

# Battlefield spoon returns to family

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MORE than 95 years after Peter Friel was killed at the Somme and his body never recovered, his grandson has held in his hands the spoon which the Donegal soldier used to eat his rations in the trenches.

The spoon was discovered by Londonderry lads David Canning and Don O'Donnell in a First World War artefact shop on a recent trip to Belgium's Ypres War Graves. The store owner, Patrik Indevuyst, told the Ulstermen that he had located the spoon only four weeks previously on the old battle site.

After checking the service number, he identified the spoon belonged to a Peter Friel from Ballybofey, who was serving with the 6th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

A search on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website confirmed that Peter was 39 years old and married when he died on October 17, 1918.

Peter had six children and his youngest, Nancy, was born only months after he joined the regiment in August 1914 as part of the 31st Brigade of the 10th Irish Division.

The regiment saw active service in 1915-1916 during the bloody battles of Gallipoli and Suvla Bay, where thousands of Allied troops were killed. They also operated from rat-infested, disease-ridden and mud-filled trenches on the Turkish Keritch, Tepe, Siet, Salonika, Kosturino and Struma

battlefields. Peter and the remainder of his regiment were deployed to Palestine, Gaza and Jerusalem in 1917. After almost five years surviving continuous battles, with comrades dying all around them, they returned to the Western Front, in action at Prospect Hill and Selle and finally to the Somme offensive where Peter was to give his life just one month before the end of the conflict.

His body was never recovered and there is no known grave for his family to visit but the Ballybofey man's name is commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois memorial in Ypres.

In an effort to trace family members, David Canning contacted Stranorlar parish priest Father Kieran McAteer, who directed him to the local Friel and McHugh families and on to Jason McGarrigle, a photographer in Donegal town, the great-grandson of Peter Friel. Jason's father Marty has the war medals, the circular bronze "Death Disc" and other documentation in relation to Peter and had actually visited the memorial where his grandfather is commemorated.

**BRAVE:** Peter Friel, who died in the First World War

"I grew up listening to my late mother Nancy relating the sad but brave stories of the father she hardly knew and the torment he must have gone through," said Marty. The spoon, with medals and a photograph, now have pride of place in the McGarrigle household and Marty with his wife Mary made an emotional journey to Belgium recently to thank Mr Indevuyst for his gift.



**PROUD:** Marty McGarrigle, from Donegal town, with his grandfather's medals and recently-found spoon from in the First World War

PICTURE: Jason McGarrigle