



remembrance ni

The largest cemetery on the Somme

Serre Road Cemetery No 2, is the largest CWGC cemetery on the Somme with over 7,000 men buried there.

The village of Serre is 11 kilometres north-north-east of Albert.



In June 1916, the road out of Mailly-Maillet to Serre and Puisieux entered No Man's Land about 1,300 metres south-west of Serre. On 1 July 1916, the 31st and 4th Divisions attacked north and south of this road and although parties of the 31st Division reached



Serre, the attack failed. The 3rd and 31st Divisions attacked once more on the 13 November, but again without success.

Early in 1917, the Germans fell back to the Hindenburg Line and on 25 February, Serre was occupied by the 22nd Manchesters. The village changed hands once more in March 1918 and remained under German occupation, until they withdrew in August.

The cemetery was started in May 1917 when the British V Corps cleared the battlefield of soldiers' remains when the



territory around the cemetery came into British hands. Many hundreds of soldiers had been killed in the vicinity of this cemetery in the British offensive of 01/07/1916 and it had not been possible to retrieve their bodies for almost a whole year. The British 31st and 4th Divisions had attacked along the Front on that day and had suffered heavy casualties, many of whom were killed in No-Mans-Land and were irretrievable for many months.

In February of 1917 the German Army left their positions at Serre village and the Redan Ridge, which they had firmly held since September 1914 and made a tactical withdrawal to a line of defence they called the Siegfried Stellung, known to the British as the Hindenburg Line.

From the establishment of the cemetery in the spring of 1917 until the end of the war there were about 475 soldiers

buried here. After the Armistice there were 71 individual graves brought to this cemetery from 16 locations including French civilian cemeteries, one German military cemetery and one American military cemetery.

During the clearance of the battlefields in this area the remains of over 6,500 British and Commonwealth dead were discovered and reburied in Serre Road Cemetery No. 2. There are now 7,127 Commonwealth burials of the First World War in the cemetery, mostly dating from 1916. Of these, 4,944 are unidentified.

The cemetery, which was not completed until 1934, was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Wilfred Owen served in this area

It is known that the poet Lieutenant Wilfred Owen served in this area with his unit the 2nd Bn Manchester Regiment. It is believed that somewhere between what is now the cemetery and the French Chapel is where Owen spent a period in a captured German bunker during January 1917.

His battalion was doing *turn about* with the 15th Bn Highland Light Infantry, holding the position which was almost as Owen was to put it: *...not at the front but in front of it.*

He wrote to his mother on 16/01/1917 how after wading through the mud and water he had to endure fifty hours of agony during which one of the sentries was blown down the steps by a bombardment.

The soldier had been blinded by the blast and the incident is thought to have inspired Owen later on in the year to write the poem: *The Sentry*.

There we herded from the blast
Of whizz-bangs, but one found our door at last.
Buffeting eyes and breath, snuffing the candles.
And thud! flump! thud! down the steep steps came thumping
And splashing in the flood, deluging muck —
The sentry's body; then his rifle, handles
Of old Boche bombs, and mud in ruck on ruck.
We dredged him up, for killed, until he whined
"O sir, my eyes — I'm blind — I'm blind, I'm blind!"

Acknowledgments - CWGC, photos by Jeremy Banning

With Ballymena and Glenarm men on the Somme last night in 1915

On the 30th November/1st December 1915 the 12th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles were in the area of Vauchelles - Les - Quesnoy, Somme. The following entry from the 1st of December is from the Battalion War Diaries is in regards to an incident which took place the night before 30th November.

"Last Night No 18914 Rfm Colville C Coy and No 19162 Rfm Orr A Coy were accidentally wounded by the bursting of a shell. A court of Enquiry was held this morning where it transpired that Rfm Orr was working at a piece of a shell with his entrenching tool when it exploded and wounded the above named two men. Orr's injuries are considered by the medical officer to be of a serious nature but Colville's are slight. The court were of opinion that the injuries were caused accidentally. They were both sent to hospital after temporary treatment by the Medical Officer".



Ballymena War Memorial

Rifleman Orr received injuries to his arm, legs and hands and was discharged due to injuries in March 1916 (possibly due to injuries received on the 30th November). Rifleman Colville continued to serve with the battalion until he transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps on 16th July 1918. Rifleman Colville survived the war

Rifleman Colville was from Ballymena and his father John Colville lived in Princess Street. Rifleman Colville prior to

enlistment was a member of the Seven Towers Flute Band and he was a member of the battalion band. Rifleman Alexander Orr was from Glenarm.

On this Day – December 1

1917

The Germans attack heavily at Bourslon Wood and claims 4,000 prisoners and 60 guns.

1918

Eight German submarines surrender at Harwich, making the total surrendered now 122.

1939

The Soviet Union creates a puppet Finnish government in Moscow under the leadership of a Finnish communist, Otto Kuusinen, who immediately accedes to the Soviets territorial demands. Finnish coastal guns at Russar engage the Russian cruiser Kirov and its screen of destroyers. The Kirov and one destroyer damaged.

1940

Joseph Kennedy resigns from position as US ambassador to Britain, wanting to keep US out of war.

The Italian submarine Argo torpedoes Royal Canadian Navy destroyer Saguenay, killing 21, but not sinking the ship. Saguenay had been escorting an eastbound convoy 300 miles west of Ireland.

First attack by British Long Range Desert Group, a commando group based in Egypt.

1941

State of Emergency is declared in Malaya and Hong Kong is put on 'stand by'.

Japan fixes the date of its attack against Pearl Harbour as the 7th December 1941.

US-Japanese talks continue and Roosevelt curtails holiday.

US forms Civil Air Patrol for civilian pilots to aid in Civil Defense.

Japanese Navy changes its communications code, blinding the US to its movements.

1942

Coffee joins the list of rationed items in the US.

The Australians take Gona in New Guinea.

1943



38 (Irish) Brigade north of the Sangro river: "The London Irish occupied Rocca & pushed across as far 'as the wadi, where it cut the road between Rocca & St Vito. They spent the night trying to find route across the wadi as it had very precipitous sides & was well defended."...The Faughs explored northwards over the wadi along the coast & the Skins, plus some 3 CLY Tanks, looked after our left flank between Rocca & Lanciano. In Fossacesia, an 'S' mine killed Major Bunch & two fusiliers & injured one other."

The British 10th Corps opens the U.S. Fifth Army's offensive on the Garigliano.

Russian forces isolate the Germans in Crimea and control the northern half of the Dnieper bend.

The Conclusion of the Tehran Conference, with the three Allies in substantial agreement on the division ofÂ post-war Germany, the westward movement of the Polish eastern and western frontiers and theÂ summary execution of 50,000 German officers.

First use of US P-51 Mustang fighter planes in Europe, as US Ninth Air Force flies a sweep over France.

Mussolini orders arrest of all Jews in Italy, but Italians shelter many.

1944

Germans evacuate most of Crete

1945

Seventy-six German industrialists who helped Hitler are arrested.



Execution of General of the Infantry Anton Dostler. He was shot by a US Army firing squad after being found guilty of ordering the execution of American prisoners of war during the Italian Campaign in 1944.

Roll of Honour – December 1

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1914

+PATTON, James

Royal Irish Rifles. 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 6612. Died 01/12/1914. Age 26. Husband to Emily Patton, of 15, Douglas St., Belfast. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

1915

+CALLAGHAN, James

Gordon Highlanders, 3rd Btn. Private. S/13279. Died 01/01/1915. Age 18. Enlisted Coatbridge. Son of Charles and Annie Callaghan of 227 Annathill Terrace, Glenboig, Lanarkshire. Lived at Bushmills and Glenboig. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Cemetery, Airdrie, Scotland

+MONTGOMERY, Robert

Welsh Regiment, 1st / 5th Btn. Private. 5240. Died 01/12/1915 in Gallipoli. Age 28. Born Cookstown 31/05/1887. Only son of Alexander and Margaret Jane Montgomery. He was one of at least five children. His father died when Robert was just two years old. The 1901 census records the family as living at Derrinleagh, Orritor, Tyrone – close to both Drum Manor and Wellbrook. Robert's mother was working as a farm labourer. Robert worked as a butler in County Cork and then in Merthyr, Glamorgan, Wales. He was married to Alicia Montgomery. They had three children. He enlisted in Pontypridd. Helles Memorial, Cape Helles, Gallipoli. Kildress C of I Parish WM

+SLEATOR, James

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 2nd Btn. Corporal. 10582. Died 01/01/1915. Age 19. Son of George and Emma Jane Sleator, of Annagarvey, Augher. Bois-Guillaume Communal Cemetery, France

1916

+FALLOON, Albert Victor

RMLI. Private. 16053. Plymouth Division. PLY/16053. HMS Exmouth. Died 01/12/1916. Age 21. Action referred to as The Greek Intervention. Enlisted 23/02/1913. Born Ballysillan 10/11/1895. Son of Albert Victor and Louie Falloon, Bay Rd., Larne Harbour, previously of Lock View Place, Ballysillan, Belfast. His brother James Huston Falloon died serving with Royal Engineers in France 09/10/1915. Piraeus Naval and Consular Cemetery. IMR. ADM 159/158/16053

1917

+BLAIR, Samuel

Royal Field Artillery. 236th Bde. D Bty. Gunner. 951466. Died 01/12/1917. Born in Antrim. Enlisted in Hamilton, Scotland. His sister Mrs J Blair lived in Rigside, Douglas Water, Lanarkshire. Metz-en-Couture Communal Cemetery British Extension, France

+DONNAN, William James

5th Royal Irish Lancers, transferred to Royal Fusiliers (City of London Regiment). 23rd Btn. Private. G/61958. Died 01/12/1917 in action at Cambrai. Aged 19. Enlisted in Dublin. Born on 27/03/1898 in Kearney, Portaferry. Son of Hugh and Jane (nee Chermside) Donnan who were married on 16/08/1895 in Ballyphilip Parish Church of Ireland Church (St. James) Portaferry. Hugh Donnan from Kearney was a fisherman and during the Great War he served in the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (RNVR). Cambrai Memorial in France; Ballyphilip C of I Parish Church Portaferry (St

James) and on the family grave headstone in the adjoining graveyard.

+GREEN, Samuel

Royal Irish Rifles. 1st Btn. Rifleman. 10646. Died 01/12/1917. Born in Ballyclare. He was a machinist in Tullis, Russel & Co, paper manufacturers in Markinch, Fife. Enlisted Perth, Scotland. Husband to Elizabeth Greer. Tyne Cot Memorial, Belgium. Ballyclare WM. Markinch WM. Brunton United Free Church, Markinch, memorial plaque

+JOHNSTON, James

Irish Guards. 1st Btn. Serjeant. 3985. Died 01/12/1917. Age 25. Native of Belfast. Son of William and Margaret Johnston. Rocquigny-Equancourt Road British Cemetery, Manancourt, France

+McCALLUM, Hugh

Royal Irish Rifles, 12th Btn. Company Serjeant Major. 15/9241. Died 01/12/1917. Age 24. Shortly after the outbreak of the Great War, Hugh McCallum joined the Cyclist Corps of the 36th (Ulster) Division. He was transferred to the 15th and then the 12th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles (Central Antrim Volunteers) and he served in 108th Brigade of the 36th (Ulster) Division. In April 1917 he had a short period of home leave before returning to the fighting line.

Son of John and Charlotte McCallum, of 1, Blacklands Row, Kilwinning, Ayrshire. Hugh McCallum was baptised in Greyabbey Presbyterian Church. John and Charlotte McCallum moved to Scotland where they lived at 1 Blacklands Row, Kilwinning in Ayrshire. On leaving school Hugh McCallum served his apprenticeship in gardening

when he worked in Rosemount Gardens, Greyabbey for the Montgomery family. He went from there to Charleston Gardens in County Roscommon where he worked for Sir Gilbert King. After that he went to work in the Flood Hall Gardens in County Kilkenny. From there he secured a position in Belle Vue Park Dublin which was owned by Mr M.V.B. Douglas DL. After that Hugh McCallum moved to Scotland where he was employed for a year by the Marquis of Tweeddale at Haddington, Edinburgh.

The remains of Company Sergeant Major Hugh McCallum were buried in Grevillers British Cemetery, France and he is commemorated on Greyabbey and District War Memorial located on the outside wall of Greyabbey Parish Church of Ireland Church (St Saviour's); in the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) Roll of Honour 1914 – 1919 for Trinity Presbyterian Church Greyabbey and on the McCallum Family Grave Headstone in Greyabbey Old Cemetery.

+SMYTH, John

Royal Irish Fusiliers, 9th Btn. Formerley North Irish Horse. Private. 41205. Died 01/12/1917. St Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen, France

+THOMPSON, Robert Lloyd

Royal Field Artillery. 173rd Bde. C Bty. Major. Died 01/12/1917. Age 29. Son of James Armstrong Thompson and Sara Thompson, of Penrhyn, Strandtown, Belfast. Hermies Hill British Cemetery, France. Knock RFC Memorial Pavilion

1941

+ROLLESTON, David John

RN. AB. D/JX243282. Died 01/12/1941. Age 21. HMS President II. Son of Robert and Mary Rolleston, Belfast. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 48

1942

+GALES, Christopher

Royal Engineers. 40 Fortress Coy. Warrant Officer Class II. 1859679. Died 01/12/1942. Age 43. Son of Joseph and Harriet Gales, husband to Martha Gales, of Murlough, Co. Down. Yokohama War Cemetery, Japan

+GRATTAN, George Francis

RAF. Flight Sergeant. 521645. Died 01/12/1942 in a prisoner of war camp in Japan. Aged 32. Son of Major Andrew Francis Grattan and Matilda Grattan of 40 Ashley Gds, Bangor. Husband to Daisy Evangeline Grattan. His sisters Shelagh Grattan aged 20 and Angeline Grattan aged 18 died alongside their 54-year-old mother in Bangor, Co. Down on 16/04/1941 as a result of enemy action (blitz). Yokohama Cremation Memorial, Japan.

1943

+COGGLE, William John Sewell

Royal Ulster Rifles, 2nd Btn. The London Irish Rifles. Rifleman. 7022493. Died 01/12/1943. Age 18. Son of Robert George and Eliza Jane Coggle, of Belfast. Sangro River War Cemetery, Italy

+DUFF, William Francis

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 6th Btn. Fusilier. 6979828, Died 01/12/1943. Age 20. Son of Mark and Margaret Duff, of Belfast. Sangro River War Cemetery, Italy

1947

+McCOMB, Malcolm Patrick

RN. Able Seaman. D/SSX24324. HMS Gannet. Died 01/12/1947. Age 28. Reported missing after the fall of Singapore. Confirmed as a Japanese prisoner of war. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 27/08/1943). Son of Hugh and Isabella McComb, of Alfred St., Ballymena; husband to Annie McComb. Kilbride New Cemetery

VETERANS

ASHLEE, George Thomas

RN. Petty Officer. J6716. Boy service from 11/01/1910. Enrolled 02/07/1912 for 12 years. War service in Pembroke I, Indomitable, Woolwich and Columbine. Served to 01/12/1928. Born Holywood 02/07/1899. ADM 188/660/6716

BLEMMINGS, Hector

RNR. Born Newcastle, Co. Down 05/11/1900. Died 01/12/1988, Joyce Green Hospital, Dartford, Kent. St John's Parish Church Newcastle RH

MILLIKEN, John A W

RN. AB. J22327. Boy service from 08/02/1913. Enrolled 01/12/1914 for 12 years. War service in Doris, Thistle,

Triumph, Dido, Vivid, Woolwich, Defiance and Wellington.
Demobbed 17/02/1920. Joined RFR 18/02/1920. Born
Coleraine 01/12/1896. Ballysally, Coleraine. New Row - PCI
RH. ADM 188/691/22327

Every day is a Remembrance Day

We will remember them

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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

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