



remembrance ni



**Raf Decombel**

## **Twenty years of service at Menin Gate Memorial marked**

The evening ceremony at the Menin Gate Memorial can rightly be regarded as the highlight of any visit to remember the fallen. Key to this is the nightly sounding of The Last Post by a voluntary team.



### **Raf Decombel with fellow team members**

Raf Decombel played his very first Last Post on Monday 15 January 2001. On Friday 15 January 2021, his colleagues marked that he had been a bugler of the Last Post Association for 20 years.

Congratulations were rightly paid to Raf for all that he has done and still does to remember the fallen.

The Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing is a war memorial dedicated to the British and Commonwealth soldiers who were killed in the Ypres Salient of World War I and whose graves are unknown.





## Veterans presentation of new instrument

The Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial now bears the names of more than 54,000 officers and men whose graves are not known. The memorial, designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield with sculpture by Sir William Reid-Dick, was unveiled by Lord Plumer on 24 July 1927.

The names of 8 holders of the VC are recorded on the memorial.

Last Post Association Ieper: [www.lastpost.be](http://www.lastpost.be)  
<https://twitter.com/lastpostieper>

# On this Day – January 16

## 1940

Hitler orders the postponement of his attack in the west until the Spring. Likely reasons for this are the compromise of 'Fall Gelb' and increasing criticism from some commanders that the plan was too predictable. Led by Gerd von Rundstedt, they proposed instead that the main blow should come through the wooded Ardennes region in southern Belgium as the allies would not expect this.

British submarines Seahorse, Undine and Starfish reported sunk after penetrating Heligoland Bight

Soviet artillery pounds the Mannerheim Line near Viipuri, Finland.

## 1941

French forces in Indochina launch an offensive against Thailand after numerous border provocations, but are unable to make much headway on land.

French inflict a naval defeat on Thai forces at Koh-Chang.

The Germans bomb Malta for the first time, killing 50 people, destroying 200 buildings and damaging the capital city of Valletta.

The British troopship Oropesa is sunk in the Western Approaches by the German submarine U-96.

German submarine U-77 was commissioned.

## **1942**

Heavy US losses on the Bataan Peninsula as the Japanese troops press the defenders back.

In the Battle of Muar in Malaya, the Japanese 5th Infantry Division crossed the Muar River and captured Muar itself.

President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9024, creating the War Production Board.

Prime Minister Winston Churchill becomes the first head of state to cross the Atlantic Ocean by plane, following the First Washington Conference with President Franklin Roosevelt.

## **1943**

The Eighth Army destroys Rommel's rearguard at Buerat, in Libya and is now just 300 miles from the Tunisian frontier. Iraq enters the war against all three Axis powers.

Berlin is bombed for the first time in 14 months, as the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force bombers began the heaviest raid ever on the German capital. During the night raid, 1,000 tons of bombs fell and fires were visible for 100 miles.

The Battle for Velikiye Luki ended in Soviet victory. Iraq entered World War II, declaring war on Germany, Italy and Japan.

## 1944

Dwight D. Eisenhower formally assumed the duties of the Commander in Chief of the Allied Expeditionary Forces.

Japanese forces make their last counter-attack on New Britain.

Japanese submarine I-181 ran aground and was wrecked on Gneisenau Point at Kelanoa Harbour, New Guinea.

German submarine U-544 was sunk in the Atlantic Ocean by rockets and depth charges from Grumman TBF Avenger planes from the escort carrier USS Guadalcanal.

## 1945



Hitler enters his bunker under the Chancellery and will never leave Berlin again. Within 104 days, the Red Army will be in the German capital and the Führer will be dead.

The Battle of the Bulge ends as US First and Third Armies meet in Houffalize, Belgium, cutting off the tip of the Bulge.

The Soviet 1st Belorussian Front captured Radom, Poland.

German submarine U-248 was depth charged and sunk by U.S. destroyer escorts north of the Azores.

No. 101 Squadron RAF was equipped with Lancasters fitted with radio jamming equipment and each aircraft carried an additional crewman who was fluent in German; some were German Jews. As well as jamming enemy transmissions, the operators on board the Lancasters would also pose as Luftwaffe controllers to confuse the enemy nightfighters. Since all other bombers in the attacking force maintained radio silence, 101's Lancasters were more easily located. As a result, the squadron's casualty rate was significantly higher than others in Bomber Command.

## Roll of Honour – January 16

*Representing their comrades who died on this day*

**1915**

**+COTTER, Edward**

Royal Irish Rifles. 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 7021. Died 16 / 01/1915. From Ballymacarrett. Bailleul Communal Cemetery, Nord, France

**+VANCE, William**

Royal Irish Rifles. 2<sup>nd</sup> Btn. Rifleman. 6078. Died 17/01/1915 at 7 Field Ambulance in Locre after having been shot through the head. Aged 24. Born on 29/07/1890 in Movilla

Street, Newtownards. A son of James and Annie Vance (nee McMillan) who were married on 14/04/1884 in Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church Newtownards. The Vance family lived at 19 Greenwell Street and before that at 12 George's Street, Newtownards. James Vance Senior fought in the South African War and then he worked as a labourer. He and Annie had at least eleven children. Three of their sons served during the Great War and only Alexander survived. He was discharged from the Army after suffering gas poisoning and being severely wounded – part of one foot was blown off in an explosion and he needed a series of operations to remove shrapnel from his leg. Alexander Vance died in 1965 and was buried in Movilla Cemetery Newtownards alongside his father who died in 1937 and his mother who died in 1938.

William Vance was the first of the two brothers to be killed during WW1 and, during the war, at least four of his siblings, his widow and his daughter died of tuberculosis. His brother Rifleman James Vance 19236 also died in the war.

Prior to the outbreak of the Great War, William Vance worked in a factory. Before that he had served for nine years in the 4<sup>th</sup> Btn Royal Irish Rifles (Royal North Downs).

He and Mary Jane McCullough were married on 17/07/1914 in Second Newtownards Presbyterian Church and they had one child, a daughter named Mary Catherine (Kathleen, born 02/10/1914 in West Street, Newtownards; died of tuberculosis 26/03/1916).

William Vance was a Reservist and at the outbreak of war he was recalled to the colours. He went to France on



09/11/1914, served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Btn Royal Irish Rifles and died of wounds on 17/02/1915.

His widow Mary Jane and their daughter Mary Catherine lived at 8 West Street, Newtownards.

Loker Churchyard, Belgium. Newtownards and District WM. Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church RH

**1916**

**+MULHOLLAND, David**

Royal Irish Rifles, 9<sup>th</sup> Btn. A Coy. Lance Corporal. 19141. Died 16/01/1916. Aged 20. Son of John and Bessie Mulholland, of Belfast. Forceville Communal Cemetery and Extension, Somme, France

**1918**

**+ROBB, William**

Royal Irish Rifles. 1st Btn. Rifleman. 11449. Died 16/01/1918. Age 21. Son of Alexander and Jane Robb, of 53, Watson's Land, New Stevenston, Holytown, Lanarkshire. Tyne Cot Memorial. Belgium

**+SMYTH, David McCully**

Royal Irish Rifles attached 6<sup>th</sup> King's African Rifles. Company Sergeant Major. 7741. Died of disease on 16/01/1918. Aged 31. David McCully Smyth was Born on 01/06/1886 in the townland of Ballyhay, Donaghadee. A son of Samuel and Margaret (Maggie nee Arnold) Smyth who married on 09/02/1878 in First Newtownards Presbyterian Church. The Smyth family lived in Loughriscouse, Ballyhay

and at 87 Mill Street, Newtownards. There were at least eleven children.

Prior to the outbreak of the Great War David Smyth worked as a house painter. He enlisted in Belfast and served with the Royal Irish Rifles. It was reported in the 26 January 1918 edition of the *Newtownards Chronicle* that Company Sergeant Major David Smyth had succumbed to malarial fever when doing his duty for King and Country at Tabora during the fighting in German East Africa. He was 31 when he died on 16 January 1918 in Tabora Hospital and he was buried in Dar Es Salaam War Cemetery in the territory of Tanganyika, (now Tanzania). Dar Es Salaam War Cemetery, Tanzania. Newtownards and District WM. Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church Newtownards RH

## **1919**

### **+GRAY, Emily**

Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. Staff Nurse. Died 16/01/1919. Age 35, Daughter of James and Mary Gray, of Sherries Hill, Caledon, Co. Tyrone.

Dungannon WM. QAIMNS memorial in the North Transept of York Minster, known as the Five Sisters Window.

Memorial St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast. Family headstone Minterburn Presbyterian Church Cemetery, Co. Tyrone

## **1940**

### **+HALL, William James**

Royal Artillery. Gunner.1547282. Died 16/01/1940. Aged 29. 77 Bty., 44 Lt. A.A. Regt. Son of John and Margaret Hall, of

Lisburn. St. Peter  
Port (Foulon)  
Cemetery,  
Guernsey, Channel  
Islands,

**Sunrise over  
Seraucourt-le-  
Grand British  
Cemetery, near St  
Quentin and  
close to the area  
depicted in the  
“1917” film.**

**1941**

**+DAVISON,  
George**

RN. Able Seaman.  
D/JX 214456. HMS

President III. Date

of Death:16/01/1941. Age: 34. Son of Horatio and Martha Davison, Belfast; husband to Elizabeth Davison, Alliance Ave., Belfast. Father of two young children.(Belfast Weekly Telegraph 08/02/1941). Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 46



**1942**

**+BELL, James D**

RN. Able Seaman. D/SSX32827. HMS Sultan. Died 16/02/1942. Age 21. He had been at sea two years. He had been an active member of Lambeg Jubilee Company of the Church Lads' Brigade. Son of John and Emily Bell, Mill St.,

Hilden. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 24/04/1942). Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 101. Lisburn WM

**+MacDONALD, Robert**

RAF. Leading Aircraftman. 502123. Died 16/01/1942 in a burning accident. Aged 38. Before joining RAF he was a member of the Coleraine Battery, 9 HAA Regt, Royal Artillery (SR). Born 1904. Son of John and Annie MacDonald, 2 MacDonald Terrace Coleraine. He had seven siblings. Husband to Irene, and father of Roberta, Nursery Avenue, Coleraine. Coleraine Cemetery

**1943**

**+DARRAGH, Herbert**

RN. AB. D/SSX 30785. Died 16/01/1943. Age 21. HMS Evolution. Killed in action off North Africa. He joined the RN before the war and took part in numerous engagements. His brother Andrew served as a sergeant in the RAF and two sisters served in the WAA. His father was wounded serving with the Inniskillings in WW1. Youngest son of Mr Andrew and Mrs Agnes Darragh, Hopewell St., Belfast. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 29/01/1943). Bone War Cemetery, Annaba

**+THOMPSON, William**

RAFVR. Sergeant. 1067997. Died 16/01/1943. Aged 20. Son of Henry and Rachel Thompson of Ballylesson, Ballymena. Kells and Connor New Presbyterian Cemetery.



**1944**

**+PRINGLE, Terence Alexander**

RAFVR. Squadron Leader. 78022. Died 16/01/1944. Aged 29. B.Sc. Son of George A. Pringle, M.D., and of Amy J. Pringle, of Cranham, Upminster, Essex, England. Ottawa Memorial, Ontario, Canada. QUB WM

**1945**

**+MacRAE, Colin James Fraser**

RAF. Squadron Leader. 35235. Died 16/01/1945. Aged 44. Husband to S. E. MacRae. Antrim New Cemetery

**+McDOWELL, John Ritchie McDowell**

RAF. Sergeant. Flight Engineer. 1798275. Died 16/01/1945. 101 Squadron. His Lancaster bomber was shot down near the German/Czechoslovakia border. Avro Lancaster Mk III LM472 SR-V2 took off from RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire on Tuesday 16/01/1945 at 1748hrs. The mission to raid on a synthetic oil plant in Brux, Czechoslovakia between 2230hrs and 2259hrs. The Lancaster crew were part of 231 Lancasters and 6 Mosquitos from No. 1 and No 5 Group. This included six other planes from RAF 101 Squadron. No. 101 Squadron RAF was equipped with Lancasters fitted with radio jamming equipment and each aircraft carried an additional crewman who was fluent in German; some were German Jews.

As well as jamming enemy transmissions, the operators on board the Lancasters would also pose as Luftwaffe controllers to confuse the enemy nightfighters. Since all other bombers in the attacking force maintained radio

silence, 101's Lancasters were more easily located. As a result, the squadron's casualty rate was significantly higher than others in Bomber Command. McDowell and crew were due back at Ludford Magna at 0247hrs on 17th January 1945. Lancaster LM472 was the only plane not to return from the sortie, shot down between Hof and Pluen, Germany. Seven of the eight crew on board died.

Shortly after 2209hrs, LM472 crashed 800 metres south-west of the village of Geilsdorf. The plane was on fire as it came down. As the pilot attempted to crash land in a snow-covered field, the plane struck high tension wires. The Lancaster exploded and crashed 30m from the road between Ruderitz and Geilsdorf.

Locals recovered two bodies that night and a search party found the other five crew members the following day. Navigator Flight Sergeant John Edward Knight of the Royal Australian Air Force survived. He recalled the starboard engines and wing catching fire after sustaining fire from another plane. Locals took Knight to a nearby military hospital in Plauen. Known to family and friends as Jimmy. Son of John McDowell and Mary Ann McDowell of Hillsborough. 1939 - 1945 Commonwealth War Cemetery, Charlottenburg, Berlin

### **+PROUDFOOT, Abraham Patterson**

HMS Caroline. RNVR. Leading Seaman. P/UD/X 1324. BEM. Died 16/01/1945. Age 25. HM Submarine Porpoise. He had seen service in various parts of the world since being called up. He was awarded the BEM for bravery and resource when his ship was attacked by enemy aircraft. He had six years' service. Brother serving in RAF. Son of

Abraham and Margaret Proudfoot, Gawn St., Newtownards Rd., Belfast; husband to Annie Proudfoot, Shap, Westmorland. He had been married two years. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 12/06/1942 and 28/12/1945). Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 90

## **VETERANS**

### **GRANT, Norman Steel**

RN. Lieutenant - Commander. OBE, DSC. Mentioned in despatches. He was posted as a Paymaster Cadet to his first ship on his eighteenth birthday. Paymaster Lieutenant 01/11/1935. He was MiD in September 1941 for "courage, skill and devotion to duty in operations off the Libyan coast." He was given a year's seniority and posted to HMS Coventry. RN College, Greenwich, 1946; Joint Services Staff College, Latimer, Bucks, 1947. PSC (Naval); PSC (JSSC); Interpreter in Turkish (High Grade), 1939. Commander (S). Two brothers served in the army. Born 16/01/1913. Campbell College. Son of Albert Grant, Ulster Bank Ltd., Cromac Street, Belfast, and Mrs. Grant, Cadogan Pk., Belfast. Died 07/1977.

### **HAY, Joseph Norman Haughey**

RNVR. Temp. Lt. MiD. December, 1942 - July, 1946. London Gazette, 05/12/1944. Born 16/01/1923, son of Edward Norman Hay, Mus. Doc., Breenagh, Wandsworth Drive, Belfast and head of music at Campbell College. Joseph was student 2744 at Campbell College. Scholar. Brother of 2913. U.VI, Dec., 1940. Prefect. John Bartley Verse Prize, 1940. Dufferin Medal, 1940. Balliol College, Oxford, January, 1941 - December, 1942. M.A., F.C.I.I. Balliol

College Lawn Tennis and Fencing Teams. Royal Insurance Co. Ltd. - Financial Dept. Address: Strand Head, Portstewart, Co. Derry and Penrhyn House, 3 Riverdale Road, Twickenham, Middx.

# Every day is a Remembrance Day

***We will remember them***

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



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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)

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