

Lieutenant Colonel Francis George Jones 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers

Francis George Jones (known as Frank) was born on Friday 8 April 1864 in the Rectory at Kilmurry which is situated between Macroom and Bandon, Co. Cork. He was the son of Edward George and Eliza Wilhelmina Jones, nee Symes. Edward Jones was a Clergyman.



Frank received his later education at Trinity College, Dublin and records indicate that he was a member of the 9th Battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps (a Militia Battalion) by early 1883. In May of 1883, Frank was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in the KRRC. Military life obviously appealed to him for he was transferred to the Regular Army and appointed as Lieutenant in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in December 1885.

Available information indicates that Frank was posted to the Regiment's 2nd Battalion in India. In October 1891, the Regimental Journal reported that he was recovering from fever at Wellington Convalescent Depot in what is now the State of Tamil Nadu, India. On recovery, Frank was posted to the Depot for a period of two years.

It appears that Frank did not remain at Wellington for the full term of the posting, as he was serving as Signalling Officer on the staff of General Palmer during operations in the Northern Chin Hills and Kachin Hills, Burma (Myanmar) in 1892-3.¹ The Kachin Hills were a heavily forested area in the northern highlands of Burma, with the Chin Hills being in the west of the country.



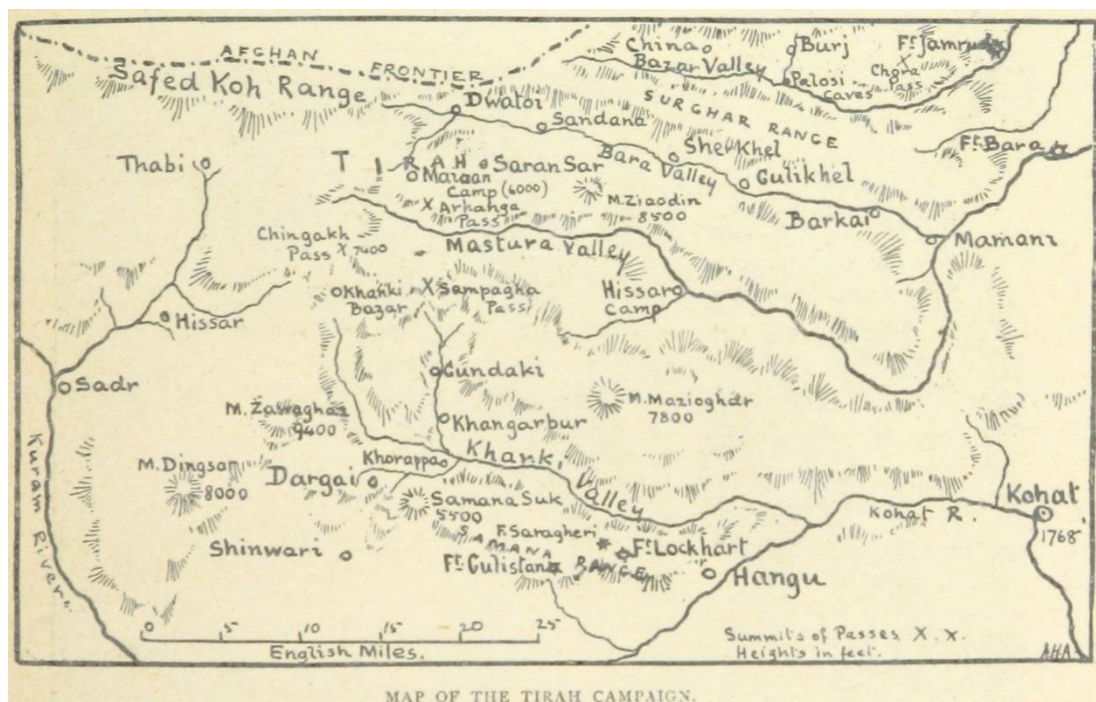
For his participation in these operations, Frank was awarded the India Medal with clasp for the Chin Hills.



In March 1893, Frank was promoted Captain and in November of the following year was appointed as Adjutant of 2nd Battalion.

The Regimental Journal of 1895 shows that sport played an important part in battalion life, with articles mentioning that whilst based at Thayetmayo in Central Burma, Frank was actively involved in Cricket, Polo and shooting.

In 1897 the Orakzai and Afridi tribes in the Khyber Pass area rose up and seized control of the strategically important Pass between India and Afghanistan, and a force of 40,000 (including the Inniskillings) under Major General Sir William Lockhart was sent to put down the uprising and restore the Pass to British control. Known as the Tirah Campaign, sporadic guerrilla type encounters took place until a peace treaty was signed in June 1898, which left the British in control of the Pass.



For his participation in the campaign, Frank was awarded the India Medal (1895) with clasps for the Punjab Frontier and Tirah Expedition.



In the autumn of 1899, Frank was transferred to the Regiment's 1st Battalion in the post of Adjutant. War with the Boers had broken out in South Africa in October 1899 and the 1st Battalion were mobilised at Mullingar for active service arriving in Cape Town on 30 November. The battalion participated in the Battle of Colenso on 15 December 1899 and Frank arrived to take up his appointment the following day.

Records indicate that Frank participated in actions at Spion Kop, Tugela Heights and at the Relief of Ladysmith, being Mentioned in Despatches for outstanding conduct on 8 February and 10 September 1900.² Military records indicate that Frank was invalided from South Africa however, there are no further details. Letters held by the family shed some light on this, as a letter from his mother Eliza to her sister Mary Hartrick in July 1900 refer to Frank recovering from a broken arm he had received in action.

For his service in South Africa, Frank was awarded the Queen's South Africa Medal with Clasps for The Relief Of Ladysmith, Tugela Heights and the Cape Colony.



Queen's South Africa Medal

The 1st Battalion left South Africa on 17 January 1903 and on arrival back in Ireland proceeded to Enniskillen before being posted to Ebrington Barracks, Londonderry.



Inniskillings at Ebrington Barracks 1904

In 1905, the battalion moved to Victoria Barracks, Belfast, remaining there until February 1907 when they embarked at Southampton for service in Crete. This was essentially a peacekeeping role, to prevent unrest between the native Greeks and a sizeable Turkish population. During their stay, there were no serious incidents and Frank embarked with the battalion in February 1908 for Malta, where the battalion assumed garrison duties.

Malta was seen as a good posting with an excellent climate and plenty of opportunities for sport however, the battalion only remained there for a year before embarking in February 1909 on HMT *Soudan* for China. The voyage was a long one with stops at Port Said, Colombo, Singapore and Hong Kong. On arrival at the port of Chin Huang-Dao, there was a long train journey undertaken to the Inniskillings new home at Tientsin.

Following the Boxer rebellion in 1900, the Great Powers had provided a garrison to protect foreign interests in Tientsin and Peking. In Tientsin, there was a foreign community of around 4,000 comprising Japanese, French, American, Russian, Belgian and British citizens. Most duty was performed at Tientsin, with a detachment sent on a rotational basis to Peking.



Inniskilling Officers at Tientsin 1912. Frank is seated far right in the front row.

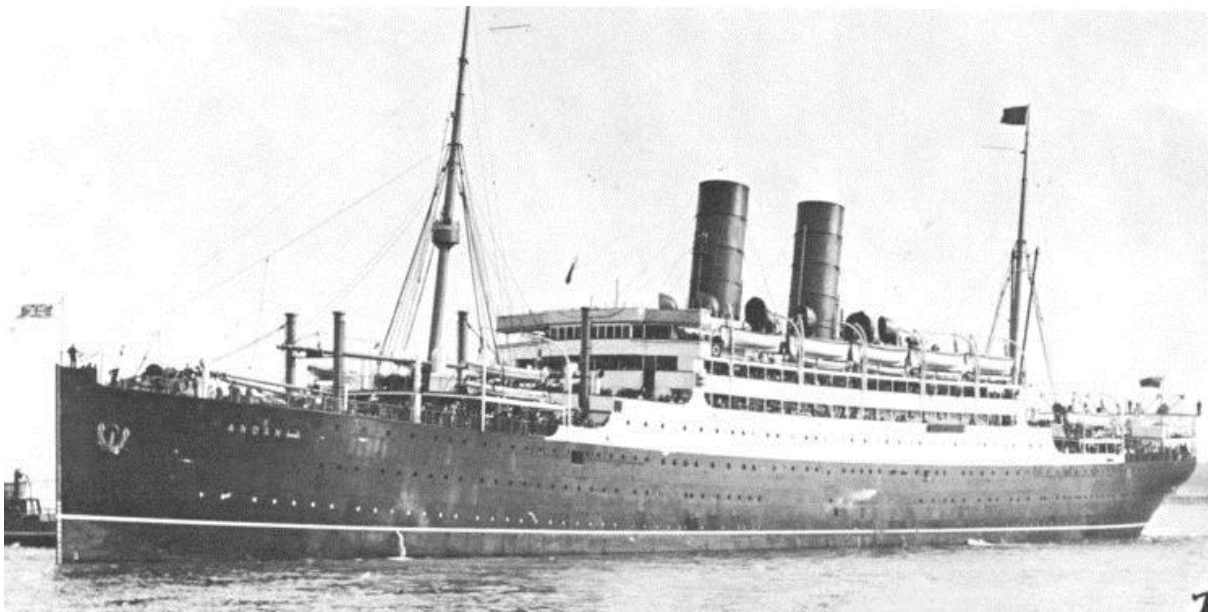
The battalion was due to redeploy to India in October 1911 however, an outbreak of unrest delayed their departure until November 1912 when they sailed via Hong Kong to Bombay. On arrival, Frank and his comrades travelled by train to their new home at Meadow Barracks, Secunderabad.

On 19 February 1914, Frank was promoted Lieutenant Colonel in command of the battalion, replacing Lieutenant Colonel Hancocks who had retired.

Following the outbreak of war, the 1st Inniskillings prepared for the inevitable call to return to the United Kingdom to prepare for active service. The order came in early December and the battalion embarked at Bombay on 15 December, having Christmas dinner whilst docked at Port Said. Frank and his battalion arrived at Southampton on 10 January 1915 and travelled by train to Rugby, Warwickshire, where they joined other Regular Army battalions returned from Empire service. The Inniskillings joined 2nd Battalion South Wales Borderers, 1st Battalion King's Own Scottish Borderers and 1st Battalion Border Regiment to form the 87th Infantry Brigade of the newly raised 29th Division.

Intensive training was undertaken and the Division was inspected by King George V at Rugby on 12 March 1915, before orders were received to embark to participate in the landings at the Dardanelles.

The battalion war diary records that Lt Col Jones along with B & D companies left Rugby at 6.40 pm 16 March by train for Avonmouth where they embarked on HMT *Andania*³ for the Greek island of Lemnos, a staging post for the Gallipoli landings.

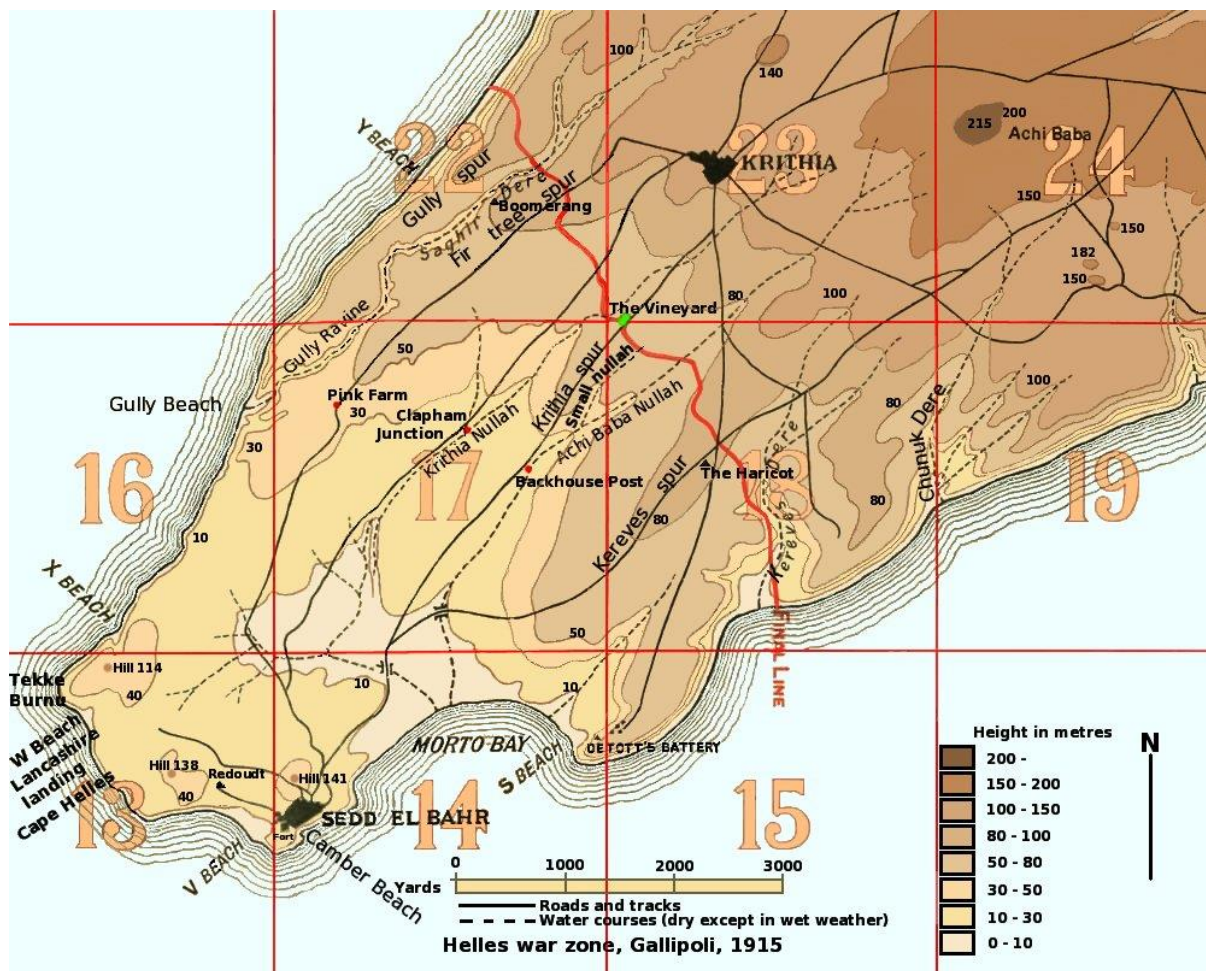


HMT *Andania*

The war diary reports that on departure, the strength of the battalion was 27 Officers and 999 other ranks. The *Andania* arrived at Malta on 24 March at 7.30 am and departed on 26 March at 8.30 am arriving at Alexandria, Egypt on 28 March. The battalion disembarked and marched to a rest camp at Mex, where they acclimatised to the heat and undertook route marches and training.

On 10 April, Frank and his men left Alexandria, arriving at the island of Lemnos at 7.00 am 12 April. The plan was for the 29th Division to land on the Gallipoli peninsula and moving inland seize the Turkish positions overlooking and controlling the Dardanelles straits. The Inniskillings were to land at X Beach on the eastern side of the peninsula.

On 23 April, each man was issued with two days rations and 200 rounds of ammunition. Departure however, was postponed due to bad weather.



At 5.00 pm on 24 April, Frank and his battalion left Lemnos for Gallipoli, arriving at dawn on 25 April. The battalion landed at 9.00 am along with the 1st Battalion Border Regiment, facing little opposition. They moved about 600 yards inland and dug in, taking up a position overlooking and protecting the beach. The Turks attacked the Inniskillings positions that night but were repulsed.

On 28 April, 87th Brigade was ordered to attack along with 89th Brigade and French troops. The village of Krithia was almost captured however, the attack faltered and the Inniskillings entrenched in the furthest position reached. For the next three days there was relative calm with occasional sniping.

On the night of 1 May, the Turks attacked in force however, the Inniskillings had been forewarned of the attack and were prepared. The first enemy line comprised bombers who were bayoneted on the parapet. The main attack then began and the Inniskillings waited until the Turks were within 30 yards before opening rapid fire and decimating the attackers. Morning revealed Turkish dead piled in front of the position and in a dip in the ground a party of unwounded Turks were seen sheltering. Fire was opened on them and they showed a white flag, a total of 142 officers and men being captured. The events of 2 May are covered in detail by Sir Frank Fox (1928) in *The Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in the World War*, p183 and are quoted directly:⁴

Following on that night's heavy lesson to the enemy a general advance was ordered at 8.30 am on May 2, the Inniskillings in the centre. Progress was slow on the right and left flanks. Then the battalion on our right retired in some confusion and the order came for the whole line to fall back on the trench from which we had advanced. Lt Col. FG Jones, while he was endeavouring to re-organise the men of the battalion on the right of the Inniskillings, was struck by a shell and mortally wounded.

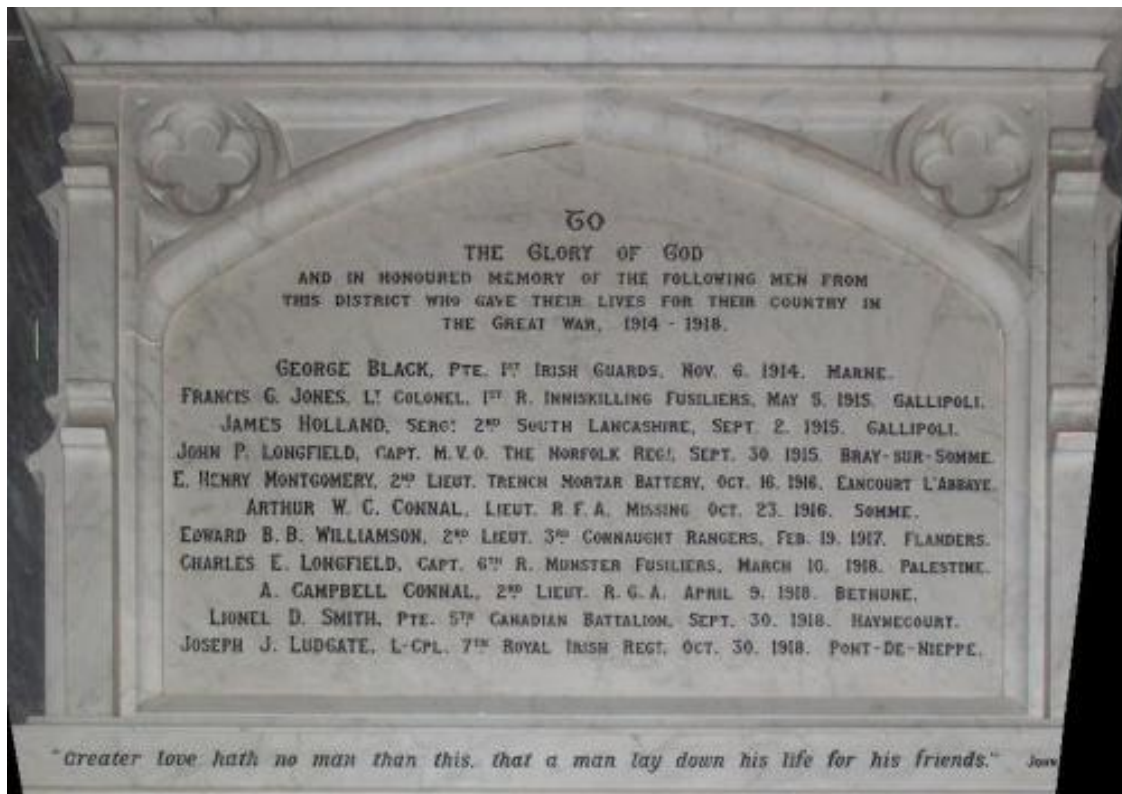
This is the only official record available of how Frank was injured. However, a witness claims that he was wounded but not mortally at that stage. A witness account was contained in a letter sent to Frank's predecessor as CO, Lt Colonel Handcock from a Royal Artillery Officer who stated:

We were heavily shelled for an hour afterwards and it was then that Colonel Jones was hit. He was within a few yards of me at the time and we did not then consider that his wound was dangerous.⁵ Frank received initial treatment before being taken to the beach and evacuated with other wounded on the HMHS *Caledonia* to Alexandria, Egypt, for further treatment. Unfortunately, Frank succumbed to his wounds on Wednesday 5 May 1915 whilst on the voyage.

Frank was buried at sea along with others who had died. An account is available from Lieutenant Norman King-Wilson, who was aboard the ship at the time and described the procedure:⁶

The Parson every night, at midnight exactly, would appear in surplice and cassock on the main deck, aft, and there by the flickering light of a solitary candle lantern, would read aloud the burial service. It was the most weird ceremony one could possibly imagine – lying on the deck bound tightly up in sailcloth, with a weight at the feet, anything from three to near a score of silent motionless figures. Three placed at a time on a the gangway board from the ship's bulwark. Lying feet pointed seaward, the Union Jack spread over all three, the hundreds of dark figures watching from the decks, soldiers and sailors silent and awed for once at the sight of the last rites of those chaps who so lately had been cheery lusty comrades. The few words of the Chaplain soon over, the Union Jack is whipped off the bodies by a sailor and three bells are heard in the Engine Room, the great engines stop their roar and the ship glides on in silent darkness. The board is elevated and with a swish, followed by a dull splash, those three join Britain's countless dead, deep down in the Aegean Sea, far from home and those who hope for their return.

Frank is commemorated on the Helles Memorial, Panel 98-102 and on the War Memorials at St James' Parish Church, Mallow, Co. Cork (overleaf) and St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork.



Following his death, Frank was again Mentioned in Despatches on 12 June 1915 and 6 April 1921. For his wartime service, Frank was eligible for the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Allied Victory Medal. Records indicate that his sister Esther, a Governess and resident at the family home at Cecilstown Lodge, Mallow, Co. Cork applied for the medals in October 1919.

Frank's Will shows that he left the sum of £1768-01-03 to Esther.

A newspaper report of 4 June 1921, reported that the family home at Cecilstown Lodge was attacked and destroyed by fire the previous day, during the War of Independence.

¹ The Chin people were one of the major ethnic groups of Burma and were governed by the British separately from the rest of Burma. In December 1892 a police column was attacked and the town of Myitkina raided. A force of 1200 under General Palmer was sent to suppress the uprising which was carried out successfully, with British and Indian troops sustaining 108 casualties.

² Research has found no mention of Frank in the Despatch of 8 February 1900 and there is no Despatch dated 10 September, the closest being 17 September.

³ The RMS *Andania* was a Cunard passenger liner launched in 1913. Requisitioned as a troopship by the war office in 1915, she continued in this role before reverting to a passenger liner on the Liverpool-New York route in 1917. She was torpedoed and sunk by U 46 two miles north-east of Rathlin island on 27 January 1918 with the loss of seven lives.

⁴ The war diary entry merely states, '29th-6th May, same line held.'

⁵ The *Sprig*, December 1915.

⁶ Account contained in Hart, P. (2011) *Gallipoli*. London, Profile Books.