

The Battle of Jutland, 1916.

Other remarkable stories in his book include that of Lt Cdr William Forbes, the oldest Royal Navy Officer to captain a ship during the war. Then there was Rear Admiral Edward Barry Steward Bingham, who was awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military honour, for his part in the Battle of Jutland.

However, it wasn't just the male Persse descendants who contributed to the war effort. Among the women was Florence Madeline Barry, who managed a 100-bed hospital for French soldiers in France, vital to the treatment of the wounded in the Somme region.

Her story is included in Gerry Kearney's book as are other in-depth accounts of the gallant service and sacrifice of the Persse men and women.

The subject of the First World War and the Irishmen who fought in it, has always conjured up feelings of uneasiness in Ireland.

After we gained independence from Britain in 1921, the names of these soldiers were actively excluded from the annals of Irish history and it's only recently they have been restored.

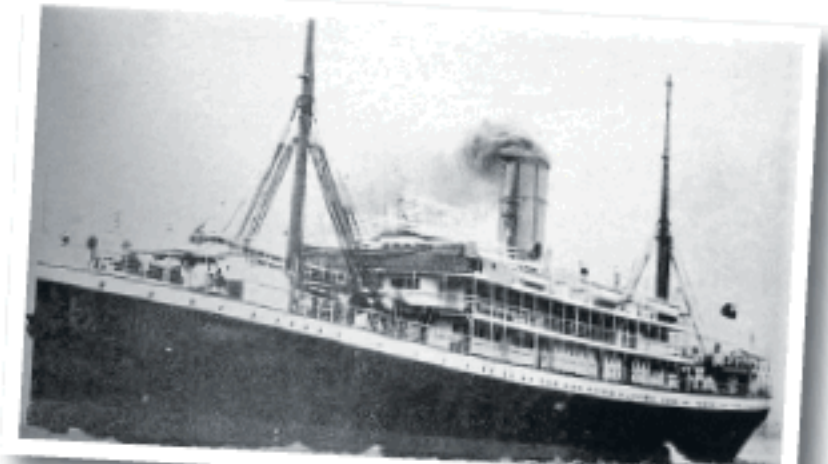
Some of the men fought to secure home rule for Ireland, while others were just seeking adventure. Regardless of the reasons, many Irish people could not overlook the fact that these men served with an army that was soon to become the enemy in the War of In-



Wounded sailors from the 1916 Battle of Jutland.



A Sopwith Camel F.1 fighter aircraft. Nearly 400 pilots, including Major Robert Gregory of Coole Park died in accidents involving this type of aircraft.



The SS Falaba was deliberately torpedoed off the Pembrokeshire coast on March 28, 1915. William Hugh Cornwallis Trousdell was lost in that tragedy.



The Prince of Wales reviewing New Zealand troops at Beauvois, France, on October 14, 1918.

dependence.

"They were ostracised and it was kept very quiet about," observes Gerry.

While that political friction of the past is slowly being laid to rest, acknowledging the Irishmen who fought and gave their lives on the battlefields of World War One remains a difficult issue.

"There is still a great divide", states Gerry.

The title of his book, *In Days that Were*, is an intriguing one, and was inspired by a member of the Persse family.

"It came from a poem by Dudley Eyre Persse," Gerry says. "It was never published but I thought it was lovely and should be brought to light."

Dudley was just 22 years old when he was killed in the fields of Flanders in 1915.

In Days that Were is an appropriate title for this book, as it gives the reader an insight into the how things were before the Great War, before the conflict changed the social and political landscape of Ireland forever.

The war resulted in the demise of the Anglo-Irish ruling class and marked the end of the Protestant Ascendancy. The Persse story truly encapsulates the harrowing effects the First World War had on the Anglo-Irish, as a family with over 200 years of history in Ireland fell into obscurity.

In Days that Were: The Great War and Beyond was officially launched in Gort's Lady Gregory Hotel, in acknowledgement of the family's links with South Galway and has received much praise so far.

"I think people were surprised by what is in the book" says Gerry, "It isn't just about the Western front and the Irish regiments, as it brings the history of other countries into it as well."

Gerry is delighted with the early success of the book and would like to thank all those who helped him to make *In Days that Were* possible.

■ *In Days that Were* is available in Kenny's and Charlie Byrne's bookshops. It can also be purchased online at www.Kennys.ie.