



remembrance ni



The record of 1st Battalion, The Royal Ulster Rifles

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India. It was recalled to the UK shortly after the outbreak of World War II and assigned to defensive duties with 31st Independent Brigade Group in 1940.

The brigade was formally redesignated and reorganised as 1st Air Landing Brigade in late 1941 and its battalions, including **1st (Airborne) Battalion RUR**, were re-roled to undertake airborne assault by glider.

Later, in May 1943, it was transferred to form part of 6th Airlanding Brigade, 6th Airborne Division, in preparation for the liberation of North West Europe. The 1st Battalion landed in Normandy by glider on the evening of 6 June 1944 at LZ N, near Ranville, and was initially deployed to extend the southern sector of the bridgehead.

The battalion remained in Normandy until September when it returned to the UK, but was redeployed, along with other units of 6th Airborne Division, to halt the German offensive in the Ardennes during the winter of 1944-45.

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Shortly after, the battalion amalgamated with 2nd Battalion RUR to form 1st Battalion, The Royal Ulster Rifles (83rd and 86th).

The Rhine Crossing and follow up

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Anti-aircraft fire was particularly heavy, and the Royal Ulster Rifles received more than most when their gliders came in to land. "D" Company, landing very close to the bridge in a coup-de-main capacity, rapidly gained their objective, despite numerous casualties and the absence of two of their four platoons. As they were attacking towards the Bridge, the Company was faced with the daunting prospect of five self-propelled guns approaching their position, however once one of these had been knocked out at very close range with a PIAT, the rest dispersed.

"A" Company had been charged with the capture of the railway station, but as with "D" Company, only two of their platoons had landed on target. Nevertheless this force reached the station, encountering unexpectedly little resistance on the way, and discovered a platoon of the 12th Devonshires waiting nearby with a collection of fifty German prisoners who had been eager to surrender. This platoon was taken under command and the Company braced themselves for an anticipated counter-attack. This did not materialise, though three self-propelled guns did put in an appearance, but a wounding shot from a PIAT encouraged these vehicles in their clear intention of withdrawing without reply.

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Ulstermen had located and begun to attack these positions, they found the will of the enemy to fight crumbled remarkably quickly and a considerable number of prisoners were taken. By the afternoon, the Battalion was in complete control of their area, but the day had been extremely costly with two hundred and fifty-nine casualties sustained.

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April 2, 1945

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Three members of the Battalion from Northern Ireland are included in today's Roll of Honour.

On this Day – April 2

1916

German Zeppelin raid on the east coast and Scotland. A reported 13 killed and 24 injured.

1917

US President Woodrow Wilson presented a declaration of war against Germany to the US Congress.

1940

Hitler gives orders that the invasion of Denmark and Norway is to begin on the 9th April 1940.

Germans again attack Scapa Flow and North Sea convoys.

1941

The 5th Light Division recaptures Agedabia from the British and fans out into three columns, two of which race across the desert in an attempt to cut off the retreating British, while the third pushes up the coast road towards Benghazi. Rear Admiral Bonnetti, the commander of the Italian Red Sea Flotilla orders his seven destroyers out on 'do or die' missions. All the destroyers are sunk or captured without achieving any worthwhile results.

1942

The British Indian Ocean Fleet withdraw to Addu Atoll to avoid a clash with a far superior Japanese fleet. The overwhelming Japanese carrier force would have sunk the

slow British capital ships. HMA Ships Napier, Norman and Nizam were part of the fleet's escort

The aircraft carrier USS Hornet, with 16 B-25 Mitchells of the Doolittle attack group, departs Alameda, CA en route to launch a bombing raid on Tokyo

British retreat from Prome, upper Burma.

Axis air forces begin a bombing campaign against La Valetta, the British naval base on Malta.

In Burma, Japanese take Prome and Akyab, securing Arakan Peninsula.

In the United States, tin tubes for toothpaste & shaving cream must be turned in to buy new tube; restrictions placed on use of tin in consumer packaging.

1944

38 Irish Brigade - CQMS O'Sullivan, 2 LIR: "I was taken with my supplies to San Michele & I was allocated 30 mules which I loaded with tools, food & water & the men's kit. After getting so close to Monte Cassino that we felt we were almost under the monastery's walls, .we started climbing a precipitous path to Monte Castellone. We had to take particular care as the nervous muleteers were attempting to ditch their loads. I finally arrived at the top with about half a dozen mules. Loads were spread along the track behind us...."

Major Lawrie Franklyn-Vaile 1 RIRF at Cairn: "The question is whether my nerves are good or bad. While shelling is on, there is a sinking feeling in the stomach & a rather dry taste

in the mouth, but once it is over I feel perfectly happy & comfortable again.”

The Russians announce their entry into Romania and threaten to shoot one third of all German POWs if the 18 divisions of the trapped 1st Panzer Army do not surrender. The Russian army crosses the river Prut, East of Cernovcy and liberates the little city Gerca.

1945



On 02/04/1945 Cpl Thomas Peck Hunter, advancing with 43 Commando, Royal Marines, at Lake Comacchio charged across open ground to clear a German position and 3 Spandau machine guns, firing his Bren gun from the hip. He allowed his troop to advance but died shortly after. Awarded the VC.

The 3rd Ukrainian Front and Bulgarian forces take Nagykanizsa, thereby gaining control of the main Hungarian

oil production region. 2nd Ukrainian front under Malinovsky conquers the industrial area of Mosonmagyaróvár and reaches the Austrian border between Duna and the Neusiedler lake.

The British 7th Armoured Division enters Rhine on Dortmund-Ems canal, 60 miles North. The 3rd Ukrainian Front and Bulgarian forces take Nagykanizsa, thereby gaining control of the main Hungarian oil production region. 2nd Ukrainian front under Malinovsky conquers the industrial area of Mosonmagyaróvár and reaches the Austrian border between Duna and the Neusiedler lake.

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American troops of the 10th Army marched inland after landing on the beach of Okinawa, Japan, crossed Okinawa, dividing the island.

On Okinawa, United States opens Yontan and Kadena airfields for emergency and reconnaissance use.

Reichswald Forest War Cemetery

Reichswald Forest War Cemetery was created after the Second World War when burials were brought in from all over western Germany and is the largest Commonwealth cemetery in the country.

Some of those members of the land forces buried there died in the advance through Reichswald Forest in February 1945. Others died crossing the Rhine, among them members of the airborne forces whose bodies were brought from Hamminkeln, where landings were made by the 6th Airborne Division from bases in England.



Some of the airmen buried in the cemetery lost their lives in supporting the advance into Germany, but most died earlier in the war in the intensive air attacks over Germany. Their graves were brought in from cemeteries and isolated sites in the surrounding area.

There are now 7,594 Commonwealth servicemen of the Second World War buried or commemorated in the cemetery. 176 of the burials are unidentified. There are also 78 war graves of other nationalities, most of them Polish.

Special Memorials to 9 airmen are located at the East boundary wall, near Plot 10. Further Special Memorials to 7 airmen are located within Plot 31, near the Cross of Sacrifice. The cemetery was designed by Philip Hepworth.

1st Battalion The Royal Ulster Rifles

1941 to 1947

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Roll of Honour – April 2

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1915

+IRWIN, William Irwin

North Irish Horse. A Squadron. Private. 626. Died of spinal meningitis at No.10 Stationery Hospital, St Omer, on 02/04/1915 .He was born in Garvary, County Fermanagh, around 1890, son of Margaret Irwin. He was Honorary Secretary of his Orange Lodge. He enlisted in the North Irish Horse at Tempo in October or November 1911. On 17/08/1914 he embarked for France with A Squadron of the North Irish Horse, seeing action in the retreat from Mons and Advance to the Aisne. In early 1915 Irwin fell ill. He died

at No.10 Stationery Hospital, St Omer. Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France

+LIDDLE, Thomas Dixon

Staff Surgeon. HMS Thames. Died: 02/04/1915. Age 35. QUB MB, BCh, BAO, 1903. Thomas passed his surgical exams on 23/11/1903 and immediately joined the Admiralty. Eight years later, on 23/11/1911, he became a Staff Surgeon. Over the years he served in many different ships and had at least two spells in Haslar Hospital. His last ship was HMS Thames which he joined on 07/01/1913. When he died on 02/04/1915 there were extenuating circumstances which called for a post mortem to be held. The results of the post mortem were read by Staff Surgeon Hughes. The cause of death was given as morphia poisoning, self-administered, but whether by intent or misadventure, there was insufficient evidence to prove. Born in 1897. Son of Edward (MD) and Elizabeth Liddle, Cookstown. Sheerness (Isle of Sheppey) Cemetery. QUB WM. IMR

+McCRORY, Hugh

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 8981. Died 02/04/1915. Age 37. Son of John Henry McCrory, of 25, Byron Place, Belfast, and the late Bessie McCrory; husband to Eliza McCrory, of 20, Urney St., Shankhill Rd., Belfast. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

1916

+LITTLE, Peter

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 7th Btn. Private. 23668. Died 02/04/1916. Age 21. Educated at Tamlaght National School,

Coagh. He enlisted with the Inniskillings in June 1915 and was posted to the 7th Battalion for training at Randalstown, County Antrim and Finner Camp, Ballyshannon. Died along with his comrades, John Burns from Belfast, Alex Thompson and Denis Gallagher from Donegal and John Richard Poller from Birmingham. Son of Joseph and Maggie Little, of Coagh, Moneymore. Philosophe British Cemetery, Mazingarbe, France. Coagh WM

+McNALLY, J

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 8th Btn. D Coy. Private. 22160. Died 02/04/1916. Age 23. Son of Patrick and Bridget McNally, of 66, Raglan St., Belfast. Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos, France

+O'NEIL, A

Royal Irish Rifles, 8th Btn. D Coy. Serjeant. 15713. Died 02/07/1916. Age 30. Son of Charles O'Neil; husband of Maggie McNamara (formerly O'Neil), of 29, Eversleigh St., Belfast. Knightsbridge Cemetery, Mesnil-Martinsart, France

+PATTERSON, Robert

Royal Irish Rifles, 8th Btn. Rifleman. 863. Died 02/07/1916. Age 36. Son of W. J. and Charlotte Patterson, of Dromore, Co. Down; husband to Mary E. Patterson, of 9, Wayland St., Belfast. Theipval Memorial, France

+PAYNE, Henry

Royal Irish Rifles, 9th Btn. D Coy. Rifleman. 958. Died 02/07/1916. Age 18. Son of William Payne, of 13, Vistula St., Belfast. Theipval Memorial, France

+RANSON, A

Royal Irish Rifles, 8th Btn. A Coy. Serjeant. 4745. Died 02/07/1916. Age 29. Son of Susan and the late Andrew Ranson, of 53, Ravenhill Rd., Belfast. Grandcourt Road Cemetery, Grandcourt, France

+RAVEY, William

Royal Irish Rifles, 8th Btn. D Coy. Rifleman. 853. Died 02/07/1916. Age 26. Son of John Ravey, of 133, Parkgate Avenue, Belfast; husband to Agnes Ravey, of 34, Glenvarlock St., Belfast. Theipval Memorial, France

+REA, Allen

Royal Irish Rifles, 8th Btn. Rifleman. 13433. Died 02/07/1916. Age 24. Son of John Alexander Rea, of 9, Fitzroy Avenue, Belfast. Serre Road Cemetery No 2, France

+RITCHIE, John

Royal Irish Rifles, 8th Btn. Rifleman. 13433. Died 02/07/1916. Age 22. Foster son of Mrs. M. Hibbs, of 30, Moorfield St., Belfast. Connaught Cemetery, Theipval, France

+ROBINSON, James

Royal Irish Rifles, 8th Btn. D Coy. Lance Corporal. 12411. Died 02/07/1916. Age 34. Son of the late John and Sarah Robinson; husband of Sarah Robinson, of 4, Saunders St., Belfast. Theipval Memorial, France

1917

+BENSON, James

Canadian Infantry. 52nd Btn. Private. 198631. Died 02/04/1917 at Thelus. Age 30. James emigrated to Canada and enlisted there. Son of William and Esther Benson, of Drumherriff, Portadown. Ecoivres Military Cemetery, Mont-St. Eloi, France. St Paul's C of I Church, Tartaraghan WM

+FLYNN, D

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 2nd Btn. Private. 22652. Died 02/04/1917. Age 19. Foster son of Elizabeth McKinney, of Clady Urney, Co. Tyrone. Foreste Communal Cemetery, France

+GEDDIS, Joseph

Royal Irish Rifles. 13th Btn. Serjeant. 17694. Died 02/04/1917. Age 25. Born at Ballagh, Co. Down. Son of James and Susan Geddis; husband to Annie Geddis, of Lake View, Lurgan, Ulster. Drumees Presbyterian Cemetery, County Down

+McCLEAN, Thomas Harrison

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Private. 27448. Died 02/04/1917. Age 19. Born 31/12/1897 in Coalisland. Enlisted Dungannon. Only son of John and Emily McClean. Foreste Communal Cemetery, St Quentin, France. Dungannon WM

+ROGERS, Hugh

The King's (Liverpool Regiment). 4th Btn. Private. 11869. Died 02/04/1917. Age 44. Son of John and Rose Rogers, of

Keady, Co. Armagh. Rue de Bacquerot No 1 Military Cemetery, Laventie, France

1918

+BEHAN, Walter

Royal Irish Fusiliers. 1st Btn. Private. 18114. Wounded in the head, captured and died of wounds in a German military hospital in Goyencourt on 02/04/1918. Roye New British Cemetery, Goyencourt Chateau German Cem. Mem. 116. France

+COUSINS, John

Royal Irish Rifles, 22nd Entrenching Btn. formerly 11/13th Btn. (1st County Down). Transferred to the 11/13th when they amalgamated then to the 22nd Entrenching Battalion February 1918 when the 11/13th disbanded. Rifleman. 13/1492. Died of wounds 02/04/1918 in No10 General Hospital Rouen France. Age 23. A member of Maralin UVF. Born in Lurgan. Son of Abraham and Annie Cousins, Dollingstown, Co Down. St Server Cemetery, France. Dollingstown WM, Maralin WM

1920

+DOWNIE, Thomas

RN. Stoker 1st Class. SS114250. HMS Retriever. Died 02/04/1920. Age 24. Born Belfast 28/02/1895. Husband of Ellen M. Downie, Fair Hill, Ballycarry. Belfast City Cemetery. ADM 188/1120/114250

1944

+McCRYSTAL, Bernard

Pioneer Corps. 79 Coy. Private. 13011025. Died 02/04/1944. Age 46. Husband to Elizabeth McCrystal, Ballymena. Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio, Italy

1945

+CONNOLLY, James

Royal Ulster Rifles. 1st (Airborne) Btn. C Coy. Rifleman. 7046879. Died 02/04/1945. Born in County Down. Reichswald Forest Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

+GARDINER, Arthur

Royal Ulster Rifles. 1st (Airborne) Btn. Rifleman. 7020506. Died 02/04/1945. Four years service. From The Bridge, Monkstown, County Antrim. Reichswald Forest Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

+O'HARE, Robert

Army Catering Corps, attd Royal Ulster Rifles, 2nd Btn. Private. 7011777. Died 02/04/1945. Aged 30. Son of Thomas O'Hare and of Brigid O'Hare (nee Kerr), of Belfast. Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

+RUSSELL, Brian Beven

Irish Guards. 3rd Btn. Lieutenant. 278612. Died 02/04/1945. Aged 20. Born on 10/04/1924, he was the eldest son of

Mary "Mollie" Sara Welman (formerly Russell, née Knox-Peebles) of Westfield Park, Harold's Cross Road, Dublin, Ireland. Brian was the son of Wing Commander George Henry Russell DFC and the stepson of Major William Herbert Eyre Welman. William and Mollie lived in Donaghadee, Co. Down. Mollie's grave is in the Church of Ireland graveyard. Brian's grave is at Rhineberg War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany

VETERANS

COCHRANE, George Waterson

RN. Leading Signaller. 215674. HMS Boadicea. Jutland. Enrolled 02/04/1904 for 12 years. War service in Vivid, Leander and Boadicea (09/08/1916 - 19/03/1919). Served to 19/03/1919. Born Coleraine 02/04/1886. ADM 188/378/215674

HORNBY, Mary Frances

Leading Aircraft Woman Mary Frances Hornby (Frankie) at just 18 years of age in December 1943 joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and began her basic training in England to become a Leading Aircraft Woman. Her ambition was to be a cook but she quickly discovered that there was no call for chefs in this branch of the service but rather a serious need for drivers.

Frankie was posted to the RAF Fighter Station Coverack, Cornwall, England to drive Officers, Lorries and Ambulances to the Morgue. She returned to Northern Ireland and was initially based at HQ in Belfast driving high ranking Officers

and Chaplains around the Province for Sunday services. Occasionally, when Frankie drove them to Fermanagh she was allowed to keep the car over the weekend and visited her family home close to Lisnaskea. Roads were not as good as they are today and with wartime headlight blackouts driving was not easy. At the end of the war she was posted to RAF Castle Archdale and RAF Killadeas, again driving Officers from their quarters at the Manor House. It was here that she celebrated the end of the War with Japan in 1945. Frankie spent 4 years in the WAAF and shared she enjoyed every minute.

Frankie enjoyed attending WW2 commemoration events in Fermanagh, the most recent being the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day at Enniskillen Royal School in 2020.

In 2021 Frankie returned to her old primary school Aghadrumsee, along with Wg Cdr Jacqs Rankin to meet the children and share her inspirational story. A painting by David Briggs, commissioned as part of the VE Day commemorations was presented to the school and depicts Leading Aircraft Woman Frances Hornby collecting a Senior Officer in a military spec Humber Hawk staff car. A Catalina flying boat is seen returning from a mission on approach to the Killadeas base just below the Manor House on the Lough.

The funeral service of Mary Frances Hornby (Frankie), who had recently celebrated her 99th birthday, took place on Friday, 05/04/2024 at Dowlers Funeral Home, Lisnaskea. It was attended by representatives of The Royal Air Force Northern Ireland and The Royal Air Forces Association (Fermanagh Branch). The Earl of Erne DL, represented The

Viscount Brookeborough, Lord Lieutenant for Co. Fermanagh.

KEARNS, James Hugh

Private. 14079. Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. James was a married man with three daughters and living at Cornafannoge townland near Lisbellaw when he enlisted in 11th (Service) Battalion (Donegal & Fermanagh Volunteers) on 23/09/1914. He embarked for active service early in 1916 and was wounded at the Battle of Langemarck, August 1917. Posted to 9th (Service) Battalion (Tyrone Volunteers) on the disbandment of 11th Battalion in February 1918, James was again wounded during the German Spring Offensive in March 1918. He was wounded for a third time in October 1918 and was discharged with the Silver War Badge on 02/04/1919. In 1923, he was allocated a newly built Serviceman's Cottage by the Irish Soldiers and Sailors Land Trust at Cornafannoge townland.

McCLELLAND, Robert James

RN. Stoker I. SS107581. Enrolled 04/08/1890 for 5 and 7 years. Served to 02/08/1913. Joined RFR 03/08/1913. Served from 02/08/1914. War service in Pembroke II, Dido, Woolwich, Attentive II, Vigilant and Sarepta. Demobbed 02/04/1919. Born Belfast 04/08/1890. Upper Townsend St, Belfast. Agnes Street - PCI RH ADM 188/1113/107581

McGURK, Robert John

RN. Stoker I. SS112840. Enrolled 10/09/1912 for 5 and 7 years. War service in Tyne, Wallington, Pembroke II and

Hecla (Pigeon). Invalided 02/04/1919. Born Belfast
03/03/1894. ADM 188/1118/112840

McKERNAN, Joseph William

Warrant Officer Class II Joseph William McKernan (D/25096) was a Company Sergeant Major in the Royal Ulster Rifles during World War Two. He was the son of William McKernan and Mary Ann McKernan and husband to Edith McKernan of 50 Enid Parade, Ballyhackamore, Belfast, Co. Down.

The East Belfast man had previously served in the King's Own Scottish Borderers and was a member of the Ulster No. 1 Branch of the Old Contemptibles' Association. Joseph William McKernan died on 02/04/1947 aged 62 years old. Dundonald Cemetery.

**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

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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

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