



remembrance ni

World War 2 Life stories 4

Coleraine Inst rowing brothers died on active service

On June 4, 1957, Coleraine Academical Institution held an unveiling ceremony in the War Memorial Pavilion on the school grounds. It was a Roll of Honour to all those Old Boy's who lost their lives during WW2.

Two of those named on the plaque were the sons of James and Emily Dunlop McGrath of Mountsandel, Coleraine. Emily conducted the unveiling of the memorial.

Their sons were Captain William McGrath D.S.O., of 1 Field Squadron, Royal Engineers and his younger brother, Lt. Daniel McGrath. Like their father James, the pair were members of Bann Rowing Club until shortly before the War started.

William McGrath was the eldest son in the family. He died on 19/02/ 1942 at the age of 24. His remains were buried in

Tobruk War Cemetery, Lybia, where 2,272 casualties are commemorated.

Lt Daniel McGrath joined the Royal Irish Fusiliers and was attached to the Royal Ulster Rifles (Airborne Division). He was also killed in action on 26/03/1945. His remains were buried in Holland, at the Venray War Cemetery.

Shortly before WW2 started Daniel won the Blue Ribbon (Irish Championship) at Dublin Metropolitan regatta. He volunteered early in the war and gained his Commision from serving in the ranks.

Daniel took part in the 'D Day Landings' in June 1944 and was later wounded. After recovering he returned to his unit and was killed instantly by anti-aircraft fire in a glider which was making a landing in Germany.

HMS Caroline officer was present at the surrender of the Japanese navy in Tokyo Bay

John Edward Robinson. HMS Caroline. RNVR. Commander. OBE. Served 1939-46. Commander of the Ulster Division 1957.

A Master Mariner, he joined the RNR 1939. He served as Midshipman in HMS Wolfe on the Northern Patrol and Atlantic convoy.

Promoted to Sub - Lieutenant 1940 and to Lieutenant in 1942 when in HMS Hastings. Later in 1942 he was appointed to Captain 'Johnnie' Walker's renowned Second Escort Group as Navigating Officer in HMS Wren, and took part in some of the fiercest anti-submarine actions of the Battle of the Atlantic, before being transferred to the Pacific in 01/1944 as Navigating Officer of the escort carrier HMS Ruler in which capacity he was present at the surrender of the Japanese navy in Tokyo Bay.

Demobbed in 04/1946 he joined the Royal Mail Line as a Second Officer.

In 1950 he 'left the sea' and transferred to RNVR, Ulster Division, where he was soon promoted to Lt. Commander and awarded the RNR Decoration. When he assumed command of the Ulster Division in 1957, the post-war transformation of the Naval Reserves was nearly complete with the amalgamation of the RNVR and the RNR. Captain Robson's period of command was one of consolidation.

A highlight of that time was the centenary celebrations of the original RNR in 10/1959 when Belfast enjoyed a "Navy Week".

The frigate HMS Duncan and the submarine HMS Thule visited the port and together with HMS Kilmorey, the Ulster Division's ship, were open to the public.

The Royal Marine Band of Plymouth Command beat retreat on the lawn at RBAI. An exhibition was held in the Drill Hall of the OTC at QUB and the celebrations ended with a Centenary Parade through Belfast to St Anne's Cathedral for a Trafalgar Day Thanksgiving Service.

John Robinson was Chairman of the NI Sea Cadet Corps from 1962 - 78. Born 09/09/1920, he was the son of EG Robson. Gilnahirk Road, Belfast. He was educated at Campbell College

RAF from NI commemorated on Singapore Memorial

There are at least six men from NI who served in the RAF who are commemorated on the Singapore Memorial.

Two of them were lost in the same plane. Sergeant Trevor Boyd from Greenisland and David Nelson from Larne were members of an 11 man crew in a B-24 Liberator bomber which was lost on a bombing run over Burma on 23rd/24th February 1944. None of the crew were recovered.

+BOYD, Trevor Barkley

RAFR. Sergeant. 1145139. Died 23-24/02/1944
Born in Greenisland, Carrickfergus in 1922 Killed in the air on a bombing run over Burma on 23rd/24th February 1944 aged 22. He was assigned to a B-24 Liberator bombing crew as one of the 11 man crew. On the evening of 23/02/1944 he and the B-24 crew of BZ951 were on a bombing mission en route to Sinda in Burma when the aircraft was lost in the sky due to an explosion. Records on the event are vague but it appears that the entire crew were lost and none of the men were ever recovered for burial. Son of Edgar and Margaret Jessie Boyd of Greenisland. The entire crew including Trevor are

remembered on the Singapore Memorial, Malaya, Column 435 .

+CLAYTON, James

RAFR. Corporal. 970707. Died 2/3/1945 aged 28, whilst a prisoner of war. Son of James and Martha Clayton, of Gilford. His death was commemorated on Column 452 Changi War Memorial in Singapore, now commemorated on Krangi Cemetery, Singapore. Gilford WM

+NELSON, David

RAF. Flight Sergeant. 533351. Died 23/02/1944. Aged 26. Killed in the air on a bombing run over Burma on 23rd/24th February 1944. On the evening of 23/02/1944 he and the B-24 crew of BZ951 were on a bombing mission en route to Sinde in Burma when the aircraft was lost in the sky due to an explosion. Son of Hugh and Nancy Nelson, of Ballyhampton, Larne. Singapore Memorial, Malaya, Column 435.

+KERNOHAN, George

RAFVR. Sergeant. Died 06/10/1944. Age 22. 159 Sqdn. Foster Parents at Castletown, Ahoghill. No known grave. Commemorated on the Singapore Memorial, Col. 436.

+THOMPSON, Thomas William

RAFVR. Flight Sergeant. 1145121. Died 01/06/1944. Son of Thomas William and Mary A. Thompson of Lurgan. Singapore Memorial, Malaya, Column 435. Lurgan WM

+WATSON, Henry De Landre

RAFVR. Flight Lieutenant. 148537. Died 26/03/1947. Age 23. 48 Sqdn. Pilot of a Dakota KK120 on a regular flight over South China Seas between Singapore and Saigon. No trace of the aircraft was found, and weather may have been a factor. Son of C. S. Waller Watson and of Esme M. Watson (nee de Landre), of Gilford. Singapore Memorial, Changi, Malaya, Column 460. now transferred to Kranji War Memorial, Singapore. Gilford WM

Acknowledgements

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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 houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com

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