



## remembrance ni

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### World War 2 Life stories

#### Ballymena Military Policeman had prior skills for seagoing and jungle warfare

**William (Billy) Telford BEM from Harryville in Ballymena received the British Empire Medal for his bravery in trying to rescue American aircrew from a crashed and blazing plane in Northern India in the dying days of World War Two.**

The citation for the medal read as follows:- 'At Barackpore (Bengal) on May 26, 1945, riding as a passenger in a jeep when an American bomber crashed near the road and caught fire, L/Cpl. Telford at once ordered his driver to make for the scene of the accident, leaped out of the vehicle and regardless of personal danger ran straight to the aircraft which was, by this time, burning fiercely.

'He located two of the crew, both severely injured, in the nose of the aircraft and succeeded in picking one of them

up, and carrying him clear of the burning wreckage. The airman died later of his injuries.

'L/Cpl. Telford then attempted to reach the other man, but as he approached the aircraft the second time, an explosion scattered blazing petrol over a wide area and made his task impossible.'

## **Weapon skills as a B Special**

Following training as a 'B Special' from 1935, Billy Telford joined the army in 1940. In January 1941 he joined the Corps of Military Police.

He recalled, "The first morning I went on parade, it was with a Sergeant Mills, originally from the Coldstream Guards. We had some turn (fun) with him when they were issuing the rifles.

'I caught my rifle and transferred it and threw it (drill procedures). The other boy I was with dropped his, you see, and the Sergeant says to me .. 'who told you to do that with the rifle?' '

Then he told me to do it again. I caught it in the left hand, put it in the right hand and threw it back just the way we had been taught with Sgt. Harry Crockett in the B-Specials.

'The Sergeant says, 'where did you learn that?' and I just told him I had learned it in the past. Anyway, we went out on the drill square and I was better at sloping arms or ordering arms. By this time the Sergeant was watching me like a hawk!

'But that was nothing. When we went to train with Webley revolvers, the Sergeant said, 'take your pistol down for cleaning purposes'.

'I got a penny out and soon I had the gun left in about 20 wee bits.

'The next morning I was marched into the commandant and he asked me what regiment I had deserted from. I told him I'd never deserted from anywhere and that I'd been in the police in Ireland.

'Oh, do they have guns?' says this boy sitting in big long breeches, 17/21st Lancers style. 'You're the sort of boy we want here!' Commando training

### **Special Service Company was a bad mistake**

'I did another ten days and then I was posted out for I didn't need any more training. I made only one bad mistake, when I went to a Line of Communication Company. They were forming a Special Service Company and I volunteered.

'Anyway, I went and trained with the Commandos. We used to go out in trawlers into the Firth of Forth. I'll tell you a good one about that ...

'In the B-specials, just before the war started, they were looking for boys to go and train on the Lewis Gun (a light machine gun). They couldn't get anybody from Ballymena sub-district so I said I would go.

'I did three weeks on the Lewis and you know, I learned it. Sgt. Crockett made us dismantle and assemble the gun blindfold. If he wasn't satisfied, he wouldn't pass you out!

'Anyway, we used to go out into the Firth of Forth on the trawlers. It was ice cold. They were just ordinary fishing boats. They weren't naval but the crew were Royal Naval reserve.

'On the bows there was a Lewis gun-post and on the stern there was a twin Lewis mounting. When one of the seamen who would normally man the twin guns fell and dislocated his shoulder, the young naval lieutenant asked our captain if he had anyone who could work with the Lewis.

'The boys in my squad were all used to the Bren gun so I put my hand up. The officer checked me over on the guns and then I asked him how long I would stay on them.

'Until you are relieved,' replied the Naval officer.

'I was there for ten days! The Naval officer went on leave and I was reported absent. When he returned he says ... 'are you still here?' and I says 'Yes sir. You said I was to stay until relieved.'

'Anyway, he goes and back he comes in 20 minutes.

The Naval man says: 'You are in the soup, and I'm in the soup .. but I got you in the soup. I've got your officer in the soup too, we forgot where we had put you!'

'Eventually, I went back to Sergeant Major Avery, my own CSM. He was a very hard man.

'He says: 'You are for the clink. Stand at attention when I address you. Where were you!' 'So I says, I was sitting frozen to death behind two Lewis guns on the bow of a trawler in the Firth of Forth.' Sergeant Major Avery says: 'What were you doing there?'

'And I says, a naval officer put me there and told me that I was to stay until I was relieved. Our own Captain Bunker told me to go with him.' This obviously had the desired effect on the hard-case Sergeant Major and he told Billy: 'I will make Captain Bunker jump corporal. Go and carry on with your duties.' Billy recalls: 'He could hardly keep from laughing.'

## **Jungle warfare**

In 2005, Billy was interviewed by David Reid (transcription by Bruce Logan) at a gathering of Second World War veterans in Ballymena Services Club where he was a long standing and highly valued member. In the interview, he recounted his experiences in the Far Eastern theatre of operations when the enemy was as much the climate and the jungle – never mind the Japanese army. Allied air superiority meant that air transport was widely used in these campaigns.

" Either we went by glider or by Dakotas. We used to go in a glider, maybe 10 men in a glider. And the first thing you had to do with that glider was to chop it up into wee bits and

hide it. Because the Japanese knew there was a subversive element in their midst."

He also recalled flying over the infamous 'hump' of the Himalayas in a 4-engine American aircraft loaded with petrol and oil. The flying conditions were often atrocious and there were many wrecks on this route which was used to take war material into China.

The grim reality of war remained crisp and clear in Billy Telford's memory: "I have plenty of memories, but I'm not allowed to tell you them.

"Whenever you went on a Long Range Penetration job the officer in charge would say: "'You'll see nothing, and you'll hear nothing, and you'll say nothing.' "You were going to do something that wasn't nice. And before you went on an LRP jump you were searched. You weren't allowed cigarettes or cigars ... The only tobacco you could take was chewing tobacco. Because if you smoked in the bamboo jungle, the Japanese could smell it a week after you threw the cigarette down." Billy Telford died in October 2007 at the age of 93. He was pre-deceased by his wife Etta. His funeral was to Ballymena Cemetery.

## **Ballyclare brothers in tanks of the Irish Guards in heart-breaking incident at Arnhem**

Lance Corporal Edward Armistice Walker, 2722995, was killed in action on the 02/10/1944 at the age of 25 on the road Nijmegen.



**Edward Armistice Walker, B Squadron, 2nd Battalion Irish Guards. He was killed in action on 2/10/1944 at Nijmegen bridge during a German counter attack against the British lead operation (Market Garden). His tank was called Ballyjamesduff. His brother and another Doagh man were in the tank behind which had to push the burning Ballyjamesduff off the road.**

His tank belonging to B Squadron of the 2nd Battalion Irish Guards named the Ballyjamesduff was the second in the column trying to push through to relieve the airborne troops cut off at Arnhem. As depicted in the famous film "A Bridge too Far". it took a direct hit from enemy fire and was pushed off the road.

The scene sadly depicted in the film was of the third tank pushing the Ballyjamesduff off the road.

The film does not reveal that Edward's brother William and another Ballyclare man, Harry Black, were in that tank, as it



pushed Ballyjamesduff off the road with the crew burning inside.

The fatal incident underlines the horrors of war. Edward had to leave his brother and Harry had to leave his school chum behind in the burning tank they had pushed off the road, and continue on with the attack. This is the type of rarely told story that needs to be preserved. Such stories are central to true remembrance worthy of those who fought and died for our country's freedom.

Judging by his middle name, you would be correct in thinking Edward was born on Armistice Day. However, he was also named after his uncle Edward McKendry Walker who was also killed in action during the Great War on the 06/09/1918 at the age of 28. He was awarded the Military Medal for action at Messines Ridge in Aug 1917.

Edward Armistice Walker was the son of William Henry and Mary Walker, of Ballyclare. Groesbeek Memorial, Panel 3

Harry Black was the son of Mrs Todd, Court Street, Ballyclare. He was wounded in Normandy. His brother was serving in India.

There is another Irish Guardsman from Northern Ireland commemorated on the Groesbeek Memorial, Panel 3..

**Guardsman Thomas George Clarke**, 2719127, died on 17/09/1944 aged 26. He was the son of James and Jane C. Clarke, of **Corkley, Almamachin, Co. Armagh**. It is quite possible that Guardsman Clarke is buried in one of the 6 graves marked as simply Irish Guardsmen who died on 17 September 1944. (Valkeswaard War Cemetery). However



there are 9 men listed on the memorial who were noted as having died on that day.

## **Belfast airman who stayed at large in Belgium after being shot down**

Flight Sergeant Walter Berry, DFM, MiD, survived a couple of plane crashes and numerous attacks during his service with bomber command. After his last crash he survived on the run in occupied Belgium.

Known as "Pat / Pad / Paddy", he served with bomber command in 76 Squadron. On 21/06/1943 a crew comprising, Elder, Wood, Clarke and Berry were flying

together in Halifax DK188 on Ops to Krefeld when the aircraft suffered from one of the engines failing outbound. The pilot, Wilfred Elder



**Walter Berry and Anne Brusselmans of the Belgian underground in the streets of Brussels.**



## **Berry in Brussels in 1944**

was later awarded the DFM for his actions on this night.

Gazetted on 16/07/1943, the citation reads.. "This airman was the captain and pilot of an aircraft which was detailed to attack Krefeld one night in June 1943. On the outward flight, one engine of the bomber became unserviceable but, despite this, Flight Sergeant Elder continued to the target and pressed home a determined attack, afterwards flying the aircraft back to base.

This airman displayed great skill and tenacity throughout, setting an inspiring example."

On 27- 28/07/1943 Elder, Berry, Wood and Clarke were again flying together in Halifax DK188 on an operational flight to bomb Hamburg when the aircraft was damaged by night-fighters, on their return to England they force landed in Norfolk. One member of their crew died after an attack by the enemy aircraft after being struck by cannon fire in the mid upper turret. The flight engineer, Sgt Berry, then went to occupy the turret and returned fire during another attack but was himself wounded. The regular mid upper gunner Sgt Arthur Smith RAFVR (1694468) was buried by his family in Drighlington Cemetery, Leeds.

On the night of 23 - 24/08/1943 his Handley Page Halifax aircraft had been used for an operational flight to attack Berlin and had taken off at 20.11hrs. On their return to base



## **A Handley Page Halifax**

the aircraft crashed at 03.20hrs. Two of the crew sustained injuries.

On the night of 12 - 13/05/1944 his Handley Page Halifax III B No. LK883 series (OW-E), during a mission in Leuven was downed (credited to Oblt Heinz-W. Schnaufer of IV./NJG1) and crashed near Londerzeel, Flemish Brabant, Belgium. Four men perished in the crash - the radio / gunner W / OFF1 Robert Joseph Fitzpatrick, RCAF, the central gunner Sgt James Howard Jones, RCAF, the upper gunner Sgt Kenneth Wesley Drumm, RCAF, and the rear gunner Sgt Christopher Albert Jones. All four are buried in the cemetery of Brussels in Evere. The pilot, Fl / Off J. Howard Black was captured and three other men also managed to escape - Fl /





Off John "Bill" Van Maarion, RCAF, the Navigator Ross Doubt and Walter Berry.

It is not known how Walter Berry came in contact with the Belgian underground. Records show that with their support he stayed in a number of locations and remained at large until Belgium was freed. On 03/09/2000 a plaque in memory of all the crew of Halifax LK883 was unveiled at the entrance to the Bergkapel in Berg district, Mechelsetraat in Londerzeel. (See above)

Sgt Walter Berry, 1080826, was from Belfast. He was awarded the DFM for service with 76 Squadron, Gazetted on 16/11/1943 and was later Mentioned in Despatches, Gazetted on 14/01/1944.

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Ballyclare & District Roll of Honour

Irish Guards in WW2

War Years Remembered

### **Walter Berry**

Aerial Combat

Evasioncomete

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The **remembrance ni** programme is overseen by Very Rev Dr Houston McKelvey OBE, QVRM, TD who served as Chaplain to 102 and 105 Regiments Royal Artillery (TA), as Hon. Chaplain to RNR and as Chaplain to the RBL NI area and the Burma Star Association NI. Dr McKelvey is a Past President of Queen's University Services Club. He may be contacted at [houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com](mailto:houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com)

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