



**Canada's Ambassador to Ireland, His Excellency Kevin Vickers  
Guest of Honour at the Irish Artillery Corps' Annual Saint Barbara's Dinner,  
on Friday, 07 December, 2018**

*Canada's Ambassador to The Republic of Ireland, His Excellency, Ambassador Kevin Michael Vickers ONB SC is a Canadian diplomat, former Sergeant at Arms and former Royal Canadian Mounted Police officer. He has been the Canadian Ambassador to Ireland since 19 January 2015. He became world famous as the ninth Sergeant-at-Arms of the House of Commons of Canada. He became a national hero when he shot a jihadi gunman Michael Zehaf-Bibeau inside the Ottawa parliament. Zehaf-Bibeau had moments before murdered a reservist Corporal Nathan Cirillo who stood guard at Canada's Tomb of the Unknown soldier. On February 8, 2016, Vickers was presented with the Star of Courage. In May 2016 Kevin Vickers tackled and dragged a protester away from a military ceremony in Dublin. He grabbed a man who was shouting "this is an insult" near a memorial service for British soldiers killed during Easter Rising, a 1916 rebellion against British rule. Hosted by the Irish Artillery Club on 07 December, 2018, Ambassador Vickers was invited to toast Saint Barbara, the Patron Saint of Gunners. This is what he had to say on behalf of Canada and Canadian Gunners:*



**“St Barbara of the Artillery Corp,  
Be at the bursting of the doors of doom,  
And in the dark deliver us,  
Amen.”**



I am honoured and exceptionally humbled to be invited to join you at this Annual Saint Barbara's Dinner. I understand when gunpowder made its appearance in the Western world; Saint Barbara was invoked for aid against accidents resulting from explosions. Since some of the earlier artillery pieces often blew up instead of firing their projectile, Saint Barbara became the patroness of the artillerymen. She is also regarded as the patroness of armourers, gunsmiths and miners.

Brigadier-General (Retd) Paul Pakenham (Right), President of the Artillery Club with Ambassador Vickers.

I was intrigued in learning of the origins of Ireland's Artillery Corps through reading the history of the Battle of Ballinamuck. Shortly after arriving in Ireland, I read the Year of the French, 1798 so was well aware of the exploits of French General Humbert. From reading the book, I would say he was brilliant, especially choosing the route that he did from Kilcummin to Castlebar taking the English

by total surprise. If only the other promised French reinforcements had arrived during the rising, perhaps the outcome would have been different. But I had not known of the persistence and bravery of Gunner James Magee during the Battle of Ballinamuck. And I have come to learn that Gunner James Magee is Ireland's Artillery Corps' figurehead.



**Gunner James Magee at the Battle of Ballinamuck**

*At Ballinamuck one Saturday we lost the fateful fight.*

*But the saga of this GUNNER is recounted day and night.*

*On a gallows tree they hanged him as the sun sank in the sky.*

*"Christ be with me on this journey" – prayed Magee to God on High.*



The 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 1798 will be a day long remembered in Irish History. Certainly one of the most brilliant stories of that day refers to Gunner Magee, supported by his gun detachment, a small number of pike men, and a limited amount of ammunition. They made a final stand bearing a special courage and history given only to those men who long fought for the cause of freedom. The gallant stand in which these men made is well known among you. Never were men so brave, they ennobled the Cause of Ireland by their splendid gallantry on that very desperate occasion.

(Google: **Gunner Magee: Defender Of Values - The Artillery Corps**)

I have also learned of the very special relationship between Irish and Canadian Gunners. And as Ambassador of Canada and on behalf of all Canadians and Canadian Gunners, I would like to thank the Irish Artillery Corps for their extraordinary support. During the past six years the Irish Artillery Corps presented six 25 Pounder guns to The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery to help us remember and tell the story of the history and glorious past of Canadian Gunners. Thanks to our Irish friends, Canada has a 25 Pounder monument at Juno Beach in Normandy, France. There is another at Point 67 just

south of Caen in Normandy to be dedicated after D-Day next year. A third gun is on display in the town of 's-Heerenberg, The Netherlands where the Canadian Army crossed the Rhine and began the final push north to liberate Holland in 1945. Three other 25 Pounder guns are in



WO1 John Morris  
Receiving a RCA Birks  
Pocket Watch for  
helping Canada acquire  
six QF 25 Pounders.  
A great Gunner, and  
friend of Canada

Toronto (Limber Gunners), Ontario, one in Montreal (3BAM) and the other in Lévis Quebec (6 RAC). I understand there are very active re-enactors who fire these guns on community and ceremonial occasions. These six guns have helped the Canadian Artillery of today tell Canada and the world about the significant role that Canada's Artillery has played in World Wars, peace support operations, counter-insurgency operations, peacekeeping and support to virtually all military operations everywhere – from early colonial times to Afghanistan, and even today. Help in telling this story has been made possible through the support and generosity of the Irish Artillery Corps.



Saint Barbara, the Patron Saint of Gunners has blessed the bonds of friendship between The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery and the Irish Artillery Corps. She is watching over our Gunner families. Our sharing of St Barbara as our patron saint is particularly symbolic in developing the bonds between the Artillery of Ireland and Canada. May such unity and collaboration continue well into the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to propose a toast to the continued comradeship and friendship between Ireland and Canada and their Gunners, and may the Patron Saint of all Gunners, Saint Barbara continue to guide and protect you in times of danger. Good Shooting, friends!

And from my own moment in life with gunfire may I say: *“May your fire always be on time and on target”*

Now please rise and join me in a toast to Saint Barbara, the Patron Saint of all Gunners, everywhere!

**SAINT BARBARA!**



*Ambassador Vickers – Guest of Honour at “The Artillery Club” of Ireland*



## ***The Artillery Club***

*The Artillery Club supports the preservation of the Artillery Corps unique legacy and distinctive traditions, promotes professional excellence, provides a focal point for remembrance and camaraderie, in order to encourage and foster the Corps admirable Esprit de Corps. 2018 marks the 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Artillery Corps.*

*The Club's membership consists of serving and retired commissioned officers of the Permanent Defence Force, the Army Reserve and An Fórsa Cosanta Áitiúil who are, or were, commissioned officers of the Artillery Corps at any time during their service with the Defence Forces.*

See: <http://artilleryclub.ie/> Become a member! Once a Gunner, Always a Gunner, Everywhere!



Fr Seamus Madigan  
Head Chaplain on the  
far left and Col Tom  
Carter (Retd) on the  
right



*Guns of the Battle of Ballinamuck*

