The ground floor entrance of Royal Portrush Golf Club which will host next year’s Open includes a display of historic golf memorabilia associated with the club as well as evidence of recent world status attained by members Darren Clarke and Graeme McDowell.

Amongst this priceless collection is a significant Roll of Honour of members who served during the First World War.
Included in the Roll of Honour is the name of **Rev. Arthur Edwin Ross, MC and Bar.** A former Irish rugby international, he was rector of Portrush before being appointed rector of Ballymena Parish in 1912. His wife was from a well known Irish military family. Mary Elizabeth Linzee Hezlet, a well-known golfer, had become his wife in 1909, and he became a son-in-law of Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Jackson Hezlet of Bovagh House (photo below), Aghadowey, Co Londonderry and brother-in-law of then Lt Col Robert Knox Hezlet, DSO, of the RFA. Robert Knox Hezlet's son was Vice-Admiral Sir Arthur Richard Hezlet KBE CB DSO DSC, Legion of Merit (United States) (1914-2007), a distinguished Royal Navy officer and submariner. He also retired to Bovagh House.

The local Ballymena newspapers kept track of the Rector's military service, the Ballymena Observer of December 17, 1915 telling the public ‘We have been informed that Rev. Canon A. E. Ross, Rector of Ballymena and Ballyclug, has offered his services to the army and has been appointed Chaplain. He will leave for the front at the beginning of the year.’

His war was followed carefully by the Ballymena population and they were delighted to learn that he had been mentioned in

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*Bovagh House, Aghadowey*
despatches in January 1917. After over a year of his service at the front, they got a chance to meet him in person during a furlough in 1917, the Ballymena Weekly Telegraph of the 3rd March 1917 noting that St Patrick’s Church on Castle Street was filled with his own parishioners and ‘by his friends in other denominations in the town.’

In this evening service he told the assembled congregation that troops had ‘died in a true and lasting sense for the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness’. He thought ‘some troops may not have apprehended for what [troops had died] but they knew it was worth dying for.’ He said that he believed personally that they had ‘died that justness and fairness and true dealing and freedom may be preserved’. He understood they had ‘died for their country, but they have died for the world, too. We must see that it is so’. He probably already thought WW1 was the ‘war to end wars’.

He told them a little about the gruesome reality of the fighting, the horror of warfare, and about the harrowing nature of his role. He related the tale of how he had on one occasion during fog been on
the frontline just 40 yards from German lines. Looking through the trench periscope he could see ‘the ground littered with friend and foe’. One man had told him that he could see ‘lying there his officer and comrades’. Ross then explained that he often got letters, mostly from mothers, asking him to “tell me where my son died, where he was buried, and shall I be able to find his grave after the war?” He revealed thereby the agonies of those at home and said that answering these ‘caused [him] great trouble ... You could hardly say that when a shell falls in a trench there was no need of burying; and when they asked “where was he buried?” it was hard to write ‘he was buried where he fell’.

On a more positive note he went on to say that he thought the war had brought ‘a new sense of brotherhood ... a new spirit of service to one another and mankind’. He linked this to an idea that was to emerge in the resounding promise of the Lloyd George Coalition after the armistice that it was necessary to make Britain a land “fit for heroes to live in”. Ross asked, ‘What is the good in our Empire preserving itself from destruction ... unless we see to it that the Empire is worth living in for all it citizens?’ He died in 1923 and sadly had lived just long enough to see the recession get under way, a recession of the 1920s that made way for the depression of the 1930s, events that ensured a land “fit for heroes to live in” never materialised before WW2.

He also referred to the Home Rule Crisis in his sermon. He asked, ‘Are we going to start it again after the war has ended? The thought is appalling.’ He was thinking of the near civil war of 1914 and was probably upset by the Easter Rising (1916) and its aftermath, events that were already destroying his perceived ‘new sense of brotherhood.’

He was awarded the Military Cross “For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He carried in wounded under circumstances of
great danger and difficulty. He ended by helping to carry a wounded officer for over four hours. He was the means of saving many lives, and inspired the stretcher-bearers to work to the utmost limit of endurance”.

Arthur Edwin Ross, son of David and Anne Maria Ross (née Neligan), was born on the 18 December 1869 at Montenotte, Cork. He was later educated at Trinity College, Dublin and during his time there was an international rugby player. He was ordained a clergyman in the Church of Ireland in 1895, was curate of St Anne’s Church, Belfast (on the site of the present cathedral) before becoming rector of Portrush and Ballywillan. He was appointed rector of St Patrick’s Church, Ballymena in 1912 and was later to be Vicar of Holywood Parish, Canon of St Patrick’s Cathedral and Chancellor of Down Cathedral. He became the 5th Bishop of Tuam, Killala and Achonry in 1920.

Bishop Arthur Edwin Ross, MC and Bar, died in Dublin on 24 May 1923.

Chaplains in WW1

From before 1066 armies have taken clergy with them to war. The roles of chaplains within the military have changed significantly but their presence has remained as important as ever.
Significant dates

1796. The Army Chaplains’ Department formed under the first Chaplain General, the Reverend John Gamble though with very few applicants.

1854. The Crimean War. 26000 troops, one deployable Chaplain, the Reverend Henry Press Wright. However the reports of William Russell to the Times caused the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to finance more Chaplains. Eventually sixty deploy and twelve die.

1879. The Reverend James Williams Adams was the first clergyman to be awarded the Victoria Cross as he served with the 9th Lancers at Killa Kazi.

1836 Roman Catholic clergy joined the Department, followed by the Presbyterians in 1858, Wesleyans in 1881 and Jews in 1892.

1914-18. The Great War. Names such as Woodbine Willy and Tubby Clayton became synonymous with the bringing of comfort, care and compassion to those caught up in the bloodiness of war. The Reverends Theodore Bayley DSO, MC, VC, Noel Mellish VC, MC and WRF Addison VC stood as marks of the commitment of the Chaplains to serve wherever the British soldier was to be found, and at whatever the personal cost. 179 Chaplains die during the war. In recognition of their devoted work since 1914 King George V conferred the prefix ‘Royal’ on the Army Chaplains’ Department.
1939-45. The Second World War. New formations such as Airborne Forces had Chaplains learning new skills such as parachuting. The fortitude of devoted Chaplains such as The Reverends Happy Harry Thorpe and HLO Davies in the prison camps of the far East sustain the captives during the horrors of life and death on the Burma-Siam Railway and of the notorious Shamshuipo Camp. 96 British and 38 Commonwealth Army Chaplains die during the war.

1945-present. Chaplains have continued to serve wherever British soldiers have been sent. Korea, Suez, Aden, Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Iraq, Sierra Leone, the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan. The conflicts may change but the call, care, compassion and prayer remains constant.

The response of clergy in Ireland to WW1

The outbreak of WW1 produced a response from the clergy and their families in manses and rectories throughout Ireland. They served in all three services and many did so with distinction.

There were a number of clergy who were already serving as chaplains and others joined them.

In the Army Chaplains’ Department a significant leadership role with the BEF was provided by John Morrow Simms CB, CMG, DD, LLD, KHC, of the Irish Presbyterian Church. He was Principal Chaplain to the Forces. (Rank equivalent to Major General). CB, CMG, DD, LLD, KHC. He was educated at Old Academy, Belfast, Queen's College, Belfast, and Edinburgh, where he studied theology, afterwards becoming a Presbyterian minister.

In 1887 he was appointed an army chaplain and served in the Sudan (Nile Expedition 1898), and in South Africa 1900.
In the First World War he was appointed principal chaplain to the British forces in France (10/08/1914), with the rank equivalent to major-general. He was made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George and a Companion of the Order of the Bath.

When the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was deployed in 1914 it included 55 chaplains including two from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland – the Rev Dr J M Simms and the Rev H C Meeke, both of whom had joined the Department before the war began. Both went on to give distinguished service – the Rev Meeke was awarded the DSO. In 1914 JM Simms was on the verge of retirement. He was the oldest serving member of the chaplains’ department. This “genial, forceful, Irish man” did much to sort out denominational chaplaincy problems in the BEF. The establishment of chaplains in each division was raised from five to thirteen and reflected the denominational composition of each division. He introduced a scheme whereby experienced chaplains were attached to new divisions to help their new chaplains adjust. More chaplains were also posted to BEF bases, rear lines and lines of communication. Post-war, in 1919 he became Moderator of the General Assembly, and in 1922 member of the Westminster parliament for North Down, retaining his parliamentary seat until 1931. He was an Honorary Chaplain to the King. He died in Newtownards in 1934. In his obituary The Times said of him: 'He was no mere arm-chair minister, but shared the risks and hardships of military life'. Born Newtownards, 23/11/1854. He was the second son of John Simms and his wife, Elizabeth, née Alexander.

**41 ministers of the Presbyterian Church served** as commissioned chaplains in World War 1

The Primate of the Church of Ireland, Archbishop Crozier at the time described the conflagration as a “war of self-preservation against barbarism and brutal excess.” He declared, “Men are
The presentation of the VC to Reverend Theodore Bayley Hardy VC, DSO, MC by King George V, by Terence Tennison Cuneo.

**VC Chaplain’s link to Belfast**

Theodore Hardy (1836-1918) was over 50 years of age when he was awarded the VC for his service in the front lines. He was graduate of London University. During his time at university on September 13, 1888 he married Miss Florence Elizabeth Hastings, the daughter of a prominent civil engineer, the wedding taking place in her home city of Belfast. He later was ordained. Their son served with the RAMC and their daughter, shown in the painting, served with the Red Cross in France. Theodore Hardy was later killed in action.
wanted at the front” in the fight against “German aggressive militarism.”, and volunteers responded in their thousands!

A feature of the **36th Ulster Division** was the number of clergy who identified with the Ulster Unionist cause and who went with the battalions of local men including their parishioners and congregational members who had been members of the Ulster Volunteer Force. In July 1915 the Church of Ireland Gazette stated: “The fact that more than half the Ulster Division are members of the Church of Ireland proves how well the parishes of the North have responded to the country’s appeals.”

St Mary’s, Crumlin Road, Belfast, “gave almost 1000 men to the colours – a record that will be hard to beat.”

Derryloran Parish (Cookstown) mustered 153 men, 35 of whom were to die.

A few clergy served as combatants. Some served with support organisations such as the YMCA and helped organise canteens and other facilities for the troops.

Sons of the rectories and manses also joined the colours. The two sons of the Archbishop of Armagh served, one as a combatant and one as a chaplain. Three sons of the Revd Dr MacDermott from Belmont Manse served and one was to lose his life. The rector of Ardee, Co. Louth, Canon Abraham Ford, drew up a Roll of Honour of 380 serving sons of C of I clergy.

**In 1920 it was stated that 102 Church of Ireland clergy from throughout Ireland had served as wartime chaplains.** They included a number of well-known figures: Rev J. Crozier, son of the Archbishop of Armagh; Rev J O Hannay, better known as the writer George Bermingham; and Rev R. Watson, an Irish rugby international. Eight of these 102 chaplains were killed or died of wounds during the War. Three were awarded the Military Cross.
The **remembrance ni** programme is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD who served as Chaplain to 102 and 105 Regiments Royal Artillery (TA), as Hon. Chaplain to RNR and as Chaplain to the RBL NI area and the Burma Star Association NI. Dr McKelvey is a Past President of Queen’s University Services Club. He may be contacted at houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com

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