



remembrance ni



## Portstewart War Memorial

# Newcastle man was in crew when 1 of M ferry made naval air history

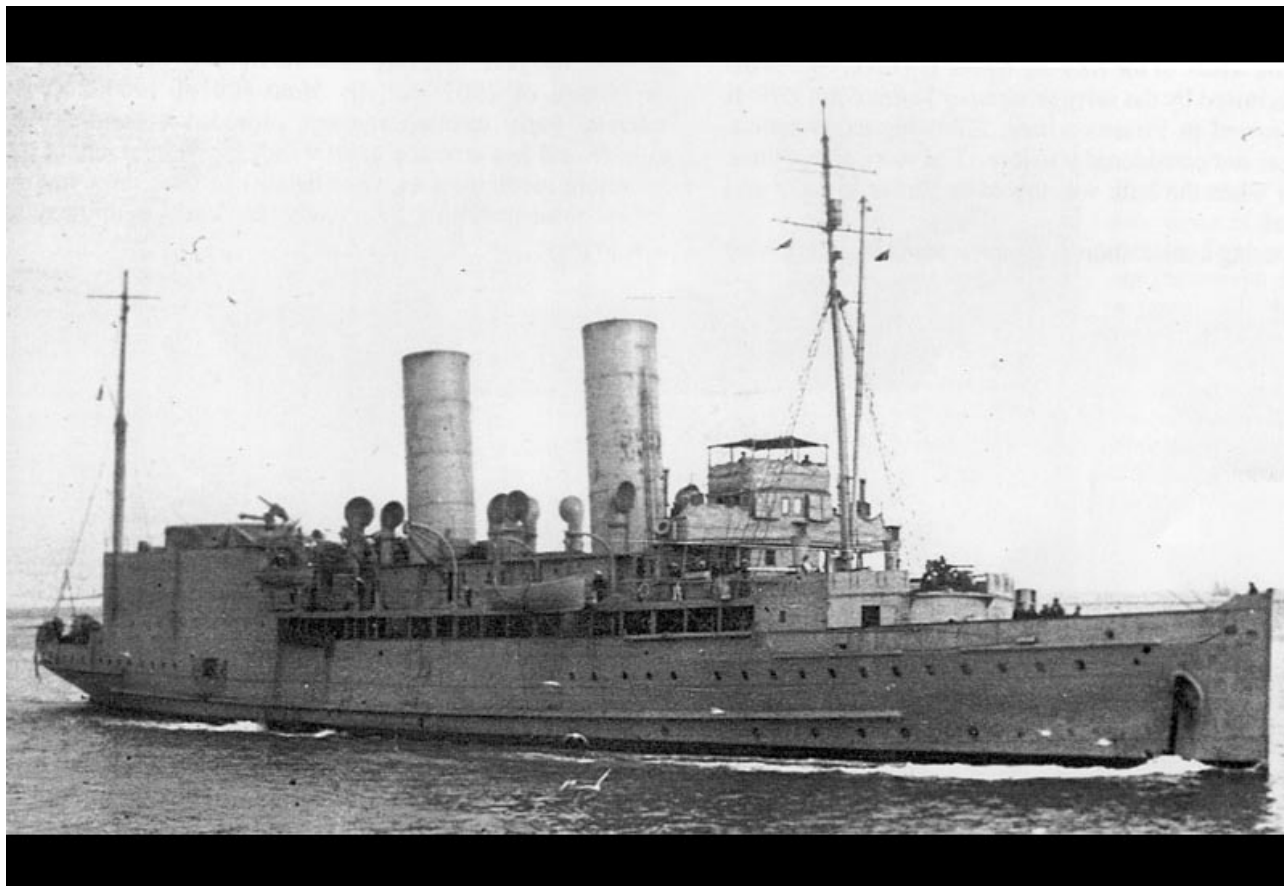
**Sam Ryan from Newcastle served on HMS Ben-my-Chree, a former Isle of Man ferry which was converted for use as a seaplane carrier. It was a history making ship.**

A seaplane launched from HMS Ben-my-Chree became the first aircraft to deliver a torpedo against an enemy ship. HMS Ben-my-Chree served the Royal Navy through the middle years of World War 1, operating as a seaplane carrier.

Originally, the vessel was a 2,500 liner used to ferry passengers to the Isle of Man until being taken over by the Royal Navy for purposes of the war effort. After her conversion, the Ben-my-Chree retained some of her passenger likeness but several major additions solidified her position as a warship of the waters.

During the early part of the 20th century, speed of service was very much at the fore for shipping companies plying the Irish Sea routes to the Isle of Man; an article in the Daily Mail of July 1908 stated:

“What the Lusitania is to the Atlantic the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company's new steamer Ben-my-Chree will probably be to the Irish Sea. There can, of course, be no comparison as to size between the leviathan Cunarders and the speedy little Manx boats, but for years there has been a quiet, determined contest between the vessels of the two Companies for sea-going speed honours. The diminutive boats plying from Liverpool to Douglas claimed pride of place until the advent of the Lusitania and Mauritania. Infected by the competitive spirit, the Directors of the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company resolved that their next vessel should not be far behind the race. The Ben-my-Chree, it is asserted, can reach over 25 knots and it is expected to reduce the record time (2hrs 56 mins) from Liverpool to Douglas, at present held by the turbine steamer Viking, by six minutes at least. Apart from the contest for speed honours there are many points of similarity between the Manx vessels and the new Cunard liners.” — *The Daily Mail. Saturday 11 July 1908.*



### **Bow starboard view of the HMS Ben-my-Chree**

The profile of HMS Ben-my-Chree was dominated by two smoke funnels amidships. Masts were located forward and aft of these funnels with the bridge superstructure between the forward funnel and mast. A larger superstructure containing the hangar was fitted aft. The forward upper part of the forecastle was fitted with a fly-off ramp for launching her seaplane fighters. A total of six aircraft could be carried aboard, though four was highly ideal considering the space allowed. Initially, these aircraft centered around the Sopwith Schneider seaplane, finally giving the Allies an offensive naval airborne punch and threatening the general dominance of the German Zeppelins. Soon to follow would be the Short seaplanes which brought about the advent of the torpedo bomber in naval aviation lore. Several such

aircraft served in the Dardanelles campaign, sinking two Turkish ships with direct torpedo hits.

Beyond her limited air wing, armament aboard the Ben-my-Chree was generally offensive. This included cannon of various calibres led by the 4 x 12-pounder batteries and 2 x 3-pounder systems installed in the 1915 conversion from a passenger liners. A 1916 refit added additional 12-pounder cannons, 2-pounder "pom-pom" cannons and 3-pounder cannons on their respective towing carriages.

As a vessel of war, the Ben-my-Chree saw combat action in World War 1. Throughout the conflict, she served as a mobile raiding platform, artillery spotter, rescue ship and a direct strike carrier. In February of 1916, the Ben-my-Chree was shortly out of action after it had collided with the SS Uganda, causing serious forward damage to the former. Once back in action, the vessel served her days through bombing raids, more artillery spotting and general reconnaissance of enemy movements. On January 11th, 1917, whilst at anchor in Kastelorgio harbour, the Ben-my-Chree was permanently knocked out of commission by Turkish shore batteries and capsized. Post-war, the hull was brought up and reassessed, eventually being sold for scrapping in 1921.

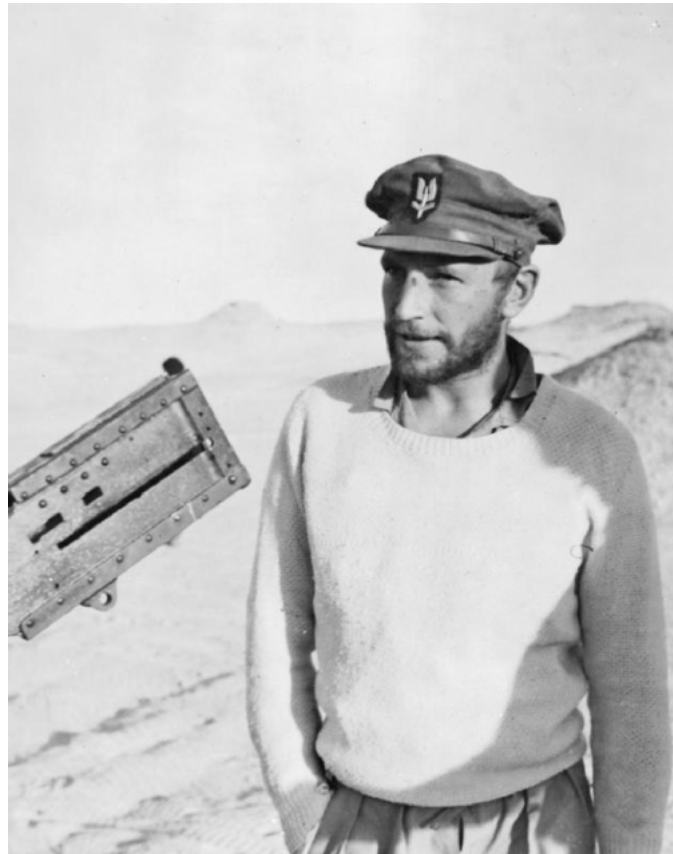
HMS Ben-my-Chree was laid down by Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness in 1907 (conversion handled by Cammell Laird in Birkenhead) and launched the following year. She was officially commissioned in 1915. The unusual name of "Ben-my-Chree" stems from the Old Irish Manx language and is related to Manx Gaelic, a language spoken on the Isle of Man which was the passenger ferry route the original Ben-

my-Chree liner was built for before her acquisition and military conversion by the Royal Navy in 1915.

Acknowledgment - Military Factory

## On this Day – January 11

**1915**



Blair 'Paddy' Mayne was born in Newtownards. Mayne played rugby for Queens University, Ulster, Ireland and the Lions. He was one of the original members of the SAS. He would go on to become one of most decorated solders in British Army history, and command 1SAS, rising to rank of Lt. Col.





**1916**



Violent explosion at the 18 Ponts munitions depot Lille. One hundred and four civilians died, thirty Germans and nearly 400 people were wounded, including 116 severely.

## 1941

Hitler confirms in Directive No.22, his intentions to send military support to the Italians in Albania. The operation is to be named 'Alpine Violets'.

The Cruisers HMS Southampton and HMS Gloucester are attacked by German aircraft in the Sicilian channel. HMS Gloucester receives damage, while HMS Southampton is sunk. British submarines begin to make attacks German and Italian convoys crossing to Libya.

Hitler confirms in Directive No.22, his intentions to send military support to the Italians in Libya. The operation is to be named 'Sunflower'.

In Luftwaffe raid to London, a direct hit on the Bank underground station kills 111.

## 1942

The Japanese 5th Division enters Kuala Lumpur, which is the main supply base for the Indian 3rd Corps. By this time Japanese forward elements are coming in to contact with the 8th Australian Division, which puts up fierce resistance, although Japanese amphibious landings to their south force them to retreat and ends British hopes of a protracted defence of Johore.

The Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies begins with landings at Tarakan (Borneo) and Manado (Celebes).

The Kriegsmarine begins Operation Drum Beat, the first coordinated attack carried out by five U-boats initially against US shipping along the East Coast of the United States. Their first victim is the 9,000 ton British steamer

Cyclops which is sunk by U-123 (Kptlt. Hardegen), 300miles to the east of Cape Cod.

## 1943

President Roosevelt submits his budget to the U.S. Congress. \$100 billion of the \$109 billion budget is identified with the war effort.

An SS doctor conducted a selection in a prisoners' hospital in Block 28 in Auschwitz I. He decided that 55 prisoners do not have chances for a quick recovery. On the same day, they were killed with phenol heart injections.



## 1944



The Royal Navy submarine, HMS Tally Ho attacks and sinks the Imperial Japanese Navy cruiser, Kuma off Penang.





Japanese Navy cruiser, Kuma

Ciano and 17 others are shot by firing squad.

660 heavy bombers of the U.S. 8th Air Force carries out attacks against industrial targets at Braunschweig, Magdeburg and Ascherleben.

In the US Eighth Air Force raid on Brunswick, the 94th Bomb Group makes a rare second run on the target and receives the Presidential Unit Citation; however, the group loses 8 B-17s.

Avenger aircraft from US escort carrier Block Island attack a U-boat using forward-firing rockets for the first time.

Captain Franklyn-Vaile **1 RIRF in Castel di Sangro** (Photo below), writing to his wife:

"The war news is very good. The Russians appear to be making remarkable progress & have indeed borne the brunt of the fighting. There is great hope that the war will be over this year..."



## Castel di Sangro

**1945**

British troops capture Laroche, 20 miles Northwest of Bastogne.

U.S. troops establish a firm hold on the Luzon beachhead.





# Roll of Honour – January 11

*Representing their comrades who died on this day*

**1916**

## **+GRAHAM, Robert**

Durham Light Infantry, 10th Btn. Lance Corporal. 12649. Died 11/01/1916. Age 25 years old. Robert went to live in Glasgow. He volunteered at the outbreak of the war and enlisted in Sunderland. Son of the late John and Mary Ann Morrison Graham; husband of Sarah Graham, of 16, Queen's Hill St., Springburn, Glasgow. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Ypres, Belgium. Kilrea WM

## **+McCORMICK, J**

Royal Irish Rifles, 9<sup>th</sup> Btn. Rifleman. 9/656. Died 11/01/1916. Aged 33. Son of Samuel McCormick, of 24, Hutchinson St., Belfast, and the late Mary Jane McCormick. Sucrierie Military Cemetery, Colincamps, Somme, France



**1917**

**+ELLIOTT, David**

Highland Light Infantry, 1st Btn. Private. 22428. Died 11/01/1917. Age 33. Born Drumnagee, Bushmills 21/06/1883. The family moved to Glasgow. Son of James and Jane Elliott; husband of Mrs. Brown (formerly Elliott), of 709, Dumbarton Rd., Dalmuir, Glasgow. Basra Memorial, Iraq

**+McALLISTER, John**

Connaught Rangers. 6th Btn. Private. 6343. Died 11/01/1917. Age 26. Son of John and Charlotte McAllister, of 11, Emily Place, Belfast. Native of Ballymena. Pond Farm Cemetery, Belgium

**+McCOMB, R**

Royal Irish Rifles. 3rd Btn. Rifleman, 9039. Died 11/01/1917. Age 43. Husband of Mary Ann McComb, of 6, Barrack Lane, Lisburn. Lisburn Cemetery

**+MOORE, Robert**

Highland Light Infantry, 1st Btn. Private. 10024. Died 11/01/1917 at the battle of Tigris, Mesopotamia. Born Ballygowan, Ballynure 1887/88. Enlisted Shotts, Lanarkshire. Was in the Reserves when war broke out and acted as a drill instructor for Raloo Company UVF. Son of John Moore and Margaret McConkey, Ballygowan, Ballynure. Amara War Cemetery, Iraq.



**+MORAN, Patrick Joseph**

Royal Garrison Artillery. Gunner. 5314. Died 11/01/1917. Age 27. (Served as Lavery). Son of James and Sophia Moran, of Belfast; husband of E. A. Moran, of 10, Sackville St., Belfast. Milltown Roman Catholic Cemetery, Belfast

**+WILSON, W**

Royal Irish Fusiliers. Private. 21562. Died 11/01/1917. Age 49. Husband of Annie Wilson, of 20, Roseberry Gardens, Woodstock Rd., Belfast. Dundonald Cemetery, Belfast

**1918**

**+MITCHELL, David Crooks**

Canterbury Regiment, 1st Btn. N.Z.E.F. Private. 56984. Died 11/01/1918. Son of David and Annie Mitchell. He was born in the Cookstown area on 28/03/1892. They lived in Dunmore, Lissan. They were a farming family. David and his oldest brother William emigrated to New Zealand. Prior to enlisting, David was a farm labourer. He was living in Marine, Clinton, Otago, at the very southern point of the South Island. Buttes New British Cemetery (NZ) Memorial, Polygon Wood, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Cookstown WM. Claggan PCI RH.

**1942**

**+ROBB, James**

RN. Able Seaman. D/JX 191463. Died 11/01/1942. Age 38. HMS President III. Husband to Margaret Robb, Carrickfergus. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 88

**1944**

**+McILHAGGA, Samuel**

Royal Artillery. Gunner. 1471106. Died 11/01/1944.  
Brookwood 1939 - 45 Memorial, Surrey

**1945**

**+ALLDEN, John**

Royal Artillery. 8th HAA Regiment. 23 Bty. Bombardier.  
1683001. Died 11/01/1945. Aged 31. Husband of Olive  
Allden, of Quarry Brow, Upper Gornal, Dudley, Staffordshire.  
Delhi War Cemetery, India. 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.

**VETERANS**

**JAMFREY, James**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. K17091. Enrolled 12/12/1912. Re-  
engaged 26/09/1924. War service in Antrim, Pembroke,  
Colleen, Hannibal and Egmont. Served to 11/01/1928. Born  
Cookstown 17/09/1893. ADM 188/901/17091

**JAMINSON,**

Petty Officer. HMS Southampton. He survived the sinking of  
Southampton in the Mediterranean on 11/01/1941. News of  
his survival was reported in the Lisburn Standard (January  
1941). Son of Mrs Jaminson, Causeway End Road, Lisburn

## **MAGILL, William**

RN. Stoker First Class. K19937. Enrolled 27/08/1908 for 12 years. War service in Berwick, Vivid I, Suttlej, Wellington, Acteon and Boadicea. Served to 11/01/1929. Born Newtownards 17/01/1890. ADM 188/906/19937

## **NEEDHAM, Francis Charles Adelbert Henry. Earl of Kilmorey**

HMS Caroline. RNVR. Captain, The fourth Earl of Kilmorey, OBE. VRD. Lord Lieutenant of Co. Down. Vice-Admiral of Ulster. Appointed to the staff of FOIC Northern Ireland in which role he served until his retirement in 1946 at the conclusion of hostilities. He was commissioned into the 3rd (Militia) Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry in 1901, and in March 1902 transferred to the 1<sup>st</sup> Life Guards as a Second Lieutenant. He was promoted Lieutenant again in 1904 and Captain in 1907. He resigned his commission in 1911. He returned to the Army during WW1, reaching the rank of Major. In 1930 he was appointed Captain in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in which rank from 1930 to his retirement in 1946 he was commanding officer of the Ulster Division of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve based in HMS Caroline in Belfast Harbour. Lord Kilmorey married Lady Norah Frances Hastings, daughter of the Earl of Huntingdon in 1920. They had two daughters. He died on 11/01/1961, aged 77, at the family seat of Mourne Park.

## **REID, Thomas**

Private 23016 1st Bn. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Thomas was born on the family farm at Dungorkin townland, Claudy, Co. Londonderry in March 1893. He enlisted in the Inniskillings on 18/05/1915 and was posted to 1st Battalion,

arriving with them at Gallipoli in November. He relocated to France with the battalion in March 1916 and was wounded at the Somme in July 1916 with a gunshot wound to the right clavicle. He was discharged with the Silver War Badge on 11/01/1917 and assessed as 20% disabled. He applied for and received a disability pension of eight shillings per week.

### **RYAN, Samuel**

RNAS. Chief Petty Officer II. Enrolled 09/09/1914 for hostilities. Served in Pembroke III, President II, Ben MyChree. Transferred to RAF 31/03/1918. Born Co. Down 07/12/1886. Owner of the Station Garage, Newcastle.

In 1914 Earl Annesley from Castlewellan went with the the RNAS Armoured Car Division, in his armoured motorcar to help check the advance of the Germans on Brussels and in the Defence of Mons and Antwerp. Sam who had acted as family chaffeur accompanied Lord Annesley on the retreat from Mons and at Antwerp. Annesley died in an aeroplane crash on 06/11/1914

Sam later served on the seaplane carrier Ben my Chree which prior to the war had been an Isle of Man tourist ferry. He survived when it was sunk off the Gallipoli peninsular. After the war he ran the post office in Castlewellan and taught motor-engineering classes in the local technical college. Sam's service is recorded on St John's Parish Church, Newcastle RH. ADM 188/560/362



# Every day is a Remembrance Day

***We will remember them***

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masthead.**

**Information about individuals who served - please  
forward to remembrance ni at email below**

**remembrance ni**

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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 [houstonmckelvey@mac.com](mailto: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](mailto:houstonmckelvey@mac.com)

