

# Fr. Ned Dowling - the Colonel

By Jim Walsh

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from

*Sliabh Rua: A History of Its People and Places.*

Compiled by Jim Walsh.

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**W**AS born in Slieverue in 1886. He was son of William and Catherine Dowling the local school teachers, and older brother of P. J. (see separate item). Ned studied for the priesthood and was ordained for the diocese of Ossory, Maynooth on June 21st 1908. His priestly career was as follows:

- Ordained Maynooth 1908, 21 June
- Hexham and Newcastle 3 years
- Professor St. Kieran's College, 28th August 1911 - November 1914.
- Army Chaplain, November 1914 - 21st February 1920
- C. C. Castlecomer, 21st February 1920 - 16th April 1923
- C. C. Lisdowney, 16th April 1923 - 31st August 1925
- C. C. Dunnamaggan, 31st August 1925 - 20th September 1932
- C. C. Gathabawn, 20th September 1932 - January 1942
- P. P. Camross, January 1942 - 7th June 1960
- Died 1960, 7th June, buried in Camross

When teaching in St. Kieran's College "he was remembered for his unconventional and entertaining lectures but he never cared for teaching."<sup>1</sup> Soon after the outbreak of the Great War he enlisted in the Dublin Fusiliers as a Military Chaplain and had a distinguished army career. He served for the duration of the Great War and for a period afterwards. He survived the battles of the Somme and Ypres, was awarded a number of decorations for service and retired with the rank Colonel. Ever afterwards he was affectionately known as 'The Colonel' and always had a great fund of stories about the War.<sup>2</sup>



Rev. Ned Dowling

He was a keen student of education and contributed articles to the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* and the *St. Kieran's College Record*. In anticipation of the centenary celebrations for the present St. Kieran's College building in 1936 Bishop Collier asked Fr. Ned in 1935, to write a history of the College. It was an impossible task in the time available but Fr. Dowling gathered a tremendous amount of material and this was put into narrative form by his brother P. J. The work was never published and the great effort made by Fr. Ned has not been adequately acknowledged. His material was subsequently drawn on by other scholars, e.g. Dr. Peter Birch for his history of St. Kieran's, and in this way Fr. Ned's labours have contributed to our historical knowledge.

The Chalice and Paten, pictured below, was presented to Fr. Dowling when leaving St. Kieran's to start his military Chaplaincy. It was used by him throughout the war and is a significant memento of the period. It is at present in the possession of the Phelan family, Slieverue. The chalice bears the inscription:

From the Eccl. Students of  
St. Kieran's, Kilkenny  
To their Professor, Rev. E. Dowling  
Military Chaplain  
Nov. 1914

<sup>1</sup> From an obituary by Rev. T. J. Clohosey.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

