



remembrance ni

# Anniversary of victory in Battle of Monte Cassino



**This day in 1944, Polish, British and other Allied forces captured Monte Cassino, Italy, after 123 days of heavy fighting. 55,000 Allied troops became casualties in 123 days of fighting.**

The Battle of Monte Cassino, arguably one of the most intense and demanding of the war.

It is worth recalling the circumstances that led to this protracted engagement on the Italian peninsula. With the Axis surrendering in North Africa, the Allies had just passed their first real test. The road to Rome appeared open.

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**18th May 1944**

**Letter from Lt. Room to Olive Franklyn-Vaile**

**"Yesterday morning, about quarter to eight, Lawrie died. I was about five yards from him when the shell exploded so was with him immediately. I am certain he was not conscious after he had been hit and so suffered no pain."**

*Major Lawrie Franklyn-Vaile was a company commander of RIF*

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Halfway up the boot of Italy, however, Allied troops encountered a series of coast-to-coast defensive fortifications known as the Winter Line, with the magnificent Roman Catholic abbey of Monte Cassino at its apex. Built in





**John Horsfall, CO 2 London Irish Rifles, north of Cassino, 18 May 1944; "We remained in the vicinity of Piumarola for the rest of that day, the 18th &, during the morning, I sent out a further patrol westwards. But all that F Coy could find was a rather scruffy jager, who had clearly got lost. Not a shot was fired at us all morning and in this strange lull, hardly a gun opened up in the whole of the sector..."**

the sixth century, its hilltop vantage point dominated access to the Liri and Rapido valleys – and the road to Rome.

Months of fighting followed in what became one of the longest and bloodiest engagements of the Italian campaign.

The 8th Army might have arrived at the battle in their desert warfare gear but, far from being warmed by the Mediterranean sun, Allied troops found themselves chilled to



**Written from  
his hospital  
bed by  
Lt Nicholas  
Mosley E Coy  
2 LIR, May  
1944...**

## **Lacrimae Liri**

"The cornfields wave toward the sky.  
And from above the clouds reply  
With smiles of gentle sleepiness.  
Below, the summer sun's caress  
Lies softly on the silent plains.

**+++++**

the bone. Fighting across the rugged terrain was hand-to-hand, on exposed slopes as torrential rain beat down and artillery fire turned rock to shrapnel.

War diaries from soldiers in the 10th Royal Berkshire Regiment speak of the 12-hour climb to the battalion forward positions to replenish rations and ammunition.

It took four separate battles before the Abbey was finally taken by Second Polish Corps as part of a multinational force of 20 divisions assaulting across a front of 20 miles.

The Battle of Monte Cassino was in many ways a flawed campaign. Ill-equipped troops struggled to cope with unfamiliar terrain, chains of command were not always followed – even the higher strategic objectives were not fully agreed. Those mistakes had tragic consequences. But the tactical, strategic and political lessons learnt were applied to D Day planning, from the importance of logistical supply chains, troops in reserve, and wise use of artillery power to post-conflict stabilisation and responsibilities to civilians.

# On this Day – May 18

## 1916

At the Battle of Verdun German attacks are repulsed at Hill 304 and Avocourt Wood.

## 1917

US Congress passes the Selective Service Act authorizing the draft. Although criticized for destroying democracy at



home while fighting for it abroad, President Wilson claims he sees no other option and signs the bill into law.

**1918**

**In the newspapers - May 18**

## **18th May 1918 Northern Whig**

### **Ulster Division Rank and File Fatality**

Lance Corporal Edward George Rennix, 12th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, prev. 11th/13th battalion, killed in action 13th April, 1918. Son of Samuel and Mary Ann Rennicks nee Connor, of Ballsbridge, Dublin and Husband of Mary Rennix, of 3 Maryville Terrace, Dunmurry, Co. Antrim. Deceased was 35 years of age and is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium.

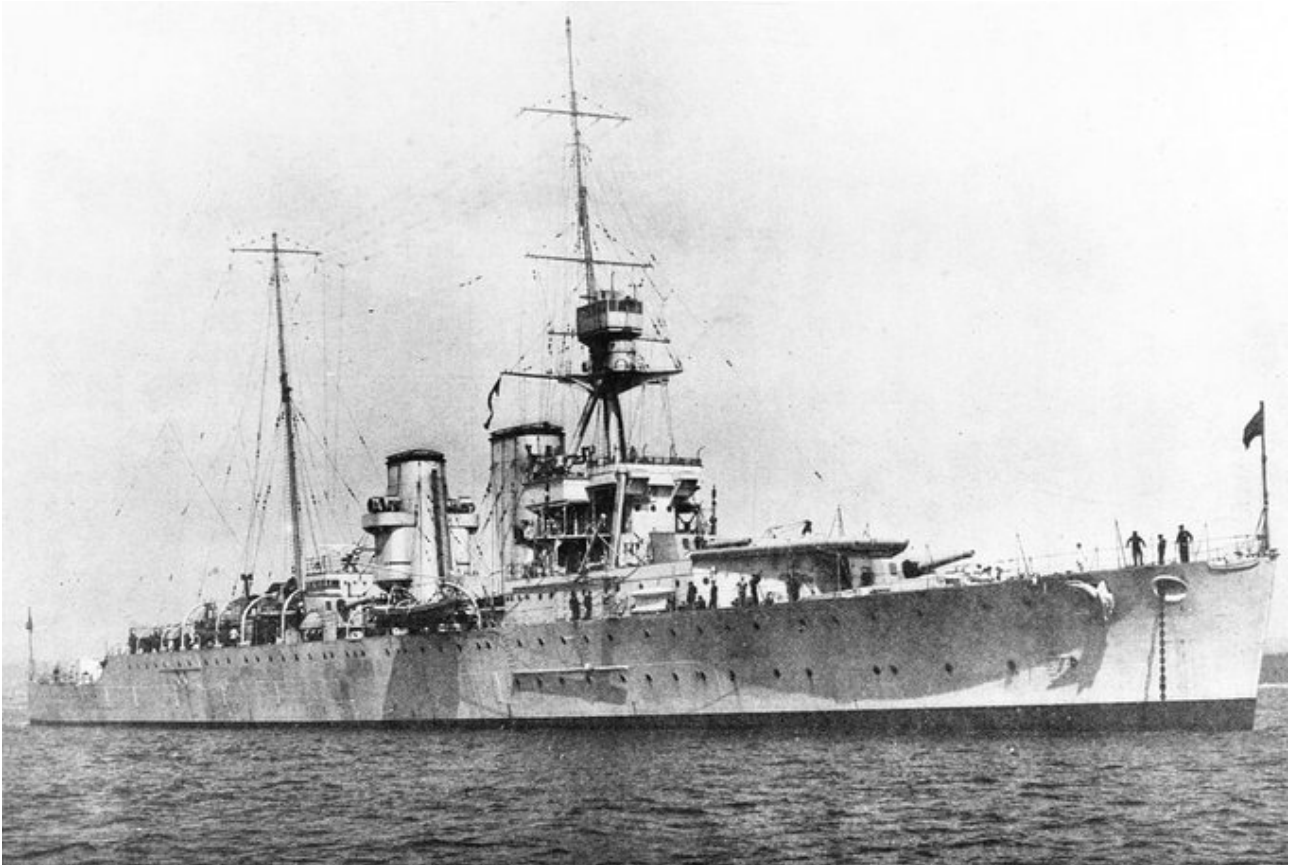
The Australians make successful raids west of Morlancourt, and in the darkness they capture Ville-sur-Ancre and take 360 German prisoners and 20 machine guns.

**1940**

Germans take Antwerp, Belgium's second city. Allied forces are seriously split as German tanks of 19th Panzer Korps (Guderian) reach Peronne and Rommel's 7th Panzer Division reaches Cambrai during their rapid advance toward the Channel coast. Amiens is occupied.

Regions ceded to Belgium in Treaty of Versailles (1919) are re-incorporated into Germany.

Heavy cruiser HMS Effingham was wrecked after striking rocks off Bodø, Norway and ran aground. Her hulk was



scuttled by a torpedo from HMS Matabele on 21 May. No casualties.

## 1941

PO Alfred Sephton is awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions in HMS Coventry during a German attack on a hospital ship. Sephton died of his wounds the following day. His medal was stolen whilst on display at Coventry Cathedral in 1990 and never recovered.

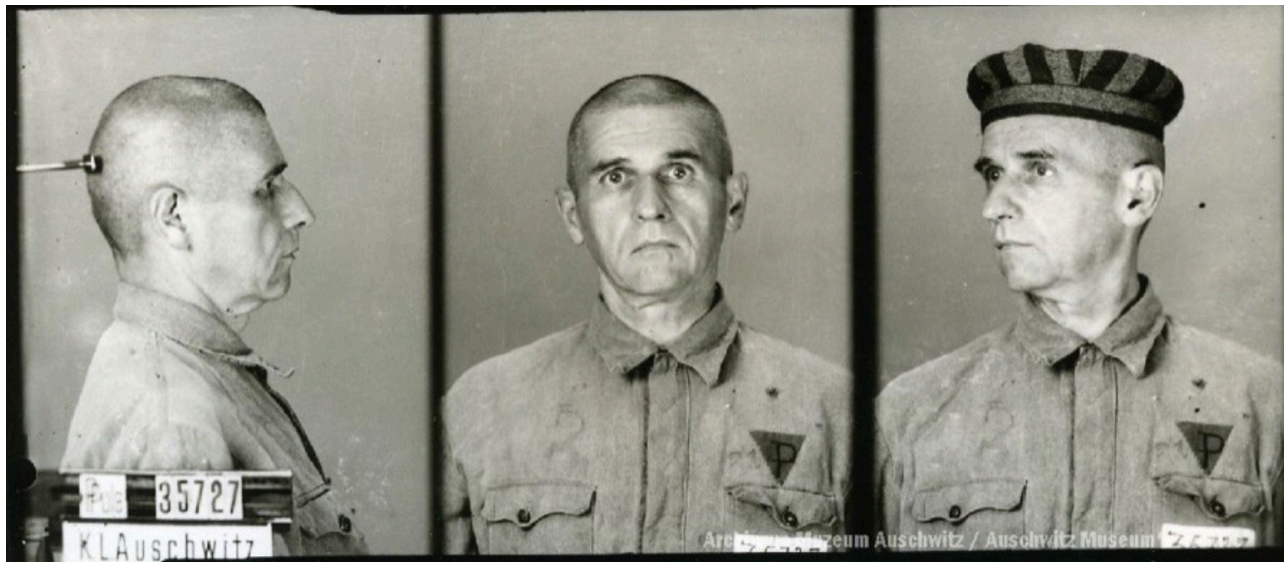
British air raids on Germany continue.

Italy annexes the Yugoslavian territory of Dalmatia.

General Dentz tells the French Army in Syria to “match force with force”. The 5th Indian Division captures the Italian fortress of Amba Alagi after 18 days of fighting.

The British column from Palestine (Habforce), arrives at Habbaniyah and relieves its garrison.

**1942**



Tadeusz Polaczek-Kornecki (b. in Rudawa on 8 Feb 1885) arrived at Auschwitz in a transport from Montelupich prison in Cracow. He was a mechanical engineer, director of Cracow Municipal Electrical Railway. He perished in the camp on 2 June 1942.

New York ends night baseball games for the rest of World War II.

The RAF launches a major attack against Mannheim.

The Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm attacks and hits the German heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen off Norway, but she makes it back to Kiel.

Despite increasing losses, Churchill remains determined to continue the Arctic convoys to Russia.

German forces finally halt the Russian summer offensive just short of Kharkov and let loose Group von Kleist's with a strength of 15 Divisions (1st Panzer Army and 17th Army),



of which two are Panzer and one Motorized. The Germans aim for Izyum to the South of Kharkov in order to pinch off the Russian salient. The Germans attack with their usual skill, technology, and ferocity and defenses. The Germans have a 4.4-1 edge in tanks, 1.7-1 edge in artillery, and 1.3-1 edge in infantry on the battlefield. Russian co-ordination is poor and the Germans quickly gain local air superiority. Russian officers lack adequate combat experience to handle the fast pace of the German blitzkrieg, and their divisions literally come apart.

The New York Times reports on an inside page that Nazis have machine-gunned over 100,000 Jews in the Baltic states, 100,000 in Poland and twice as many in western Russia.

## **1943**

The Japanese launch a new offensive along the Yangtze river, 250 miles north east of the Nationalist capital of Chungking.

## **1944**

Polish troops finally capture the town of Cassino.



# Roll of Honour – May 18

*Representing their comrades who died on this day*

**1915**

## **+BATES, Oliver**

Irish Guards, 1st Btn. Private. 4687. Died 18/05/1915. Oliver Bates was born in Willenhall, Warwick, England. The 1911 census does not show any Oliver Bates in Ireland at that time. Oliver Bates enlisted in Cookstown. Private Oliver Bates was serving with the 1st Btn of the Irish Guards when he was killed in action at the Battle of Festubert. Le Touret Memorial, France Cookstown War Dead Book

## **+FREEBURN, Alexander**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Lance Corporal. 9634. Died 18/05/1915 while the 1st Inniskillings were holding the line between Ghurkha Bluff and Big Nullah on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Prior to enlisting, Alexander, worked as a solicitor's clerk in Omagh. He joined the Army in Cookstown in 1910 and was drafted into the 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He went with them to China and later was stationed in Secunderabad in India, and later at the Gallipoli Peninsula, Dardanelles in April 1915. Twelve Tree Copse Cemetery, Turkey (including Gallipoli) Cookstown WM, Second Presbyterian Church

### **+GALLACHER, John**

Irish Guards. 1st Btn. Private. 5066. Died 18/05/1915. John Gallacher was born in Maghera. From his service number it can be deduced that he enlisted shortly after the outbreak of war. Le Touret Memorial, Richebourg, Pas de Calais, France

### **+GRAY, John**

Irish Guards, 1st Btn. Private. 1812. Died 18/05/1915. John enlisted with the Irish Guards and served the full period. He afterwards joined the Royal Irish Constabulary. Prior to the outbreak of war, Constable John Gray was stationed in Springfield Road Barracks, Belfast. He was called up on the reserve of the Irish Guards. John was born in Clonfeacle, on 01/06/1888. The family lived in Donnydeade, near Dungannon. His father was a farmer. Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Dungannon WM, Moy WM

### **+FAULKNER, Thomas**

Irish Guards. 1st Btn. Private. 1885. Died 18/05/1915. Aged 33. Son of Alexander and Annie Faulkner, of Ahoghill, Ballymena, Co. Antrim, husband to Sarah Faulkner, 10, Somerset Street, Belfast. Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. St Jude's C of I Parish Church, Belfast, WM

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Inniskilling Fusiliers. He went with them to China and was later stationed in Secunderabad in India, and then at the Gallipoli Peninsula, Dardanelles, in April 1915. Born in Killymoon Street, Cookstown. A son of David Freeburn. Twelve Tree Copse Cemetery, Turkey (including Gallipoli). Cookstown WM. Second Presbyterian Cookstown RH

### **+McMANUS, Hugh M**

Irish Guards. 1st Btn. Private. 14. Died 18/05/1915. Born in Lisburn, he lived in Belfast, enlisted at Oxford. Upon its creation by orders of Queen Victoria, the man chosen to form the new regiment was Colour Sergeant Conroy, transferred from the Royal Munster Fusiliers, who had the regiment serial number '1'. The first civilian recruit was James O'Brien from Limerick and the first man to be awarded the DCM was Colour Sergeant John Hudson. But the first man from Belfast to enlist in the Irish Guards was Hugh Michael McManus and he was allotted the number '14'. McManus served with the Irish Guards for 12 years and volunteered at the outbreak of WW1 during which he fought in several fierce battle in France and Flanders. But it was during the Battle of Festubert, when infantry attacked the enemy they were fired on by enemy artillery. Some 10 minutes later the infantry began to move out and they were mercilessly mown down by machine gun fire. The 1st Irish Guards and the 2nd Grenadier Guards had a very difficult time getting across the muddy battlefield and at Ferme Cour d'Avoue, suffered particularly badly by the enemy who were in Adalbert Alley. It was on this day 18/05/1915 that Guardsman Hugh M. McManus, service number 14, lost his life, and his body was never recovered. He is remembered on the Le Touret Memorial, Pas-de-Calais. There are 79

men from the Irish Guards mentioned on this memorial, all lost beneath the fields of France.

### **+SALES, John**

Irish Guards, 1st Btn. Serjeant. 2261. Died 18/05/1915. Age 27. Born in Andersonstown, Belfast on 31/07/1888. He lived for a period at Islandbawn, Muckamore. Enlisted Belfast. When John and Dorothy Georgina Evans married in West Kensington, London, he was living with his uncle William while working as a police officer. He was also a member of LOL 233 meeting in Pimlico, London. His brother Thomas died at the Battle of Jutland. Son of Robert and Margaret Sales, of 18, March St., Belfast; husband to Dorothy Georgina Sales, of 7J, Lewis Dwellings, Chelsea, London. Le Touret Memorial, Pas de Calais, France

## **1916**

### **+BOYLE, James**

Royal Munster Fusiliers. 8th Btn. Corporal. 1801. Died 18/05/1916. Age 24. In 1911 James was a mill worker and living with his family and widowed mother in Bessbrook. Disembarked in France December 1915. Son of Patrick and Catherine Boyle, of Maytown, Bessbrook, Co. Armagh. Bethune Town Cemetery, France

## **1917**

### **+BROWN, Joseph**

Cameronians (Scottish Rifles), 11th Btn. Private. 21756. Died 18/05/1917. Age 40 years old. Son of David and Mary Brown, of Belfast; husband to Hannah Brown, of 42, Marine

St., Belfast. Lembet Road Military Cemetery, Salonika, Greece

### **+KANE, Peter**

Royal Irish Rifles, 12th Btn. Sergeant. 5925. Died 18/05/1917. Age 27. Prior to enlistment in the 1911 census Peter's occupation was recorded as a farm servant. Peter was also a member of the Orange Order and H Company, 2nd Battalion, North Antrim Regiment, Ulster Volunteer Force. Son of Peter and Jane Kane and husband to Caroline (nee Hutchinson) Mosside, Stranocum, Co. Antrim.. Bailleul Communal Cemetery, France. Bushmills WM. Dunservick Parish Church RH, and Drumtullagh Parish Church RH.

### **+MURPHY, John**

Royal Irish Fusiliers. 9th Btn. Private. 14444. Died 18/05/1917. From Milford. Served an apprenticeship as a joiner with McCrum, Watson & Mercer Ltd. Was a member of the UVF before enlistment. He was a capable musician and was a member of the 9th Btn's band. Disembarked France on 04/10/1915. Armagh Guardian (02/02/1917) states he was the son of Mr & Mrs A H Murphy of Milford, Armagh, who have another son serving in France with the Canadians and who is in hospital suffering from trench foot. John had married the previous December and his widow was residing at Umgola. Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France

## **1918**



## **+CUMMINGS, William Gordon**

RAMC. Captain Died 18/05/1918. Royal School, Dungannon. Matriculated QUB 19/10/1898. MC. BCh, BAO 1903. For a time after qualifying, William Cummings acted as resident medical officer at Richmond Hospital, Dublin. Afterwards he had in a few years, built up a large medical practice in the districts of Hamwell and West Ealing, London. He was a member of the Ealing Division of the British Medical Association. He voluntarily joined the forces long before the introduction of conscription. He was with the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was killed in the battle around Bullecourt. William was well-known in local rugby football circles, and was a member of the brilliant Queens College rugby team of 1899-1900 which went through the season with an unbeaten record and won three cups. He was an excellent scrum half, and played in the inter-provincial team with another famous footballer, the late John D Ferris, who afterwards died in India while serving in the Indian Medical Services. In 1908, William married Mary Pleasance Cracknell. In 1910, they had a daughter, Mary Elizabeth Cummings. William retained his interest in Ulster politics, for in 1912 his signature could be found on the Ulster Covenant, signing in Westminster. Son of James Cummings, Scotch Street, Dungannon. Mory Abbey Military Cemetery, Mory, Pas de Calais, France. QUB WM, RH

## **+GIBSON, James**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Private. 28157. Died 17/05/1917. Aged 20. James enlisted in Hamilton while he was living and working in Scotland. He was born in the parish of Derryloran, Cookstown about 1897. Brother of Henry Gibson, of 13, Alaska St., Belfast. Arras Memorial,

Arras, Pas-de-Calais, France. Dungannon WM, Newmills C of I Parish Church WM.

**1918**

**+HARPUR, Thompson**

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 9th (North Irish Horse) Btn. C Coy. Private. 41433. Native of Co. Donegal. Died 18/05/1918. Age 21. Son of John James and Jeannie Harpur, of 10, Glandore St., Belfast. Avesnes-sur-Helpe Communal Cemetery, France

**+SHIELS, John**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 9th Btn. Lance Corporal. 12/28264. Died 18/05/1918. John was captured and became a prisoner of war. He died of wounds in Lazarett, Darmstadt, Germany. John Shiels was the eldest child of Samuel and Maggie Shiels of Mullagh, Maghera. Niederzwehren Cemetery, Kassel, Hessen, Germany

**+STEENSON, Robert**

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 2nd Btn. Private. 9823. Died 19/05/1918. Robert Steenson was born in Dungannon. Robert attended Drumglass Boys National School, Dungannon. Robert Steenson enlisted in Armagh. He was living in Belfast at the time. According to his will, dated June 1917, his mother was living at 49 Montreal Street, Crumlin Road, Belfast. Cairo War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt. Dungannon WM

**1940**

### **+DAVIDSON, Thomas**

RNVR. Telegraphist. P/UD/X 1397. Died 18/05/1940. Age 20. HMS Princess Victoria. Was on duty in the wireless cabin at the time of the disaster. He had been married for only three months to Miss Marie Irwin of Paris St., Belfast. His father, mother Elizabeth, and two sisters lived at Harley St., Old Lodge Rd., Belfast. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 01/06/1940). Cley - next - the Sea (St. Margaret) Churchyard

### **+GILLESPIE, William James**

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Fusilier. 6975630. Died 19/05/1940 during the withdrawal to Dunkirk. Age 33. Son of Thomas and Alice Gillespie. He was born on 17/03/1907 in Fivemiletown. His father was a tailor. He was one of nine children. His mother died when he was eleven. Husband to Margaret Gillespie, of Belfast. Heverlee War Cemetery, Belgium. Fivemiletown WM

### **+HAYCOCK, William**

Royal Ulster Rifles, 2<sup>nd</sup> Btn. Bugler. 7011437. Died 18/05/1940. Born in Belfast. Heverlee War Cemetery, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium

### **+LYNAS, Mark**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Btn. Lance Corporal. 2872731. Died 18/05/1940. Aged 32. Son of Joseph Lynas and of Margaret Lynas (nee McNeill), of Ballymena, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland; husband of Margaret Hawke Lynas (nee Power), of Harryville, Ballymena. Hello Communal



Cemetery, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium. Harryville Presbyterian Church, Ballymena RH.

**+McCALMONT, James**

RNR. Petty Officer. World War 1. Took part in the Gallipoli campaign. (Glenarm - PCI RH). In WW2 he served as Boatswain. Naval Auxiliary Personnel. Died 18/05/1940. HMS Princess Victoria. In the inter-war years he was engaged on the Larne - Stranraer route and when the Princess Victoria was taken over by the Admiralty for mine laying, he went along with the vessel. He was the first Glenarm man to be lost at sea in the war. His father was resident in Glenarm. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 01/06/1940). Husband of Mary McCalmont, of Stranraer, Wigtownshire. Liverpool Naval Memorial, Panel 18

**+McVITTY, Trevor Maynard Watt**

Royal Artillery. 24 LAA. Regt. 87 Bty. Gunner. 1488507. Died 18/05/1940. Aged 33. Accidental death as a result of a fall from a window whilst sleep walking. Son of the Revd. W. Presley McVitty and Gretta C. A. McVitty, of Donaghadee. Netley Military Cemetery, Hampshire

**+MEGARRY, Herbert Reginald**

RAFVR. Sergeant (Pilot). 745111. Died 18/05/1940. Aged 20. Son of Herbert and Sarah Megarry, of Bangor. Bangor Cemetery, Co. Down. 502 (Ulster) Squadron WM, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast



**1941**

**+HOOD, JOHN**

A.I.F. 2/12 Bn. Australian Infantry. Corporal. QX2025. Died 18/05/1941. Aged 31. Son of John and Mary Ann Hood, of Baylands, Larne. Knightsbridge War Cemetery, Acroma, Libya

**+LENNON, John**

RNPS. Stoker. LT/KX106886. HM Drifter Jewel. Died 18/05/1941. St Clare's Ave., Newry. Lowestoft Naval Memorial, Panel 7

**1943**

**+MILLAR, Thomas Hugh**

Royal Ulster Rifles, 1st (Airborne) Bn. Rifleman. 7012135.  
Died 29/05/1943. Carnmoney Cemetery.

**1945**

**+BROWN, Robert William**

RN. Able Seaman. D/JX 348457. Died 18/05/1945. Age 22.  
HMS Lanka. (RN base, Colombo, Ceylon). Son of Jeannie  
Brown, Armoy. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 93

**1947**

**+TAYLOR, Denis**

Royal Corps of Signals. Signalman. 2333136. Died  
18/04/1947. Aged 27. Son of William and Alice Taylor;  
husband to Eileen Margaret Taylor, of Ballymena. Uttoxeter  
Cemetery, Staffordshire,

**VETERAN**

**BAIRD, Thomas Terence**

RNVR. Surg. Lt. Temporary Surgeon Lieutenant, Navy List  
24/06/1940. MB DPH 1939 QUB. Chief Medical Officer,  
Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland  
1972–78. In the Silver Jubilee and Birthday Honours of  
11/06/1977 he was awarded a CB Civil. 31/05/1916  
-18/05/1996. St Finian's Moville Lower Church Cemetery,  
Moville, County Donegal.



## **FRY, David**

Private. M2/079398. Army Service Corps. David from Concord St, Belfast enlisted in April 1915 and served with 363 MT Coy ASC attached to 18 Bde RGA in France and with 913 MT Coy ASC attached to IV Mountain Bde RGA in Salonika and Palestine. Demobilised May 1919.

# 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**

**[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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