

JULY 8



remembrance ni



**Green
Beret
RBL
stalwart
was five
years a
German
POW**

Despite his wartime experience, Bill Balmer served in the Royal Marines until July 11, 1953

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Bill Balmer was a well - known and popular figure in Ballymoney Royal British Legion, who survived five tough years in a World War Two German prison camp. He died on July 9, 2011 at the age of 88.

Bill Balmer's life was so full of stories he even crammed his experiences into a book and as testament to the high regard he was held, there was a big turnout at his funeral service at St Patrick's Church of Ireland in Ballymoney.

Mr Balmer, from Gault Park, died at Causeway Hospital, Coleraine, just three days short of his 89th birthday which would have been on July 12. He was survived by his wife of 64 years, Lizzie, brother Andy and sisters Nellie, Mary and Annie.

Mr Balmer's coffin was draped in the Union Flag and standards from the Royal British Legion and the UDR Regimental Association were on display.

The Rev Brian Howe recalled Mr Balmer's long and varied life.

He said: "William (Bill) was born in Coleraine 12th July 1922, the son of William and Annie from Ballymoney. The family lived in Adams Place opposite Union Street Orange Hall. Born at 6am on the 12th his mother always reminded him that he was born to the sound of the Lambeg Drums hence the name William. Bill had three brothers and five sisters -John, Bobby and Andy, Nellie, Mary, the twins Sadie and Elsie and the youngest Annie.

"Educated at the Eden Elementary school, his first job on leaving school was working for Boyd's Engineering in Bendooragh working in the Blacksmiths shop. But the

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families' military influence was never far away, in 1938 along with a friend he cycled to the army recruiting office in Kilrea intending to join his father's old Regiment the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Unfortunately for him and to the benefit of the Royal Navy the Recruiting Officer knew his father and realised Bill was too young to join.

“In 1939 after hearing stories from his father of how Royal Marines had rowed to the beaches of Gallipoli and evacuated his Regiment and having seen an advert in the local paper he decided he was going to apply for the Corp. In June 1939 he travelled to the Royal Marine depot in Deal. “Training was due to last a year but due to the onset of war, September 1939, his training was condensed and he was sent on his first posting. “Engagements with the enemy at Boulogne and Calais followed; he was taken prisoner on 26th May 1940 and marched into Germany to STALAG V111-B where he and his fellow prisoners were subjected to a gruelling 12 hour day in the work camps. He was liberated on 2nd May 1945.

“On 15th March, 1947, Bill's luck changed when he married Elizabeth (Lizzie) Ann McKinney, Lizzie was to become a devoted partner and his life long friend. In 1949 Bill volunteered for the prestigious Commando course and on winning his Green Beret was posted to Malaya as part of 3 Commando Brigade, he was 27 years old that year. After tours in Malta and north Africa Bill left the Marines on 11th July 1953.

“After his discharge Bill was employed as a postman in Ballymoney, walking a 22-mile route every week before he decided that it would be quicker on a bicycle. He had 31 years service with the Post Office.

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“He joined the B specials and the Royal British Legion that same year, serving as the Legion’s branch chairman from 1972 – 1979, and on the Services committee with his good friends Annie Dobbin and Sam Anderson.

“Not only did Bill serve in the Legion, Lizzie, devoted as ever, served beside him. She was awarded the Legion’s Merit Award Bar for outstanding Service to the women’s section. The B Specials were disbanded in 1970, but Bill’s military skills were recognised and he was asked to join the UDR which he did in 1972. His young nephew David Dickie was also a member of the unit and Bill soon took him under his wing whilst on operations.

“Bill served in the Ballymoney Company until 1979. His most satisfying military experience was undoubtedly completing the arduous commando course and earning the coveted Green Beret, an achievement of which he was justifiably proud.

“Outside the military and their British Legion life, Bill and Lizzie enjoyed their trips to Canada with Lizzie’s sisters Sarah and Martha, many happy hours were spent there and many winter nights passed telling the wider family of their exploits.

“2009 saw his book ‘My Service Life’, published. Bill spent many hours with the author Ronnie Gamble producing an amazing insight into Bill’s life and his many sacrifices, many of these exploits he previously had only divulged to a chosen few.

“He was the consummate Marine, feared by all enemies and loved by all Company Sergeant Majors. A quiet dedicated Husband. He will be sorely missed by his devoted wife

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Lizzie, his brother Andy and sisters Mary, Nellie and Annie, and all the extended family and friends whose hearts he touched.

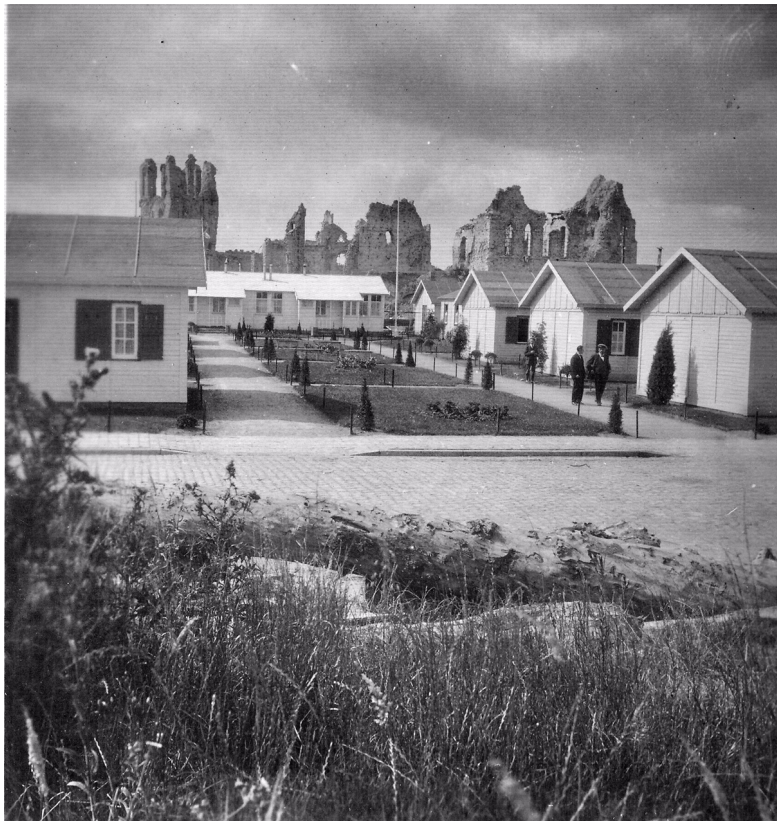
“In his last few months Bill spent some time in the Model Nursing Home and was in and out of Coleraine Hospital where he received excellent care from all the staff in both locations and the family wish to pass on their sincere thanks to all who attended to Bill over those months,” said Rev. Howe. - Acknowledgment Ballymoney Times

On this day – July 8

1915

The British repulse German attack SW of Pilkem.

1920's



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Photo above - Aftermath - temporary housing at Ypres, in the shadow of the ruins of the Cloth Hall and St Martin's Cathedral. People from the outlying villages lived here in the early 1920s; so at night the old battlefields were a shattered landscape, silent and empty.

1940

British Metropolitan Police to be armed when guarding vulnerable positions.

The Swedish government agrees to transport German war material across Sweden to Norway.

Swordfish aircraft damage the French battleship Richelieu at Dakar after the French reject demilitarization proposals.

1941

Soviet military mission arrives in London.

Twenty B-17s fly in their first mission with the Royal Air Force over Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

Litvinov Broadcasts in English from Moscow saying that the UK and Russia must strike at Germany together. Panzer Group 4 of Army Group North captures Pskov and advances toward Novgorod and Leningrad.

Germany and Italy announce the dissolution of the state of Yugoslavia, with large portions annexed to Italy.

1942

The 4th Panzer Army at Voronezh begins an offensive southeast along the west bank of the Don, with the aim of meeting up with 6th Army which is advancing East toward the Don from Kharkov. The objective is to establish bridgeheads across the river in the Kalach area and then

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continue on to Stalingrad. However, heavy rain and lack of fuel slowed the advance, allowing the Russians time to withdraw their armies intact. Army Group A's, 1st Panzer Army crosses the Donet's river.

Axis bombers carry out raids on the harbor facilities at Valetta in Malta.

British forces in North Afrika devise a new method of destroying the enemy's water supply. They put fish oil into the wells that are to fall into German hands, making the water undrinkable.

1943

As the battle of Kursk reaches its climax, the exhausted German forces are unable to make any further gains while losing vast numbers of men, tanks and planes. Soviet claims for the day are 304 tanks and 161 aircraft, while the Germans claim 400 tanks and 193 aircraft.

American B-24 bombers strike Japanese-held Wake Island for the first time.

1944

The British Second Army begins a major offensive '**Operation Charnwood**' another attempt aimed at capturing the French city of Caen. A tactical success for the Allies, the 48 hour operation cost the Allies 3,817 casualties, but parts of the city remained in German hands.

Twenty B-17s fly in their first mission with the Royal Air Force over Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

The Japanese Fifteenth Army is ordered to retreat to the Chindwin after losing 53,000 men and 17,000 horses since the 7th March.

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[Soldiers clamber over a badly damaged street in Caen.](#)

The Russians capture Baranovichi, 80 miles South West of Minsk. Lieutenant General Maller, the commander of German 12th Corps surrenders with 57,000 men. Street fighting is reported as the Russians enter Vilna. Army Group Centre's losses have now reached 300,000 men (28 divisions) in less than three weeks. The U.S. Navy shells Guam in the Pacific.

Roll of Honour – July 8

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1916

+CULLEN, Thomas

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 7845. Died 08/07/1916. Age 22. Husband of Mrs. Julia Cromer (formerly Cullen), of 23, Frederick Lane, Belfast. Theipval Memorial, Somme, France

+DOHERTY, George

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 7876. Died 08/07/1916. Age 19. Son of George and Margaret Doherty, of 9, Cromac Square, Belfast. Theipval Memorial, Somme, France

+FERGUSON, W

Royal Irish Rifles, 14th Btn. Lance Corporal. Died 08/07/1916. Age 24. Son of Mr. W. H. Ferguson, of 2, Collingwood Rd., Belfast. Caudry Old Communal Cemetery, France

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+GAMBLE, David John

Royal Irish Rifles, 12th Btn. Rifleman. 115. Died 08/07/1916. Age 17. Son of Mr. and Mrs. R. Gamble, of 4, Brownlow St., Comber. Caudry Old Communal Cemetery, France

+GLASS William Patrick

Canadian Infantry, 4th Btn. Central Ontario Regiment. Private. 10959. Died 08/07/1916. Age 30. Born on 05/07/1885. Son of Hugh and Elizabeth Glass, of Clogher, County Tyrone. He emigrated to Canada where he worked as a salesman. He enlisted on 23/09/1914 at Valcartier, Quebec. Son of Elizabeth Glass, of 112, South Rd., Waterloo, Liverpool, England, and the late Hugh Glass. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, Belgium. Clogher WM, St Macartan's Cathedral RH

+LINDSAY, William

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 11245. Died 08/07/1916. Son of James and Sarah Lindsay, of 56, Lawnbrook Avenue, Belfast. Theipval Memorial, Somme, France

+LUKE, A

Royal Irish Rifles, 12th Btn. Rifleman. 6363. Died 08/07/1916. Age 23. Son of James and Mary Luke, of Ahoghill; husband of Agnes Luke, of 37, Springwell St., Ballymena. St Sever Cemetery, Rouen, France

+McCONNELL, William Clarke

Royal Irish Rifles, 3rd Btn. attd. 2nd Btn. Lieutenant. Died 08/07/1916. Injured whilst in charge of a machine gun section. Another officer Lt. GL Murphy from Rathmines, Dublin, went up to the first trench and dressed his wounds. He had only gone about ten yards when Wm McConnell was hit by a shell. Youngest son of Sir Robert McConnell, Glen Dhu, Strandtown. Theipval Memorial, Somme, France

+McDOWELL, Harry

Royal Irish Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 9115. Died 08/07/1916. Age 24. Husband of Martha McDowell, of 13, Geoffrey St., Belfast. Theipval Memorial, Somme, France

+McFALL, James

Royal Irish Rifles. 16 Btn. Lance Corporal 682. Died 08/07/1916. Aged 20. Son of Mrs. Annie Moore, of Galgorm Parks, Cullybackey. Kensal Green (St Mary's) Roman Catholic Cemetery, London

+WHITE, Thomas

Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, 2nd Btn. attd. 8th Btn. Second Lieutenant. Died 08/07/1916. RBAI. Working in London. Family home Winston Gardens, Knock. Theipval Memorial, Somme, France

1917

+POLLOCK, Victor

Royal Irish Rifles, 11th Btn. Rifleman. 7292. Died 08/08/1917. Aged 22. Son of Lizzie Pollock, of Church St.,

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The CWGC St Germain-au-Mont d'Or communal cemetery extension which began in October 1917. The site was used first as a Rest Camp with a small British Hospital until Nov 1919.

Antrim. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. LOL 651. Antrim District LOL 13 WM

1940

+CROSS, Robert George

South Wales Borderers, 2nd Bn. Warrant Officer Class II (C.S.M.). 3907996. Died 08/07/1944. Aged 29. Son of Charlie and Maud Cross; husband to Sarah Cross, of

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Waterside, Londonderry. Hotot - Les - Bagues War Cemetery, Calvados, France

1941

+BURNSIDE, John Stanley

RAF. Sergeant (Air Gunner). 538670. Died 08/07/1941. 9 Squadron based at RAF Honington, Suffolk. On the night of 07/08 July 1941 he was aboard Vickers Wellington 1C R1040 on a mission to Cologne. Jonkerbos War Cemetery, Gelderland, Netherlands. 502 (Ulster) Squadron WM, St Anne's Cathedral, Belfast

+LYTLE, Samuel John

RAF. Flight Sergeant (Wireless Op./Air Gunner). 619200. Died 08/07/1941. 44 Sqdn. On the night of the 08/07/1941, Flight Sergeant Samuel Lytle was on board a Hampden I (AD840) when it set out on a night raid over Hamm, Germany. The aircraft failed to return and was presumed shot down with its crew of four. Samuel John Lytle was the son of John S Lytle. He was born about 1921. Reichswald Forest War Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. Dungannon WM

1942

+ANDREWS, William Henry Lowry

Royal Artillery, 32 Field Regt. Lieutenant. 143809. Died 08/07/1942. Aged 23. Son of Joseph M. and Ina H. Andrews, of Bangor, Co. Down. El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt

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+KING, Neville Stuart King

RAFVR. Flying Officer. 112178. Died 08/07/1942. 603 Sqdn
Neville was flying a Supermarine Spitfire aircraft in pursuit of a German Junkers Ju 88 aircraft over Gozo and, when turning to return to base, was flying so low that a wing tip touched the water and his aircraft crashed. His body was not recovered. Born 24/03/1913 at Carndonagh, Foxrock, Killiney, Dublin, son of Jonas Lowcay King and Charlotte Mary King (née Stack). They were married on 04/07/1900 in Lower Langfield Parish Church of Ireland Church, Drumquin, Co. Tyrone (where Charlotte's father served for a time as Rector). For a time, the King family lived at Martello, Holywood and Neville Stuart King attended Rockport. Neville Stuart King married Brenda Howarth of Leeds, Yorkshire. At that time, he was a policeman in the Metropolitan Police. Malta Memorial, Valetta, Malta. Rockport School.

1943

+RICHMOND, Richard Hugh

RAFVR. Leading Aircraftman. 1062122. Died 08/07/1943. Aged 21. Son of Robert and Mary Richmond, of Larne. Madras War Cemetery, Chennai, India

1944

+FREW, Andrew McWilliams

RAFVR. Flight Sergeant (Air Bomber). 1132241. Died 08/07/1944. Aged 29. 61 Sqdn. Son of Hugh and Isabella Frew, of Belfast. Marissel National Cemetery, Olse, France

+HOLLINGSWORTH, Antony Howard

South Staffordshire Regiment, 2/6th Btn. Lieutenant.

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299319. Died 08/08/1944. Aged 26. Son of Fred Hollingsworth and Winifred Mabel Hollingsworth (née Hughes) of Newcastle upon Tyne, Cumberland. Husband to Hazel Lilian Hollingsworth (née Kerr) of Belfast. Cambes en Plaine War Cemetery, Normandy, France

+McCORMICK, Bernard

South Staffordshire Regiment, 7th Btn. Private.1524125. Died 08/08/1944. Aged 35. Son of Mary McCormick of Coleraine. Cambes en Plaine War Cemetery, Normandy, France. 1/6th Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment was a territorial battalion, part of 59th (Staffordshire) Infantry Division based in Northern Ireland in 1942.

+MULLEN, Patrick Mullen

Royal Ulster Rifles, 2nd Btn. Rifleman. 7043313. Died from a shrapnel wound to the head which he sustained at "Farm Gazelle" 08/07/1944. Aged 33. Son of Patrick and Mary Ann Mullen from Rosslea, County Fermanagh. Husband to Mary Ann Mullen from Rosslea. Hermanville Cemetery, Normandy.

+SMALLMAN, Denis Harold

South Staffordshire Regiment, 7th Btn. Lieutenant. Died 08/08/1944. Aged 26. Son of James Smallman and Mary Alice Smallman, and husband to Emelia Lavinia Millicent Smallman of Ballywalter, Co. Down. Cambes en Plaine War Cemetery, Normandy, France

1947

+BLAIR, Ernest

Royal Artillery. 102 HAA Regiment, 14 Battery. Gunner.14863223. Died 08/07/1947. Aged 51. Son of

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James and Ellen Blair of Belfast; Husband of Emily Blair of Belfast. Belfast City Cemetery

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 houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com

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