



remembrance ni



Passchendale in the mud

On August 1, 1917, one of the most famous photographs of WW1 taken by Warwick Brooke, near Boesinghe, on the second day of the Third Battle of Ypres. (IWM Q 5935). The men are from 36th Division Field Ambulance. The small man on the left was identified as J Coates from Woodvale, Belfast - see account on next page.

Passchendale in the mud

Following the Battle of Messines, which had reduced the bottom half of the Ypres Salient, the British began their offensive in Flanders, known as the Third Battle of Ypres, to reduce the northern half of the Ypres Salient. The battle had begun on 31 July.

Both the 16th (Irish) and the 36th (Ulster) Division were held in reserve when they joined XIX Corps in Passchendale. They were destined to assault at Langemarck on August 16.

Both divisions went into the line on the night of August 3 with the 36th (Ulster) Division to the left of the 16th (Irish) Division. None of these divisions' troops would be fresh going in to the attack on August 16 as they struggled through the mud, the enemy artillery attacks, and aircraft attacks.

The ground had been churned to a powder by bombardment and as earlier shelling had destroyed the drainage canals, it took very little rain to turn the Flemish plain into an impassable roadless swamp. After the heavy rain of July 31, men floundered in porridge-like mud with some being swallowed up and drowned.

James Coates - the medic in the mud

Each year over the past six years Remembrance Ni has updated the daily report on the web site. Mostly this has been through research of sources which has enabled new names or new information to existing names to be added.

It is a delight when someone who is related to an individual or knew them makes contact. The photograph on page 1 of Jimmy Coates from Woodvale of the 36th (Ulster) Division Field Ambulance in the mud of Passchendale brought a wonderful response from granddaughter Elizabeth Nicholl. This is her recount of the man in one of the muddiest events of the war trying to save the life of a comrade.

Elizabeth recalls that James was born 04/03/1893 to Matthew and Mary Coates (née Crawford) in Benwell Street, off the lower Oldpark Road, Belfast. He was their fourth son. They had another two sons and three daughters after him.

Two of his older brothers and a younger one all joined up at the start of the First World War. They were in the Royal Irish Rifles.

Elizabeth has a certificate with Jimmy's signature on the Ulster Covenant in 1912.

He met his wife Lizzie Mullan at work, she was a spinner and he a labourer.

They married 08/11/1914 in Holy Trinity Church Belfast which was sited in the Carrick Hill area. (The church was destroyed during the Belfast Blitz). Their marriage certificate that he was a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was aged 21.

He did some training on the Clondeboy Estate. He was a stretcher bearer in the army and was responsible for collecting the dead/dying and wounded off the battle field. He was at the Battle of Passchendale/ 3rd Battle of Ypres,

as can be seen from this notorious photograph. He did not return home until late 1918.

His wife, Elizabeth's grandmother, worked while he was away at war.

He lived at 10 Linwood Street, Lower Oldpark, all his married life. His first child was born in 1919. He worked as a porter for the Northern Bank from his return until his retirement. It was the big white bank on the corner of Lower Donegal Street, Belfast.

He rarely talked about his experiences but was very, very involved with the British Legion when it was formed and was very devout in remembering his friends and family on Remembrance Day. He always went to the City Hall Memorial to pay his respects.

He joined the Royal Artillery at the start of the Second World War and served with them for that war.

He died 24th March 1966 from an aortic aneurysm



On this Day – August 2



1914

German troops invade Luxemburg as France is entered at four points.

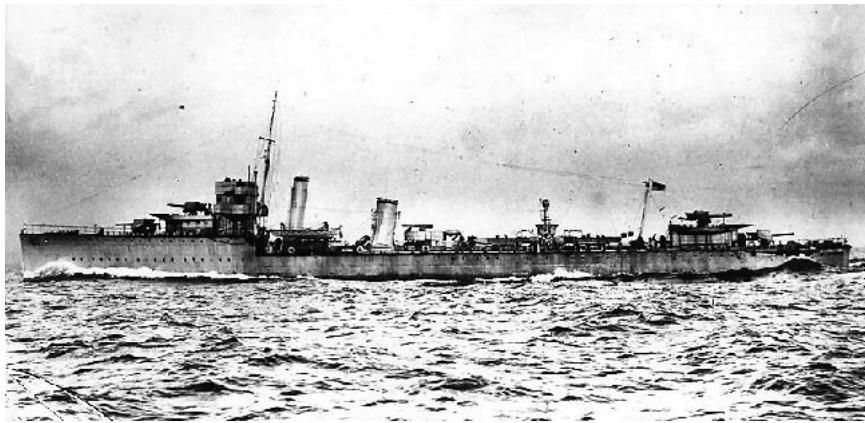
1916

At Verdun German trenches are carried south of Fleury, with a reported 800 prisoners taken.

1917

The Germans attack Infantry Hill (East of Monchy-Arras) and carry some trenches.

Fleet supply vessel HMS Ermine (ex steam passenger ferry SS Ermine, G & J Burns, Glasgow) was sunk by a submarine-laid mine in the Aegean with the loss of 24 of her



crew.

1918

The French enter and re-take Soissons.

1934

Adolf Hitler merges the offices of German Chancellor and President, declaring himself "Führer" (leader)

1940

Montreal mayor Camillien Houde publicly urges Quebecers to not sign up for national registration for war duty.

Lord Beaverbrook appointed to War Cabinet.

French military court sentences de Gaulle to death in absentia.

Italy reported to be massing troops on Libya-Egypt border.

British Royal Navy bombards Italian naval base on Sardinia.

1941

US and USSR agree on US aid.

All radios in Norway are confiscated.

Soviets blow up a huge Japanese fuel and ammunition dump at Tatuzuchuan in Eastern Manchuria.

US Office of Production Management seizes silk supply and

takes control of silk industry, restricts use of rayon, reserves steel for government use only.

1942

The British convoy, code-named 'Pedestal' leaves Britain for the strategically-important island of Malta in the Mediterranean. The convoy consists of 14 fast merchant ships loaded with fuel, food, and ammunition. The convoy is accompanied by 2 battleships (Nelson and Rodney), 3 aircraft carriers (Victorious, Indomitable, and Eagle), 14 destroyers, and 3 anti-aircraft cruisers.

1943

PT-109, commanded by future president Lt. John F. Kennedy, sunk off Solomons by Japanese destroyer Amagiri; the survivors swim 4 hrs to a deserted island.

The ninth attack on Hamburg in eight days. More bombs have now been dropped on Hamburg than on London during the whole of the Blitz. Estimated 50.000 killed, equal to Britain's entire civilian losses by bombing in the war so far.

Hitler orders that German armies are to hold fast in Russia, but Manstein ignores him and uses a flexible defense in the Kharkov sector. The Russian gains around Orel continue., but German forces repel massive Soviet attacks at Izyum and the Mius river line.

The US Army drafts Sicilian mules into service to carry supplies to soldiers fighting in the mountains of Italy. The mule train commander reports that few of the draftees “seem to like army life.”

Two hundred Jews escape from Treblinka extermination camp during a revolt.



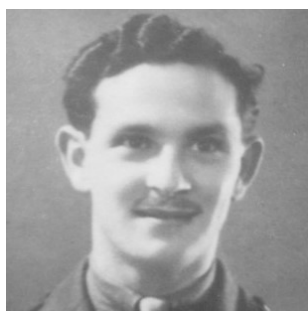
1943 - 38 (Irish) Brigade at Centuripe

From the War Diary of the Brigade -

On August 2, 1943 The Irish Brigade was ordered to take Centuripe. It was taken. "Centuripe was the Skins battle. The Faughs had some heavy fighting on the east of the town & the London Irish made a dangerous flank secure but the Skins were closely engaged all day & all night." The Irish Brigade was ordered to take Centuripe. It was taken. Centuripe was the Skins battle. The Faughs had some heavy fighting on the east of the town & the London



Irish made a dangerous flank secure but the Skins were closely engaged all day & all night."



1 RlrF: 2000 Zero. 2050 D Coy were on their first objective but not their second. While attacking the second, the OC Capt W Hanna was killed (See Roll of Honour below). Sgt Brandon's platoon had some very close fighting on the reverse slope of the first objective before they finally took it



2 LIR:

"At midday, after a recce had been made for an attack on the right, the battalion was ordered to attack positions on the west of the town as a prelude to the final assault by 6 Innisks & 1 RlrF. The battalion objectives were pt 611, pt 704 & pt 704" Photo below - Lt Percy Hamilton, 6 Innisks:



"Late in the afternoon, the CO gave orders to the right hand coys to advance & the remaining two to make straight for the town up the cliff through the cactus.

We watched the fellows climbing up the cliff & getting to the first couple of buildings.

Someone on our side dropped a smoke bomb near them, but actually it attracted more attention than anything else. After they disappeared among the first buildings, we could only see odd figures crossing gaps and could not tell who they were.."

1944



The largest naval convoy of WW2 arrives in English waters. Codenamed HX 300, it's comprised of 166 cargo ships and 35 escorts. It carries everything from tanks and fuel oil to



Springtime in bloom at Courcellette British Cemetery on the Somme for Canadian, Australian and UK servicemen

lumber and rum. Not a single vessel is lost to enemy U-boats.

Churchill makes a statement to the House of Commons and says after seven weeks of non-stop V1 attacks, 5,340 having being launched, that 4,735 have been killed, 14,000 injured and 17,000 houses completely destroyed.

The U.S. VIII Corps moves West from the Avranches area along the Brittany coast, but the main force drives eastward. Turkey ends diplomatic relations with Germany.

The First Polish Army gains a Vistula bridgehead, 40 miles to the south of Warsaw.

1945

Potsdam conference ends after more than two weeks of deliberations. Allied leaders have been discussing what should become of Germany.

US B-29s drop 6000 tons of bombs on Nagasaki and Toyama, Japan. Japanese suffocate 387 Allied POWs in mine on Sado off Honshu.



Roll of Honour – August 2

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1915

+ANDREWS, William Ernest

Royal Irish Rifles. 2nd Btn. Captain. Died 02/08/1915. Age 23. Son of Archibald and Mary Andrews, of 647, Athabasca

St. West, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada. Native of Gilford. Co. Down. White House Cemetery, St Jean-Les-Ypres, Lankhof Chateau Memorial. 28. Belgium and UK servicemen. Knock (Belfast) RFC Memorial Pavilion

+CLOSE, John

RN. AB. 216280. HMS Indefatigable. Died of illness 02/08/1915. Boy service from 24/07/1901. Enrolled 06/10/1903 for 12 years. In Indefatigable 24/02/1911 - 02/08/1915. Born Belfast 08/10/1885. Ashmore St., Belfast. Queensferry Cemetery. ADM 188/379/216280

+McDONALD, Mark William

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 4th Btn. Second Lieutenant. Died 02/08/1915. Age 19. Son of Mark and May McDonald, of Portaferry, Co. Down. Glenarm New Cemetery

1916

+AGNEW, William

Seaforth Highlanders, 5th Btn. Private. 4150. Died 02/08/1916. Age 23. Son of James Graham Agnew and Elizabeth Agnew, of 19, Ravenscroft St., Belfast. Theipval Memorial, France

+BEST, T W A

Royal Irish Rifles, 1st Btn. Rifleman. 7298. Died 02/08/1916. Age 21. Son of Thomas William Alexander Best and Annie Vickers Best, of 49, Jennymount St., Belfast. Vermelles British Cemetery, France

+HAMILTON, William

Royal Field Artillery, 275th Bde. Gunner. 2429. Died

02/08/1916. Age 18. Son of James and Mary Jane Hamilton of Mullaghmore, Fivemiletown, Flat Iron Copse Cemetery, Mametz, Somme, France. Timpany LOL 889 RH, Fivemiletown WM, Clogher WM, St John's C of I Fivemiletown RH

+McCAUGHEY, J

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 8th Btn. Private. 24762. Died 02/08/1916. James was born in Clogher, County Tyrone about 1881. Son of Catherine McCaughey. James was born in Clogher, County Tyrone about 1881. The family moved to Cookstown. His mother was a widow. James was a labourer. He enlisted in the army on 12/07/1915. Bois-Carre Military Cemetery, Haisnes, France

1917

+DICKSON, Robert Adair

Royal Irish Regiment, 6th Btn. Second Lieutenant. Died 02/08/1917. Age 36. Son of John Mitchel Dickson and Mary Gamble Dickson, of 28, Stranmillis Rd., Belfast. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

+McCARTNEY, W

Royal Irish Rifles. Rifleman. G/215. Died 02/08/1917. Age 51. Husband to Nellie McCartney, of Waringstown. Carnmoney Cemetery

+McGUGAN, William John

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 2nd Btn. Private/acting Lance-Corporal. 7911. Died 02/08/1917. Age 33. "He was called up on the General Reserve in August 1914, and took part in the

heavy fighting at Mons, and was wounded at the battle of Aisnr, where a portion of shell struck and lodged in his heel". (The Northern Whig, 03/10/1914). Son of William and Mary McGugan, of Aghadowey. Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, France

+MITCHELL, Andrew

Leinster Regiment. 2nd Btn. Second Lieutenant. Died 02/08/1917. Age 23. Son of Mr. and Mrs. James Mitchell, of Fahan, Co. Donegal. Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Belgium. Londonderry Diamond WM

+TODD, Harold Edwin

Yorkshire Regiment, 2nd Btn. Private. 33568. Died 02/08/1917. Age 26. "Rev. J. W. Gibson, at the morning service in Broadway Presbyterian Church (Belfast), on Sabbath announced that just before entering the pulpit he had received a letter written by an officer in France intimating that Private Harold E. Todd, who was connected with his regiment, and who belonged to Broadway, had been killed in action on 1st August. The officer wrote saying — "He was a fine soldier, and set a noble example to his comrades by his bravery and devotion to duty." Private Todd, previous to his enlisting, held a position in the Bank Buildings, his parents residing at Lake Glen, Andersonstown. He enlisted in the Mechanical Transport, and after a time of training was transferred to the infantry. A few months ago he went out to France with his regiment, and had been in several heavy engagements. On the day on which he fell his parents received a letter in which it was stated that he had been recommended for the Military Medal." Son of James and Elizabeth Todd, of Claremount,

Andersonstown, Belfast. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

1918

+FOSTER, David

RN. AB. J36501. HMS Ariel. Died 02/08/1918. Age 20. He took part in the campaign in East Africa and saw considerable service elsewhere. He died after a mine explosion sank HMS Ariel, an Acheron Class destroyer, which was converted to mine laying in 1917. Together with HMS Attack and HMS Acheron, Ariel rammed and sank U12 off Aberdeen. Born Ballymena 11/02/1898. Son of David and Elizabeth Foster, Ballycraigy, Ballymena. Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel 27. Harryville - PCI RH. ADM 188/720/36501

+KENNEDY, Richard

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn.transf. to (513222) 798th Area Employment Coy., attd. Emp. S.B. Unit, Labour Corps. Private. G/33. Died 02/08/1918. Age 38. Son of John and Mary Jane Kennedy, of Belfast. Terlincthun British Cemetery, Wimille, France

1941

+DELANEY, Samuel

Royal Artillery. Gunner. 886277. Died 02/08/1941. Aged 27. 31 Field Regt. Son of William and Eliza Jane Delaney, of Ballycarry, Co. Antrim. El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt

1942

+CAMPBELL, Thomas McCord

RAFVR. Sergeant (Wireless Op./Air Gunner). 1111478. Died 02/09/1942. Aged 21. 218 Sqdn. Son of Robert John and Jeannie Campbell, of Portrush. Nossegem Communal Cemetery, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium

1943

+HANNA, William

Royal Irish Fusiliers, attached from Royal Ulster Rifles. Captain. 112985. Died 02/08/1943. Age 22. Capt Hanna, who was D Company Commander, died in the attack on Centuripe. Born in Armagh in 1921, he was the youngest of three brothers, the others being Robert and James. William Hanna began his army career at Sandhurst in July 1939 and was commissioned into the Royal Ulster Rifles (RUR) soon after the outbreak of war. During early 1940, 2nd Lieutenant Hanna joined up with the RUR at their depot in Northern Ireland. Hanna was posted to the Faughs on 13/05/1943 after being posted to the British North African Force as a reinforcement. He was promoted to Captain and made second-in-command of A Company. Hanna took over command of D Company after the Tunisian campaign.

Billy Hanna's D Company 1st Royal Irish Fusiliers, led the Faughs' advance. Just before H Hour a small feature, described in the war diary as a pimple, from which 'the Germans had been making life difficult', was showered with mortar fire. A platoon moved on to it to support D Coy's advance; this was the first objective. At H Hour artillery fire crashed down on the main objective and D Coy moved off in darkness under its cover. As they passed the 'pimple' they came under intense fire from well-concealed German positions that had survived the shelling. Billy Hanna was hit

and killed almost immediately. Many others were mown down and the attack ground to a halt.

Earlier, as the CO, Lt Col Butler, had been giving his orders for the attack, the Adjutant, Captain Brian Clark, had looked at Billy Hanna and 'saw a man who was going to die; he had death on his face'. When a report came into Bn HQ after H Hour that Captain Hanna had been wounded, Clark said, 'No, he's dead'.

Others had also noticed Billy Hanna's visage during the O Group and were not surprised when he was killed. Among them was Robbie Robinson who recalled, 'I knew he was dead then.' Robbie Robinson was wounded by the same MG but Billy Hanna took a full burst.

A fellow subaltern (later Major General) Corran Purdon would remember Hanna as a sportsman: "I had travelled over (to Armagh and then onto Ballymena) with Teddy D'Arcy...and Bill Hanna, a fine athlete against whom I had played matches for Campbell College when he was at the Royal Academy in Armagh. Bill had represented Ulster at rugger, cricket and hockey. I remember being tackled by him – it was like being hit by a charging bull," Son of Walker and Sue Hanna, of Armagh. Catania War Cemetery, Italy

+JOHNSTON, George

Royal Canadian Infantry Corps, Loyal Edmonton Regiment. Private. M/16958. Died 02/08/1943. Age 44. The Loyal Edmonton Regiment was part of 2nd Infantry Brigade, 11st Canadian Infantry Division during Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily. The Division landed between

Pachino and Syracuse tasked with moving north to liberate the eastern coast as far as Messina. They encountered resistance from the German Army and scaled high ground around Etna before facing stiff opposition in the town of Leonforte. Further heavy fighting took place at Agira and Nissoria and the Canadian Regiments sustained many losses. George Johnston's death took place as his Regiment advanced to Adrano. He was the son of Thomas Johnston and Margaret H. Johnston of Ballymena. Agira Canadian War Cemetery, Sicily, Italy.

+TROTTER, John Alexander

RAF. Sergeant. 527609. Died 02/08/1943. Age 28. 211 Sqdn. Son of Robert and Elizabeth Trotter, of Maguiresbridge, Co. Fermanagh. Ambon War Cemetery, Indonesia

1944

+ATKINSON, Frederick William

Irish Guards, 2nd Btn. Corporal. 2719213. Died 02/08/1944. Aged 27. Frederick enlisted prior to the outbreak of WW2. Born 25/03/1917. Second son of Joseph and Margaret Atkinson. One of at least four children born in Armagh area. Frederick had only been married for a few months before being killed in the invasion of Normandy. Bayeux War Cemetery, Calvados, France. Moy WM

1945

+HYNDS, William John

RAFVR. Flying Officer. 161672. Died 02/08/1945. Age 24. 681 Sqdn. Son of Capt. S. N. Hynds, R.E., and Caroline

Hynds; Husband to Doreen Hynds, Belfast. Singapore Memorial, Column 447, Singapore

1946

+CURRY, T M

Royal Artillery. 4th Field Regt. Major. 265357. Died 02/08/1946. Taukkyan War Cemetery, Myanmar.

VETERANS

BAILIE, Robert John

RN. Leading Stoker. 301969. Enrolled 05/11/1902 for 12 years. Served to 02/08/1911. Joined RFR 03/09/1911. War service in Vivid II, Illustrious and Vengeance. Served 02/08/1914 - 12/02/1919. Born Belfast 18/01/1882. ADM 188/490/301969

MATCHETT, Henry Taylor

RN. FAA. MCB. Born 02/08/1920. Son of Robert J Matchett, Mountcollyer Ave., Belfast. Foreman, Onslow Parade, Belfast

**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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