



remembrance ni

Wartime Wren in HMS Caroline and Belfast Castle



Wren Rebecca McCabe served with HMS Caroline, Belfast from 1942-1944 before moving to the Signals Distribution Office, Belfast Castle in the run up to D-Day.

Only two weeks into McCabe's time in HMS Caroline, came one of the highlights of her service. In June 1942, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother) visited Belfast on board HMS Phoebe. While King George inspected the Royal Navy, the Queen inspected the women

at HMS Caroline. Wren Rebecca McCabe had the honour of being in the front row for the royal inspection, which was captured by Royal Naval photographers.

She was born at 59 Palmer Street, Belfast, Co. Antrim on 31/08/1921 and later moved to 71 Twaddell Avenue, Belfast, Co. Antrim. She attended Woodvale School in North Belfast until the age of 14 when she left to work for Mourne Clothing Company in 1936. The business was on the Oldpark Road. Rebecca's job was rubbing soap along the selvages of the material so that sewing machines would run faster. She earned 10/11½ - ten shillings and eleven and a half pence.

In 1938, she joined her sisters Sadie and Margaret at Ewart's Linen Factory where they worked as pern winders. Rebecca became a warping apprentice and within two years was running her own machine. Warping was an intensive job; running linen thread from hundreds of spools through a reed onto beams. She would also have needed a keen eye to check selvages and to watch for "slubs" or bumps or knots in the thread which required cutting out.

In 1941, Ewart's Linen Factory was one of many buildings damaged in the Belfast Blitz. Afterwards, Rebecca McCabe signed up to the WRNS, working in Mackies Factory until her call up in 1942.

She found herself based at HMS Caroline from 1942-1944. She was a maintenance Wren, which encompassed many tasks. These included testing battery banks on trawlers, using hydrometers, and checking electrical contacts. While stationed at the Belfast base, she would also have gone out on depth charge practices. Many of these young women ended up with impaired hearing, requiring ear syringing after

these exercises. She was a soloist with the RN choir in the city.

Rebecca was the mother of Caroline Simmond. Born 31/08/1921, Rebecca died 11/12/2006.



Minesweeping was one of the more perilous responsibilities of the Royal Navy in World War 2 and at least twelve men from Northern Ireland lost their lives on trawlers converted for this purpose.

Lurgan sailors lost when Lady Shirley was sunk by a U-boat

Ian McCready and Norman Mitchell from Lurgan served in HMS Lady Shirley (T464) (also known as HMT Lady

Shirley) which was a fishing trawler requisitioned by the Royal Navy in 1940 and converted for anti-submarine warfare.

After conversion, which included fitting an ASDIC anti-submarine dome, Lady Shirley went into service in January 1941 and served with the 31st Anti-Submarine Group based at Gibraltar. She was under the command of Lieutenant-Commander Arthur Henry Callaway DSO RANVR.

Lady Shirley was part of the 31st A/S Group and was stationed and operated from Gibraltar with the trawlers Erin of 7th A/S GP and Lady Hogarth.

Lady Shirley was a escort / patrol trawler. She was fitted with Asdic anti-submarine dome. October 4th 1941 found Lady Shirley on lone patrol South of the Canaries' the Lookout spotted something that looked like a ships funnel and reported it to Watch officer Sub Lieutenant French. French went to investigate and as he observed the object it dissapeared. It could have been a funnel or the conning tower of a U boat, Shirley`s captain immediately altered course to head for the position. Having a positive contact from the Asdic equipment Lady Shirley went into attack. A pattern of depth charges were dropped and shortly afterwards to the stern of Lady Shirley a U boat surfaced, Lady Shirley turned hard to port to bring the 4 inch gun to bear on the U boat, as Lady Shirley`s point five guns opened fire they were answered by a stream of cannon shells. The four inch gun fired but was a near miss, the U boat fired at the same time and tracer flasheds went everywhere.



The RNPS Naval War Memorial at Lowestoft

This burst of tracer mortally wounded the gun layer, Seaman Pizzey who was hit by a cannon shell, he called out "they've got me !" he staggered back, collapsed and died. A replacement quickly took over as gun layer and another shot was fired, all the while the Hotchkiss gunners firing at the U boat. The crew of Lady Shirley could not understand why the U boat had not returned fire with it's big gun. The U boat crew started to abandon ship and very quickly afterwards the U boat sank. All the Germans were taken aboard from the water 45 in total, 8 were unaccounted for including the captain. On the voyage back to Gibraltar that afternoon a funeral service was held for Seaman Pizzey, another service was held the day after for a wounded German.



Lurgan War Memorial

After four days Lady Shirley arrived back in Gibraltar to a heroes' welcome. Winston Churchill cabled his personal congratulations to Lady Shirley. Lieutenant Commander Callaway was awarded an immediate DSO 'For daring and skill in a brilliant action against a U boat in which the Enemy was sunk and surrendered, to H.M.T Lady Shirley.

German survivors claimed that U-111 was the first U-boat to be lost of those operating in that area. According to the lengthy interrogation report, the crew of U-111 put up a poor fight and surrendered speedily to their much less powerful adversary after their Captain was killed. The crew consisted of four officers, three chief petty officers, fourteen petty officers, and thirty ratings, plus an officer under

instruction as a prospective U-boat Captain. U-111's commander, Wilhelm Kleinschmidt, was killed in the action with Lady Shirley, along with her First Lieutenant, a junior officer, and five ratings. The captured POWs said that the normal complement was 43, including officers.

Lady Shirley took the POWs to Gibraltar. A British warship escorting a convoy then took them to England.

On December 11th 1941, a torpedo from U-374 (Oberleutnant zur See Unno von Fischel) hit Lady Shirley, sinking her in the Straits of Gibraltar. All 33 including Arthur Henry Callaway were lost with their ship.

On this Day – December 11

1917

British airship lost (with crew of five) over the North Sea.

1939

Finnish ski troops attack Soviet supply line on Raate Road.

1940

Sidi Barrani is captured along with over 20,000 Italians, bringing the total captured to nearly 38,000 in 2 days, along with 237 guns and 73 tanks. At this time, Wavell decides to withdraw the 4th Indian Division and send it to the Sudan. It

will be replaced by the 6th Australian Division, although it will take some days for it to be ready.

Battleship HMS King George V is commissioned.

1941

The British garrison in Hong Kong begins to withdraw from the mainland to Hong Kong Island itself. As a result of command and control problems, rumors and many desertions, the 11th Indian Division withdraws from Jitra towards Alor Star in northern Malaya, even though the Japanese troops facing them were inferior in numbers. The US garrison in Peking is forced to surrender to the Japanese.

Japanese troops attempt to land on Wake Island, but US Marine gunners and airmen repulse the first landing attempt and sink two Japanese destroyers in the process. Further Japanese landings take place in the Philippines.



In a speech before the Reichstag, Hitler, after denouncing the un-neutral and warlike anti-German policies of President Roosevelt and citing Germany's obligations under the Tri-

Partite Pact with Japan and Italy, declares war on the United States. Italy follows suit some hours later.

In response to Germany and Italy's declaration of war, the US reciprocates and declares war on both Germany and Italy. Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua also declare war on Germany and Italy.

In the last week the Royal Navy has lost the destroyers Pentlan, Porcupine and Blean, off Algeria.

1942



Destroyer HMS Blean was torpedoed and sunk by German submarine U-443 off Oran, Algeria, while on convoy escort duty. 89 of her crew lost their lives. Blean was commissioned in August 1942: her career was the shortest of any Hunt-class destroyer.

1943

A heavy USAAF raid on Emden kills 1,000 and makes 12,000 homeless.

Moroccan troops successful in first combat against Germans in Italy.

Field Marshal Kesselring permits German troops to occupy Monte Cassino in Italy, excluding the abbey itself.

1944

US Eighth Air Force launches largest mission to date—1586 bombers hit rail targets in western Germany.

First Japanese balloon bomb found in US, in Montana.

1945

William Halsey promoted to fleet admiral.

Roll of Honour – December 11

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1915

+JOHNSTON, William Robert

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Private. 8166. Died 11/12/1915. Aged 31. Born in Ballymena and enlisted Belfast. He was the son of the late Alex. and Sarah Johnston, Ballymena. Forceville Communal Cemetery, Somme, France

+McMATH, Francis

Royal Engineers. 122nd Field Coy. Company Serjeant Major. 57550. Died 11/12/1915. Age 40. He went to France on 04/10/1915 with the 36th (Ulster) Division. Francis McMath lived in Dublin for a time. He worked as a clerk before he enlisted in Belfast on 24/10/1914. He had previous service with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Born on 20/02/1874 in the townland of Drumfad, Carrowdore. Son of James and Margaret (nee Boyd) McMath who were married on 09/08/1870 in Carrowdore C of I Parish Church (Christ Church). In Army records he named as his next-of-kin his uncle, John Boyd, of Wentworth Cottage, Hill of Howth, Co Dublin. He was a cousin of Private John Boyd (790538) who died serving with Canadian forces on 07/05/1917. Louvencourt Military Cemetery, France

1916

+BANFORD, Charles

RMLI. Private. PLY/17001. Died of wounds 11/12/1916. Aged 21. Enrolled 21/08/1914. Whilst being numbered with the Plymouth Battalion, records show he was serving with the Deal Battalion, RMLI, when wounded with MEF at Gallipoli 25/02/1915 - 01/05/1915. It was a head wound caused by shrapnel. He was invalided to UK 07/05/1915 and discharged invalided on 03/11/1916. Born Belfast 27/04/1886. Son of J. Banford, Hutchinson St., Belfast. Husband to Maud Banford, Excise St., Belfast. Belfast City Cemetery. ADM 159/160/17001

1917

+BLACK, John Clarence

Royal Irish Rifles. 10th Btn. A Coy. Rifleman. 14090. Died 11/12/1917. Age 22. Son of John and Elizabeth Black, of 36, Albion St., Belfast. Theipval Memorial, France

+CAIRNS, Duncan Morrison

Royal Irish Rifles. 8th/9th Btn. Rifleman. 14272. Died 11/12/1917. Age 35. Husband of Charlotte Cairns, of 5, Tyne St., Belfast. Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery, Manancourt, France

+CHEDDY, T

Royal Irish Rifles. 10th Btn. Rifleman. 47486. Died 11/12/1917. Age 22. Son of James Cheddy, of 35, Queen Victoria Gardens, Belfast. Sunken Road Cemetery, Villers-Plouich, France

1918

+McGARRY, James

RAF. Aircraftman 2nd Class, 186598. Died 11/12/1918. Aged 20. Son of John and Sarah J. McGarry, of 36, Parkview St., Belfast. Belfast (Miltown) Roman Catholic Cemetery

+WEIR, John

North Irish Horse.C Sqdn. Private.1454. Died 11/12/1918. Age 28. Son of James and Margaret A. Weir, of Belfast.Carnmoney Cemetery, Newtownabbey



The RNPS memorial at Lowestoft commemorates 2,385 names from the patrol depot "Europa", including 49 from Newfoundland, who never returned to their base at Sparrow's Nest.

1941

HM TRAWLER SHIRLEY ANN

+McCREADY, Ian Robert

RNPS. Stoker. LT/KX 115483. DSM. Died 11/12/1941. Age 30. HM Trawler Lady Shirley. In a previous action he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal - the second highest gallantry award for a rating. Lady Shirley was requisitioned May 1940 and converted to an auxiliary patrol vessel. In January 1941 it was converted for anti-submarine duties and joined 31st. A/S Group at Gibraltar. It sank U-111 off Teneriffe in October. It was torpedoed by U-374

off Gibraltar. Son of Thomas and Annie McCready, Moyallen. Husband to Theresa McCready, Lurgan. Lowestoft Naval Memorial. Panel 7. Lurgan College WM. Lurgan WM.

+MITCHELL, Norman

Seaman. LT/JX 241380, HM Trawler Lady Shirley, Royal Naval Patrol Service. Died 11/12/1941. Aged 22. Torpedoed by U-374 off Gibraltar. Son of Robert and Mary Ann Mitchell, Lurgan. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 26/12/1941). Lowestoft Naval Memorial, Panel 5. Lurgan WM

1941

+LENNOX, Thomas Hugh

Royal Artillery, 9 HAA. Regt. 26 Bty. Lance Bombardier. 1473074. Died 11/12/1941. Aged 38. Died in hospital. Killed accidentally by an Egyptian Army truck in the Middle East. Son of Hugh and Agnes Jane Lennox; husband to Mary Lennox, of Railway Terr., Castledawson. Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt. Regimental WMSt Columb's Cathedral, Londonderry. Castledawson WM

+LOUDEN, David

Royal Artillery. Second Lieutenant. 156923. Died 11/12/1941. Aged 23. 3 Lt. A.A. Regt. Son of John McPhail Loudon and Elaine Loudon, of Dunmurry. Brookwood 1939 - 1945 Memorial, Surrey

1942

+McINTYRE, Hugh

+RN. Leading Stoker. C/KX 93743. Died 11/12/1942. HMS Blean. Joined April 1939. On one previous occasion the ship he was in was torpedoed. Son of Mr and Mrs George McIntyre, Grafton St., Londonderry. (Derry Standard 21/09/1942. 30/12/1942. 03/05/1943, Belfast Weekly Telegraph 08/01/1943). Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 61

1943

+YOUNG, William

RAFVR. Sergeant (Air Gunner). 1795688. Died 11/12/1943. Aged 19. Son of James and Emma Young, of Drumaheagles, Ballymoney. Bath (Haycombe) Cemetery, Somerset, United Kingdom

1944

+BUCKLEY, William

Royal Artillery. Gunner. 973089. Died 11/12/1944. 119 Lt. A.A. Regt. Husband to Maria Buckley, of Annaghmore, Co. Armagh. Mierlo War Cemetery. Noord-Brabant, Netherlands

+CHARLES, Edward Christopher

RAFVR. Sergeant. 2221730. Died 11/12/1944. Aged 24. 49 Sqdn. Son of Edward and Mary Charles, of Warrenpoint; husband to Joan Charles. Runnymede Memorial, Panel 226, Surrey

VETERANS

AINLEY, John Francis

RN. Surgeon Captain. CBE, London Gazette 11/12/1945.
Temporary Surgeon Lieutenant, Navy List 28/08/1919. MB
QUB 1917.

BRYANS, R

WRNS. Leading Wren. Sisters serving in WAAF and ATS.
Folly Lane, Armagh. (Ulster Gazette 11/12/1944).

BUNTING, Edward John

RN. AB. SS4999. Enrolled 20/05/1914. Served in Vivid,
Tiger, Cyclops, Sabrina, Penshurst, and Q7. Demobbed
11/12/1919. Joined RFR 12/12/1919. Born Lurgan
22/10/1895. ADM 188/1098/4999

+CUMMINS, Michael

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. 8482. Born Belfast 1890. He
kept a diary up to the time he was captured. Prisoner in
Belgium 24/12/1917. Discharged 11/12/1918.

McCABE, Rebecca

WRNS. Wren. HMS Caroline and Belfast Castle SDO.
Joined up 1942. Served as a maintenance Wren attached to
H.M.S. Caroline and after two years she was transferred to
Belfast Castle S.D.O. Signal Distribution Office. A soloist in
the Royal Naval Choir. Mother of Caroline Simmond. Born
31/08/1921, 59 Palmer Street, Belfast. Died 11/12/2006

MOSES, Andrew Ernest

Ernie died on 11/12/ 2013, aged 89. He ran away from
home in 1942 to join the RAF. He later joined the army.

"I wanted to do my bit," Ernie later told his family in Seskinore, Co Tyrone.

But, within a short time, Ernie changed uniforms from blue to khaki when he transferred to the Army, where he felt more at home serving at ground level.

"I never did like flying in aircraft," he admitted. "I only realised it when I joined up."

Ernie served throughout the war as a corporal in the Royal Corps of Signals and saw action in Italy and Austria. Back on Civvy Street, when the Second World War ended, he built a reputation as a pig breeder who showed stock at Balmoral and at agriculture shows from his Ballyrobert farm in Co Antrim.



He was also the pig adviser to Thompsons Animal Feeds, and by 1963 had moved to a holding in the Crumlin area.

Ernie met his future wife Joyce (nee Fouracre) when he was still in uniform, based at Milton Heights Army Base in Oxfordshire, and he brought her home as his bride after their wedding in 1946.

He and Joyce had been married for 44 years when she died in 1990. His funeral service in St Catherine's Parish Church at Aldergrove, where he was a member of the select vestry for nearly 50 years, was conducted by the rector, the Rev William Orr, and also Canon Sam McComb.

Ernie, who was buried in Crumlin Cemetery, was survived by sisters Sally, Evelyn and Molly; sons Ken and Roy; grandchildren Nigel, Julie, Andrew and Philip, and great-grandchildren Shannon, Ed, Emily, Jack and Alfie. Two brothers, David and Bertie, pre-deceased Ernie.

SIMMONDS, nee McCabe, Rebecca

HMS Caroline. WRNS. Pre-war worked in Mourne Clothing Company Ewarts and Mackies. Enrolled 1942 serving as a Maintenance Wren attached to HMS Caroline. This involved topping up large banks of batteries, checking with a hydrometer and topping up when required; checking electrical contacts in the wheelhouse. Met Queen Elizabeth whilst King George was inspecting Royal Navy personnel on the opposite side of Pollock Dock. After two years she was transferred to Belfast Castle SDO - Signal Distribution Office. A soloist in the Royal Naval Choir which sang at various venues in the Belfast area. In the lead in to D Day she saw the vessels lying in Belfast Lough prior to departure. Married a naval husband in Crumlin Rd

Methodist Church in 1946 and lived in London, returning to Belfast in 1973. Mother of Caroline Simmonds. B 31/08/1921 at Palmer Street, Belfast. Died 11/12/2006

WHITLA, Sir William

War physician. RVH, Belfast 1914 - 18. Monaghan Diocesan School. QCB MB 1877. Knighted 1902. Senator, Royal University. President BMA. Professor Materia Medica and Therapeutics, QUB.

Sir William Whitla was one of the most significant figures in Ulster medicine of any era. He studied medicine at Queen's College Belfast and in Dublin and Edinburgh, after which he joined the staff of the Belfast General Hospital, Frederick Street, Belfast (which received the Royal Charter in 1875) as Resident Medical Officer, for one year. He spent some time in St. Thomas' Hospital, London. Between 1877 and 1882, when he became a consultant physician, he was Assistant Physician to the Belfast Charitable Society. About this time he took up an honorary appointment to the Belfast Hospital for Women and Children. In 1882 he was appointed Physician to the Belfast Royal Hospital in Frederick Street where he was to remain a visiting member of the staff, and later of the Royal Victoria Hospital, until 1918. In 1890 Whitla was appointed Professor of Materia Medica at Queen's College, Belfast. He built an international reputation on several remarkably successful textbooks. The income from these, from his private practice and from private sources made him in his time probably one of the wealthiest professors on the staff; and much of his wealth and other assets he would eventually bequeath to Queen's University though a number of bodies would eventually benefit from his

considerable largesse. In 1909 was elected President of the British Medical Association having already been knighted in 1902 for distinction as author and doctor - this double distinction is relatively rare and Whitla was very proud of it. As Pro-Chancellor of Queen's he represented the University in Parliament from 1918 to 1922.

From 1884 to 1906 he lived and practised at 8 College Square North, moving in that year to Lennoxvale, while retaining the professional house in College Square. He was appointed honorary physician to the King in Ireland in 1919.

During his life his gifts to his profession included the Good Samaritan stained glass window in the Royal Hospital, and a building for the Ulster Medical Society. Whitla's legacies to Ulster were certainly considerable. The Whitla Hall in Methodist College, Belfast, one of the leading secondary-level schools in the British Isles, was named for him, Whitla having been a governor of the school, appointed in 1906, remaining until his death in 1933, as well as a generous benefactor.

At Queen's University, is another Whitla Hall, similarly provided for by Whitla to the amount of £35,000; its foundation stone was laid in 1939; the hall was completed in 1942, requisitioned by the government during the Second World War, and officially opened on 19 February, 1949.

In 1876 in London he married Miss Ada Bourne. He died at his home in Lennoxvale on 11 December 1933 and was buried in Belfast City Cemetery.

Every day is a Remembrance Day

We will remember them

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masthead.**

remembrance ni

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 houstonmckelvey@mac.com

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