



remembrance ni



## **Kemmel Battle Honour for 36th (Ulster) Division**

**The 36th (Ulster) Division, 108th Brigade and C Company from the 36th Battalion Machine Gun Corps was awarded The First Battle of Kemmel, 17th- 19th April 1918 Battle Honour.**

**The Battle, in its entirety, took place between 7th and 29th April 1918, and is also known as the Lys Offensive, the**

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(v) FIRST BATTLE OF KEMMEL, 17TH--19TH APRIL.

Second Army.<sup>1</sup>

IX Corps : 19th, 25th, 33rd, 34th, 49th and 59th Divisions ;  
71st Infantry Brigade, 6th Division ; 88th Infantry Brigade,  
29th Division ; 89th Brigade, 30th Division ; 108th Infantry  
Brigade, 36th Division ; Wyatt's Force.<sup>2</sup>

XXII Corps : 9th and 39th<sup>3</sup> Divisions and 62nd and 64th  
Infantry Brigades, 21st Division.

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## **Fourth Battle of Ypres, the Fourth Battle of Flanders and Operation Georgette.**

It formed part of the 1918 German offensive in Flanders during World War I, known as the Spring Offensive or the Kaiserschlacht.

The aim of the Battle of Lys from the German point of view was to capture Ypres (leper) and the surrounding high ground around Messines.

The Battle of Lys cost the Germans dearly in terms of men lost. While the arrival of thousands of US troops boosted Allied manpower, the Germans could not afford such losses despite men arriving from the Eastern Front. The Germans lost 120,000 killed, wounded or missing, of the 800,000 men engaged in the battle. While the initial territorial gains in the battle may have boosted German confidence in their High Command, they could not cope with their overall losses.

British and French losses were on a similar scale with over 82,000 killed and wounded and nearly 32,000 missing. However, the steady inflow of new troops from the United States meant that the Allies could cope with this loss.

The British after this conflict would launch the successful Hundred Days Offensive starting on the 8th August 1918 and would last up to the armistice 11th November 1918.

### **First Battle of the Kemmelberg**

17-Apr-1918—19-Apr-1918. The British repulse a German attack on the high ground of the Kemmelberg.

### **Second Battle of the Kemmelberg**

25-Apr-1918—26-Apr-1918

A French division arrives at the Kemmelberg to relieve the British defenders. However, the German forces attack and capture it from the French.



German war cemetery at Sully sur Lys burial place of 5000 German soldiers buried between May and the final German retreat 1918



The Front Line (orange line) at the end of the German April Offensive from 9th to 29th April 1918. This line marks the farthest point of the German Army's advance to the west. Ypres was not captured.



# On this Day – April 17

## **17th April 1918, Northern Whig**

Rifleman Robert John Bell, 8743, 1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles (Ulster Division), died of wounds 10th April, 1918, He was the son of Ann Jane Bell, of 51 Longford Road, Belfast. Deceased is buried in St. Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen, France.

Rifleman John Porter Walker, 109056, Labour Corps, formerly 957, 8th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, 25 years of age died of wounds 21st March 1918. Husband of Sarah Jane Walker, of 29 Foxglove Street, Belfast. Deceased is buried in Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery, Arras, France.

## **17th April 1918, Belfast Newsletter**

### **Death of Bangor Officer**

Second-lieutenant James McGilton, 21st Entrenching Battalion, formerly 8th/9th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, killed in action 21st March 1918. He was a son of Sarah Ann McGilton nee Green and the late John McGilton, of 71 Emerald Terrace, Railway View Street, Bangor, Co. Down. He enlisted in the ranks of the County Down Battalion of the Ulster Division in September, 1914, and was wounded on the 1st July, 1916, at Thiepval. He was promoted in October, 1917. The deceased brother, Second-Lieutenant David John McGilton, also of the Royal Irish Rifles, was taken prisoner during the opening of the present offensive.



Second-Lieutenant James McGilton is commemorated on the Pozières Memorial, France.

## 1918

North West of Dixmude, the Belgians take 700 German prisoners and 42 machine guns.

## 1934



The Fairey Swordfish biplane, that would become famous for its WW2 Royal Navy service, made its first flight. It would be involved in many FAA actions against enemy units including the Bismarck and Taranto, destroying more enemy tonnage than any allied aircraft.

## 1940

Royal Navy Heavy cruiser “Suffolk” bombards installations at Stavanger, but on her return is badly damaged by Ju-88 bombers and barely makes Scapa Flow with her stern awash.

Admiral Karl Dönitz withdraws U-boats from Norwegian waters to study torpedo failures.

## **1941**

Yugoslavia surrenders, with the Wehrmacht taking 334,000 prisoners. King Peter of Yugoslavia is flown to Athens and then on to London by the RAF.

## **1942**

The RAF makes a daylight raid against Augsburg in southern Germany with 14 Lancaster bombers. The raid is pressed home with great gallantry, with squadron leader J.D. Nettleton being awarded the VC. However, 7 aircraft are lost, which convinces Air Marshal Harris that daylight raids by heavy bombers were too costly.

## **1943**

Germans find buried Polish officers at Katyn Wood. The U.S. War Manpower Commission orders 27 million workers in industries deemed essential to the war effort not to leave their positions for any reason.

## **1944**

Amid rumours in the allied press that he is dead or is locked in an insane asylum, Hitler appears, but does not speak at the funeral in Munich of Gauleiter Adolf Wagner. It is the first time Hitler has shown himself publicly since his speech to the “Old Fighters” the previous November.



American soldiers from the 1st Special Service Force (known as "The Devil's Brigade") with an M1941 Johnson Light Machine Gun, take a quick rest on the Anzio Beachhead in Italy in April, 1944.

### **17th April 1944, 6 Innisks at Cassino:**

"0510 - The remains of three ORs were found. They belonged to D Coy's mule party & had been caught by the mortaring of Bttn HQ at 2230-2359hrs the previous night.

Died on this Day:

Fusiliers Sidney Hollinshead, Albert Howard, Eric Heaton."

"2035 to 2100 - Bttn HQ & Snakeshead were heavily shelled, also Mortar Corner & a 3" ammunition dump was hit.



One OR was killed.

Died on this Day:

Fusiliers Francis France, Fusilier Arthur Stead."

## 1945

The battle for Berlin escalates a breakthrough is made by the 1st Ukrainian front. However, the 1st Belorussian Fronts offensive against Berlin is stalled by tenacious German resistance on the Seelow Heights, 2 miles West of the Oder, with great losses of troops and tanks for the Russians. The situation for the German 6th SS Panzer Army in Austria is now critical at St.Polten. The Russians occupies Wilhelmsburg.

The US Eighth Army lands on Mindanao in the Philippines.

# Roll of Honour – April 17

***Representing their comrades who died on this day***

## 1915

### **+DOCHERTY, Joseph**

1st Bn. Gordon Highlanders. Private. 2825. Died 17/04/1915. Aged 21. Born in Ballymoney. Lived in Glasgow. Son of William and Elizabeth Docherty, 190 Gourlay Street, Springburn, Glasgow. La Laiterie Military Cemetery, Kemmel, Belgium

## **+HORNER, JR**

Royal Scots, 1st Btn. Lance Corporal. 18320. Died 17/04/1915. Age 39. Son of Richard and Ruth Horner, of Belfast; husband to Mary Kate Homer, of Lower Walkin St., Kilkenny. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

## **+LYNCH, Patrick**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 6th Btn. Private. 10854. Died 17/04/1915. Age 55. Son of James and Margaret Lynch; husband of Margaret Kilday (formerly Lynch). Enniskillen Roman Catholic Cemetery

## **+MATCHETT, John Joseph**

Royal Field Artillery. 147th Bde. Driver. 6865. Died 17/04/1915. From Larne. Helles Memorial, Turkey, Gallipoli

## **1916**

## **+GRAHAM, W**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 10th Btn. Private. 15556. Died 17/04/1916. Age 21. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Graham, of 13 Albert Place, Londonderry. Authuille Military Cemetery, France

## **+WATTERSON, George**

Royal Irish Rifles. 15th Btn. Rifleman. 1171. Died at home of wounds 17/04/1916. Age 22. Enlisted Belfast. Born Ballymacarett, Belfast. Son of Mary Watterson, of 28, Carew st Belfast and the late John Watterson. Dundonald Cemetery, Belfast

**1917**

**+ABRAHAM, Thomas Robert**

Canadian Infantry. 102nd Btn. Private. 253019. Died 17/04/1917 from wounds sustained between 9 and 13 of April 1917. Born 11/01/1889 to George and Mary Ann Abraham of Annaboe, Richhill, Co. Armagh. He emigrated to Canada. His brothers Absalom and James Robert died in action on 01/07/1916 during the attack on Hamel. Barlin Communal Cemetery Extension, France

**+BEST, David**

North Staffordshire Regiment, 5th Bn. formerly (5094) Lowland Division. Private. 34775. Died 17/04/1918. Aged 20. Son of Andrew and Ann Best, of 31, Taylor St., Townhead, Glasgow. Links with Dungannon. Reninghelst New Military Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

**+GIBSON, Robert James**

Royal Irish Rifles. 2th Btn. B Coy. Rifleman. 17705. Died 17/04/1918. Age 22. Son of William and Mary Ann Gibson, of White Gate, Bryansford, Co. Down. Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium

**+HILL, Nelson**

RN. AB. HMHT Donegal. Died 17/04/1917. Ambulance transport sunk by enemy action in English Channel between Le Havre and Southampton. She sank quickly taking 29 wounded soldiers and 11 of her crew. Son of Thomas and Mary Hill, Bogside, Islandmagee.

**1918**

**+GIBSON, Robert James**

Royal Irish Rifles. 12th Btn. Rifleman. 17705. Died 17/04/1918 during the Battle of Kemmel during the Battle of the Lys. Age 22. Enlisted in Downpatrick in the 13th Royal Irish Rifles (1st County Down). Born 1897 youngest son of William and Mary Ann Gibson 14 Ardagh Tofanny Kilcoo , later living at White Gate, Bryansford, Co Down. Rathfriland WM. Drumlee Presbyterian Church RH. Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium

**+NEILL, Joseph Wylie**

Royal Field Artillery. 119th Bde. A Bty. Gunner. 126191. Died 17/04/1918. Born 26/06/1896 in Cookstown. Joseph was the eldest son of James and Hester Neill. He was the first of five children, the others being born in Clydebank, Scotland. By 1911, he was back living in Cookstown. He was a factory worker. Around 1914, he went back to Clydebank to work in the shipyards. He enlisted in Clydebank in 1916 and was sent to France in July of that same year. Nephew of Mrs. Maggie Beattie, of 31, Glasgow Road, Clydebank, Glasgow. Le Grand Hasard Military Cemetery, Morbecque, France. Cookstown WM, St Luran's Church RH

**+WATTERSON, George**

Royal Irish Rifles, 15th Btn. Rifleman. 1171. Died 17/04/1916. Age 22. Son of Mary Watterson, of 28, Carew st Belfast and the late John Watterson. Dundonald Cemetery, Belfast

## 1920

### **+McGIRR, Thomas**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 3rd Btn. Private. 3/24862.  
Died 17/04/1920. Age 64. Husband to Elizabeth McGirr of  
Bridge St., Irvinestown, Co. Fermanagh. Sacred Heart  
Roman Catholic Churchyard, Irvinestown

## 1941

### **+McMURRAY, William**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Quartermaster. 6983653. Died  
17/04/1941. Aged 30. Son of George and Annie and  
Husband of Susan Elizabeth, Bessbrook, County Armagh.  
Bessbrook Methodist Cemetery, Bessbrook. Bessbrook WM

## 1942

### **+GIVEN, James**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Lance Corporal.  
6976278. Died between 17/04/1942 and 18/04/1942. Age  
33. Son of Parnell and Sarah Given, of Omagh. Medjez-el-  
Bab War Cemetery, Tunisia

### **+JEPSON, James**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Fusilier. 6981621. Died  
17/04/1942. Age 27. Husband of Kathleen Jepson, of  
Omagh. Rangoon Memorial, Myanmar



**+McALLISTER, William**

Royal Irish Fusiliers. 1st Btn. Fusilier.1472432. Died 17/04/1942. Age 36. Son of Matthew and Isobella McAllister, of Larne; husband to Agnes McAllister, of Larne. Faenza War Cemetery, Italy

**+McKANE, James Edward**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 6th Btn. Lance Corporal. 6985620. Died 17/04/1942. Age 21. Son of John and Annie J. Orr, of Limavady. Medjez-el-Bab War Cemetery, Tunisia

**1943**

**+AXTELL, Dennis**

RAF. Flight Sergeant. 626794. DFM. Died 17/04/1943. Age 22. Handley Page Halifax Mk.II HR784 of 51 Sqn. The aircraft left RAF Snaith at 20.42 on Ops to Pilzen, and crashed at Eppeville, on the Somme. WO W R Kiernan was taken Prisoner of War. All the remaining crew were killed and are buried at the village cemetery in Maucourt. They include William Robert McBriar, Flight Engineer, from Belfast. Son of Allan and Vera Axtell; Husband to Agnes Axtell nee Smythe, Belfast. Married on 13/12/1941, in St Helen's Church, St Helens, Isle of Wight. Agnes was the daughter of Mr & Mrs Smythe (both deceased of Lisburn). Maucourt National Cemetery, France. St Helen's WM, Ryde Borough WM (Marriage - Isle of Wight County Press - December 20, 1941. Missing Saturday, April 24, 1943, Page 3)

## **+BAMFORD, Charles Glendinning**

RAF. Sergeant. (Flight Engineer) 575897. Died 17/04/1943. Aged 19. Sqd 49. In the light of a full moon on 16/17 April, 327 heavy bombers went after the Skoda armaments works at Pilsen. Aircraft from 49 squadron pressed home their attacks with great determination. But sadly, back over at RAF Fiskerton in the bright light of an early spring morning two dispersal points lay empty: Sgt Dave Penry and crew had failed to return on this their 12th operation; their Lancaster ED441 (EA-D) had crashed in the Amiens area, only the air gunner Sgt Kerr survived, becoming a POW; the remains of the rest of his crew including Charles Bamford, are buried in France. Son of James and Grace Bamford, Belfast. Camon Communal Cemetery, Somme, France

## **+CRAWFORD, David**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Fusilier. 7043624. Died 17/04/1943. Age 34. Son of David and Margaret Crawford, of Beragh, Co. Tyrone. Medjez-el-Bab Cemetery, Tunisia

## **+DAVIES, John Albert**

RAFVR. Sergeant. 2204830. Died 17/04/1944. Aged 19. Son of Flt. Lieut. Albert Edwin Davies and Caroline Isobel Davies, Glengormley. Runnymede Memorial, Panel 228

## **+GIVEN, James**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Lance Corporal. 6976278. Died 17/04/1943. Age 33. A Faughs' regular, L/Cpl Given was in 17 Platoon in D Company during the Tunisian campaign. He was in a trench on Kef El Tior when suffered a shrapnel wound to his head, and was then sent for medical treatment

and, according to John Coldwell-Horsfall (The Wild Geese Are Fighting), "he found and consumed medical rum supplies."...he headed back to the battle and the Inniskillings found him a week later, lying dead in the German positions on the col of Tanngoucha. Son of Parnell and Sarah Given, of Omagh, Co. Tyrone. Medjez-el-Bab Cemetery, Tunisia

**+McALLISTER, William**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Fusilier. 1472432. Died 17/04/1943. Age 36. Son of Matthew and Isobella McAllister, of Larne, Co. Antrim; husband of Agnes McAllister, of Larne. Faenza War Cemetery, Italy

**+McBRIAR, William Robert**

RAF. Pilot Officer. (Flight Engineer) 51909. Died 17/04/1943. Aged 23. Handley Page Halifax Mk.II HR784 of 51 Sqn. The aircraft left RAF Snaith at 20.42 on Ops to Pilzen, and crashed at Eppeville, on the Somme. WO W R Kiernan was taken Prisoner of War. All the remaining crew were killed and are buried at the village cemetery in Maucourt. They include Denis Axtell, husband to Agne nee Smythe formerly of Lisburn. Son of William James Norwood Owens McBriar and Cathrine Stewart McBriar, Belfast. Maucourt French National Cemetery, France

**+McKANE, James**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Lance Corporal. 6985820. Died 17/04/1943. Age 21. Son of John and Annie J. Orr, of Limavady, Co. Londonderry. Medjez-el-Bab Cemetery, Tunisia

## **+MOONEY, James Owen Beggs**

Royal New Zealand Air Force, 103 (R.A.F.) Sqdn. Pilot Officer (Pilot). NZ41614. Died 17/04/1943. Age 25.

Lancaster I W4848 took off 2112 16/04/1943 from Elsham Wold. Cause of loss and crash - site not established. He emigrated to New Zealand in 1938. Son of John and Agnes Mooney, of Brookfield House, Doagh, Co. Antrim. Durnbach War Cemetery, Bad Tolz, Bayern, Germany. New Zealand Online Cenotaph

**1944**

## **+DAVIES, John Albert**

RAFVR. Sergeant. 2204830. Died 17/04/1944. Aged 19. Son of Flt. Lieut. Albert Edwin Davies and Caroline Isobel Davies, Glengormly. Runnymede Memorial, Panel 228

**1945**

## **+BROOKE, Henry Alan**

Royal Armoured Corps. 10th Royal Hussars. A Sqn. Lieutenant. 259934. MC. Died 17/04/1945. Aged 21. Son of Capt. the Rt. Hon. Basil Stanlake Brooke, 1st Viscount Brookeborough, P.C., C.B.E., M.C., 10th Royal Hussars, and of the Viscountess Brookeborough (nee Sergison), of Brookeborough, Co. Fermanagh. His elder brother Lieutenant Basil Julian David Brooke of the Grenadier Guards also fell on 11/04/1943, aged 22. Ravenna War

Cemetery, Italy. Brookeborough WM. Portora WM

### **+McCANN, George**

Royal Scots, 719th Bn. Private. 14429060. Died 17/04/1945. Age 19. He and a comrade were killed after their platoon had captured 40 enemy prisoners of war. A German soldier fired a panzerfaust from a nearby building in retaliation, killing the two soldiers. Commonwealth War Graves records list Private McCann's age as 19 years old, however he was 18 years old at his time of death, having lied about his age to enlist two weeks short of his seventeenth birthday. In 1943, he first joined the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers at Omagh, Co. Tyrone, transferring to the Royal Scots in August the same year. McCann served in a home defence role with the Royal Scots until January 1945 when 7/9th Battalion, Royal Scots joined the advance into Germany with 52nd (Lowland) Division. Commonwealth War Graves records list Private McCann's age as 19 years old, however he was 18 years old at his time of death, having lied about his age to enlist two weeks short of his seventeenth birthday. In 1943, he first joined the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers at Omagh, Co. Tyrone, transferring to the Royal Scots in August the same year. Son of James and Minnie McCann, of 1 Florence Court, Portadown. Becklingen War Cemetery, Germany. Portadown WM and Seagoe Church of Ireland WM, Portadown

### **+WIDDOWSON, John Bernard**

Royal Corps of Signals. 145 Field Regt., R.A., Sig. Sec. Signalman. 2588545. Died 17/04/1945. Age 26. Son of



Charles Everard Widdowson and Millicent Widdowson;  
husband of Margaret Law Widdowson, of Glennyough,  
Ballymoney. Delhi War Cemetery, India

**1946**

**+BLACK, Albert**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Private. 6982742. Died  
17/04/1946. Age 25. Son of Elizabeth Black, of Belfast.  
Glenalina Extn. Belfast City Cemetery

**1947**

**+TAYLOR, T R J**

South African Air Force. Captain. 103704. DSO, DFC. Died  
17/04/1947. Age 27. Died in Aircraft Accident, crashed  
between Malakal and Khartoum, in Lockheed PV-1 Ventura  
Mk V 6501.

Distinguished Service Order citation - London Gazette Sup  
13 July 1945 pg. 3619 - "This officer has completed many  
sorties on his third tour of operational duty. On 3 occasions  
in April, 1945, he led the squadron in harassing attacks on a  
variety of targets in the battle area. In these well planned  
and resolutely executed sorties much damage was inflicted  
on the enemy. The results obtained reflect the greatest  
credit on the gallant efforts of Major Taylor, whose skill and  
leadership were of a high order. Since the commencement  
of the final offensive in the Italian theatre in April, 1945, the  
squadron commanded by Major Taylor has been  
responsible for the destruction of a large number of  
mechanical vehicles, numerous barges and tanks. Many  
buildings occupied by the enemy, a good number of gun

positions and various road and rail bridges have been most effectively attacked. This officer has set an example which has inspired all”.

Distinguished Flying Cross citation - London Gazette Sup 26 May 1944 pg. 2436 - "In April, 1944, Captain Taylor led a small formation of aircraft in an engagement against 14 enemy fighters. In the fight four enemy aircraft were shot down, two of them by Captain Taylor. On a previous occasion this officer flew the leading aircraft of a formation which engaged a large force of bombers escorted by fighters. Three of the bombers were shot down and the remainder were forced to jettison their bombs and turn for home. In both these operations, Captain Taylor displayed high powers of leadership, great courage and determination. This officer has always shown the greatest keenness to engage the enemy and has destroyed 3 hostile aircraft"

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick A. Taylor; husband of Annette M. Taylor, of Banbridge. Khartoum War Cemetery, Sudan

## **VETERAN**

### **GREEVES, John Edward Brian**

RNVR. Lieutenant (E). Jesus College Cambridge 1938 - 41 (Mechanical Science Tripos). Born 17/04/1920. Son of William Edward and Marion Janet Greeves, Ardeevin, Portadown. Husband to Jill Kathleen nee Ware. They had four daughters and a son. Died 20/07/1981. Campbell College 2597

# 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

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

**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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