



remembrance ni

Vichte Military Cemetery,
Belgium

International rugby players in WW1

William Victor Edwards, a former student of Coleraine Inst and Campbell College, was gifted at rugby, swimming and water polo.

He played rugby for Ireland and was the first person to swim across Belfast Lough in 1913.



On the first day of 1912 Ireland played France at rugby in Paris. When Irish internationals **Alfred Squire Taylor**, **William Victor Edwards** and **William Beatty** sprinted on to

the Parc des Princes turf, it was in front of one of the biggest crowds the French capital had seen., with nearly 20,000 noisy, sports-mad Parisians. Regular games of international rugby were still a novelty, and the arrival of the Irish team had excited the city's population so much that thousands of tickets had been snapped up days in advance.



Captain William Victor Edwards

Even though France were relative newcomers to the recently formed Five Nations Championship, the expectation of a home victory was still high. The side had improved in recent years and had beaten Scotland in the previous season.

Ireland took to the field with five debutants, while the French selectors had chosen six new faces. Edwards, from Strandtown, Belfast, who played in the pack for Ulster, was making his first appearance in Irish colours. He was strong

and well-built with powerful shoulders, and after impressing selectors during club games in Belfast, he was chosen to be Ireland's new number eight.

Twenty-three-year-old William Beatty, who had made his international debut at the same Paris ground two years earlier, was a prop and had been on the winning side in March 1910 when Ireland won by 8 points to 3.

Taylor, who had played school and university rugby and then for Ulster, was a speedy and talented centre.

The Irish and French teams included doctors, accountants and students, amateurs who played the game for fun. They were young men at the peak of physical fitness, the sporting heroes of their day, with much to look forward to.

At the start of 1912, the idea of a bloody European war beginning in 1914 was unimaginable.

But of the 30 players who took the field to cheers that January afternoon, 10 – seven French and three Irish – would die as a result of the forthcoming four-year conflict. The first World War affected the lives of hundreds of sporting stars.

Edwards was killed on 29/12/1917 during the defence of the city of Jerusalem.

As well as rugby he was a gifted swimmer and regularly took part in championships. He became the Irish 200-yard swimming champion, in addition to being an accomplished water polo player. He was also fond of sea swimming and in August 1913 he made history by becoming the first man to swim across Belfast Lough.



Captain Alfred Squire Taylor

Taylor became a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps. While treating a wounded comrade during the Third Battle of Ypres in 1917, he was hit and killed by a German shell.

Beatty, who rose to the rank of major with the Royal Army Medical Corps, lived to see the end of the conflict but died in 1919 as a result of his experiences on the Western Front.

Robbie and Edmund Smyth were two brothers who played international sport for Ireland, saw service in the Western Front and died during the Great War.

Robbie was educated at Royal School Dungannon and played rugby for Ulster and Ireland. In 1903, he toured South Africa as a member of the British Isles team.

His younger brother was a talented hockey player with Banbridge and he helped the team become one of the best sides in Ireland.

Edmund made his Irish debut in 1911 and he played for his country on four occasions and went on to captain the side.

Robbie, who trained to be a surgeon, was a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps and during the Great War he saw service in France. He rose to the rank of major and was mentioned in despatches for his “gallant and distinguished service in the field”. However, he became seriously ill in 1916 after he was gassed and he was sent to London to recover but he was in a very poor state. In April 1916 he died and his body was brought back to Banbridge for burial.

Today, his name appears on the war memorial in the town and it is also recorded at Sir Patrick Dun’s Hospital in Dublin where he worked.

His brother Edmund saw service as part of the Somme offensive in 1916 and he nearly lost his life when he was injured near Thiepval.

He was honoured for his exploits in battle being awarded the Military Cross. On 03/12/1917 he was with the Royal Irish Rifles near Cambria and he was killed by a German shell. The news of his death reached Banbridge a number of days later and since he was a well-known sportsman it was reported in the local newspapers. One of his commanding officers wrote to his family and said Edmund was “one of the finest officers in the Brigade and is a great loss to us”.

SPORTSMEN - ROLL OF HONOUR

+EDWARDS, William Victor

Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Captain. Died 29/12/1917. Age 30. He was born on 16/10/1887 at Strandtown, Belfast . The

son of Mary Edwards, of The Laurels, Strandtown, Belfast , and the late Alfred Edwards. His father had been a cabinet maker and upholsterer with Maguire & Edwards.

He was educated at Thanet College , Margate ; Coleraine Academical Institution, Campbell College and Queen's University, Belfast .

He played for Malone RFC and gained two caps for Ireland in 1912. He was also the Irish 200 yard swimming champion and a water polo champion. He is said to have been the first man to swim Belfast Lough.

He was an accountant, being a Company Officer in the 6th Battalion East Belfast Regiment of the Ulster Volunteer Force; gazetted Second Lieutenant 22/09/1914; promoted Lieut. December 1914, and Captain April 1915.

He served with the expeditionary force in France and Flanders from May 1915. He had been wounded on the right side of the head by a machine-gun bullet (which left a 4" scar) on 09/09/1916 at the capture of Ginchy. This resulted in him suffering from dizziness, headaches and insomnia.

He went to Egypt in September 1917, and took part in the Third Battle of Gaza between November 1 and 7, 1917, and took part in the capture of Jerusalem on December (and its defence for the rest of that month). He assumed command of 'D' Coy, 7th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers on 26/12/1917.

He was killed in action near Deir Izbzia, Palestine on 29/12/1917. He was initially buried 700 yards from the south-east corner of the village of Deir Izbzia , ten yards left

of the track leading down the hill to the trees. He was then reburied east of the village of Deis Ibsis , close to Mount Horeb at the Jerusalem War Cemetery, Israel.

Amongst his returned possessions were a cigarette case, three devotional books, a (damaged) watch, his whistle and strap, and pipe and pipe lighter. Strandtown WM. Knock RFC Memorial Pavilion On the base of a small war memorial near the old Gobbins cliff path on Islandmagee, was a reference to a soldier of the Black Watch – Capt. W V Edwards – Royal Dublin Fusiliers killed in action in Palestine 29/12/1917.

+SMYTH, Edmund

Royal Irish Rifles. Major. MC. Died 03/12/1917. Royal School Dungannon and played rugby for Ulster and Ireland. In 1903, he toured South Africa as a member of the British Isles team. Son of William and Jane R. Smyth, of Brookfield, Banbridge. Brother of Robbie. Fifteen Ravine British Cemeter, Villiers - Plouich, Nord, France. Banbridge WM

+SMYTH, Robbie

RAMC. Major. He was gassed in 1916 and brought back to UK. He died April 1916 and his body was brought back to Banbridge for burial. Son of William and Jane R. Smyth, of Brookfield, Banbridge. Brother of Edmund. Banbridge WM, St Patrick Dun's Hospital, Dublin WM

+TAYLOR, Alfred Squire

Royal Army Medical Corps attd. 10th/11th Battalion Highland Light Infantry.

He was born on 06/07/1889 the son of the Rev. David Alexander Taylor, D.D., of " Eastbourne ," Windsor Avenue North , Belfast . He was educated at Campbell College , Belfast , Belfast University and Edinburgh University where he graduated M.B., and Ch.B. in 1914.

At Edinburgh he was president of the University Union and captain of the University football fifteen (1911-12). He played four times for Ireland between 1910 and 1912.

He took a temporary commission as lieutenant in the RAMC on 12/10/1914, was promoted to captain after a year's service and on 11/01/1917, took a permanent commission in the RAMC as lieutenant and temporary captain. He had earlier been invalided home from Mesopotamia. He returned to France with the Highland Light. He was dressing a brother officer's wound in France, when both were killed instantly by the bursting of a shell. He was killed on the first day of 3rd Battle of Ypres, 31/07/1917. Buried at Ypres Town Cemetery. Comber WM

On this Day – December 29

1939

The Royal Navy suffered its first submarine loss of WW2 when HMS Seahorse was lost off Heligoland Bight off Germany with all hands. She could have been mined or collided with a German pathfinder ship used to clear routes through a minefield.

Finnish forces launch a successful counter attack to the North of Lake Ladoga.

Finnish ski troops tear up the Leningrad-Murmansk rail line.

1940

The worst Luftwaffe raid on London causes 1500 fires in the “Second Great Fire of London,” but St. Paul’s Cathedral survives.

President Roosevelt makes “Arsenal of Democracy” radio address in a fireside chat, promising aid to Britain.

Vichy France creates a commission for Jewish affairs.

The Italian troopship Sardegna is torpedoed and sunk by the Greek submarine Proteus, which was then rammed and sunk by the destroyer Antares.

1941

Soviet troops make an amphibious landing at Feodosiya on the south coast of the Crimea in order to relive pressure against Sevastopol and hopefully clear the Germans from the Crimea.

British evacuate from British Borneo to Dutch Borneo.

Japanese bomb Corregidor in the Philippines for the first time.

German submarine U-602 was commissioned.

1942

The British cruisers HMS Jamaica and HMS Sheffield join convoy JW-51B south of Bear Island as it makes the dangerous passage through the Barents Sea.



Vichte Military Cemetery is located 40 Kms east of Ypres and 13 Kms east of Kortrijk. and contains 236 WW1 burials and 2 from WW2.

German army begins retreat from Caucasus.

British Eighth Army occupies Buerat and Bu Ngem, Libya.

1943

The Eighth 2,000-ton air raid is flown against Berlin by the RAF on the third anniversary of the fire bombing of London.

General Eisenhower orders Allied Commanders to, as far as possible, avoid attacking the historic monuments of Italy.

“Today we are fighting in a country which has contributed a great deal to our cultural inheritance,” Eisenhower wrote.

“We are bound to respect those monuments so far as war allows. If we have to choose between destroying a famous

building and sacrificing our own men, then our men's lives count infinitely more and the buildings must go. But the choice is not always so clear-cut as that. In many cases the monuments can be spared without any detriment to operational needs."

US Marines secure Cape Gloucester airfield on New Britain.



Transport, Irish Brigade style, in Italian winter

1944

In Italy, Germans retreat in Serchio Valley after counterattack against US Fifth Army.

British Commandos carried out Operation Partridge over the night of December 29/30, a diversionary raid behind German lines in Italy.

RAF drops 12,000-pound bombs on German U-boat pens in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

The Siege of Budapest by Soviet and Romanian forces begins.

German submarine U-322 was depth charged and sunk south of Weymouth, Dorset by Canadian corvette Calgary.



Vichte Military Cemetery

Roll of Honour – December 29

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1915

+COLLINS, James

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 6th Btn. Private. 3659. Died 29/12/1915. Aged 22. James Collins was the son of Charles Collins and Emily O'Hara. He was born at Ballygrooby, Randalstown on 25/01/1894. His parents, railway labourer Charles of Shane Street, Randalstown and mill worker Emily O'Hara, Ballygrooby, Drummaul, had married in Randalstown RC Chapel on the 26/12/1892. CWGC states he was the brother of Harry Collins, of Ballygrooby, Randalstown. Salonika (Lembet Road) Cemetery.

1941

+CAMPBELL, Joseph Edmund

RAFVR. Flight Sergeant. 948110. Died 29/12/1941. Son of William Campbell of Waterside, Londonderry. Ardmore Roman Catholic Cemetery

+SMITH, William

RN. Petty Officer, D/JX 151875. Died 29/12/1941. Aged 28. HMS Repulse. Husband to Mary McWhirter Smith, Bushmills. Son of Alexander and Sarah Smith, Bushmills. Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore.

1942

+KYLE, Norman

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Fusilier. 7043678. Died 29/12/1942. Aged 21. Fusilier Kyle was killed during the Faughs' operations around Goubellat on 27-29 December 1942. Son of Annie Kyle, of Carnmoney. Medjez-el-Bab, Tunisia

1944

+AMES, Harold Victor

RAFVR. Flight Sergeant. 1461233. Died 29/12/1944, aged 24. Son of Walter and Kate Ames. Ardglass (St. Nicholas) Church of Ireland Churchyard

1945

+GARTLAN, John

RN. Able Seaman. P/JX 518880. Died 29/12/1945. Age: 24. HMS Colombo. Son of Frank and Rose Gartland, Jerrettspass. Columbo (Liveramentu) Cemetery

VETERANS

AUSTIN, William Matthew

RN. AB. J26219. Enrolled 26/05/1914 for 12 years. Re-engaged 20/01/1916. War service in Irresistible, Swiftsure, Vivid, Defiance, Hecla, Dolphin and Bonaventure. Served to 29/12/1918. Born Belfast 02/05/1896. ADM 188/699/26219

BAILLIE, D J

Royal Artillery. 8th HAA Regt. 23 Bty. 1455012. Transferred to 79th AA Regt. RA 06/03/1940/4?. Left home 28/11/1939. Landed in France 29/12/1939. Laundry Lane, Kilnock, Randalstown. Warehouseman, Gallahers Ltd., Belfast

BENSON, Edward White

RNAS. Chief Petty Officer Mechanic. F2880. Armoured Car Division. Enlisted 29/12/1914 for hostilities. Service in Russia. Selected RNVR Sub - Lieutenant 31/12/1916. Born Ballymoney 10/10/1884. Son of Canon and Mrs Benson, Ballymoney Rectory, Co Antrim. ADM 188/565/2880

FULTON, Joseph

RNVR. Lieutenant. Born 29/12/1902. Campbell College.
Son of Dr Joseph Fulton, Windsor Crescent, Lisburn Rd.,
Belfast. QUB

Every day is a Remembrance Day

We will remember them

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masthead.

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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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Please forward - information about those who served - names, regiment, ship or unit, date of death to houstonmckelvey@mac.com

