Tragic sacrifice of Church Lads in the First World



Sergeant Major Harry Hamilton, one of the Irish Church lads who fought in the trenches.

Across the globe 250,000 members of the Church Lads Brigade enlisted for the war effort, many hundreds of them were from Ireland. Recruitment was so high that a complete battalion of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps was formed from members, which had an Irishmen's Platoon comprising lads from across the island: from Cork to Portrush.

Sadly 20,000 of the Church Lads were killed in action, often in the most harrowing of circumstances, a further 20,000 were injured and all told members were awarded more than 1,000 medals for bravery, including 21 Victoria Crosses.

The £9,500 awarded will be used by the present day Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade to research the contribution of the Church Lads from Ireland to the war effort: those who lost their lives, those who survived and what happened to them, leading to the publication of a book, a booklet and a website.

Members will also be asked to contribute towards the creation of a banner to commemorate the Irish Church Lads who were involved in the First World War. This will match a banner created in 1919 which already hangs at Westminster Abbey.

John Conn of the Church Lads and Church Girls Brigade said: "We are delighted to receive this funding. It is important for our members to learn about the past: and the heroism and sacrifice of those that went before them. This is a

forgotten story and one that deserves to be told.

Paul Mullan, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, said: “We are pleased to award funding for this project. It is a very good example of an initiative which will teach young people important research skills as well as helping to bring to life a story which few today know much about. This is another project contributing to our collective understanding of the First World War and the legacy of the conflict.”

Further information

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