believed that so much attention had been drawn to Australia by the war that men from all parts would be drawn to it and settle in it. The prospects of such material prosperity should hearten the people at a time like the present. Out of the 38 names on the Honour Roll, sixteen had been associated with the Pipe Band, which seemed to indicate that there was something

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in the association with the Scottish Pipes that brought out the best that was in a man. He congratulated the Pipe Band on its splendid contribution towards the manhood of Australia in the war.

In conclusion, the Minister asked James Galbraith, secretary of Comunn na Feinne, to remove the veil from the Honour Roll.”

“James Galbraith gave a brief sketch of the members who had gone on service, and in memory of the late William Tosh, who fell in action, the audience stood while Donald McDonald piped ‘Flowers of the Forest,’ the Scottish National Lament.”

“Major John Small, in a short speech, said that the Commandant of the Geelong camp, Major Purnell, through a serious illness had been deprived of carrying to completion the work he had so very well begun. No man he had ever met had put his heart and soul so much into the comfort of the men under his command than did Major Purnell, and it was a sad thing that he had been deprived of bringing to completion the work he so well started.”

“Major John Small also expressed the history of the men in camp to the people of Geelong district for the magnificent way in which they had provided practically everything that men in camp could want. He did not think any camp could be better provided for with necessaries and luxurious (sic) than the Geelong camp.”

“Referring later to the Honour Roll, Donald McKinnon said that in Phillip Russell, the Chief of Comunn na Feinne, they had an example of what the Western district families were doing in the war, and he had been instrumental in helping a great many young men from that District to obtain commissions at the front in France. He did not know how many Russells had gone, but he would say that at least half a dozen or ten of them were fighting in the British Army or with the Australian Expeditionary Forces. There was hardly a family in the Western district that had not a son or sons fighting at some portion of the seat of war at the present time. In his opinion, no class had shown more patriotic spirit than those of the Western district land owners since the war began.” (*Geelong Advertiser* 5<sup>th</sup> October 1915, p4)

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