

LOCAL HISTORY & TOPOGRAPHY.

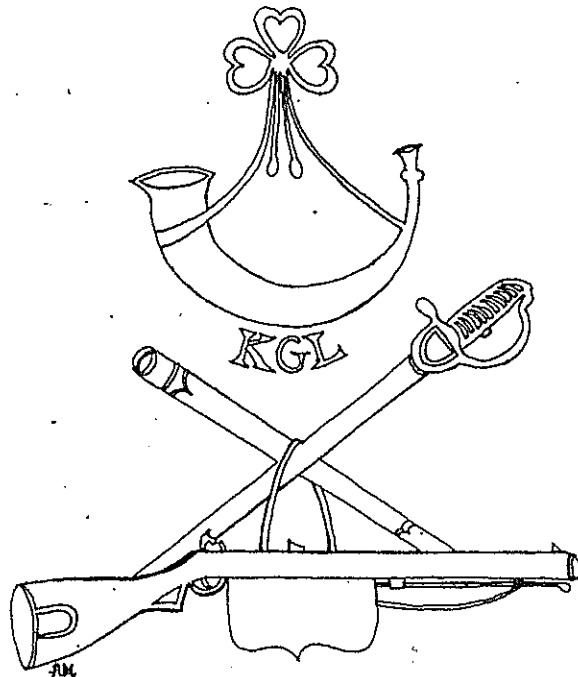
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Two tombstones of the Kings German Legion.

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TWO TOMBSTONES OF THE KING'S GERMAN LEGION AT TULLAMORE

by N. W. ENGLISH



TWO interesting military tombstones are situated in the now neglected and disused graveyard of Kilcruttin, Tullamore, Co. Offaly. The first¹ is a normal erect rectangular limestone slab (132 cms. above ground x 78 cms.) with rounded apex, and above the inscription is carved in relief a rifle, and crossed sword and scabbard, from which is suspended a sabretache²; these are surmounted by a bugle³ which is the normal symbol for a rifleman. This device is illustrated above. The inscription reads:

In memory of Christophe Koch Rifleman in the 5th Company of the 1st Light Infantry Battalion Kings German Legion. He was born in Goettingen in the Electorate of Hanover, Germany and died the 16th July 1806 at Tullamore aged 23 years.

Beneath is a similar inscription in German; and—most unusual—on the rear of the tombstone is also inscribed:

He lived like a Christian and a true Soldier and died in performing his duty

This is followed by the same in German.

The second memorial is more elaborate, being a limestone column of the Tuscan

¹ Apparently this tombstone has not been previously published; Moran, *Early Hist. of Tullamore*, 1962, p. 28 omits it, but mentions the Oldershausen memorial.

² 'The Hungarian hussar wore tight trousers which did not permit the use of pockets. Thus he had an attached tache (German for pocket) a type of bag which hung from the same belt that carried his sabre. The flap of this item served as a useful place to display the royal cypher or regimental device. It was discontinued in the British army at the end of Queen Victoria's reign' (Kanick and Carman, *Military Uniforms in Colour*, London, 1968, p. 268).

³ 'The original role in the field of all rifle and light infantry regiments (latter half of 18th and early part of 19th century wars in N. America and Peninsula mainly) was to skirmish or scout well ahead of the main body. For this duty, all cumbersome equipment was dispensed with and the men equipped as lightly as possible. Normally, the drum was used for conveying orders in the field, but as this somewhat obstructed rapid movement, it was discarded in favour of the bugle. Hence the bugle is incorporated into the badges of rifle and light infantry regiments as a link with their original role' (Edwards, *Regimental Badges*, Aldershot, 1957, p. 366).

order on a plinth (now 210 cms. high) the capital and finial are lying in fragments on the ground. There are two inscriptions on opposite sides of the shaft:

Sacred to the memory of Fredk. Willm. Baron Oldershausen late a Captain in His Majesty's 1st German Dragoons. Born the 15th March 1776 at Verden in the Electorate of Hanover and departed this life at Tullamore (sic) the 22nd of December 1808.

By his Brother Officers.

On the opposite side is the following in German:

Des Gatten Vaters Freundes Bande Sind fruh Gelost im freiden Lande Schlafst Du den ernsten Todesschals. Dies Monument spricht Keine Luge Der Wahrheit Grissel grub die zuge Du warst Treu Edel Bieder Bray. (The bonds of husband, father, friend are early loosed in a foreign country. Thou sleepest the solemn sleep of death. This monument speaks no lie, the graving-tool of truth carves these lines Thou wert true, noble, loyal, brave).⁴

The celebrated 'Tullamore incident' described by Dr. Daniel S. Gray occurred on 22 July 1806, six days after Koch's death and over two years before that of Captain Oldershausen. There can thus be no truth in the long-held local tradition that both men died in the skirmish.

One further connection of Tullamore with the King's German Legion is noted in *The Irish Sword* (vol. x, 1791, p.73) wherein Anne Mills, a farmer's daughter, born in Tullamore on 9 May 1788, married at Midletown (sic) Co. Cork on 6 November 1806, Sergt.-Major Heinrich Wilhelm Müller.⁵ After demobilization he became a farmer in Germany and died at Osnabruck, 20 May 1854. Anne died there, 5 August 1862. They had two sons. This marriage was undoubtedly the result of the Legion's sojourn in Tullamore.

⁴ Translation copied from *Assocn. Mem. Dead Ireland*, vol. i, (1888-91) p. 421. The full inscriptions without a translation also appear in *Mem. Dead*, vol. ix, (1915) p. 299.

⁵ Between c.1753 and c.1790 a Robert and James Mills, described as farmers, resided at no. 5, High Street, Tullamore (see deed no 154-592-107558, Lord Tullamore to Robert Mills, 6 April 1753, and other deeds in Registry of Deeds, Dublin).