



remembrance ni



## Launch of a legend - the Avro Lancaster

**In 1941, the first prototype of the Avro Lancaster took to the skies from RAF Ringway in Cheshire.**

But did you know that the Lancaster was originally known as the Manchester Mk III? This prototype, BT308, had been a



**The office in the Avro Lancaster - there was no co-pilot's seat.**

Manchester powered by two powerful yet unreliable Vulture engines. Avro's chief design engineer, Roy Chadwick, decided to swap the two heavy engines with four lighter Merlin engines, the same that powered the Supermarine Spitfire. As much as the twin-engined Manchester design was a failure, the Lancaster was an instant success.

A long unobstructed bomb bay meant that the Lancaster could take larger bombs than other bombers, such as the 4,000 lb 'cookie' or the heavier 'Blockbuster' bombs. The biggest bomb carried was the 22,000 lb Grand Slam 'earthquake bomb' even though it meant removing a turret to save weight. It was the heaviest bomb dropped during the war, even bigger than the American nuclear bombs.



## The Dambusters

However, the most famous bomb it carried was the 'bouncing bomb', designed by Barnes Wallis. No. 617 Squadron led by Guy Gibson took their 'Lancs' over the Ruhr valleys to destroy its hydroelectric dams. This Squadron has been known as the Dambusters ever since.

7,377 Lancasters were produced for the RAF and its Allies, delivering 608,612 tons of bombs in 156,000 sorties. Together with its lesser-known twin brother, the Handley Page Halifax, they formed the core of Bomber Command during most of the Second World War.

The bomber was loved by its crews, who appreciated the reliability of the Lancaster, its ability to take damage and bring them home. It could also fly higher and faster than other British heavy bombers at the time.

One former pilot is Benny Goodman. In the last months of the war, he flew Lancs on daylight missions, participating in the raid that finally sank the Tirpitz battleship, and attacked Hitler's mountain residence at Berchtesgaden. He explained to us why it was his favourite: 'it was wonderful to fly and it would do anything you wanted from it'. He described how the Lanc would veer up as soon as the 22,000 lb Grand Slam bomb was released. The always modest Benny recently celebrated his 100th birthday.

Benny is a very humble veteran and doesn't consider what he did exceptional. He recalls the many young men who were not that lucky. Almost half all Lancasters delivered during the war were lost on operations with the loss of over



21,000 crew members. The disadvantage of having such a large bomb bay was that there was no room for a gun turret underneath. This meant that the Lanc crews were blind from attack from below. The Germans took full advantage of this by installing upward firing guns in their night fighters. If the crew needed to abandon a struck Lancaster, the escape hatch in the nose of the Lancaster revealed a peculiar design flaw: it was too narrow. Only 15 % of the Lancaster crew were able to bail out...

One of the most lucky Lancasters is the one on display at the RAF Museum London. S-for-Sugar flew an astounding 137 missions. The average was 20!

RAF Museum Cosford has an Avro Lincoln on display but it is essentially an improved Lancaster. Not only do they look powerful and majestic, the Lancaster is THE symbol of Bomber Command, but it has become more than that. It has

become an iconic and defining figure of the Second World War, as much as the Spitfire, or Winston Churchill.

Acknowledgments - RAF Museum

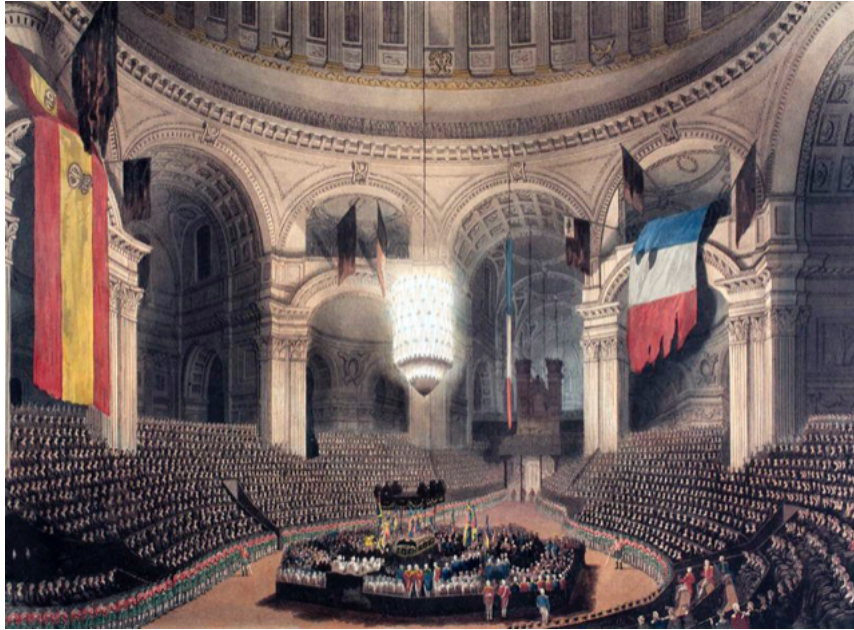
## On this Day – January 9

1806



Horatio Nelson's funeral was held at St Paul's Cathedral. 10,000 mourners were seated on specially built grandstands and after the service at 6:00pm precisely, the coffin was lowered through an opening made in the centre of the dome floor down to its resting place below.





**1916**



The final Commonwealth servicemen left the Gallipoli Peninsula. More than 43,000 Commonwealth servicemen

had died in the campaign – being commemorated at over 40 CWGC cemeteries and memorials. Some 20,000 are named upon the Helles Memorial.



The Munster & Dublin Fusiliers were the first to land and over 3,000 Irishmen died there over the next 9 months. Photo above of men from the Royal Irish Fusiliers.



## 1917

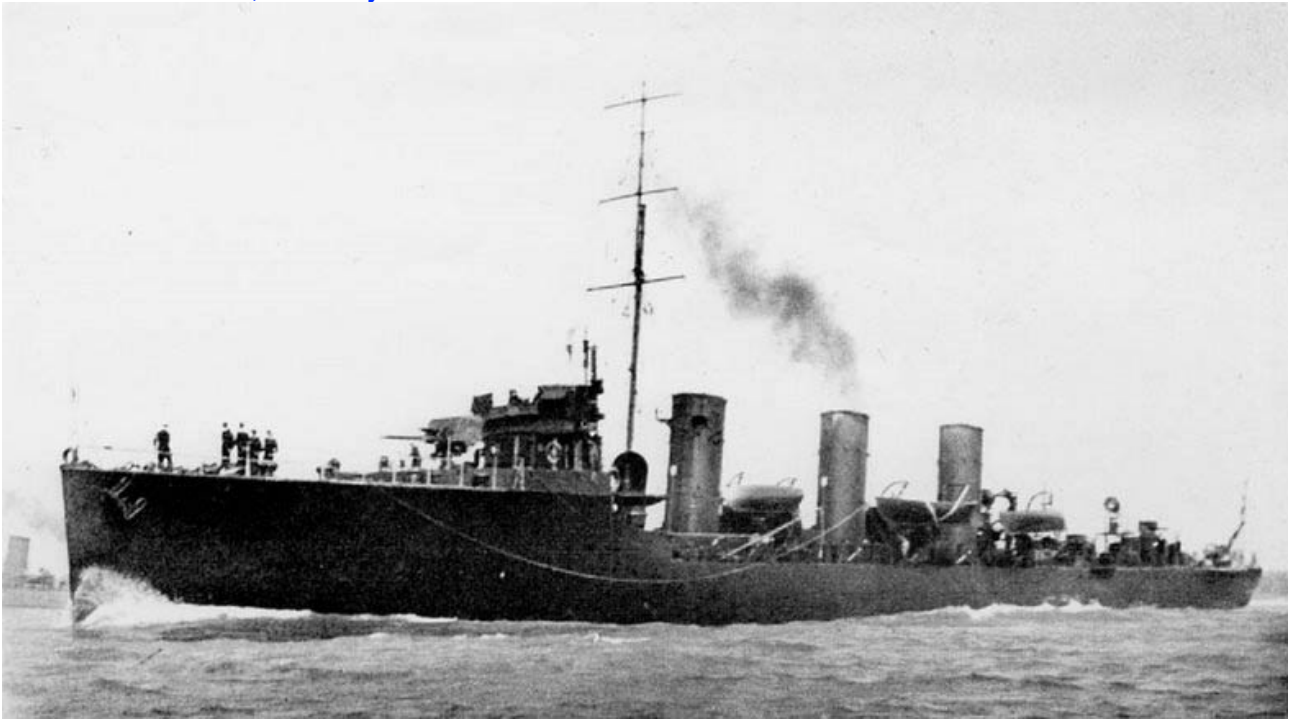
H.M.S. Cornwallis a sea plane carrier was torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean on January 9, 1917, thirteen men are missing. The British take trenches east of Beaumont Hamel (Ancre). The seaplane carrier Ben-my-Chree was sunk by gunfire in Kastelorizo Harbour on January 11.

## 1918



During the early morning of 9 January 1918, H.M.S. Racoon, a Royal Navy Beagle class destroyer on way to Lough Swilly struck rocks off Donegal. See today's Roll of Honour below.





All on board were lost. Twenty-two bodies were recovered. The vessel's crew was normally 105 but nine men were left behind at the last port of call.

In 2018 the Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Joan Baird and Jill Bedingfield, great niece of William Henry McKay a stoker, laid a wreath at Bonamargy Abbey in Ballycastle to mark the 100th anniversary of HMS Racoon sinking. Racoon had served with the Mediterranean Fleet and off Gallipoli.

## **1940**

German bombers sink three merchantmen in North Sea.

Australian Comforts Fund reestablished, for women to send care packages to soldiers.

The British submarine Starfish was sunk in the Heligoland Bight by German minesweeper trawlers.

## **1941**

The Avro Manchester III makes its first flight equipped with four Rolls-Royce Merlin engines in place of the two Rolls-Royce Vultures used on earlier marks. Ordered into production as the Lancaster, it becomes possibly the most famous RAF bomber of all time, after bearing the brunt of the Bomber Command offensive in Europe.

British & Australian troops surround Italians at Tobruk, Libya.

Hitler held a conference with his generals to discuss plans to attack the Soviet Union. Hitler said that German success in Russia would encourage Japan to attack the United States, thus keeping the Americans too occupied to get involved in the war in Europe.

## **1942**

Japanese troops launch an attack against the eastern side of the Santa Rosa-Natib defence line on Bataan, making some gains, although US-Filipino counter-attacks forces them back to their start-line.

Soviets begin offensive at Moscow and Smolensk (Battle of the Valdai Hills).

In Malaya, British begin withdrawal into Johore to protect Singapore.

The Battle of Dražgoše began between the Slovene Partisans and Nazi occupying forces.

The British destroyer HMS Vimiera struck a naval mine and sank in the Thames Estuary.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto made a statement to Taketora Ogata that may have been the basis for the apocryphal sleeping giant quote attributed to him when he said, "A



military man can scarcely pride himself on having ‘smitten a sleeping enemy’; it is more a matter of shame, simply, for the one smitten. I would rather you made your appraisal after seeing what the enemy does, since it is certain that, angered and outraged, he will soon launch a determined counterattack.”

## **1943**

Soviet planes drop leaflets on the surrounded Germans in Stalingrad requesting their surrender with humane terms. The Germans refuse.

Italian destroyer Corsaro sank off the coast of Tunisia after hitting a mine.

First flight of prototype Lockheed C-69 Constellation, fastest US transport plane of war.

## **1944**

Countess Ciano escapes to Switzerland and is interned.

British forces take Maungdaw, Burma, a critical port for Allied supplies.

Flight nurses and medics from the 807th Medical Air Evacuation Transport Squadron who crash-landed in Albania arrive in Italy after two months behind enemy lines.

## **1945**

The U.S. Third Army counter-attacks towards Houffalize, on the southern side of the Ardennes salient.

British troops enter Thebes, to the Northwest of Athens.

U.S. troops land at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon. 100,000 men are ashore in a single day, which is the largest Pacific operation so far.

## Roll of Honour – January 9

*Representing their comrades who died on this day*

**1916**

**+KERNAGHAN, Robert**

Royal Irish Rifles. 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 8637. Died 09/01/1916. Age 17. Son of Christopher and Sarah Kernaghan, of 130, Balfour Avenue, Belfast. Thiepval Memorial, France

**1917**

**+ELLIOTT, David**

Highland Light Infantry. 1st Btn. Private. 22428. Died 09/01/1917. Age 33. Born Drumnagee, Bushmills 21/6/1883. Son of James and Jane Elliott. Resided Glasgow. Enlisted Glasgow. The family appears to have moved to Glasgow as no further trace of them remains at Dunseverick. Basra Memorial, Iraq

**+WILSON, James**

Lanarkshire Yeomanry. Serjeant. 1167. Died 09/01/1917. Age 34. Son of Mrs. Eliza Wilson, of 37, Fortwilliam Parade,



Belfast. Jerusalem Memorial, Israel and Palestine (including Gaza)

## **1918                      HMS RACCOON**

During the early morning of 9 January 1918, H.M.S. Racoon, a Royal Navy Beagle class destroyer was on her way from Liverpool to Lough Swilly to begin anti-submarine and convoy duties in the Northern Approaches. In blizzards and heavy sea conditions she struck rocks at the Garvan Isles just off Malin Head and sank with the loss of all hands.

The navigational error was revealed in a subsequent enquiry when it emerged that Racoon was taken between the isles, rather than going around, which would have been standard in the weather conditions. Visibility failed and she ran straight into one of the islands.

96 members of the crew of HMS Racoon died. At least 5 were from Northern Ireland.

### **+CALLIE, William**

RN. Leading Stoker. K14866(Ch). HMS Racoon. Died 09/01/1918. Enrolled 30/05/1912 for 12 years. War service in Newcastle, Pembroke II, Actaeon and Hecla (Racoon) 10/10/1917 - 09/01/1918. Born Belfast 26/04/1894. Brother of Elizabeth Callie, Worcester Terr., Chamberlain St., Belfast. Belfast Telegraph 'For King and Country' memoriam, 13/12/1918. IMR. ADM 188/896/14866

### **+FERRIS, Wesley**

RN. Stoker I. SS114263. HMS Racoon. Died 09/01/1918. Age 24. Enrolled 13/06/1913 for 5 and 7 years.



War service in Pembroke II, Blenheim and Hecla. Born Belfast 22/01/1894. Son of William J. and Elizabeth Ferris, North Howard St., Belfast. Chatham Naval Memorial. Rosemary St - PCI RH. ADM 188/1120/114263

### **+GREER, John**

RN. Stoker 1st Class. CH/SS/113181. HMS Racoon. Died 09/01/1918. Age 25. Born Belfast. Son of John and Isabella Greer, Ravenhill Rd., Belfast. Commemorated Belfast City Cemetery. Woodstock Road WM. IMR



## Trincomalee War Cemetery

**Photo above - Trincomalee War Cemetery is to the north of the city in Sri Lanka which was one of the largest RN bases for the war in the Indian Ocean and Pacific. One of the headstones shown is that of a Jewish member of the RAF**

**+HARVEY, John Samuel - alias James Samuel Gibson**

RN. Stoker I. K6961. HMS Racoon. Died 09/01/1918.

Enrolled 21/06/1910 for 12 years. War service in Pembroke, Tyne (Flying Fish), Hecla (24/02/1916 - 09/01/1918). Born Belfast 08/08/1890. ADM 188/880/6961

**+ROBERTS, Edward**

RN. Stoker 1st Cl. HMS Racoon. Died 09/01/1918. One of three sons lost in the war. Jack, 71027, Private, North Irish Horse was killed in action on 21/09/1918. William Henry, 34392, Gunner, 107th Bty. 23rd Bde., Royal Field Artillery, was also killed in action. Son of Mrs. Nixon, the Orange Hall, Downpatrick. Downpatrick WM.

**1920**

**+JENKINS, Samuel John**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Lieutenant. DCM. Died 09/01/1920 from tubercular enteritis. Born Greencastle 03/07/1894. First served in the Black Watch (Royal Highlanders). 1377. Awarded a DCM whilst serving with the 1<sup>st</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> (Perthshire) Btn, Royal Highlanders. (Edinburgh Gazette 14/03/1916). Commissioned into the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers as a Lieutenant. He was a member of

the JH Stirling Freemason's Temperance Lodge 345 and a Sunday School teacher. Son of Samuel and Maria (nee McAllister) Jenkins, Cavehill View, Greencastle. Carnmoney Cemetery. Whitehouse Presbyterian Church RH

### **+MATIER, J**

Royal Irish Rifles. 12th Btn. Serjeant. 2550. Died 09/01/1920. Age 31. Son of John and Mary Ann Matier; husband of Margaret Matier, of 49, Antrim St., Lisburn. Lisburn Cemetery

## **1944**

### **+HOUSTON, James**

RN. AB. D/SSX 16513. HMS Spartan. Died 09/01/1944. Next of kin: Jessie Houston, Belfast. Parents, H and L Houston. Ballymena connection. Plymouth Naval memorial. Panel 86 Col. 3

### **+McCUTCHEON, Thomas**

Royal Artillery. 2nd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. 5th Battery. Bombardier. 1467311. Died 09/01/1944. Aged 28. Born in Bangor. Son of William McCutcheon and Margaret McCutcheon (née Strain) of Bangor. 1939-1945 Commonwealth War Cemetery, Charlottenburg, Berlin, Germany.

### **+SMITH, Donald Hector Tresham**

RNVR. Lieutenant. Died 09/01/1944. Age 24. HMS Penn. Served from 18/04/1939, HMS President; Pembroke; 23

Elementary Flying Training School Belfast; Daedalus; King Alfred - volunteered for service in Dunkirk evacuation; Admiralty, Nimrod, Forester - Dakar assault; Foresight - Malta convoys; Chatham; Penn - gunnery officer - landings in North Africa, Sicily, Salerno; Aegean late 1943. Died of illness. Son of Robert Fergus Smith and Anna Dora Amy Smith, Ballymena. Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery. Ballymena WM

# Every day is a Remembrance Day

***We will remember them***

**To return to Home Page - click on Remembrance NI masthead.**

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

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

**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



Remembrance Ni, January 9

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

**Copyright** - all material in this **remembrance ni** publication is copyright, and must not be reproduced in print or electronically.

---