



remembrance ni



The Great War Battlefields in Winter:  
the French Cemetery at Chattancourt near  
Mort Homme, Verdun.

# On this Day – March 16



**1939** - Hitler orders the Wehrmacht to occupy Czechoslovakia and threatened to bomb Prague if President Hácha would not surrender his armed forces.

**1917**

British make gains on the Somme as they occupy St. Pierre Vaast Wood, dominating Peronne.

## 1935

Adolf Hitler orders German re-armament in violation of The Treaty of Versailles

## 1940

The Luftwaffe attacks the British Fleets anchorage at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands. This raid causes the death of a British civilian, the first of the war.

## 1941



The Kriegsmarine loses two of its most successful U-boat commanders, Kretschmer (U-99) and Schepke (U-100) to British escorts from convoy HX112



British troops from Aden land at and capture Berbera in Italian occupied British Somaliland.



## **1942 Consolidated Liberator crashes in Republic of Ireland**

Consolidated Liberator AL577 LB-30 crashed in bad weather. The Mk II plane came down on Slieve na Glogh on the Cooley Peninsula. A memorial plaque stands today on high ground at Jenkinstown, near Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland.

This incident would prove to be the worst airtime crash in Ireland when it came to the loss of life. In all, 15 men lost their lives when the bomber came down.

The Liberator crash on 16th March 1942 was the second of three fatal incidents in this mountainous area of Louth. The

other accidents came in the form of a British Hudson bomber in 1941 and an American P-51 Mustang fighter

## **1944**

RAF 108 Squadron had been serving in North Africa engaging in bombing campaigns. In December 1941, the RAF decided to switch from Wellington bombers to the American built Consolidated Liberator. Its initial success soon led to the entire squadron swapping to the American planes.

In March, a crew of experienced men from 108 Squadron flew back to the United Kingdom to collect new Liberators and return to the front. Their flight would take them from Egypt, across to Gibraltar and across to England.

Liberator AL577 of 108 Squadron HQ Middle East took off from Egypt at 1655hrs on 15th March 1942. The destination would take them over the Mediterranean and France to RAF Hurn in Dorset, England.

There were 19 men with full kit on board. A six-man crew operated the plane carrying thirteen passengers from the same squadron. In all, the plane held six pilots, three navigators, three wireless operator/air gunners, and one mechanic. The men were from the English, Scottish, Australian, Canadian, and New Zealander forces.

Shortly after flying over the French coast towards England, the crew experienced their first problems. Reports suggest the plane was ordered to return to Egypt due to bad weather over the British Isles. These orders were acknowledged.

Veering off course in the bad weather, the plane ended up flying over the east coast of Ireland. The crew saw city lights, believed it to be Dublin and set course for RAF Greencastle in Co. Down as they were by then short on fuel. The American bomber crashed at Slieve na Glogh on the Cooley Peninsula near Dundalk around 1410hrs on 16th March 1942.

Of all those on board, 15 died in the incident. Dundalk Hospital, Ireland received the remaining four injured parties. When recovered enough they moved to Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry, then on to Stranmillis Military Hospital, Belfast.

First test launch of the world's first long-range guided ballistic missile, the Vergeltungswaffe 2 (V-2 rocket). The rocket crashed after about a mile. Hitler was not convinced, not yet.

## **1943**

Wolfpack 'Raubgraf' and attacks convoys HX-229 (37 ships) between until the 19th March, sinking 12 ships for 86,326 gross tons damaging 4. Another wolfpack, named 'StÃ¼rmer', attacks SC122 and over a period of four days and nights sinking 11 ships (54,740 tons) for the loss of just

one U-boat, U-384 (Oblt. von Rosenberg-Gruszinski).

## 1944

**38 (Irish) Brigade** - Major John Horsfall 2 LIR in Italy, March 1944: "'Clanachan.' I said, 'I am posted second in command of the Rifles. Are you prepared to suffer the indignity of coming too?' .. Hastily removing any further sign of emotion from his face, Clanachan said that if that was where I was going, he thought he had better keep an eye on me 'among that lot,' and 'anyway, sorr, it's not the brigade we'll be leaving.'"

The 'Chindit' 'White City' base at Mawla severs Japanese communications in northern Burma.

Oswald Job, a British subject, is hanged for spying at Pentonville Prison.

The British Eighth Army continues to batter itself against Monte Cassino.

A Japanese advance through Burma isolates the British garrison at Imphal. During the three-month siege, 150,000 men had to rely entirely on air supply for their survival. More than 400 tons of stores had to be flown daily into a heavily guarded valley, with only three squadrons of Spitfires available for air defence and six squadrons of Hurricanes for attack.

## 1945

Iwo Jima is declared secure by U.S. forces although small pockets of Japanese resistance still exist.

Two fresh Soviet armies of the 3rd Ukrainian Front counter

attack the German offensive towards Budapest.

The US 8th Air Force launches a massive attack (675 bombers) against the HQ complex of the OKH at Zossen 20 miles south of Berlin, but with minimal effect.

The German Heavy Cruisers Schlesien and Prinz Eugen give supporting fire forces of Heeresgruppe Kurland in their defence of the Kurland pocket.

## Roll of Honour – March 16

*Representing their comrades who died on this day*

**1915**

### **+BURNS, William**

Royal Irish Rifles, 1st Btn. Rifleman. 9248. Died 16/03/1915. Age 22. Son of George and Margaret Burns, of Belfast. Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, France

### **+MURPHY, Charles**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 3rd Btn. Private. 18806. Died at home 16/03/1915. Aged 42. Enlisted Fauldhouse, Linlithgow. Born Deffrick, Dervock 1873. Son of James and Matilda McAllister Murphy. Husband to Janet Brown Murphy, of Den Row, Fauldhouse, West Lothian. Londonderry City Cemetery





**+LAVERY, Joseph**

Royal Irish Fusiliers. 2nd Btn. Private.10927. Died 16/03/1915. Age 23. Born at Loughall, Co. Armagh. Disembarked France 19/12/1914. Son of the late Mr. and Mrs. James Lavery. Ypres (Mennin Gate) Memorial Belgium

**1916**

**+HILL, Alexander**

Royal Field Artillery, HQ staff, 93 Bde. Gunner. 65453. Died 16/03/1916. Born on 24/04/1897 in Ballymena. Enlisted Glasgow 25/04/1911. Wounded in action with gunshot to the forearm on 16/03/1916. Son of shoemaker John and his wife Sarah Mullan, Kilbride Road, Doagh. They had married in Kilbride Presbyterian Church on 06/06/1890. Ferme-

Olivier Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium. Ballyclare WM. Kilbride Presbyterian Church RH

**1917**

**+BLANN, Daniel**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 7th Btn. Private. 24234. Died 16/03/1917. Born about 1881 in Kilrea. The 1911 census lists Daniel as age 30 boarding at house 23, Coleraine Street, Kilrea, County Londonderry with Mrs Mary Walker. He was working as a general labourer. He enlisted in June 1915. He was serving with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers when he contracted measles and pneumonia and died of illness in hospital in France. Puchevillers British Cemetery, Puchevillers , Amiens. Kilrea WM

**1919**

**+McGIBBON, Rosa Anne**

Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service. RA. Sister. Died 06/03/1919. Sister McGibbon had enlisted on 2nd June 1915 and had embarked from Southampton on His Majesty's Hospital Ship Aquitania on 19/11/1915, arriving in Suez on 29/11/1915. She served in the 18th Stationary Hospital and the 21st General Hospital in Egypt and was invalided home when severe glycosuria was detected following an operation for appendicitis and a subsequent bout of influenza. Daughter of David and Mary McGibbon, of 40, North St., Lurgan. Lurgan (Dougher) Roman Catholic Cemetery. Nurses' Memorial St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast

## 1941

### **+HEFFERLIN, John**

Royal Ulster Rifles, 6th Btn. Rifleman. 7018196. Died 16/03/1941 at Massereene Hospital, Antrim. Aged 45. He was one of three men serving in the Rifles killed when their lorry crashed at Dunadry. The vehicle was on its way from Belfast to Antrim when it struck a barricade near a bridge. The impact threw the men from the vehicle, leaving them with severe head injuries and lacerations. The other victims of the lorry crash were Corporal J McKeown and Sergeant Major Jim McIlvenny. The driver JS Donly survived the incident, suffering from shock. Milltown Cemetery, Belfast

### **+McKEOWN, Robert John Baine McKeown**

Royal Ulster Rifles, 6th Btn. Corporal . 25094. Died 16/03/1941. Age 54. On the 1901 Irish Census return he lived in Drumaness, Co. Down with his parents, a grandfather, and six siblings. Son of James McKeown and Mary McKeown of Drumaness, Co. Down, and husband to Margaret Anne McKeown (née Kennedy) of Belfast. John and Margaret had a daughter, Ellen Catherine Kennedy. Christ Church Churchyard, Kilmore, Co. Down

## 1942

### **+BLAKISTON - HOUSTON, Barbara Kathleen**

WAAF. Section Officer. 1696. Died 16/03/1942. Aged 24. Died in flying accident. Daughter of James Edward and

Dorothy Blakiston-Houston of Killyleagh. Loughinisland (St. John) Church of Ireland Churchyard

**+BONAR, Samuel**

62 Gen. Transport Coy. Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. Private. B/82613. Died 16/03/1942. Aged 39. Son of James Boyd Bonar and Jeanie Bonar, of Ballymena; husband to Kathleen Bonar. Ballymena New Cemetery. High Kirk Presbyterian Church RH

**+MAGEE, Hugh Larmour**

RAFVR. Flight Lieutenant. 81690. Died 16/03/1942. Aged 30. B.A. (Dublin): Trinity College. Son of Edward and Jane Magee of Finaghy. Carrickfergus cemetery. QUB WM

**1944**

**+ATCHESON, Samuel Cunningham**

RAFVR. Pilot Officer (Pilot). 161591. DFC. Died 16/03/1944. Aged 24 57 Sqdn. Son of Caldwell and Rebecca Atcheson, of Drumquin, Co. Tyrone. Vevey (St Martin's) Cemetery, Switzerland.

**+IRWIN, William Duncan**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 2nd Btn. Sergeant. 4459560. Died 16/03/1944 in No. 64 General Hospital, Alexandria. Born Belfast 25/06/1893. Son of William Henry Irwin, a tailor, and his wife Annie (nee Mathers). The fifth of their eventual nine surviving children, the family moved to Adelaide Terrace, Larne. The family returned to Belfast and were living in Upper Frank Street at the time of the 1901 census before moving again to Ulsterdale Street. By 1911 the family had moved to Victoria Avenue in Bangor

In November 1912, William enlisted with the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers Reserves (SN: 2867) where he gave his occupation as Assistant Steward. He gave the family home at this time as Somerset Avenue, Bangor. His age is recorded as 17 years and 9 months.

Mobilised on 06/08/1914 he was posted to the 4th Battalion. Appointed Lance Corporal on 01/12/1914, he was further promoted Corporal in March 1915, Lance Sergeant in November 1915 and Sergeant in May 1916.

William was then posted to the 7th Battalion in June 1916. He was admitted to hospital Dublin with suspected TB but was diagnosed with bronchitis before being discharged on 25 February 1918.

He was then transferred to 3rd Battalion in May 1918.

In January 1919 he was transferred to No 11 Officer Cadet Battalion at Pirbright and gazetted as Temporary Second Lieutenant on 08/03/1919. However he didn't serve as an officer for long as he was then demobilised to Class Z reserve on 10/03/1919.

In September 1919 sailed for America where he became a salesman for American Mills of New York. He worked there for a number of years. Records show him returning home in August 1923 before returning to Newark, NJ, from Liverpool on 8 September 1923. He later returned to sea in 1932 working as a waiter until at August 1939 sailing on various vessels such as the Llanstephan Castle, Oronsay, and Grantully Castle.

He re-enlisted in the Second Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and served in the Middle East. He took ill and died



in No. 64 General Hospital, Alexandria. Alexandria (Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery. Family memorial in Bangor Cemetery

**+MURPHY, John Charles**

Australian Infantry, A.I.F. 2/2 Pnr. Btn. Private. VX61153. Died 16/03/1944. Age 33. The 2/2 Battalion A.I.F. was a volunteer fighting unit of the Second World War. Son of James and Emily Murphy, of Londonderry. Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, Thailand

**+WASSON, Sydney**

RAFVR. Sergeant. 1063520. Died 16/03/1944. Aged 25. 625 Sqdn. Son of Robert and Mary Wasson, of Dunadry, Co. Antrim. Runnymede Memorial, Panel 239

**1945**

**+FINNERTY, Austin**

RAFVR. Sergeant. 2225471. Died 16/03/1945. Age 23. 49 Sqd. Son of Augustine and Rose Finnerty, of Newry. Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany

**+HUTCHINSON, William Robert**

Toronto Scottish Regiment, Canadian Infantry Corps, Private. B/76677. Died 16/03/1945 of wounds received in action on 12/03/1945. "He was severely wounded by bomb fragments which penetrated the abdomen and thighs", said his widow, Mrs. Eleta Hutchinson. Enlisting at the outbreak of war, he arrived overseas in August 1940. Prior to enlistment he was a member of the Irish Regiment (Res). He was born and educated in Ireland, and besides his

widow, Eleta Hutchinson of Weston Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada., he was survived by his parents and two sisters. William's mother resided in Tarsan, Portadown, Co. Armagh while his father had emigrated to Downing Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Toronto Star, April 1945

## **VETERAN**

### **HUGHES, James Hughes**

James Hughes was born in Belfast in 1892, one of three children, losing his father in 1898 and his mother in April 1914. Prior to the First World War, he worked as a warehouse porter. When war broke out in 1914, James enlisted in the 10th Battalion of the Royal Irish Rifles. He spent six months training at Ballykinlar Camp, writing letters to his former employer, Mr. Martin, and Mrs Martin. James recalls a miserable Christmas at the 'The World's End Camp', in atrocious weather and muddy conditions, and receiving his painful vaccinations there. His letters over the next four years describe the conditions in the trenches, the Somme offensive in which he took part, his gratitude for gifts sent to him, and his marriage to Christina McKeown on 14/11/1917, while on leave from the Front. After the war they emigrated to Canada in the 1920s, but returned to Belfast, where they raised their family. James Hughes died in Belfast on 16/03/1980 at the age of 88.

# 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**

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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 [houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com](mailto:houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com)

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