



remembrance ni

**The coolest
man to have
served in
the Army,
Major
General
Corran
Purdon**

**This is the
anniversary of
the death in
2018 of “The
coolest man to
have served in
the Army”,
Major General
Corran Purdon
CBE MC CPM.**



Born on 4 May 1921 in Cobh, near Cork, during the Irish War of Independence, his father was an Army medical officer and his mother was a homemaker.

In the early 1920s the family moved to India. In 1926, after his father completed his tour with the Indian Army, the family moved to Belfast. Purdon was educated firstly in India, then at Campbell College in Belfast and, finally, at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

From Campbell College to Colditz Castle.

Corran Purdon left Campbell College in 1939 and was commissioned into The Royal Ulster Rifles. He subsequently joined No 12 Commando RM and was involved in a number of raids, including Operation Chariot in March 1942, the raid on St Nazaire - later dubbed "The Greatest Raid of All." For which he was awarded the MC for demolishing a vital wheelhouse on the Loire Estuary, Normandie Dock, and was wounded and captured whilst trying to make his escape.

Lieutenant Purdon escaped several times from Nazi captivity including being 10 days on the run in occupied territory. He was eventually incarcerated in Colditz Castle. When he was liberated by the Americans, he and another Rifles officer decided that they wanted to have another crack at the enemy, so they fought in the ranks with the American Army until VE Day.

He then served at Regimental and Staff appointments in N Ireland, England, Egypt, Hong Kong, Cyprus and Malaya & the Middle East. He went on to command the 1st Battalion of The Royal Ulster Rifles in West Germany and in Borneo

he fought in the undeclared war against the Indonesian Regular Army.

Following his Chief Instructor and OC of AATD appointment at Warminster, his next appointment was as

Commander of the Sultan's Armed Forces in Oman, in the rank of Brigadier, and then Director of Operations during

the Dhofar War, Oman 1967-1970, which was a bloody confrontation taking place against the Marxist insurgents from neighbouring Aden. He was twice decorated by the Sultan and awarded the CBE at the end of this tour.

He then returned to Warminster where he assumed the appointment of Commandant of The School of Infantry and then GOC NW District and subsequently GOC NE Land Forces in Cyprus.

On retiring from the Army, General Purdon took up the post of Deputy Commissioner in The Royal Hong Kong Police 1978 - 1981. He was appointed Honorary Colonel of The



London Irish Rifles, and later became President of their Regimental Association.

As Honorary Colonel he was in his early 1970's, everyday he would complete one sit up and one press up for every birthday he'd had. Unbeknown to him the London Irish Rifles called him 'Gripper' due to his firm fixing handshake.

Major General Corran Purdon seldom spoke about the two events that came to define his military career: the audacious commando raid on the Nazi-held French port of St Nazaire in 1942 and his subsequent year-long imprisonment at the infamous Colditz castle.

If pressed he would cite the bravery or endurance of someone who had shared the dangers or deprivation with him, while playing down the MC he was awarded for the former role.

His recollections on the raid on St Nazaire are here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4C9cnMDGnuo>

Roll of Honour – June 27

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1915

+SHORT, Patrick

Royal Irish Fusiliers. 1st Btn. A Coy. Private. 3832. Died 27/06/1915. Age 32. Son of Patrick Short, of Castle St., Armagh; husband of Bridget Short, of Banbrook Hill, Armagh. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium



Authuille Military Cemetery, Somme, France, where the graves of two entries in today's Roll of Honour may be found.

1916

+CHAMBERS, Thomas

Machine Gun Corps, 15th Coy. Lance Corporal. 16333. Died 27/07/1916. Son of Mrs. Charlotte Chambers, of 59, Charles St. South, Belfast. Serre Road Cemetery No 2, France

+COOLEY, John

Prince of Wales' Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians), 7th Btn. Private. 3412. Died 27/06/1916. Enlisted Belfast. Born British, Killead 14/11/1896. He was a farm servant employed

by Mr E Thompson of Seacash. Member of Ancient Order of Hibernians No 716, Aldergrove. Son of John and Bridget (nee McClarnon) Cooley, Dungonnell. St Patrick's Cemetery, Loos, Pas de Calais, France. Antrim Town WM

+HADDEN, George

Canadian Machine Gun Corps, 7th Bde. Private. 404848. Died 27/06/1916 of wounds. Aged 30. Son of John and Ellen Hadden, of Farriter, Cabragh, County Tyrone. George was born on 28/12/1886 in Tyrone. His father was a farmer. George emigrated to Canada. George Hadden was with the Toronto Police Force for nearly three years until 1915. He was then employed by the Toronto Harbour Commission as a surveyor. George Hadden enlisted with the 35th Battalion of the Canadian Infantry on 10/06/1915 at Niagara. He gives his next of kin as his mother. He was not married. He later transferred to the Canadian Machine Gun Corps after going overseas in October 1915. Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Dungannon WM

+IRVINE, S

Leinster Regiment, 7th Btn. Private. 3327. Died 27/06/1916. Age 18. Son of John and Bridget Irvine. Born at Belfast. St Patrick's Cemetery, Loos, France

+LAW, Victor Thomas

Royal Irish Rifles. 13th Btn. Corporal. 18071. Died 27/06/1916. Aged 19. Son of Daniel Law, of Anchor Lodge, Newcastle, Co. Down. Authuille Military Cemetery, Somme, France. Newcastle WM. Scout Association's WW1 Roll

+McCONNELL, John Wesley

Leinster Regiment, 7th Btn. Lance Serjeant. 2313. Died 27/06/1916. Age 23. Son of Rose McConnell, of 169, Crimea St., Belfast, and the late William McConnell. Loos Memorial, France

+McCRACKEN, John

Royal Irish Rifles. 13th Btn. Lance Corporal. 18146. Died 27/06/1916. Age 36. Before the war John McCracken was a member of the North Down contingent of the Ulster Volunteer Force and he enlisted in Newtownards. He joined the 1st Co Down Volunteers and he went to the front in October 1915 with the Royal Irish Rifles, 13th Btn. in 108th Brigade of the 36th (Ulster) Division. He was a bass drummer in the 13th Battalion Band. John had also been a bass drummer in Lord Londonderry's Own Church Lads Brigade (CLB) Flute Band. In a letter of condolence to John's wife, Captain Charles Murland outlined the circumstances of John's death, 'He was out with a [raiding] party on special duty and had done splendid work. He had just completed bandaging a wounded man and was going over to attend another one when he was instantaneously killed by a shell'. This was the raid led by Captain Elliott Johnston who was awarded the Military Cross for his conspicuous gallantry. John McCracken was born on 24/06/1883 in the townland of Ballyblack. Son of James and Jane McCracken (nee Conway, sometimes Conoway) who were married on 21/06/1882 in Greenwell Street Presbyterian Church, Newtownards. John McCracken, a labourer, and Elizabeth (Lizzie) McCullough married on 05/08/1904 in Newtownards Parish Church of Ireland Church (St Mark's). They had three children. The family

lived at 12, Windmill Row, Newtownards. Authuille Military Cemetery, Authuille, France. Newtownards WM.
Newtownards C of I Parish Church (St Mark's) WM

+NOBLE, William

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 9th Btn. Private. 11090.
Died 27/06/1916. Age 34. Son of the late Thomas Noble and of Helen Noble, of Church St., Omagh. Cerisy-Gailly French National Cemetery, France

+QUINN, J T

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 9th Btn. Private. 14622. Died 27/06/1916. Aged 20. Son of Mrs. Mary Quinn, of Manordougherty, Markethill. Hamel Military Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel, France

+RIDDALL, Robert

Royal Engineers, 150th Field Coy. Lance Corporal. 64242. Died 27/06/1916. Age 26. Son of Jane and the late R. Robert Riddall, of Armagh; husband to Ethel Riddall and father of Agnes, 43, Third Street, Conway Street, Belfast. The Ulster Gazette of 21/07/1916 reported, "Cpl Robert Riddall of the Ulster Division RE, formerly of Callan Street, Armagh, was killed while mending pipework in the trenches. He was 7 years in the Church Lads Brigade and a piccolo player in LOL 100 band. He served his time as a plumber with Donnelly and Somerville before working in Queen's Island, Belfast". Forceville Communal Cemetery and Extension, France

+SKILLEN, Sydney

Royal Irish Rifles. 13th Btn. Rifleman. 3069. Died

27/06/1916. Authuille Military Cemetery, Somme, France.
Newcastle C of I Parish WM

+TOTTENHAM, Arthur Henry

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Btn. C Coy. Second Lieutenant. Died 27/06/1916 near Albert. Age 20 years old. In the same week that his family received confirmation that his older brother, Edward had died during the fighting in Mesopotamia in April that year. Arthur was born in Roscommon on 08/06/1896. His father was a former Royal Irish Constabulary district inspector who retired to Moy. Arthur was educated at Mostyn House Preparatory School, Chester. Arthur and his brother were also educated at St Bees School, Cumbria. Son of Lowry Cliffe Loftus Tottenham and Isabella Ogle Tottenham, of The Grange, Moy. Bouzincourt Communal Cemetery Extension, Somme, France. Moy WM, Dungannon WM

Richard Doherty writes - 2/Lt Arthur Henry Tottenham was probably related to Maj. Gen. Frederick Loftus Tottenham who commanded 81st (West African) Division in Burma and executed an outstanding Chindit-style campaign in the Kaladan Valley. The writer of the citation for his DSO for those operations described him as playing 'Jackson in the Valley', a reference to Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign in the American Civil War. Commissioned in 2nd Gurkhas in 1916, his two sons later followed him with one being killed at Monte Cassino and the other in Burma. In the early 1950s Maj. Gen. Frederick Loftus Tottenham lived in Northern Ireland and commanded the revived Home Guard during its existence from 1952 to 1956.

1917

+DOHERTY, Stephen

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 9th (Tyrone) Btn. Private. 13624. Died 27/06/1917. Age 25. The 36th (Ulster) Division and the 16th (Irish) Division were together clearing the Wijtschate ridge when Stephen was fatally injured. Stephen is described as a “scutcher” in the 1911 census. (“Scutching” was a process of the production of linen where the dried flax was separated into “tow” and “shaws”. It involved a laborious and somewhat dangerous procedure where the stalks were offered to a rapidly spinning flail generally powered by a water-wheel). Son of Samuel and Annie Doherty, of Altreste, Milltown, Burndennett, Co. Tyrone. Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Nord, France. 1st Donaghedy Presbyterian Church

+McCREA, Alexander

Royal Garrison Artillery, 58th Siege Bty. Second Lieutenant. 17201. Died 27/06/1917. Aged 42. Alexander enlisted in Royal Horse Artillery which later became Royal Field Artillery. He is believed to have served in the Boer War. 24 / 09/1915 saw Alex as a Sergeant. in the 42 Siege Battery of the Royal Garrison Artillery, British Expeditionary Force, in the Mediterranean. He took part in the landings at Gallipoli. He was promoted to substantive 2nd Lieutenant. Son of Alexander McCrea and Maggie Ramsay Alex and Janey were married in England. They had a son Alexander and a girl Eileen. Ferme-Olivier Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. Dungannon WM

1918

+HAMILTON, Robert

Royal Irish Rifles, 12th Btn. Rifleman. 18/932. Died 27/06/1918. From Donaghadee. Premont British Cemetery, France

1940

+JORDAN, Thomas Charles

RAF. Sergeant. 629644. Died 27/06/1940. Age 18. 235 Sqdn. Son of William Henry and Jane Ellen Jordan, Belfast. Oegstgeest Protestant Churchyard, Netherlands

1943

+QUAILE, William

RAFVR. Sergeant (Wireless Op./Air Gunner). 1119328. Died 27/06/1943. Aged 21. 104 Sqdn. Son of Robert and Mary Quaile, of Lurgan. Salerno War Cemetery

+ROBERTS, William

Royal Artillery. Gunner. 14594156. Died 27/06/1943. Aged 39. Husband to Maud Roberts of Magheragall. Lisburn Cemetery. Magheragall Parish Church WM

+ROSBOROUGH, Allan

Royal Artillery. 66 Medium Regt. Gunner. 821014. Died 27/06/1943. Aged 29. Son of James and Catherine Rosborough of Londonderry; Husband to Florence Rosborough of Waterside, Londonderry. Glendermot Church of Ireland Churchyard

1944

+JESSON, Walter

Leicestershire Regiment, 1st Btn. Private. 4857399. Died 21/09/1944. Aged 28. Son of Edward and Polly Jesson; husband of Annie Jesson, of Londonderry. Singapore Memorial, Singapore

+McWILLIAMS, William

Royal Artillery. 75 Anti-Tank Regt. 119 Bty. Bombardier. 6979861. Died 27/06/1944. Aged 23. Son of William James McWilliams and Ellen Jane McWilliams, of Derryharney, Co. Fermanagh. Bayeux War Cemetery, Calvados, France

1945

+DARRAGH, James

RAMC. Corporal. 6977528. Died 27/06/1945. Aged 32. Son of Richard and Elixabeth Darragh, Rasharkin, Co. Antrim. Bangor New Cemetery.

VETERANS

FILSON, James

Flight Lieutenant. DFC. Born 27/06/1920. From Kircubbin. For a time he was based at Ballyhalbert. On one Sunday morning he performed a low level run in his Spitfire along Main Street, Kircubbin which was sufficiently low to cause his superiors some displeasure. He served with 1435 Squadron in the defence of Malta when he was based at Luqa Airfield on the island and on one occasion he was shot down by the Royal Navy off the coast of Sicily. Having seen action in North Africa Jim Filson was flying air support for American Troops during the invasion of Italy when he was

again shot down by "Friendly Fire" this time coming from the U.S. Army. The London Gazette on 20/03/1945 records his being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was a very talented musician and music arranger. Member of Kircubbin LOL. He died in June 1990.

LYTTLE, William James

RNVR. Surgeon Probationer 1915-16;. Served in destroyer in North Sea. QUB MB 1918. Surgeon, RAF 1918-19. Subsequently took up a surgical career becoming consultant on the staff at the Sheffield Royal Infirmary. Born 27/09/1896. Died 27/06/1986. Son of Thomas A. Lyttle, Maghera. Campbell College 1092.

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

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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 houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com

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