

## The Old Soldiers of Killeens

By Colm Scully

They died in the ditches.  
Not at the Somme  
but in rural Cork,  
a shell's arc from Shandon  
and Collin's Barracks;  
Dan the Man, Dinish Fleming, John Downey.

They knew of Gallipoli and the Ardennes  
but lived to recount  
tales to the farmer  
in exchange for a few pennies  
or a feed of potatoes and dripping;  
three days work on the milk cart  
or a week saving hay.

No army jobs for them  
or posts in the civic guard.  
No one to write or follow up  
with the crown forces office in London.

They staved off hunger  
with cheap stout in Caseys,  
rambled the roads retelling stories  
of the dead heat in Mesopotamia  
or the souks of Basra  
to the boys playing *Pitch and Toss*  
at Killeen's crossroads.

They died in their britches  
unknown and unloved  
by Free State or King.  
No poppies for them  
at Windsor.