



remembrance ni



**James
Gracey, DCM**

**North Irish
Horse and
New Zealand
Police**

In Trentham's St John's Anglican Churchyard, in New Zealand, there stands a headstone memorial to James Gracey DCM. It marks the last resting place of a brave North Irish soldier and one of the area's most influential policemen.

From Drumgor, Lurgan, in County Armagh, Northern Ireland, James Gracey was raised on a farm and working as

factory clerk with his brother before WW1. As Lord Kitchener, the Minister for War sought to rapidly increase the size of the British Army, he enlisted at the beginning of May



1915. Gracey initially joined the North Irish Horse, a Special Reserve unit of the British Army.

Richard Doherty notes - "The Special Reserve was completely separate from the Territorial Army, a title not adopted until after the FWW. The original Territorial Force was created in 1908 but wasn't extended to Ireland where the former militia and yeomanry units were formed into the Special Reserve.

“In the 1920s the Special Reserve became the Supplementary Reserve which equated to the First Class Army Reserve and the North Irish Horse was re-formed in the SR in 1939 while an anti-aircraft brigade in NI was also raised in the Supplementary Reserve.

“The Irish Line infantry regiments still had SR battalions on paper and thus, when the TA was re-raised and extended to Northern Ireland after the SWW, the TA battalions of those regiments took precedence after the theoretical SR battalions as 5th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 6th Royal Ulster Rifles and 5th Royal Irish Fusiliers.

“Until 1920 soldiers didn't have army numbers but were issued regimental or corps numbers which would change on transfer to a new unit.”

James Gracey was given the service number 1504. The unit's early contribution to the British Expeditionary Force has seen its members acknowledged as the first non-regular troops to land and see action in France.

Posted to F Squadron, Private Gracey left Antrim for England, where the unit was billeted at Hemel Hempstead, just northwest of London. Here they became the divisional mounted troops for the 33rd Division, a new British Army infantry division raised from volunteers for Kitchener's New Armies.

Disembarked in France November 1915

After initial training the Division was called forward to the Western Front, and Private Gracey disembarked in France

on 17 /11/1915. Concentrating in an area near Morbecque where the unit was reinforced with artillery and strengthened by the attachment of an experienced brigade. But Private Gracey would spend most of his first eight months in quiet parts of the line, and frequently moved between formations.

Before the 33rd Division's first major engagement during the Battle of the Somme, F Squadron of the North Irish Horse was transferred on 19 April 1916 to the 1st Cavalry Division. Then quickly moved again to become the Mounted Divisional troops of 49th (West Riding) Infantry Division and once more on 21 May to the 32nd Division.

On 25/05/1916, Gracey's F Squadron was formally redesignated B Squadron, then on 21 June combined with C Squadron and a Squadron of the 6th Inniskilling Dragoons to form the 2nd Regiment of the North Irish Horse. This unit was to be attached to the newly formed X Corps within the Second British Army.

Because their primary role was to break through and exploit any gap in the enemy's defences created by the infantry and artillery, Gracey's unit was frequently held back in support and readiness. After the initial stages of the Battle of the Somme, they sadly found themselves clearing the battlefield of bodies and equipment from 09 to 24/07/1916.

North Irish Horse began move to the Ypres front

Gracey's unit remained on the Somme until late October, when the 2nd Regiment North Irish Horse began to move north to the Ypres front. They were positioned at Boeschepe on the French side of the Belgium border, and remained

there until May 1917. In June they were held ready to exploit a breakthrough at Messines, but the opportunity did not come.

That month Private Gracey and his unit also received some sad news. The 2nd Regiment North Irish Horse was to be disbanded and members compulsorily transferred to the infantry. The unit moved to Aix-en-Issart to begin the dismounting process on 22/07/1917. Private Gracey was fortunate to be detailed as one of the party which would transport the Regiment's horses to Egypt.

Gracey accompanied Regiment's horses to Egypt.

Leaving on 14/08/1917, they transferred onto a mounted troop ship and sailed for Alexandria. After ensuring the horses arrived fit for their subsequent use during the ongoing Sinai and Palestine campaign, Gracey returned with his mates back through Italy to Ruyaulcourt in northeastern France.

There on 12/10/1917 he rejoined the remnants of his original unit which had been transferred to the 9th Battalion (Princess Victoria's) Royal Irish Fusiliers. Initially a service battalion from County Armagh, the unit was retitled the 9th (North Irish Horse) Battalion, in recognition of the source of most of its current members.

Private Gracey was issued a new service number of 41572, and soon found himself in the front lines as part of the 36th (Ulster) Division near Havrincourt, just southwest of Cambrai. On 3 November the unit participated in a major

trench raid, followed by time in billets at Ruyaulcourt whilst rotating in and out of the line.

Transferred to Royal Irish Fusiliers

Conditions were deteriorating as winter set in, and Private Gracey found life in the front lines particularly lively, as he was frequently subject to artillery, trench mortar and machine gun fire. On 23 November the Battalion attacked and secured the village of Moeuvres, driving off enemy counter attacks, but had to evacuate when support troops failed to arrive.

The unit then moved South of Arras into the trenches near Marcoing, participating in further raids and patrols, before having Christmas in billets. After a period of rest and training, the Battalion returned to the front line at the end of January 1918, near Grand Seraucourt. For the next two months Gracey's battalion was subject to shelling, night bombing from enemy aircraft and the occasional sniping, but overall this area of the front was considered quiet.

Forced to surrender when they ran out of ammunition

Then on 21/03/1918, in a surprise attack the full weight of the German Army fell on the defenders on this part of the line. This was the spring offensive which the enemy hoped would turn the War in their favour. Taking significant casualties, the 9th (North Irish Horse) Battalion of the Royal Irish Fusiliers fell back in a fighting withdraw over the next six days, constantly under fire and with little sleep.

Sadly, on 27 March, much of the battalion was surrounded and cut off, being overwhelmed by the enemy and forced to surrender when they ran out of ammunition. Fortunately, Private Gracey was one of 200 members of the unit who had been pulled back into a reserve position and were able to join a neighbouring brigade, from where they continued gallantly resisting the German attacks.

The German attack petered out after a week and Gracey's unit was withdrawn to the Ypres front to recuperate, reinforce and retrain. The 9th (North Irish Horse) Battalion moved back into the line near Messines in mid-April where they again suffered high casualties from enemy artillery. They remained on the defence and conducted raids in the Ypres sector until the end of August 1918, broken only by periods in brigade and divisional reserve.

Gracey found himself in front of Hill 63

On 24 August, the Battalion launched a successful attack on enemy positions at Mont Noir, and would spend the rest of the War pursuing the Germans who were withdrawing in the face of a sustained allied offensive all along the Western Front. A week later the now promoted Acting Lance Corporal Gracey, found himself in front of Hill 63 as his Battalion prepared to storm the enemy defences.

Launching at 0800 on 04/09/1918, the Battalion made good progress under the cover of an artillery barrage. Gracey's section commander was wounded and so he took command, and led a charge on two enemy machine gun positions, killing most of the enemy. Unfortunately, the



successful advance left their flanks unprotected and some companies had to withdraw in order to straighten the line.

Wounded Gracey assisted the stretcher bearers in bringing in the wounded

The enemy responded with heavy machine gun and artillery barrages and a counter attack. Although wounded himself, Lance Corporal Gracey assisted the stretcher bearers in bringing in the wounded. The 29th Division on their right had managed to take Hill 63, and the following day the 9th (North Irish Horse) Battalion were relieved.

In late September Gracey's battalion was involved in severe fighting to capture Hill 41, and during mid-October advanced to the River Lys, forcing a crossing at Courtrai. With the 36th (Ulster) Division they continued to drive the enemy back



until the end of the Month. The Armistice on 11 November 1918 found the unit in billets in Mouscron.

Award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal

Having survived the War, Gracey was promoted to Corporal and the London Gazette of 05/12/1918 confirmed the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions in front of Hill 63. Second only to the Victoria Cross, the decoration recognises conspicuous gallantry in battle. He left the Army on 26/02/1919 and was posted to the reserve.

Emigrated to New Zealand

James Gracey emigrated to New Zealand almost immediately after his release from the military. Volunteering

for service with the New Zealand Police, he was sworn in as a Constable on 1 May 1920, with the number 2230 and posted to Wellington. In 1929 he passed his examination for the rank of Sergeant, and was subsequently promoted and awarded the New Zealand Police long service and good conduct medal in 1936.

Sergeant Gracey served in Napier and relieved at Wairoa in 1941. He was then appointed the first sergeant-in-charge of the Upper Hutt station, and confirmed by the Public Service Commissioner as the Clerk and Bailiff of the Magistrate's Court at Upper Hutt on 20/12/1941. He gained admiration after leading a murder investigation and for his policing of untrustworthy residents of the Rimutaka tunnel camp in the early 1950s.

A well-respected member of the Upper Hutt community, James Gracey passed away in 1954 after a brief illness. He was interred after a well-attended service at St John's Anglican Church at Trentham. The epitaph, which was updated to include the passing of his wife in 1991, belies the man's gallantry and dedication. Beyond the letters "D.C.M." there is little to acknowledge his military service, nor his death while a serving member of the New Zealand Police.

Acknowledgements - The History of the North Irish Horse,
War Time Memories Project, NZ government archives,
Richard Doherty

On this Day – November 17

1887

Bernard Montgomery, future general, was born in London.

1916

Captain Sidney Cowan MC and 2 Bars from Castleknock, Dublin was killed in action. Cowan was one of the Royal Flying Corps first aces having seven kills by August 1916. He died in a mid-air collision with a friendly plane. Both pilots died.

1939

The Supreme Allied War Council agrees on the co-ordination of British and French war production. It is also decided that if the Germans should invade Belgium, then both British and French troops will move forward in to Belgium to defend the Albert Canal, River Meuse and the River Dyle, which were strong positions from which to meet any German attack. However, the Belgium government refuses to allow Allied reconnaissance parties in to country for fear of provoking the Germans.

Photo next page - The funeral of Czech Jan Opletal becomes the occasion for a large student demonstration. The Germans strike back ruthlessly, sentencing nine student leaders to death, closing the Czech universities, and sending 1200 students to concentration and labour camps.



The funeral of Czech Jan Opletal becomes the occasion for a large student demonstration. The Germans strike back ruthlessly, sentencing nine student leaders to death, closing the Czech universities, and sending 1200 students to concentration and labour camps.

1941

German Luftwaffe general and World War I fighter-ace Ernst Udet commits suicide. The Nazi government tells the public that he died in a flying accident.

The Germans establish the post of Reichskommissariat Ostland under Alfred Rosenberg, to administer the recently conquered territories in the east. Siberian troops are heavily engaged in front of Moscow.



Stalin issued Order no. 428, all settlements occupied by German troops are to be set on fire, to a depth of 40 to 60 km behind the main front line, force them to freeze under the open sky

A British night commando raid on what is thought to be Rommel's HQ at Breda Littoria in the Jebel Akhdar in Libya, fails when it is found to be only a logistical HQ and that Rommel is away on a visit to Rome. Also, the SAS raid on axis airfields fails when the transport aircraft are blown off course by a sandstorm.

Chiang Kai-shek urges the western democracies to take urgent action against Japan.

1942

British paratroops engage German troops in Tunisia, while the first clashes occur between the newly landed U.S. and German forces.

1943

A storm of protest erupts in Britain over the release of Sir Oswald Mosley, the British fascist, on health grounds.

The Battle of Sattelberg began during the Huon Peninsula Campaign in New Guinea.

The Russian 60th Army takes Korosten, 100 miles West of Kiev.

Roll of Honour – November 17

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1914

+ANDERSON, Bowie

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Btn. Private. 7275. Died 17/11/1914. Age 33. Native of Belfast. Son of James and Margaret Anderson; husband of Elizabeth Anderson, of 3, Paris St., Belfast. Cite Bonjean Military Cemetery, Armentieres, France

+BURGIN, Charles

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Btn. Serjeant. 2331. Died 17/11/1914. Age 2. Son of Mrs. Annie Burgin, of 15, Nelson St., Belfast. Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium

+LEARY, John

Cheshire Regiment. 1st Btn. Private. 8806. Died 17/11/1914. Age 24. Husband of Catherine Leary, of 13, Duffy St., Belfast. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

+MOLLOY, William John

Royal Irish Rifles, 1st Btn. Rifleman. 9417. Died 17/11/1914. Age 25. Son of Thomas Molloy, of 2, Alexander St., Belfast. Merville Communal Cemetery, France

1916

+MAGEE, John

Seaforth Highlanders, 1st/4th Btn. B Coy. Private. 4070. Died 17/11/1916. Age 28. Son of John and Jane Magee, of 3, Antigua St., Belfast. Frankfurt Trench British Cemetery, Beaumont-Hamel, France

+MONTGOMERY, W

Royal Irish Rifles. 16th Btn. Rifleman. 534. Died 17/11/1916. Age 24. Son of William Montgomery, of Ballymacromwell, Toy, Co. Down. Killyleagh Presbyterian Churchyard. Or Meeting House Green

1917

+McCLINTOCK, James Thompson

Canadian Machine Gun Corps, No 2 Coy. Private. 174339. Died 17/11/1917 at the Battle of Passchendaele. Born 18/1/1878 Ballyboley, Ballynure. Son of John McClintock and Mary McCrea; husband to Isabella McClintock. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

+RICHARDSON, George

Royal Engineers, 122nd Field Coy. Sapper. 57751. Died 17/11/1917. Age 44. Son of the late William John and Agnes Richardson, of Grosvenor Rd., Belfast. Brookwood Military Cemetery

+WILSON, William Alexander

Royal Irish Rifles, 13th Btn. transf. to 12th Btn. D Coy. Rifleman. 573. Died 22/11/1917. Age 20. Son of William and Sophia Wilson, of 2, Milfort Terrace, Banbridge. Cambrai Memorial, Louverval, France

1918

+CROZIER, Clarice (Clara)

Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps. 48252. Died 17/11/1918. Aged 22. Died of Influenza/Pneumonia at Military Hospital, Fermoy, County Cork. Daughter of Thomas and Eliza Crozier of Altnaveigh, Ballybot, County Armagh. Newry Reformed Presbyterian Cemetery

+DICKSON, W

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. 9th Btn. Private. 17503. Died 17/11/1918. Age 29. Husband of Agnes Dickson, of 92, Matilda St., Belfast. Belfast City Cemetery

+FULLARTON, Kenneth

RNVR. Lieutenant. ML 43. Died 17/11/1918. Age 31. Son of Robert and Ada Fullarton, Belfast. Lowestoft (Beccles Road) Cemetery

+KENNY, F

Northumberland Fusiliers. Corporal. 49993. Died 17/11/1918. Age 26. Son of Mrs. Mary Kenny, of 11, Walbeck St., Belfast. Milltown Roman Catholic Cemetery, Belfast

+McMULLAN, Robert John

Royal Irish Rifles, 12th Btn (CAV). Rifleman. 7226. Died 17/11/1918 at Fargo Military, Salisbury, Wiltshire. Cause of death was recorded as Tubercular Peritonitis and exhaustion. Robert John McMullan was from Ballymacfin, County Antrim. He enlisted in the 12th Btn Royal Irish Rifles



and deployed to France with the 36th Ulster Division on 27/11/1915. Durrington cemetery, Wiltshire. Commemorated in Carncullagh Presbyterian Church, Dervock.

1940

+McNAMARA, William Hammerton

HMS Caroline (above). RN. AB. D/JX 185599. Died 17/11/1940. Age 26. HMS President III. He had 11 months service when he died in England as a result of enemy action at sea. He had worked in the coach building department of the Belfast and County Down Railway. Son of Henry McNamara, Isoline St., Castlereagh Rd, Belfast. Caister Old Cemetery, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk

+MANSEL-PLYDELL, John Aymard Morton

Leicestershire Regiment. 1/5th Bn. Second Lieutenant. 108163. Died 17/11/1940. Aged 19. Son of Ralph and Marguerite Marie Mansel-Pleydell. Aghanloo Roman Catholic Churchyard, County Tyrone

1943

+THOMPSON, Ernest Oscar

Royal Ulster Rifles, 7th Btn. Rifleman. 7020212. Died 17/11/1943. Aged 21. Husband to Anna Thompson of Bangor. Bangor Cemetery

1944

+DAVIDSON, James Boyd

Royal Ulster Rifles. 1st Btn. The London Irish Rifles. Rifleman. 1524064. Died 17/11/1944. Aged 34. Son of John Davidson and of Ellen Davidson (nee Boyd), of Ballymoney

Co. Antrim; husband to Agnes Elizabeth Davidson (nee Burns), of Ballymoney. Forli War Cemetery, Italy

+HANKIN, Gordon Leslie James

Royal Artillery. 63 (The Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars) Anti-Tank Regt., Lance Bombardier. 1465405. Died 17/11/1944. Aged 25. Son of William and Ada Hankin; husband to L. Maureen Hankin, of Lisburn. Cemetery, Overloon War Cemetery, Noord-Brabant, Netherlands. Lisburn WM

+LECKEY, Edward

RAF. Corporal. 612557. Died 17/11/1944. Aged 26. 272 Sqdn. Son of John and Elizabeth Leckey, of Belfast. Bari War Cemetery, Italy

1947

+HAVERON, Daniel

RAF(Auxiliary Air Force). Corporal. 816130. Died 17/11/1947. Aged 41. Son of Samuel and Jane Haveron of Belfast; Husband to Marion M. Haveron of Belfast. Dundonald Cemetery

VETERANS

MONTGOMERY, James

Warrant Officer. DFC. 149 (East India) Squadron, RAF. From Mill Street, Comber. The award of the DFC for gallant service was publicly recognised at a meeting in the Andrews Hall, Comber, on 17/11/1943. James was presented by the Lord Chief Justice with an inscribed solid silver cigarette case and a cheque for £136. Lord Londonderry, Air

Commodore for the A.T.C. in Northern Ireland, was among the speakers.

The Citation - "As air gunner, Warrant Officer Montgomery has participated in a very large number of sorties. Early in his operational career he was wounded in combat but his enthusiasm remained unabated. On one occasion, during an attack on Bochum, his aircraft was repeatedly attacked by enemy fighters. His skilful and determined work during the combats contributed materially towards frustrating the attackers. Warrant Officer Montgomery has displayed great fortitude and devotion to duty."

PIGGOT, William Brown

RNR. Commander. OBE. DSC. RD. MiD. On 17/11/1940 HMS Mallow (Lt.Cdr. W.B. Piggott, RNR) picked up 18 survivors from the British merchant Saint Germain that was torpedoed and sunk by German submarine U-137 north-north-west of Tory Island in position 55°40'N, 08°40'W. On 19/10/1941 he was in command of HMS Mallow, a Flower class corvette (built in Belfast at Harland and Wolff between 14/11/1939 and 22/05/1940), when she took part in the sinking of German submarine U-204 near Tangier. "The German submarine U-204 was sunk near Tangier, in position 35.46N, 06.02W, by depth charges from the British corvette HMS Mallow (Cdr. W.B. Piggot, OBE, RNR) and the British sloop HMS Rochester (Cdr. C.B. Allen, RN)." On 11/05/1943 German submarine U-528 was sunk in the North Atlantic south-west of Ireland, in position 46°55'N, 14°44'W, by depth charges from a British Handley Page Halifax aircraft (Sqdn. 58/D) and by depth charges from the British sloop HMS Fleetwood (Cdr. W.B. Piggot, OBE, RNR). On 02/11/1943 German U-boat U - 340 was sunk at 0430hrs

near Tangier, in position 35°33'N, 06°37'W, by depth charges from the British sloop HMS Fleetwood (Cdr. W.B. Piggott, DSC, RD, RNR) and the British destroyers HMS Active (Lt.Cdr. P.G. Merriman, DSC, RN) and HMS Witherington (Lt.Cdr. R.B.S. Tennant, RN) and by depth charges from a British Wellington aircraft (Sqdn. 179/R). Awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) in September 1943, 'for great skill and courage in action against enemy submarines in the Atlantic'. Commander Piggot had experience in the merchant navy and held a master's certificate in deep-sea sailing ships. After the war he was with the Marine Surveyor's Office of the Board of Trade, in Belfast. Son of James and Margaret Orr Piggot, Beechwood St., Londonderry.

Every day is a Remembrance Day

We will remember them

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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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