



remembrance ni



HMS Manchester crew interned in Algeria after ship sinks in Operation Pedestal

Reports in the Belfast Weekly Telegraph in September 1942 stated that four men from Northern Ireland had been interned in Algeria which was then under the control of the Vichy French who collaborated with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

The four were crew members of HMS Manchester which was taking part in Operation Pedestal whose aim was to force a convoy through to beleaguered Malta. Of the 14 fast merchant ships involved in the operation during Aug 11-13, several were sunk and only five made it to the island. But their cargo was enough to ensure its survival as a base for operations against Axis convoys supplying Rommel's Afrika Corps.

The Royal Navy suffered grievously. In addition to Manchester, the carrier Eagle, the cruiser Cairo and the destroyer Foresight were sunk, and the carrier Indomitable and cruiser Nigeria seriously damaged.

Manchester's war record

Manchester, a Gloucester class light cruiser, was serving in the East Indies with the 4th Cruiser Squadron at the outbreak of war, but was ordered home and arrived back Britain on 25/11/1939.

She subsequently served with the Home Fleet at Scapa on Northern Patrol duties, capturing the German merchantman Wahehe on 21/02/1940.

After participating in the Norwegian campaign she was then based in the Humber for anti-invasion duties, but on 15/09/1940 sailed to the Mediterranean for Operation Collar and was present at the action off Cape Spartivento on 27/11/1940.

Manchester returned to Britain on 13/12/1940 and spent the first four months of 1941 under refit, then undertook Denmark Straits patrols during the Bismarck sortie.



A cigarette is given to one of the wounded men, who had been working in a shell room when the torpedo hit the Manchester

In July 1942 she returned to the Mediterranean for an important Malta convoy, but on 23 July she was hit on the port quarter by an aerial torpedo and badly damaged. Temporary repairs were made at Gibraltar, and the ship then sailed for Philadelphia for complete repair. This was finished on 27/02/1942, after which she returned to Portsmouth, where final work was completed by the end of April.

On her return to service she joined the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow during the first week of May, then carried out Russian convoy cover duties and the reinforcement of Spitzbergen.

After participating in the Norwegian campaign she was then based in the Humber for anti-invasion duties, but on 15/09/1940 sailed to the Mediterranean for Operation Collar and was present at the action off Cape Spartivento on 27/11/1940.

Manchester returned to Britain on 13/12/1940 and spent the first four months of 1941 under refit, then undertook Denmark Straits patrols during the Bismarck sortie.

In July 1942 she returned to the Mediterranean for an important Malta convoy, but on 23 July she was hit on the port quarter by an aerial torpedo and badly damaged. Temporary repairs were made at Gibraltar, and the ship then sailed for Philadelphia for complete repair. This was finished on 27/02/1942, after which she returned to Portsmouth, where final work was completed by the end of April.

On her return to service she joined the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow during the first week of May, then carried out Russian convoy cover duties and the reinforcement of Spitzbergen.

Manchester was scuttled on her captain's orders

In August she returned to the Mediterranean for Operation Pedestal

However on the night of 12/13 August 1942, Manchester was hit by a torpedo from either Ms 16 or Ms 22 off Tunisia and crippled.

The aircraft carrier Eagle had already been sunk. In daylight there were ceaseless air attacks and at night submarines and motor torpedo boats followed up. It was a torpedo from an MTB, either Ms16 or Ms22, that struck Manchester

in the early hours of the morning, when she was about 7 miles off the Tunisian coast.



Leading Stoker Albert Slater was in the engine-room when the torpedo struck home. He went through an ordeal which might have been the experience of any of the hundreds of men serving in the engine-rooms of other ships.

He was standing on some plates about 20 feet above the engine-room floor when the explosion plunged everything into darkness. He was blown off the plates, and only the water rushing into the compartment saved him from injury that would have made it impossible for him to get clear. The water carried him up, and there appeared to be nothing to stop his being drowned when the water reached the top of the compartment. Suddenly it ceased to rise, and Slater



pulled himself on to a turbine where he sat in pitch darkness - half stifled by heat and steam.

A slight glimmer of light through some pipes gave him fresh hope, but he could not climb over the pipes without being badly burned, so he plunged into the water and came up at a point where the air was a little better. Groping along the deckheads he cut his hand on a broken lamp; but the lamp told him where he was. He went on until he found himself beneath an open hatch. He was pulled clear a few minutes before it became necessary to clamp down the hatch against the advancing waters.

When the Manchester sank three officers and 142 men were picked up, but only after some of them had spent several hours in the water.

It emerged that Capt Harold Drew, commander of the Manchester, decided to scuttle the heavily damaged ship, an action which cost him dearly, finishing his naval career when he was released from internment at the war's end, and which hung over him for the remainder of his life.

Although three of her four engines were out of action and she has list to starboard, her guns were still working. Captain Drew was court-martialled for his actions although it could be argued that many of the crew survived because of his decision.

Drew's action in abandoning the crippled ship was applauded by many of his crew, who believed the Manchester, drifting in waters dominated by enemy aircraft and submarines, was doomed to be sunk in any subsequent attack.

Of the 900 men on board, 500 were interned in Vichy French North Africa, and 400 were rescued by Royal Navy ships.

The evidence against Drew was rumoured to have been aided by one or more of his officers, rescued by British ships, who said the ship might have been able to limp to a friendly port. Drew was unable to defend himself immediately, having been interned by the Vichy French. His court martial followed his return to Britain months later.

The Admiralty insisted on a court martial which was held in camera and concluded that Drew had scuttled the ship prematurely. He was never given another command at sea, and died at the age of 92 in 1987, the stain still on his character. He never complained about his treatment in public, but his wife once said that it broke his heart.

Evidence from 2002 diving expedition

In 2002 a diving expedition was timed to coincide with the 60th anniversary of Operation Pedestal.

Crispin Sadler, a leader of the diving expedition, said he had seen an enormous hole in Manchester's side around the aft engine compartment, and the shattered remains of the two propeller shafts. The ship, a war grave, is lying at a 45-degree angle in 250 feet of water three miles off Cap Bon. The divers attached a White Ensign to the wreck, presented by the crew of the current HMS Manchester, a Type 42 destroyer.

Mr Sadler said: "There was, I believe, some talk that Manchester might have been able to make anywhere between two and 12 knots. Well, there was not a chance in a million that she could have made 12 knots. You could have driven a car through that hole."

Daphne Freeman, Capt Drew's daughter, said her father never talked of the affair. "He was of the generation that did not complain. I believe that he approached A V Alexander, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and said he did not care about the court martial as long as he was not regarded as a coward."

Allan Walker, chairman of the HMS Manchester Association, said his members regarded Capt Drew as a fine and brave man. The year before the cruiser's sinking he brought her safely into port after she was crippled by an air-launched torpedo. "He always had the loyalty of the lower deck," said Mr Walker. "His action saved his men."

Peter Crockett, Capt Drew's grandson and vicar of St Luke's Church in Exeter, Devon, said: "He was very hurt by the way he was treated. I don't think he ever recovered."



ROLL OF HONOUR

HMS MANCHESTER

BOYD, James

RNVR. AB. HMS Manchester survivor. Interned in Algeria. 31 years old. Trained in HMS Caroline. Son of Mr and Mrs James Boyd, Wallace Street, Newtownards. Wife resident of Severn St., Belfast. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 11/09/1942).

CRYMBLE, John

RN. Leading Seaman. HMS Manchester survivor. Interned in Algeria. 14 years' service. Husband to Mrs J Crymble, Mountcollyer Ave., Belfast. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 18/09/1942).

RANKIN, W

RM. Marine. HMS Manchester survivor. Interned in Algeria. Nine years' service. Brother of Miss P Rankin, Ashburne St., Belfast. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 18/09/1942).

ROWE, AW

RN. Ord. Telegraphist. HMS Manchester survivor. Interned in Algeria. 19 years old. Son of Mr. and Mrs. James R Rowe, Hanover St., Portadown. "In announcing the loss of the Manchester in the Malta convoy battle the Admiralty stated that a large part of the ship's company would probably reach the near-by African shore." (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 11/09/1942).

On this day - August 12

1917 Belfast Newsletter - Rank and File Casualties
Three brothers killed.

Company Quartermaster Sergeant George Frank Newel, 12102, 15th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles who has been killed in action, was the sixth son of Mr. H. A. Newel, Royal Avenue, and 22 Antrim Road, who has now lost three sons in the war. Walter a lance-corporal in the Black Watch, having been killed in 1915 and Davis a private in a public schools battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, having been killed in 1916, while a fourth son, Thomas, also in the Royal Fusiliers, was wounded some time ago. The deceased was a brother of Mr. Jas. F. Newel, a well known local vocalist. He was educated at the Royal Academy, and before volunteering from the North Belfast Regiment, U.V.F., was in business with his father in Royal Avenue. He was formerly in the Boy's Brigade, and was a member of St. James Church. Deep sympathy will be felt for the family in their terrible loss.

Deceased was 36 years of age and is buried in Wieltje Farm Cemetery, Belgium

A handsome memorial cross of Irish Granite has just been erected at the Gobbins with the inscription:- "To the memory of Lance-Corporal Walter Newel, 6th Battalion Black Watch, who fell in action in France, 10th July 1915. Erected by his friends, with whom he spent many happy days at the Gobbin's Farm."

1917

German plane raid on Southend and Margate in the UK with a reported 32 killed and 46 injured. One plane downed.

Roll of Honour - August 12

1915

+BOWERS, James

Royal Irish Rifles, 6th Btn. Rifleman.11583, Died 12/08/1915. Born either at Caledon, Co. Tyrone or at 15 McCleery Street, Belfast on the 10/08/1887, he was the son of John and Mary Ellen (O'Neill) Bowers. Sometime before 1911 he left home for Cumberland where he lived at 11 Prospect Terrace, Cleator. He was 25 and working in a mill there when he met and married Mary Murphy a 21 year old from 20 Fletcher Street, Cleator Moor. They were married in the Registry Office at Whitehaven on the 17/07/1911. Their first child Sarah was born on the 19/08/1911 after which the family moved back to Ireland where they were living at

Tullynacross when their second child, Mary, was born on the 12/08/1914. She was baptised at Lisburn Cathedral and their address at the time was Mill View, Lambeg. In April 1915 James Bowers enlisted at Lisburn and in May moved with his Battalion to Hackwood Park, Basingstoke for further training. After sailing for Mudros via Alexandria, they landed at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli on 05/08/1915. At that time or shortly after he was wounded and died on board a hospital ship on 12/08/1915. On 17/12/1915 his son, also James Bowers, was born at Tullynacross shortly after which Mary and her three children left Ireland and moved back to Cumberland. East Mudros Cemetery, Lemnos, Greece

+FERGUSON, H

11th Bn. Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Serjeant. 3510. Died 12/08/1915. Armagh. Philosophe British Cemetery, Mazingarbe, Pas de Calais, France
1916

+WATTERSON, George

Highland Light Infantry, 10th/11th Btn. Private. 12291. Died 12/08/1916 hit by a piece of shrapnel, death being instantaneous. Age 19. George Watterson was a Signaller. He was the son of William John and Sarah Watterson. He was born on 08/03/1896 in Aughrim, Ballyronan, Magherafelt. The large family lived in Aughrim. His father was a farm labourer. George, like his older brother Marshall, was employed as a cloth starcher. Theipval Memorial, Theipval, Somme. Castledawson WM

1917**+ANDERSON, William James**

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 10th Btn. "D" Coy. Private. 15292. Died 12/08/1917 at Passchendaele almost a year after the birth of his youngest daughter Eileen. Age 28. William was born into a farming family in Ballinahone, Knockloughrim about 1890. He was a member of Ballinacross Purple Guards L.O.L. 1713. He married Sarah Jane Charters on 02/08/1908. They lived at Clooney, Tobermore, where William worked as a labourer. He and Sarah had six children. Husband to Sarah Jane Anderson. of Ballinacross, Knockcloughrim, Co. Londonderry. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium. Castledawson WM, Curran PCI RH, Tobermore WM

+DRENNAN, James Wilson

Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, 10th Btn. Lieutenant. Died 12/08/1917. Aged 24. Son of Catherine and the late John W. Drennan, of "Carse Hall," Limavady, Co. Derry. Brandhoek New Military Cemetery, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

+DUGAN, Hill

Army Cyclist Corps, 10th Btn. Lance Corporal. Died 12/08/1917. Age 21. He enlisted at Belfast. Born and living in Lisnatrunk, Lisburn, and also with an address in Lagan Terrace, Hilden, he was employed at Hilden before the war. He was the son of Hill and Mary Jane Dugan of 2 Waring Place, Low Road, Lisburn, and 1 Lagan Terrace, Hilden. Bus House Cemetery, Voormezele, Belgium

+GREER, William

Royal Irish Rifles, 12th Btn. "C" Coy. Rifleman. 2429. Died 12/08/1917. Aged 32. Son of James and Margaret Greer, of

New Row, Ahoghill, Ballymena. New Irish Farm Cemetery,
West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

+HERON, Rifleman Robert

Royal Irish Rifles, 11th Btn. "B" Coy. Rifleman. 17866. Died 12/08/1917. Aged 23. Born at Blaris, and living at Barnsley Row in Lisburn, he had worked at Robert Stewart and Son's thread manufacturing mill before the war. He enlisted at Lisburn. He was the youngest son of William and Ellen Heron of 8 Barnsley Row, Lisburn. William Heron senior had been a soldier too, serving under Lord Roberts in Afghanistan where he had risen to the rank of sergeant. Robert was wounded/gassed on 01/09/1916. His brother Corporal William Heron who was also in 11 RIR, was present at his burial. A few days later on the 16/08/1917 William, was wounded in the attack at Langemarck but appears to have survived. Robert Heron's grave was subsequently lost and his death is now commemorated on the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium

+McBRIDE, Daniel

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 5845. Born at Ballylesson, Co. Down, he was the eldest son of Hugh McBride of Ballyaughlis, Lisburn. He lived at Ballyaughlis, Lisburn, enlisting at Belfast. Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Poperinge, Belgium

+MURRAY, Francis

Royal Irish Regiment, 6th Btn. Private. 3039. Died 12/08/1917. Age 19. He enlisted in Londonderry. Born about 1898 in Garvaghy, Errigal, County Tyrone. Francis' older brother Patrick also died in WW1. The two brothers died within four days of each other. Sons of Francis and Teresa

Murray, of Foremass, Sixmilecross, Co. Tyrone. Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium. Ballygawley War Dead Book

1920

+DOOLE, John

Irish Guards, 1st Btn. Guardsman. 8737 Died 12/08/1920 (Local source) 09/08/1920 (CWGC), at home in Desertmartin of wounds received during the war. Age 29. It is believed John Doole was born on 14/05/1891 in Magherafelt. Guardsman Doole was wounded in action on 01/07/1916 and was invalided home to Luney for a short term. John Doole was discharged to Class Z Reserve on 18/04/1919. Dromore (St Comgall) Church Of Ireland Churchyard. There are 2 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-1918 war here. The other is James Wylie, half-brother of John Doole.

1940

+McELREA, Gerald

RAF. Leading Aircraftman. 548268. Died 12/08/1940. Aged 19. 930 Sqd Balloon. Son of Sarah McElrea, Antrim. Gosport (Anns Hill) Cemetery

1942

+ARLOW, Henry

RM. Marine. PO/X 102354. HMS Indomitable. Died 12/08/1942. Age 28. Son of Samuel and Elizabeth Arlow, Donaghcloney. Husband to Elizabeth Arlow. Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 70. Donaghcloney WM

+SCOTT, Hugh Kelly

RM. Marine. PO/X 101561. Died 12/08/1942. HMS

Indomitable. Son of Agnes Scott, Enniskillen. Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 70

1943

+CREANEY, Felix

London Irish Rifles. Rifleman. 7011620. Died 12/08/1943. Age 29. Son of John and Mary J. Creaney, of Lurgan, Co. Armagh; husband to Dilys E. Creaney, of Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire. Catania

+JAMIESON, William Henry

Royal Ulster Rifles, 7th Btn. Rifleman. 7018997. Died 12/08/1943. Railway crash at Scarborough. Carnmoney Cemetery, Newtownabbey

+KENNEDY, Samuel

Royal Irish Fusiliers. Fusilier. 7044534. Died 12/08/1943. Age 32. Son of Thomas and Hannah Kennedy; husband to Sarah S. Kennedy, of Whiteabbey, Co. Antrim. Catania

1944

+LINDSAY, Edward Workman

RAFVR. Squadron Leader. 74707. Died 12/08/1944. Aged 24. 224 Sqdn. Son of Cecil and Florance (Sis) Lindsay, of Lissue House, Lisburn. Runnymede Memorial, Surrey. 502 (Ulster) Squadron WM, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast

We will remember them

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 houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com

Copyright - all material in this **remembrance ni** publication is copyright, and must not be reproduced in print or electronically.

To receive a copy of **remembrance ni** or notice of new postings on web site please contact -
houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com

Contact - Simply input Remembrance ni in the title bar and give your first and second names with e-mail address in body of text. There is also a contact facility on the web site. See Menu at <https://remembranceneni.org/>
