



remembrance ni



Cookstown and St. Souplet

St. Souplet is a village about 6 kilometres south of Le Cateau, which is a small town approximately 20 kilometres south-east of Cambrai. The remains of Private William Jeffers (S/2127) from Cookstown were buried at St. Souplet.



St. Souplet village was captured by the American 30th Division on the 10th October 1918. The American troops made a cemetery of 371 American and seven British graves on the South-West side of the village, on the road to Vaux-Andigny. A smaller British cemetery was made alongside. The American graves were removed after the Armistice and the seven British graves were moved into the British cemetery. Further British graves were brought in from the surrounding battlefields and smaller burial grounds.

There are now nearly 750, 1914-18 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, one-fifth are unidentified and special memorials are erected to 55 soldiers from the United Kingdom, buried in other cemeteries, whose graves could not be found. The



cemetery covers an area of 2,504 square metres and is enclosed by a stone rubble wall.

Total Burials: 747. Identified Casualties: United Kingdom 577, Canada 5, Australia 4, India 2, New Zealand 1, South Africa 1, U. S. A. 1. Total 591.

The remains of Private **William Jeffers** (S/2127) from Cookstown were buried at St. Souplet. At a time he was known as William Jamfrey.

William Jamfrey was eldest son of Thomas and Elizabeth Jamfrey. He was born on 10th April 1888 in Omagh. Interestingly he was named William Jeffers. He was one of seven children. All the children were born in Cookstown

except William. By 1911 William, his brother and his father were all employed as railway porters. The 1911 census lists William Jamfrey as age 22, living with the family at house 1 in Coolnafranky, Cookstown. From then on his surname was 'Jeffers'.

Private William Jeffers was injured in the summer of 1917. He was serving with the 2nd Battalion of the Seaforth Highlanders when he died in France on Saturday 2nd November 1918, just nine days before the Armistice was signed and the war ended. William Jamfrey's brother. James Jamfrey, enlisted in the Royal Navy about 1919. He was killed in World War Two. Named on Lurgan War Memorial.

On this Day – December 12

1937

The Japanese fire on British and U.S. ships on the Yangtze River in China, sinking the American ship Panay. The Japanese apologize to the United States and pay reparations; the British refuse to accept any Japanese apology.

1939

Finnish have some success against Russian troops at Tolvajrvi, inflicting heavy casualties.

Two German cruisers which are accompanied by 5 destroyers are damaged by torpedoes from the British

submarine HMS Salmon as they are return from a mine laying operation of the northeast coast of England. Later in the day, HMS Salmon also gives warning under the 'rules of war' to a German liner, although it reaches the port of Bremen safely.

1940

Sheffield is heavily bombed by the Luftwaffe.

Philip Kerr, Lord Lothian, British ambassador to the US, dies in Washington DC

1941

The ship "Struma" leaves Romania for Palestine carrying 769 Jews but is later denied permission by British authorities to allow the passengers to disembark. In Feb. 1942, it sails back into the Black Sea where it is intercepted by a Soviet submarine and sunk as an "enemy target."

Britain declares war on Bulgaria.

Bulgaria declares war on both Britain and the United States.

Hungary and Romania declare war on the United States.

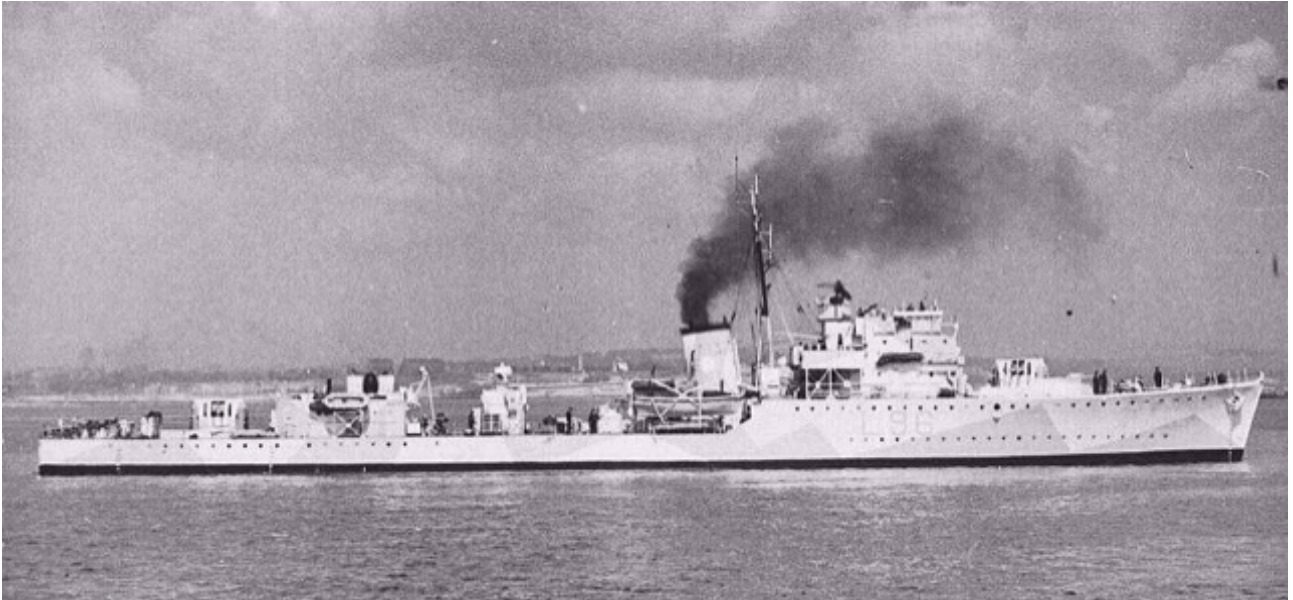
The United States. declares war on Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria after receiving those country's declarations of war.

1942

Manstein launches his counter attack with a hastily assembled force of 13 divisions, including three Panzer divisions with about 230 tanks to try and relieve Sixth Army at Stalingrad.

The 1,500 ton destroyer HMS Partridge is sunk off the coast of Algeria by U-565, commanded by Wilhelm Franken.

1943



Destroyer HMS Tynedale was torpedoed and sunk with 73 dead off Jijel, Algeria, by German submarine U-593 while on convoy escort duty. Her sister ship HMS Holcombe was also torpedoed and sunk by U-593 (81 dead) as she searched for the attacker.

Rommel becomes C in C of Army Group B, which covers the coastal defenses from Holland to Bay of Biscay.

A Czech-Soviet treaty of friendship is signed in Moscow.

1944

The underground V-weapon factory at Wittring is captured by the U.S. Third Army.

British launch Third Arakan Campaign toward Akyab, Burma

Roll of Honour – December 12

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1914

+McFARLANE, J

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 9458. Died 12/12/1914. Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord, France

+NELSON, Samuel

Royal Irish Rifles. 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 8180. Died 12/12/1914. Age 30. Native of Ballymena. Son of Samuel and Catherine Nelson; husband to Margaret Nelson, of 8, North Ann St., Belfast. Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, France

1915

+DEVLIN, John

Royal Field Artillery. 53rd Bde. C Bty. Gunner. 95897. Died 19/12/1915. Age 20. Born in Ballinderry, County Londonderry. In the 1911 census there is John Devlin, aged 16, living with his aunt and uncle, James Devlin, in Ballinderry. Prior to the outbreak of war he was working in Stockton-on-Tees, England. At the age of 19 he volunteered and went to the Western Front in May 1915 where he took part in many fierce engagements, including the Battle of

Loos. He had written a letter home prior to Christmas 1915 saying that he hoped to get leave for a week in the New Year of 1916, but his family received no more news until the report of his death. The report of his death was sent to his uncle, James Devlin, Churchill, Ballinderry Bridge. Ypres Reservoir Cemetery, Belgium

+HILL, George

RMLI. Private. CH/430S. Chatham Division. Died 12/12/1915. Age 21. Enrolled 19/10/1914. RM Brigade RND 27/01/1915 - 12/12/1915. Born Belfast 25/04/1894. Son of George and Sarah Hill, Dundee St., Belfast. Redoubt Cemetery, Helles. ADM 159/143/430

1916

+FITZSIMMONS, J

Royal Irish Rifles. 2nd Btn. C Coy. Rifleman. 5367. Died 12/12/1916. Age 31. Son of James and Mary Anne Fitzsimmons (nee Hilden), of Lisburn; husband of Catherine Fitzsimmons, of 22, Shore St., Belfast. Hyde Park Corner (Royal Berks) Cemetery, Belgium

+McFARLANE, John

Royal Irish Fusiliers. Private. 12000. Died 12/12/1916. Son of Henry McFarlane, of Keady, Co. Armagh; husband to Mary McCullouch McFarlane, of Drumgoy, Keady. Stafford Cemetery, Staffordshire

+NEVIN, J

Royal Irish Rifles. 12th Btn. Rifleman. 429. Died 12/12/1916. Bprn Kilbride 07/05/1883 and lived in Doagh. Enlisted Ballyclare. Son of Matthew and Mary (nee Loughlin) Nevin. His brothers Matthew and William Hugh both served and survived. Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France. Ballyclare WM. Kilbride Presbyterian Church RH

1917

+CUNNINGHAM, J

Northumberland Fusiliers, 24th (Tyneside Irish) Btn. Company Serjeant Major. 27/852. Died 12/12/1917. Age 21. Son of Charles and Mary Margaret Cunningham, of Mullartown, Annalong. London Cemetery, Neuville-Vitasse, France

+JOHNSTON, William Vincent

RAMC. Captain. Died 12/12/1917. Age 44. Son of Ronald Johnston. William was born in Donaghmore, County Tyrone about 1873. William Johnston was married to Elizabeth Carr Johnston. Elizabeth was from Dublin. They were married about 1898. William's became a doctor and lived with his family in Rathmines, Dublin. He died suddenly of heart disease. The death took place with tragic suddenness in the Military Hospital at the Curragh while he was acting as orderly officer on Tuesday evening of the 11th December and was found dead in his bed early the following morning. He was 44 years old. The CWGC record states that Elizabeth Carr Johnston was a resident of Portstewart. A brother Lt. Colonel GJ Johnston, RAMC, served in France, and another brother Mr J Ewing Johnston was the veterinary officer at the Remojunt Depot, Balmoral. His sister Miss ME

Johnston was Matron of the UVF Hospital, Belfast. Curragh Military Cemetery, County Kildare, Ireland. Dungannon WM

+McELMURRAY, Henry Archie

RN. Stoker 2nd Class. K42019. HMS Partridge. Died 12/12/1917. Age 21. Convoy protection in the North Sea. Enrolled 24/03/1917 for hostilities. In Victory II and Greenwich (Partridge) 28/08/1917 - 12/12/1917. Born Lisburn 15/05/1894. Son of Charles and Maggie McElmurray, Mullaghglass, Stoneyford, Lisburn. Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 26. ADM 188/951/42019

+McKNIGHT, W

Royal Irish Rifles. 16th Btn. Rifleman. 598. transf. to (381437) London Dist. Centre Labour Corps. Died 12/12/1917. Age 25. Son of Wm. and Margaret McKnight, of Caskum, Loughbrickland, Banbridge; husband to Margaret McKnight, of Newry Rd., Banbridge, Co. Down. Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey

+MURRY, George Turkington

Royal Irish Regiment, 7th (South Irish Horse) Btn. Private. 25637. Died 12/12/1917. Age 25. Born on 24/06/ 1892 at Kilkeel, County Down, the first of six children of book-seller Thomas David Murray and his wife Anne Jane Murray (nee Turkington).

Murray grew up in Belfast. By 1911 he was living with his family at 238 Oldpark Road. His father was working as a city missionary and George as a handkerchief manufacturing clerk.

According to a later newspaper report, Murray was a well-known local footballer: [He] “represented Cliftonville Strollers at the Irish Junior Alliance for many years, and served on various committees of that body. He was connected with the County Antrim Association, and for a time was in charge of Cliftonville Olympic team. He was one of the most popular Cliftonians, his unassuming disposition gaining him many friends”.

Between 29/01/1917 and 12/04/1917 Murray enlisted in the North Irish Horse at Antrim (No.2369). However in July that year he transferred to the South Irish Horse (No.3147), and soon after embarked for France as a reinforcement for one of the two South Irish Horse regiments there.

At the end of August 1917 these regiments were dismounted and brought together to form the 7th (South Irish Horse) Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment. Murray was issued a new regimental number – 25637.

On 12/12/1917 the 7th Battalion was in the lines on the south of the Cambrai front. Its war diary for the day states:

“Battln relieved in evening by 7/8 R. Innis. Fus. & returned to billets at St. Emilie. Billets shelled & 28 men killed & 40 wounded. ... Battln moved out of billets & occupied Railway Cutting”.

Murray was one of the men who died in that bombardment. Son of Thomas David and Ann Jane Murray, of 474, Oldpark Rd., Belfast. Templeux-Le-Guerard British Cemetery, France

+REID, Robert

Labour Corps. 107th Btn. Private. 63968. Died 12/12/1917 of wounds. Born in Plumstead, Kent, and lived for a time at Drumgornal, Stewartstown, County Tyrone. He was living in East Ham before he enlisted as a Private with the Royal Fusiliers in East Ham, Essex, with the Service No 36955. Private Robert Reid later transferred to the Labour Corps. Tincourt New British Cemetery, Tincourt, Somme, France. Stewartstown WM, Stewartstown Presbyterian Church RH

+REID, Thomas Jackson

Royal Irish Rifles. 15th Btn. Rifleman. 165. Died 12/12/1917. Age 19. Son of George Reid, of 46, Silvergrove St., Belfast. Thiepval Memorial, France

+SCOTT, David Harden

Royal Flying Corps, 65th Squadron. Lieutenant. MC. Died 12/12/1917. Age 21. Educated at Bangor Grammar School. On 08/09/1914 he joined the QUB Training Corps. Prior to the outbreak of the Great War he was employed by the County Down Weaving Co Ltd which he entered from the Trade Preparatory School of the Municipal Technical Institute. Harden Scott joined the Army in October 1914 and shortly afterwards received his commission in the 16th Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles (County Down Pioneers). For a time he served with the Army Cyclist Corps before being transferred to the Royal Flying Corps. Lieutenant Scott was awarded the Military Cross on 28/08/1916 and the citation stated that, along with Second Lieutenant Herbert H Turk as pilot, he attacked seven hostile machines flying in formation and brought down one as a wreck. When turning to engage

another machine the rudder controls were shot away and his machine went into a spinning nose-dive. After falling 5,000 feet the pilot partially regained control and, although the machine kept on turning, he managed to land safely. Lieutenant Scott was injured and required a lengthy period of convalescence; Second Lieutenant Turk was subsequently killed in action on 03/11/1916. Harden received his Military Cross from the King on 29/08/1917 and on 27/10/1917 he returned to France as a scout pilot.

Two weeks later, on 12/11/1917, he was killed in action whilst on patrol over the German lines. His machine was brought down by a direct hit from an enemy anti-aircraft gun. Major Cunningham described it as 'cruel luck for it is only once in many thousand or even million times that a direct hit is obtained'.

Memorial services were held in four Ballynahinch churches – Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Congregational and Methodist. Harden Scott presented a gold medal to Ballynahinch Boy Scout Troop to be used as a competition trophy. Born on 24/11/1895 in Abbey Street, Bangor and he was the eldest son of Matthew and Elizabeth Craig Scott (nee Lemon). Matthew Scott was the railway station-master in Bangor. At the time of Harden's death, the Scott family was living at 43 Railway Street, Ballynahinch where Matthew Scott was the station-master. Post du Hem Military Cemetery, La Gorgue Nord France. Lieutenant David Harden Scott is commemorated in Bangor Masonic Lodge No. 746 and as J H Scott in both First Bangor Presbyterian Church WM and Bangor Grammar School WM.

1918

+FETHERSTON, John McDonald

RNVR. Sub-Lieutenant. HMML 218. Died 06/12/1918. Age 21. Died of pneumonia on board Hospital Ship Kara Para in the East Mediterranean. Son of John William Fetherston, Montono, Malone Park, Belfast. Photo in Belfast Telegraph 10/12/1918. Campbell College 1026. Member of QUB OTC c.1916. QUB WM. Royal Portrush Golf Club RH. East Mudros Military Cemetery, Lemnos, Greece. IMR

+JACKSON, James

Royal Irish Fusiliers. 1st Btn. Private. 29777. Died 12/12/1918. Age 46. Native of Gilford. Husband to Emily Cotter (formerly Jackson), of 165, Bellevue St., Belfast. St Andre Communal Cemetery, France

1939

+LECKEY, Joseph

Royal Navy. Able Seaman. C/SSX 23785. Died 12/12/1939. Aged 19. HMS Duchess. Son of Joseph and Elizabeth Leckey, of Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial

+McMEEKIN, Harold

RN. Seaman. C/SSX 27721. Died 12/12/1939. HMS Duchess. Bangor. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 33, 2

1941

+CARDWELL, Robert John

Royal Engineers, 2 Field Coy. Sapper. 1873670. Died 09/12/1941. Aged 23. Born on 28/07/1917. Prior to enlistment Robert Cardwell worked on the family farm at Gortfad Glebe, Sandholes. Son of Alexander and Mary Cardwell, of Gortfad, Sandholes, Co. Tyrone. Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Cookstown WM

+MARTIN, David

RAF. Flight Sergeant. 630163. Died 12/12/1941. Age 21. 11 Sqdn. Son of David and Lilian May Martin, Belfast. Alamein Memorial, Column 242, Egypt

+WILTON, Alexander

Royal Artillery. 6 Indep. Lt. A.A. Bty. Gunner. 1471621. Died 12/12/1941. Aged 39. He served in the Royal Navy in the 1914-18 war, and re-enlisted a few months before the outbreak of WW2. Husband to Mary Jane Wilton, of Heatherlea Avenue, Portstewart. Tel El Kebir War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt

1942

+LUTTON, Frederick David

RNVR. Acting Sub-Lieutenant (E). Died 12/03/1942. Age 26. HMS St Briac. St Briac, a 316ft-long former cross-Channel ferry which had been hired by the Royal Navy in 1941 as a Fleet Air Arm target-towing vessel, attached to HMS Condor at Arbroath. On the morning of 12/03/1942 she sailed out of Dundee. Just before 1500 hours, its master, Captain Rupert Lubbock RN, sent a distress signal to say that the vessel had broken down in a south-easterly gale and was drifting towards a British minefield, 20 miles off Arbroath. There was

a sudden explosion and a plume of water as the St Briac struck one of the mines. As the Arbroath and Montrose lifeboats, plus four armed trawlers and a French rescue tug, all made full speed ahead towards the ship's last reported position, the St Briac sank, with 47 hands lost. Son of Joshua and Mary Elizabeth Lutton, Dungannon. Liverpool Naval Memorial, Panel 4. Moy WM

+OWEN, Thomas Richard

Pioneer Corps. Lance Corporal. 4193783. Died 12/11/1942. Aged 26. Son of Richard and Jane Owen; husband to Martha Owen, of Lisburn. Llanfachraeth (St. Machraith) Churchyard, Anglesey,

1943

+BLACKER, David

Corps of Military Police. 508 Provost Coy. Corporal. 768102. Died 12/12/1943. Aged 27. Son of Jonathan and Elizabeth Blacker, of Ballymena. Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel and Palestine

+PELLEGRINI, Eugenio

Pioneer Corps. Staff Sergeant. 13805100. Died 12/12/1943. Staff Sergeant Eugenio Pellegrini was an Italian Immigrant who lived with his family at Church Street in Cookstown. He is thought to have died as a result of an accident whilst on home service in England. His remains were returned home for burial at Derryloran Roman Catholic Churchyard, Chapel Hill, Westland Rd, Cookstown.

1944

+AIKEN, William

Royal Artillery. 8th HAA Regiment. 23 Bty. Lance Bombardier. 1456605. Died 12/12/1944. Aged 33. Son of Alexander and Sarah Aiken; husband of Margaret Aiken, of Voltaire Gds., Belfast. Brookwood 1939 - 15 War Memorial Cemetery, Surrey. Regimental RH, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. Named in Order of Memorial Service in St Mark's Akyab, Burma on 31/03/1945, held in memory of those in the Regiment who died in the Arakan Campaign 1942 - 45.

+FITZPATRICK, Thomas

Kings Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster), 1st Btn. Private. 13020155, Died 12/12/1944. Son of Patrick and Alice Fitzpatrick of Keady. Forli War Cemetery, Italy.

+McLERNON, Frederick

London Irish Rifles. Lance Corporal. 14617699. Died 12/12/1944. 14617699. Son of Francis John and Martha Ann McLernon; husband of Jean McLernon, of Aughnacloy, Co. Tyrone. Santerno Valley War Cemetery, Italy

VETERANS

CASEMENT, Peter Reginald

RAF. Group Captain. Peter Casement was from Ballycastle, County Antrim and fought throughout the Second World War.

He was educated at Marlborough College. He learnt to fly Tiger Moths in 1939 and flew solo after just 11 hours and 30 minutes of training.

During WW2 he flew with No 61 Squadron and took part in many strategically important missions such as the first of Bomber Command's 'thousand bomber raids' on Germany on May 30 1942 in which 73 Lancaster bombers participated.

During the Battle of the Atlantic the bomber he piloted was the first to bring back photographic evidence of the sinking of a U-boat. (Shown above)

The British National Press celebrated by printing the four photographs together with minute-by-minute accounts from the Air Ministry News Service.

His WW2 RAF medals and associated log books, various documents, uniforms and photographs were auctioned and the subject of a television programme.

The medals, a Distinguished Service Order (December 29th, 1942), Distinguished Flying Cross (October 24th, 1941) and Bar (September 1st, 1942) and Air Force Cross (June 7th, 1951) included in a group of eight were awarded to Peter Reginald Casement who flew with both Bomber Command and Coastal Command.

The citation for the DFC stated - "Flight Lieutenant Casement is an outstanding captain and pilot. He has completed numerous operational missions, during which he has attacked highly important industrial targets in Germany; he has also completed several patrols over the Atlantic and has assisted in the destruction of a U-boat. Throughout his operational career, this officer has displayed great efficiency and devotion to duty which have proved a source of encouragement to his fellow captains."

The medal group included a 'Mentioned in Dispatches' oak-leaf and campaign clasps for France and Germany, Malaya and Palestine 1946-48 along with the set of miniatures and three original medal boxes.

During his active service, not only did Peter update his log books as required but he also wrote detailed accounts of many of his sorties. Auctioneer, Duncan Chilcott explained:

“While his log books document the RAF’s nightly missions, Peter’s notebooks shed light on the airmen’s night-time battles with the cold, poor visibility, navigation problems, sickness, enemy search lights and flak.

“The combination of medals is rare in itself, but it’s the fact that they were awarded to a pilot with such an extraordinary WW2 service and are being offered with an extensive archive of materials to accompany them that gives this such historical significance.”

The medals and associated memorabilia, which includes his flying jacket, gloves and boots, several sets of uniform, photographs and RAF training manuals were sold as one lot by Peter’s family.

After the war Casement was posted to Amman in the Middle East, returning to the UK in 1948 to continue his RAF career in St Eval, Cornwall and at Joint Service Defence College Latimer, Buckinghamshire. Appointed to the rank of Wing Commander, the youngest in the RAF at the time, he served in Cyprus during the Suez Crisis. His later career included stints at RAF Binbrook, working back home in Northern Ireland where he was attached to HMS Sea Eagle, working with Nato Submarines and RAF Mountbatten in Plymouth.

Casement ended his career as Station Commander of RAF Topcliffe in Yorkshire in 1966.

When Casement retired in 1968, he had flown 3,800 hours in 27 different aircraft.

Promotions:

21 July, 1940: Pilot Officer on Probation

21 July, 1941: Flying Officer (war sub)

21 July, 1942: Flight Lieutenant (war sub)

1 August, 1947: Squadron Leader

1 July, 1951: Wing Commander

1 January, 1960: Group Captain

He died at home aged 95 on 12/12/2016.

HUNTER, Hugh

Gunner (Service Number 1250752), Canadian Field Artillery. Hugh enlisted in the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary Force on 24 April 1917 at Regina, Saskatchewan, and served initially with the 77th Depot Battery, Canadian Field Artillery. He was born on 12/12/1892 in Portstewart and as a young man emigrated to Canada. Prior to joining up he was employed as a traveller for the McDonald and Crawford Company, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. His parents, Mr. Hugh and Mrs. Mary Hunter, lived at Coleraine Road, Portstewart. He is commemorated on Portstewart Presbyterian Church's Roll of Honour and the Roll of Honour of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

McCLEAN, Sydney Douglas Haig

Royal Artillery Lieutenant .219553.London Gazette
12/12/1941. BA HDipEd 1938 QUB

TORRENS - SPENCE, Frederick Michael Alexander

RNAS/Fleet Air Arm. Won the DSO, DFC, AFC and Greek DFC during wartime service in the Mediterranean as a pilot with the Fleet Air Arm; in the course of his career he achieved the possibly unique distinction of having held commissions in the Royal Navy, the RAF, the Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

On the night of 11/11/ 1940, 21 Swordfish "Stringbag" aircraft from the carrier *Illustrious* flew off in two waves to mount one of the most daring naval air raids ever attempted - on the Italian main battle fleet at anchor in Taranto harbour. Lt Michael "Tiffy" Torrens-Spence and his observer Lt Alfie Sutton were part of the second wave which took off some 30 minutes after the first. By the time they arrived at Taranto, the Italian gunners were wide awake; Torrens-Spence flew so low through the harbour entrance that his wheels at one point touched the water and he was fortunate to pull the aircraft up before disaster struck. Seconds later he lined up one of Italy's newest and largest battleships, the *Littorio*, and torpedoed her; a total of three hits sank the ship in shallow water and although she was later refloated, her war was effectively over.

Four hours after they had left *Illustrious*, the crews of the 19 aircraft which returned were celebrating a victory which had handed the balance of naval power in the Mediterranean firmly, if temporarily, to Britain. So successful was the raid

that the Imperial Japanese Navy used it as the inspiration for their attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

In the spring of 1941 Torrens-Spence played an even more significant role before the naval action off Cape Matapan. By now based in Crete, he was ordered to find and attack a large Italian force at sea. After watching an attack by aircraft from the carrier Formidable achieve no result, he found a hole in the enemy smokescreen and was confronted with the cruiser Pola which he promptly torpedoed from close range. The cruiser immediately slowed to six knots and the Italian admiral decided to divide his force and head for home.

That night Admiral Cunningham's superior force caught up with them off Cape Matapan, and with the aid of radar sank them all. When the crew of the sinking Pola was rescued by the destroyer Jervis, the cruiser's captain was heard to remark: "Either that pilot was mad or he is the bravest man in the world".

In his book *War in a Stringbag*, Charles Lamb observed that because of his "innate nervousness", Torrens-Spence "always forced himself to press home his attacks to a suicidal degree, and the Italian's assessment was no exaggeration".

The following month, as CO of 815 Squadron, Torrens-Spence found himself in charge of a small force of "Stringbags" operating from an airfield at Paramythia in Albania, attacking Italian shipping to the north. On one occasion he torpedoed and blew up an ammunition ship; on another he attacked and sank what he believed to be a transport but which turned out to be a hospital ship which

the Italians had failed to mark and illuminate. No blame was ever attached to Torrens-Spence, but he was forever saddened by the incident.

One evening the men of 815 were amazed to see what appeared to be a Junkers 88 land on their airfield. Seizing revolvers, they raced to the airstrip and leapt on the aircraft as it taxied to a halt. Torrens-Spence arrived first and, wrenching open the door, ordered the occupants out. One of the three passengers, speaking perfect English, introduced himself: "I'm King Peter of Yugoslavia and that gentleman is my Prime Minister." "And I'm Father Christmas," Torrens-Spence retorted. "Get out!"

But his prisoner indeed turned out to be the young monarch escaping from the invading Germans. Shortly afterwards the Germans found the airfield and attacked it. It was then evacuated.

When writing about 815 Squadron, Charles Lamb observed that "In my opinion 815 was the best squadron of them all, and Tiffy was its finest leader."

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Frederick Michael Alexander Torrens-Spence was born on March 10 1914 at Whiteabbey, Co Antrim. His father was a professional soldier who spent most of the First World War as a PoW. At the age of 13, young Michael entered Dartmouth Royal Naval College. Torrens-Spence began his career on the battleship Valiant and was present at the Invergordon mutiny, later moving to the battleship Warspite, the cruiser Hawkins in the Indian Ocean and the destroyers Elgin and Wilchelsea.

After further training, he volunteered for flying duties with the Fleet Air Arm, then under the command of the RAF. After flying training at Leuchars on First World War Avro 504s, he was commissioned as a pilot in both the RAF and the Navy. His first postings were on the carriers Furious and, in 1937, Glorious.

When war broke out, Torrens-Spence was playing cricket in Alexandria. Glorious was immediately sent through the Suez Canal to hunt German surface raiders but none was found. He was then sent home from Aden to join the new carrier Illustrious.

Illustrious entered the Mediterranean in September 1940 and was mainly employed on convoy escorts until the Taranto raid in November. When she was hit by German dive-bombers in early January 1941, Torrens-Spence was one of only three survivors from the wardroom where he had been having lunch.

In 1942 Torrens-Spence was posted home to become a test pilot at Boscombe Down where he remained for the next three years. In the spring of 1945 he was back on Illustrious as Commander Air preparing for war in the East; but the dropping of the atomic bomb meant that she never had to be deployed.

He then went to the Empire Test Pilots' School as CO, a job he did reluctantly as he wanted to get away from flying for a while to get in some sea time. He then served successively in the cruiser Theseus, as Assistant to the 2nd Sea Lord, and as CO of RNAS Eglinton in his native Northern Ireland.

In 1952 he was promoted Captain and sent back to the Admiralty to look after future aircraft requirements. He wrote the staff requirement for the highly successful Buccaneer strike aircraft and steered it through the Admiralty Board.

In 1955 he assumed command of Delight, a Daring class destroyer deploying in home and Mediterranean waters. Afterwards he commanded RNAS Lossiemouth, a training establishment, before taking command in 1959 of the carrier Albion where he spent the next two years, most of it in the Far East.

At 47, Torrens-Spence narrowly missed promotion to Rear Admiral, though he was nominated reserve, and left the Navy. Shortly afterwards, he was invited to become the Commandant of the Ulster Special Constabulary in County Armagh, the so-called "B" Specials.

When the Specials were disbanded in 1970 and replaced by the Ulster Defence Regiment, Torrens-Spence was asked to take control of the County Armagh Battalion (2 UDR), as a lieutenant colonel, to get it up and running. This was not easy as many people had been disheartened by the disbandment of the Specials, but he succeeded in getting enough men and women to volunteer. He retired in 1972.

After the murder by the IRA of the Lord Lieutenant for Co Armagh, Sir Norman Stronge, in January 1981, Torrens-Spence was invited to become Lord Lieutenant in his place, which he did, albeit with some reluctance, and held the post for seven years.

Born Whiteabbey, County Antrim 10/03/1914. Mourne Grange School. At the age of 13 he attended Dartmouth RNC. Husband to Rachel. One of their sons Brigadier

Edward John (Johnny) Torrens-Spence CBE, was British Embassy military attaché to the United States. Died 12/12/2001, Laurelvale House, Laurelvale.

Every day is a Remembrance Day

We will remember them

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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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