

remembrance ni



Lurgan may claim Nl's most decorated fighter ace of WW2

Robert Turkington from Lurgan is amongst the foremost fighter pilots in WW2 from Northern Ireland.

With a confirmed total of 11 'kills' to his name - three of them shared - plus a 'probable' and four damaged, he emerged

as one of the most successful pilots to hail from the 'Emerald Isle' in the war, second only to the likes of Wing Commanders B. E. F. 'Paddy' Finucane and J. I. 'Killy' Kilmartin.

Robert Wilkinson 'Paddy' Turkington was born in Mhow, India on 13/06/1920, the youngest of three sons of John and Mary Amelie Turkington. His father, a native of Derrytrasna, Co. Armagh, was then employed as a civil engineer with the Indian Railways.

Young Robert was educated back home at Lurgan College, where he captained the Rugby XV and had an Ulster Schoolboys' Trial in 1938.

He attended Lurgan College from 01/09/1933 until 30/08/1939. He joined the RAFVR almost straight from school. In September 1940, and possibly inspired by events taking place over England, he enlisted in the Royal Air Force. In writing to his mother, he described how he had passed his 'Medical' with flying colours: 'The Recruiting Officer congratulated me on the way I came through – said one in two hundred got excellent all the way through – even eyesight which was perfect.'

Selected for pilot training, he was embarked for Canada and, on gaining his 'Wings', he was commissioned Pilot Officer in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.He became a highly successful pilot, and had the distinction of being awarded the DFC and Bar and then the D.S.O.

43 Squadron

In July 1942, Turkington was posted to No. 43 Squadron, a Hurricane unit operating out of Tangmere. It was in this

capacity that he commenced his operational career, among other sorties participating in Operation "Jubilee",the



Combined Operations raid on Dieppe. As noted in Adrian Stewart's "Hurricane", he made a 'most creditable landing' on returning from one such sortie in August 1942, enemy flak having shredded his aircraft's elevators.

In November, the Squadron was ordered to North Africa where, in a combat over Algiers on the 10th, Turkington claimed his first victory, a Ju. 88. His next notable achievement occurred on 27/03/1942, following 43's conversion to Spitfires: He fought a brace of combats in defence of one of our convoys and took a half-share in an Italian S-79 and damaged a He. 111. Having then claimed an Italian Re. 2001 as damaged on 13 May, he likewise shot up a 109 over Sicily on 18 July.

However, it was over Italy in November 1943 that Turkington raised himself to fully-fledged ace status, claiming five victims in combats fought over Volmonte, Volturno and off Capua. These comprised two 109s and a Ju. 88 confirmed – see above cited combat report dated 6 November – in addition to half shares in one of each type. The 109 he

destroyed on the 6th was at deck-level and 'very close range'. An indication as to just how close Turkington was prepared to get to his foe may be found in the following combat report, dated 02/11/1943:

'I first attacked from line-astern, giving a 3-second burst of cannon and M.G., opening fire at 150 yards range, closing to 20 yards. Immediately the long-range tank blew up and flames and white smoke came from underneath the fuselage. I broke away and my No. 2 continued the attack. I followed my No. 2 into another attack, giving a long burst of mixed fire from very short range. The E./A. went into a steep turn and I broke away and my No. 2 attacked again. The Me. 109 did a flick-roll and crashed. The combat took place near Val Montone. No return fire.'

Having then damaged a Fw. 190 south-east of Cassino on 15 December, Turkington was 'rested' in January 1944. The award of a richly deserved D.F.C. was announced in the London Gazette in the same month: he had amassed nearly 700 hours of operational flying time, latterly as a Flight Commander.

241 Squadron

As it transpired, Turkington's period of rest ended in May 1944. He was posted as a Flight Commander to No. 241 Squadron and quickly returned to form, claiming four confirmed 109s – and another 'probable' – in a 10-day period in July.

His first victim fell to his guns over Ancona on the 19th, as did his next two, both shot down on the 21st. A week later, over Falconara, he shot down another, in addition to claiming a 'probable'.

He was awarded an immediate Bar to his D.F.C., his total score now standing at eight and three shared destroyed; one 'probable' and four damaged.

Then in July 1944, as a Flight Commander in No. 241 Squadron, he raised his score to double figures, destroying four Me. 109s, two of them on the same day.

601 (County of London) Squadron

On the day of his last victory with No. 241 Squadron – 29 July 1943 – he received orders to take command of No. 601 (County of London) Squadron. His period of command, which lasted until January 1945, was marked by notable determination and courage of a high order.

Operating in the unit's 'Spitbombers', in close support of the advancing armies, Turkington and his fellow pilots wiped out countless locos and much motor transport. With the arrival of Spitfire IXbs at Fano in September, the Squadron packed an even more powerful punch, so much so that by the end of November it reported it had dropped almost 2,000 tons of bombs.

Much of 601's success was also attributable to determined low-level strafing work, often in the face of heavy opposition. A case in point, as cited in the recommendation for his D.S.O., was Turkington's attack on an enemy strongpoint in December. He made no fewer than six attacks until the target was reduced to burning wreckage. On 1 January 1944, Turkington's Spitfire was severely damaged by anti-aircraft fire in an attack on enemy occupied buildings at Cassiniola. He carried out a wheels-up landing back at base, where his aircraft was found to be 'riddled with holes'.

Awarded the D.S.O., for his 'sheer dogged persistence' and 'brilliant leadership', he was once more 'rested' in January 1945.

'The aircraft began to lose height and suddenly struck the ground'

Turkington, who next took command of his old squadron – No. 241 – expected to be demobbed shortly after V.E. Day in May 1945, but he was retained in Italy on standby.

He wrote to his mother to say that that he would be home in August and she re-decorated his room by way of welcome. When a telegram arrived on 2 August she expected it to herald his homecoming: instead it notified her of his death in a flying accident on the 29 July.

A witness to the tragedy later reported:

'Squadron Leader Turkington took off in Spitfire MK 423 on a cross-country flight to Naples. His engine was heard to cut out and he immediately turned to starboard in an attempt to return to the landing strip. The aircraft began to lose height and suddenly struck the ground with the nose and starboard wing. It then burst into flames.'

All ranks turned out at his temporary burial the following day at Mesne British Military Cemetery, where his grave was marked by an oak cross made by the Squadron's carpenter. His remains were later re-interred in the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Padua.

The gallant Turkington – just 26 years of age at the time of his death – is also commemorated on the Portadown's war memorial, in addition to an impressive memorial window at

Bannfoot Methodist Church, Co. Armagh. As neatly summarised in one newspaper obituary:

'Squadron Leader Turkington is dead, but his memory will live on. He, and countless others of his ilk and generation have by their deeds of valour laid the foundations of the new world created by their sacrifice.'



SQUADRON LEADER TURKINGTON - CITATIONS AND AWARDS

D.S.O. London Gazette 2 April 1945.

The original recommendation - submitted by Group Captain H. S. L. 'Cocky' Dundas - states:

'Squadron Leader Turkington took over command of 601 Squadron on 2 August 1944, at which time he was awarded a Bar to his D.F.C. for brilliant fighter and strafing work with

241 squadron. Since that time he has carried out 81 fighter-bomber sorties, bringing his total operational hours to 615 and his total operational sorties to 453. Squadron Leader Turkington is now O.T.E.

Squadron Leader Turkington has been inspiring and brilliant in his leadership while commanding 601 Squadron. As a fighter-bomber pilot he has, by personal example, taught his pilots with determination and accuracy from a low-level; the inevitable return fire he treated in characteristically light-hearted manner, although repeatedly hit himself. In this way he brought squadron morale, spirit and efficiency to the highest possible pitch, and commanded the absolute loyalty and devotion of those serving under him.

Squadron Leader Turkington has a particularly inspiring record as a close support leader. Many times he has destroyed his target through sheer dogged persistence, strafing repeatedly until his ammunition was exhausted. Thus, on 26 December 1944, leading a formation of six aircraft against a strongpoint, four bombs were not seen to explode and the other two went wide; accordingly, he led his aircraft into strafe no less than six times, despite return fire, and only left the target area when the strongpoint was reduced to burning wreckage. On 31 December 1944, under similar circumstances, and with a depleted formation, he strafed eight times to destroy the target completely.

On 5 January 1945, his aircraft was badly damaged by flak; he found it impossible to control, and would have baled out but for the fact that he needed both hands to maintain control. He succeeded in flying it back to base, and force landed successfully despite the fact his aircraft stalled at 160 m.p.h. - a very fine feat of airmanship.

For his great courage, undaunted cheerfulness and successful leadership, I strongly recommend Squadron Leader Turkington for the award of the Distinguished Service Order.'

D.F.C. London Gazette 25 January 1944. The original recommendation states:

'Flight Lieutenant Turkington took part in Dieppe and came overseas with the Squadron and now has 16 months service with us. He quickly made his mark as a fine leader and during the whole of the North African and Sicilian campaigns showed the greatest skill and enthusiasm to engage the enemy. His score to date is 5 E./A. confirmed and 2 damaged. His consistent resourcefulness, skilful flying and untiring devotion to duty has set a magnificent example to the rest of the Squadron, many months of which were spent under the most arduous conditions. I cannot too strongly recommend this award.'

Bar to D.F.C. London Gazette 29 September 1944.

The original recommendation - for an immediate award - states:

'On 29 July 1944, this officer was leading a section of two aircraft which intercepted two Me. 109s. In spite of the fact that only one cannon was firing, Flight Lieutenant Turkington destroyed one of the E./A. and probably destroyed the other, thus brining his score during the last ten days to 3 E./A. destroyed and one probably.

It is chiefly due to the fine example of skill, courage and devotion to duty shown by this officer that the Squadron owes its recent successes, for such was his keenness to engage the enemy that he flew on practically every patrol.

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On one occasion he was engaged for ten minutes by two Me. 109s, but with great skill and gallantry he warded off all their attacks and eventually they were both forced to retire.'

LURGAN COLLEGE

There were ten more former pupils of the College who died serving with the RAF in WW2.

Acknowledgments

Craigavon Historical Society, London Gazette, Lurgan College, Spink and Sons

On this day - July 29

1916



The map shows the locations of the 108th and 109th Brigades.109th War Diary is missing for this date but the 108th reported casualties. 11 Royal Irish Rifles have three soldiers wounded and the 13 Royal Irish Rifles have 1 soldier wounded.

Two German attempts made to recapture Delville Wood failed.

Fierce hand to hand fighting north and north east of Pozieres and High Wood

1921



An Austrian-born First World War veteran named Adolf Hitler becomes the leader of an obscure political faction that calls itself the National Socialist German Workers Party.



1924 On this day the Royal Naval War Memorial at Plymouth

Hoe is dedicated. Designed by Sir Robert Lorimer the memorial commemorates over 23,000 sailors of the Royal Navy and Commonwealth Navies. It is similar in design as the Royal Naval War Memorials in Portsmouth and Chatham reflecting a leading mark of the time.

1940

Eighty (80) German planes attack Dover harbour; British claim 17 down; Air Ministry accuses Germans of using Red Cross planes for reconnaissance. Germany apologizes to Eire for Wexford bombing. Intense dogfights over London and Home Counties. Britain refuses German proposal to use 64 Red Cross ships to rescue airmen from the English Channel.

A German memorandum issued by the OKM states that an invasion of Great Britain will not be possible until the second half of September 1940 and that the prospects for such an invasion seem doubtful.

Germany annexes Belgian provinces of Eupen, Malmédy, and Moresnet; bans speaking of French and Flemish.

James Melville 'Jimmy' Cox, the Reuters' correspondent in Tokyo was arrested on 27th July by the Kempeitai on the usual non-specific charge of espionage. Two days later he was seen falling from an open window on the third floor of the Kempeitai Headquarters. They claimed that he had committed suicide because he was guilty of espionage.

1941

Marshal Zhukov resigns as Russian Chief of Staff. Dutch freeze Japanese assets; now Japan has lost 75% of foreign trade and 90% of its oil supply.

1942

German troops take Proletarskaya and establish a bridgehead over the Manych River in the Caucasus region.

As Australians retreat, Japanese take Kokoda and its airfield in Papua New Guinea.

1943

The mass evacuation of a million civilians from Hamburg is ordered after the recent heavy bombings.

Army Group A launches counter attacks to improve its positions along the Mius River.

As Blitz Week continues, US Eighth Air Force bombs Kiel and Warnemünde, while RAF returns to battered Hamburg.

1944



Royal Marine Robert Shore took this gun sight (left) from a German vehicle he found on a reconnaissance mission near Caen. He kept it as a souvenir.

The last of a series of RAF bombing raids on Stuttgart that kill 900 and leave 100,000 homeless takes place.

The Red Army reaches to the Baltic coast to the West of Riga, thereby cutting Army Group North off in Estonia and Eastern Latvia.

The Orote Peninsula is secured on Guam.

1945

After having delivered the atomic bomb to Tinian, cruiser USS Indianapolis is sunk by Japanese sub I-58 off Leyte, and is not missed for days. Only 316 of 1196 men will survive the shark-infested waters.



Roll of Honour – July 29

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1915

+JAMISON, G

Royal Irish Rifles, 1st Btn. Rifleman. 10409. Died 29/07/1915. Age 20. Son of James and Sarah Jamison, of

159, Greenwell St., Newtownards. Y Farm Military Cemetery, Bois-Grenier, France

1916

+BELL, Patrick Thomas Clark

Australian Infantry, 28th Btn. Lieutenant. Died 29/07/1916. Age 26. From Larne. Son of James and Mary Eleanor Clark Bell; husband of D.M. Bell, of May St., Bayswater, Western Australia. Born Larne. Sucrerie Military Cemetery, Colincamps, France

+CASSIDY, Michael

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 7th Btn. Private. 27367. Died 29/07/1916. Age 38. Son of Michael and Mary Ann Cassidy. Born Knockninny, Derrylin, Co. Fermanagh. Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, France

+HULL, Robert

Australian Infantry, 28th Btn.Private. 98. Died 29/07/1915. Born in Dungiven. Son of Robert Hull, Dungiven, Londonderry. Enlisted: 15/02/1915, Derby, Western Australia. Courcelette British Cemetery, France

+JAMISON, G

Royal Irish Rifles. 1st Btn. Rifleman. 10409. Died 29/07/1915. Age 20. George Jamison worked as an apprentice weaver before the outbreak of the Great War. He enlisted in Belfast. He died while his Battalion was holding the line and the Rev M.W.T. Cowan, Church of England Chaplain, 95th Infantry Brigade conducted his



St Sever Cemetery in Rouen

funeral that same day. From 20th Field Ambulance in 8th Division of the British Expeditionary Force, the Rev Cowan wrote a letter of sympathy to George Jamison's mother the following day. In an article in the Newtownards Chronicle the Rev W.L.T. Whatham, Church of Ireland Rector in Newtownards described Rifleman George Jamison as 'the soldier who died with a smile on his face'. This description was based on a comment made in a letter of sympathy to his parents written by Lance Corporal D. Wilkinson (No. 6888). He wrote, 'We all miss him badly here, he was such a real good fellow, always in the best of spirits. I might tell you that he died with a smile. He and I were just after passing a joke. He was showing me the rose and handkerchief you had sent him, then he sat down to write a letter. I don't think he got it finished. He got up again to have a shot at them, as he said, when he was hit. He got it right through the head. He did not suffer any pain for he was laughing when he was hit, and that is how he fell – smiling'. Son of James

and Sarah Jamison, of 159, Greenwell St., Newtownards. Y Farm Military Cemetery, Bois-Grenier, France. Newtownards and District WM. St Mark's C of I Parish Church, Newtownards

+McCORRY, James

Australian Infantry, A.I.F. 28th Btn. Lance Corporal. 489. Died 29/07/1916. Age 46. Born in Lurgan. Son of Peter McCorry, M.D., M.R.C.S., and Jane McCorry, of 7, Albert Drive, Burnside, Rutherglen, Glasgow, Scotland. Villers Bretonneaux Memorial, France

+McWILLIAMS, F

Royal Garrison Artillery, 66th Siege Bty. Gunner. 19721. Died 29/07/1916. Born Ballyclare. Enlisted Glasgow. Next of kin was his uncle, Francis McWilliams, Lynn View, Mill Lane (now named Avondale Dr.,) Balllyclare. Peronne Road Cemetery, Maricourt, France. Balllyclare WM

1917

+KEAN, Cuthbert Benedict

RNR. Lieutenant. HMS Jessamine. Died 29/08/1917. Age 27. Killed in action with a submarine as prize crew of SS Cooray in Irish Sea. Son of Dr. Hugh and Sarah Kean of Newry. Chatham Naval Memorial, Panel 25.

+KELLY, Edward

Irish Guards 1st Btn. Private. 11364. Died 29/07/1917. Age 29. Son of Timothy and Letitia Kelly, of North St., Lurgan. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial

+McVEIGH, William Alfred

RNR. Droagh, Larne, Gardenmore - PCI RH

1918

+DEMPSEY, I

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 9th Btn. Private. 27520. Died 29/07/1918. Husband of M. Dempsey, of Artiferrall, Dunboy, Co. Antrim. Arneke Brotosh Cemetery, France

+KELLY, Robert

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 2nd Btn. Private. 4451, Died 29/07/1918. Age 26. Grandson of Annie Forbes, of Omagh, Co. Tyrone. Mont Huon Military Cemetery, Le Treport, France

+KENNEDY, J

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 7th/8th Btn. Serjeant. 3168. Died 29/07/1918. Age 19. Son of John and Mary Jane Kennedy, of 22, Earlscourt St., Belfast. Godewaersvelde British Cemetery, France

+MALLON, William Tally

165th Infantry (New York), United States Army. Private. Died 29/07/1918 at the Battle of Ourcq near Seringes-et-Nesles, France, by the bullet of a German sniper. Age 18. William Tally Mallon's parents were both from Tyrone but emigrated to America. William and Mary Ann had one son, born on 15/04/1899 in Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His father died three months after William was born. His mother remarried and when William was about 6 years, the family moved to New York City. William Tally Mallon enlisted in the

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New York 165th Infantry in April 1917, not yet aged 17. His remains were buried in France but later re-interred in Galbally, Dungannon.

+NELSON, C

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 7th/8th Btn. Private. 20255. Died 29/07/1918. Husband to Mrs. M. Nelson, of 15, Fifth St., Shankhill Rd., Belfast. Godewaersvelde British Cemetery, France

1920

+CHAMBERS, James Henry

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 9th Btn. B Coy. Lance Corporal. 14052. Died 29/07/1920. Age 26. Son of William and Mary J. Chambers, of 50, Carleton St., Portadown. Knocknamuckley (St Matthias) C of I Churchyard, Co. Armagh

1940

+KING, John

Royal Ulster Rifles, 2nd Btn. Warrant Officer Class III. Platoon Sergeant Major. 7008389. Died 29/07/1940 at Chippenham Hospital, Wiltshire, with fatal head injuries received in a motorcycle crash. Aged 38. He resided with his wife and 3 young children at 14 Oval Street, Belfast, Co. Down and had over 20 years' service with The Rifles. A brother, Constable Weir King served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Co. Armagh. His funeral took place with full military honours on 3rd August 1940. Reverend Alexander Suiters of Mersey Street Presbyterian Church, Belfast, Co.

Down officiated. Dundonald Cemetery.

1942

+McCRORY, Robert Getgood

RAFVR. Sergeant (Observer). 1024870. Died 29/07/1942. Aged 23. 115 Sqdn. Known as Bob, he studied at Banbridge Public Elementary School and Banbridge Academy where he became Head Boy. He became a teacher, becoming the Principal of St. John's School, Kilwarlin, Hillsborough. In March 1941 he joined the RAF. After training in Canada, he joined RAF 115 Squadron as an Observer at RAF Marham, Norfolk. This pioneering squadron was among the first to trial the navigational aid "Gee" and to use flares. Vickers Wellington Z1605 took off from RAF Marham, Norfolk at 2308hrs on 28/07/1942 bound for Hamburg, Germany. A total of 256 planes from No. 3 Group took part in the raid. Poor weather prevented the planned larger force from attacking the German city. The raiders became scattered in worsening weather with only 63 planes making it to Hamburg. A total of 13 people died in the city with 48 more injured. The Royal Air Force suffered great losses totalling 15.2% of the planes dispatched. McCrory's bomber did not return from the raid and all members of the crew were listed missing presumed killed. Son of Robert and Margaret Elizabeth McCrory, of Bridge Street, Banbridge. Kiel War Cemetery, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. Seapatrick Parish Church Banbridge WM

+SHILLIDAY, Alexander

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 1st Btn. Lance Corporal. 7012866. Died 29/07/1943. Age 28. From Darkley near Keady. Son of Alexander and Sarah Shilliday. He had four brothers and a sister. Rangoon War Cemetery, Myanmar

1944

+CROOKE, Arthur Woodrow

RAFVR. Sergeant.143915. Died 29/07/1944. Aged 20. 103 Sqdn. Son of Thomas J. Crooke and Edith A. Crooke, Belfast. Charmes Military Cemetery, Essegney, France

+FRAZER, Charles Moses

Royal Artillery, 61st (Denbighshire Yeomanry) Medium Regiment. Lance Bombardier. 1116622. Died 29/07/1944 of wounds sustained at Normandy. Aged 20. WOPE QUB 1942. Born in Co. Tyrone. Son of John Fitzgerald and Elizabeth Kathleen Frazer of Killylea, Co. Armagh. La Deliverande War Cemetery, Douvres-la-Deliverande, France Moy WM. QUB WM

+FREEBURN, Albert G

Naval Auxiliary Personnel (Merchant Navy). Fireman. 301408. Died 29/07/1944. Age 20. HMS Prince Leopold. Son of George Henry and Catherine Louisa Freeburn, Ebor St., Belfast. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 11/08/1944). Liverpool Naval Memorial, Panel 18

+WYLIE, Wiliam John Crozier

RAFVR. Sergeant (Wireless Operator). 1670532. Died 29/07/1944. 103 Sqdn. Son of Mrs. Margaret Wylie, Belfast.

Durnbach War Cemetery, Germany

1945

+TURKINGTON, Robert Wilkinson

RAFVR. Squadron Leader.117519. DSO, DFC and Bar. Died 29/07/1945. Aged 26. 241 Sqdn. Son of John and Mary Amelie Turkington, of Derrytrasna, Co. Armagh. Padua War Cemetery, Italy. See article this site.

VETERANS

ALDERDICE, Norman Geoffrey

RAFVR.Squadron Leader. 170402. DFC - London Gazette 19/10/1945 1945. MiD. 123, Squadron. Commissioned August 1943. Campbell College 2537. QUB 1918 - 40. Med QUB 1938. Son of G Walter Alderdice, Aldergrove, Belfast Rd., Newry. Post war National Operations Manager for Securicor Ltd. Died 29/07/1986

IRWIN, Joseph

RAF. MCB. Born 29/07/1919. Son of John Irwin, Cavehill Drive, Belfast. Postwar. Bank official, Bangor Co. Down

JEFFREY, Leonard James

RNR. Eng. - Lieutenant. Mentioned in despatches. Son of Rev. R. Foster Jeffrey, Ardlui, Cyprus Park, Belfast. B 29/07/1882. D 1920. Campbell College 361.

KNOX, William Robert

RNAS. Petty Officer Mechanic. F51150. Enlisted 12/02/1918 for hostilities. In President. To Machine Gun Corps 17/02/1918. Born Coleraine 29/07/1893. Motor driver. ADM RNAS188/643/51150

Every Day is a Remembrance Day We will remember them

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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 houstonmckelvey@mac.com

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