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remembrance ni



HMS Hermes off Yantai, China, circa 1931

NI men lost in Hermes - Britain's first aircraft carrier

Four men from N Ireland were lost when HMS Hermes, Britain's first aircraft carrier was sunk on April 9, 1942 by Japanese aircraft.

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The casualties were David McCaughey an Engine Room Artificer from Belfast; Seaman Alfred Moore from Ballymartin, AB Seaman Vincent Quinn from Whitehouse and Leading Cook Thomas Wilson from Comber.

Lieutenant JD Davey, a reservist from HMS Caroline had served in HMS Hermes early in the war. He survived the war and served in the Ulster Division at Caroline afterwards.

HMS *Hermes* was a British aircraft carrier built for the Royal Navy and was the world's first ship to be designed as an aircraft carrier, although the Japanese navy's Hoshio was the first to be launched and commissioned.

The construction of Hermes began during the First World War but not completed until after the end of the war, delayed by multiple changes in her design after she was laid down. After she was launched, the Armstrong Whitworth shipyard which built her closed, and her fitting out was suspended. Most of the changes made were to optimise her design, in light of the results of experiments with operational carriers.

In February 1941, the ship supported Commonwealth forces in Italian Somaliland during the East African campaign and did much the same two months later in the Persian Gulf during the Anglo-Iraq war. After that campaign, *Hermes* spent most of the rest of the year patrolling the Indian Ocean. She was refitted in South Africa between November 1941 and February 1942 and then joined the Eastern Fleet at Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Hermes was berthed in Trincomalee on 8 April when a warning of an Indian Ocean raid by the Japanese fleet was received, and she sailed that day for the Maldives with no aircraft on board.

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On 9 April a Japanese scout plane spotted her near Batticaloa, and she was attacked by several dozen dive bombers shortly afterwards. With no air cover, the carrier was quickly sunk by the Japanese aircraft. Most of the survivors were rescued by a nearby hospital ship, although 307 men from *Hermes* were lost in the sinking.

Ten ships of the Royal Navy have been named *HMS Hermes*, after Hermes, the messenger god of Greek mythology

On this Day – April 9

1912

An enormous rally was held in Belfast by Ulster unionists opposed to Home Rule. Edward Carson addressed the crowd: “We welcome here my own fellow citizens from Dublin, from Wicklow... from Cork... who are now holding the hand of Ulster.”

9th April 1915 Belfast Newsletter

Seven Sons in the Army

Mrs. Margaret Nabney, residing at 42, Central Street, Belfast, has the distinction of having seven soldier sons serving with the British Army, three of whom are at the front. John Nabney, one of the sons, who had served his full time in the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, rejoined on the outbreak of war. Hi is now with the 1st Battalion at the front.

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Rifleman Hugh Nabeny, the youngest of seven brothers, also served with the 2nd Battalion in India. He joined the 1st Battalion at the front, and was slightly wounded in the arm during a charge on 10th March. On 15th March a letter was received from him from the convalescent camp at Rouen. Rifleman George Nabney, 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, is also at the front. Two other brothers, David and Thomas are with the 8th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles at Ballykinlar, and still another, William, is at Shane's Park (Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers). One brother, Andrew, belong to the Royal Field Artillery, and is at present stationed at Athlone.

Note-

Sadly Private William McNabney, 14751, 23rd Entrenching Battalion, formerly of the 11th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers was killed in action 25th March, 1918. Deceased was 35 years of age and was the husband of the late Margaret Jane Nabney nee Hanretta, of Belfast. William is commemorated on the Pozières Memorial to the Missing panel 38 to 40, Belgium.

Hugh Nabney, also killed in action 9th May, 1915 with the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, four weeks after this newspaper article was printed, he is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing panel 9, Belgium.

1914

Mexican Revolution: One of the world's first naval/air skirmishes takes place off the coast of western Mexico.

1916

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The Battle of Verdun: German forces launch their third offensive of the battle.

1917

The Battle of Arras began: The battle begins with Canadian Corps executing a massive assault on Vimy Ridge. Over 50,000 Commonwealth servicemen would be killed in the six-week campaign. CWGC's Arras Memorial commemorates over 34,700 men who have no known grave – most of whom died during this period. All four divisions of the 'Canadian Corps' storm the German lines on Vimy Ridge. Their victory is seen as a "coming-of-age" moment for the young nation of Canada. On this day the Canadians take Vimy Ridge apart from the northern tip, also five villages and a reported 6,000 German prisoners.

1918

The Battle of the Lys: The Portuguese Expeditionary Corps is crushed by the German forces during what is called the (Kaiserschlacht) Spring Offensive on the Belgian region of Flanders.

1940

Operation Weserübung Nazi Germany invades neutral Norway and Denmark, surprising the Norwegian, Danish and British defenders of the countries and capturing several strategic points along the coast. The Danes capitulated within six hours and was the shortest military campaign conducted by the Germans during the war.

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Vidkun Quisling seizes power in Norway. Vidkun Quisling was an ambitious Norwegian politician and first came to be known for his relief work during the Russian food crisis in 1921. During the German attack on Norway, on 9th April, 1940, he forcibly declared himself the country's supreme leader through a radio broadcast, which failed, as the Germans did not accept his government. Norwegian coastal defence batteries engaged German cruiser Blücher, causing serious damage. Blücher which carried most of the troops and Gestapo agents intended to occupy Oslo, capsized and sank with major loss of life,

1942

The Battle of Bataan which begun in December 1941, ends. American and Filipino defenders taking a last stand to the Japanese surrender. The Japanese then forced the 70,000 captured American and Filipino soldiers to march more than a hundred kilometers from Bataan to Tarlac known as the "Bataan Death March".



From left to right: Private First Class Samuel Stenzler (September 15,

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1893-May 26, 1942); Private First Class Frank Spear (1919-July 9, 1945) and Captain James McDonald Gallagher (1915-April 9, 1942) are resting with hands bound during the Bataan Death March to Camp O'Donnell, Capas, Tarlac, Philippines in a captured Japanese photo.

Their hands are bound because they were found to possess either Japanese money, personal photos, or some other contraband. The figure to the extreme right is a Japanese soldier, who the three appear to be listening to. It's likely Gallagher and possibly the other men were beaten soon after this view was taken.

None of the three men would survive captivity; all were weakened by lack of food, extreme stress, and constant movement.

The Allied and the Philippine Commonwealth forces began the campaign to recapture the Philippines in 1944, with landings on the island of Leyte, and the battle was still going until the Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945 following the dropping of atomic bombs "Little Boy" on Hiroshima, and "Fat Man" over the city of Nagasaki, Japan.

An Indian Ocean raid by Japan's 1st Air Fleet sinks the British aircraft carrier HMS *Hermes* (see article above) and the Australian destroyer HMAS *Vampire*.

Destroyer HMS *Lance* was severely damaged by air attack while docked for repairs at Malta and was declared a total loss. No casualties.

1945

38 (Irish) Division. 2 LIR. 1700 D Day. Allied offensive on the Senio River line opens. 2 NZ Division on the left and 8

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Indian Division on the right. Btn's role will be that of infantry cooperating with tanks and spearheading the Allied advance through the Argenta Gap.

Operation Buckland starts on 9th April 1945

Op. Buckland was the Eighth Army's part in 15th Army Group's Op. Grapeshot; Fifth Army carried out Op. Craftsman, beginning on the 14th. Eighth Army was commanded by **Lt Gen Sir Richard McCreery**, a man whose family came from **Killyclogher, Co. Tyrone**, and who was Eighth Army's finest commander. The entire operation was planned by McCreery and Fifth Army's commander, Lucian King Truscott Jr, also of Irish descent. It represented the finest example of manoeuvre warfare by the western Allies in the SWW.

For its part in Op. Buckland, **38 (Irish) Brigade** was reinforced to almost divisional strength. It included a Break-Out Force of both Fusilier battalions (1 RIrF and 2 INNISKS), each supported by a squadron of The Bays, MG platoons from D Spt Gp Kensingtons, RE recce parties and a scissors bridge with the Faughs) and C Sqn 51 RTR with Crocodile flame-thrower tanks (with the Skins).

Artillery support was provided by 17th Field Regiment and 11th (HAC) Regiment RHA. The former was the Irish Brigade's supporting field regiment and referred to themselves as the Royal Hibernian Artillery.

The Mobile Force included 2nd London Irish in Kangaroo APCs, HQ 2 Armd Bde, 9th Lancers, 4th Hussars, to man the Kangaroos, Z Tp/209 SP Bty and an RE assault detachment.

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The final component was a Reserve Force for special roles which included C Sqn Bays, 254 A/tk Bty, an RE armoured troop, an MG platoon of D Support Gp, 214 Field Coy RE and 152nd Field Ambulance RAMC.

The Break-Out Force included over 100 main tracked AFVs. Commanding the Kangaroo Army was Lt Col Bala Bredin who had fought in France in 1940, in Tunisia and throughout the Italian campaign and was to finish the war as one of the most highly-decorated officers in the Army.

While 2 LIR provided the mechanised infantry of the Kangaroo Army, 1 LIR was also mechanised, taking part in amphibious operations with 56th (London) Division and crossing Lake Comacchio in Fantails (LVTs).

Op. Buckland is covered in detail in an article in the April edition of Britain at War magazine and in 'Victory in Italy: 15th Army Group's Final Campaign 1945', published by Pen and Sword Books in 2014.

Major Horsfall 2 LIR at Cassino:

"I was instructed to meet Gen Keightley & come to Pat's HQ. The enemy gunners put a fine bracket on us half way down the route. Nearly all of the shells were duds & these, when one is the target, leave one bereft of conversation."

Father Dan Kelleher celebrated Mass for the Skins on Castellone on 9 April, the Germans observing a truce while he did so. He had earned his MC three days earlier in Cairra. All positions on the ridge, codenamed Phantom, were overlooked by German positions on Monte Cairo and movement in daylight was impossible.

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Execution of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Lutheran pastor, anti-Nazi dissident and spy, by the Nazi regime.

The German pocket battleship *Admiral Scheer* is sunk by the Royal Air Force

The Battle of Königsberg, in East Prussia, ends.
The United States Atomic Energy Commission is formed.

The Fleet Air Arm Aircraft Handler Branch was formed.
Colloquially known as 'Chockheads' Handlers are responsible for the movement and safety of helicopters and jets on deck and air stations.



Arnèke British Cemetery is approximately 50 Kms south-east of Calais in Northern France. Total WW1 burials 692 and 5 WW2 burials.

Roll of Honour – April 9

Representing their comrades who died on this day

1916

+BAINE, John English

Canadian Pioneers, 2nd Btn. Private. 166459. Died 09/04/1916. Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial. Panel 32. Larne WM

+COSTLEY, Edmund

2 Irish Guards. Private. 8594. Died 09/04/1916. Age 19. Born in Moira, son of Joseph Henry Costley of Drumcro, Maralin, Lurgan. He enlisted at Lurgan. Menin Road South Military Cemetery, Ypres, Belgium

+HOLDCROFT, Robert



The Holdcroft family of Magheragall.

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Prince of Wales's (North Staffordshire Regiment), 7th Btn. Quarter Master Sergeant. 8853. Died 09/04/1916 in Mesopotamia. Born Burslem, Staffordshire, enlisted Lichfield, Staffordshire, resident Belfast. Basra War Cemetery, Iraq. Magheragall Parish Church WM

+McCONNELL, Robert Wallace

King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment. 10th Btn. Lieutenant. Died. 09/04/1916. Aged 20. Commissioned in February 1915. Robert survived the Gallipoli campaign, serving at Sulva Bay until the evacuation, after which he embarked for Port Said on the 13/02/1916; disembarking at Basra 27/02/1916. He was attached to the Indian Expeditionary Force for the relief of General Townshend when he was known to have been wounded on 05/04/1916, later to have been reported as killed in action on 09/04/1916 during an attack on Sanna-i-yat.

Robert received his elementary education at Mountpottinger school and entered Campbell College in September 1906. He gained several prizes, won a senior scholarship for two years, and passed the junior, middle, and senior grades examinations of the Intermediate Education Board for Ireland. On more than one occasion he was among the first prize-winners at the General Assembly's guild examinations. In 1909 he took second place with 95 per cent., the examiner (Rev. Prof. Heron, D.D.) reporting his answering to be "exceptionally brilliant."

He entered the honours English school of the Belfast Queen's University in October, 1914. He was extremely popular with his fellow-students, and was elected a member of council of the Literary and Scientific Society, and awarded

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at the annual meeting of the society on 10/03/1915, the Dufferin medal for oratory. He was also immensely popular with the members of his father's congregation, in the work of which he took a deep interest, teaching in both the morning and evening Sabbath - school. The office-bearers, at a social meeting on 08/04/1915, presented him with a sword of honour. Robert was the son of the late Rev. James McConnell, a former minister of Megain Memorial Presbyterian Church, Belfast, and Annie Duffield McConnell (nee Gibson), of "Ulidia" Holywood Rd., Belfast. He was the younger brother of Samuel Gibson.

His parents received a sympathetic letter from Major-General F. S. Maude, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., regarding the death in action of his son. The letter from Major-General Maude, a distinguished officer with many Ulster connections, was written on the 14th April, before the fall of Kut-el-Amara, and is as follows:—

“Though personally unknown to you, I feel that I must write a line, as General Officer Commanding, to offer you my respectful and warmest sympathy on the death of your gallant son in action. The fighting in our centre, which is to relieve our comrades who are beleaguered in Kut-el-Amara, has been strenuous and severe, and it has not been from want of valour and determination on the part of the relieving force, but rather owing to the exceptional conditions by which we are surrounded, that we have not, so far, been able to attain our object.

“The King's Own fought splendidly on the day on which your son was killed, and distinguished themselves, as they have done through other campaigns, by their steadiness and heroism. I know what a heavy blow this great loss must

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mean to you all; but I trust that at least you may derive some small measure of comfort from the thought that he fell nobly at the call of duty and King and country, a brilliant example of self-sacrifice and devotion to many of his countrymen.

“That every solace in your overwhelming grief may be yours is the earnest wish of yours faithfully, “F. S. Maude, Major-General.” Basra Memorial, Iraq.

1917

+BRADLEY, Francis Henry

Canadian Infantry, 15th Bn. (Central Ontario Regiment). Private. 77632. Died 09/04/1917. Aged 28. One of three brothers who died in WW1. Francis Henry Bradley emigrated to Canada where he worked as a surveyor's axeman. He enlisted on 05/11/1914 at Victoria. Son of William and Jane Bradley, of Corr and Dunavally, Moy, Co Tyrone. Nine Elms Military Cemetery, Thelus, Pas de Calais, France. Moy WM

+BURKE, Charles

Royal Flying Corps. Wing Commander. Lt.Colonel. DSO, MiD. Royal Irish Regiment, Second battalion, attached to First Battalion East Lancashire Regiment. Died 09/04/1917. He was the youngest son of Michael Charles Christopher Burke and Amy Burke, of Ballinahone House, Armagh, and husband to Beatrice O. Burke, Stoney Cockbury, Winchcombe, Glos. Point-du-Jour Military Cemetery, Athies, France. Men of Thomond Memorial at St Mary's Cathedral (Church of Ireland), Limerick.

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+DODDS, Michael

1 Royal Irish Fusiliers. Private. 3466. Died 09/04/1917. Aged 19. Born in Magherasaul, Co. Down, he lived in Lisburn where he enlisted. Brother of Miss Wilhelmina Dodds of 15 Young Street, Lisburn. Point-du-Jour Military Cemetery, Athies, (near Arras), France

+JOHNSON, Andrew

Canadian Infantry, 75th Btn. (Central Ontario Regiment). Sergeant. 171257. Died 09/04/1917. The youngest son of Samuel and Margaret Johnson. Andrew was born on 04/06/1891 in Drumballyhagan, Tobermore. They were a farming family. Andrew's mother died in 1904 when he was 13 years old. Andrew worked on the farm until he emigrated to Toronto, Canada in 1911. Andrew joined Toronto Police Force. He enlisted in August 1915. Vimy Memorial, Pas de Calais, France. Tobermore WM. Tobermore Presbyterian Church RH

+McILMURRAY, John

Seaforth Highlanders, 6th Btn. Private. 266541. Died 09/04/1917 Age 26. Son of Henry and Mary McIlmurray, of 43, North St., Lurgan. Arras Memorial, Pas de Calais, France

+RENNIE, David

2nd Bn. Australian Imperial Force. Private. 1619. Died 09/04/1917. Age 33. Brother of John Rennie, East Torr, Ballyvoy, Ballycastle. Hermies British Cemetery

1918

+ADAMS, James

Highland Light Infantry, 14th Btn. Lance Corporal. 23519. Died 09/04/ 1918. Age 43. Son of the late Robert and Isabella Glazebrook Adams. Ploegsteert Memorial, Belgium. Larne WM

+CAMPBELL, Francis

Royal Irish Rifles, 15th Btn. Rifleman. 19422. Died 09/04/1918. Son of Hugh and Mary Campbell (nee Haugh). Francis was born in Stewartstown about 1893. The family moved to Laganvale Street in Belfast. Francis was a general labourer. His mother was a widow. Frank's brother, Rifleman Charles Campbell (14160), served with the Royal Irish Rifles and also died in the war. Cement House Cemetery, in Langemark, north of Ypres, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

+GILLILAND, David

Royal Irish Rifles. Private, 7248, before transferring to 1 Royal Irish Fusiliers. 3783. Died 09/04/1917. Aged 36. Born in Lisburn, he lived at Belfast, enlisted at Hollywood. Son of James and Agnes Gilliland and husband to Margaret Gilliland. Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinghe, Belgium

+McLEAN, Marcus

10th Bn. Liverpool Regiment. Lance Corporal. 356377. Died 09/04/1917. Age 22. Born near Limavady. Son of William and Sarah Cameron McClean. He lived in Liverpool where

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he enlisted. Gorre British and Indian Cemetery, Special Memorial 2

1940

+MILLAR, Robert Lawrence

RAF. Aircraftman 1st Class. 569861. Died 09/04/1940. 210 Sqdn. Son of John and Anne Mary Millar, of Limavady. Selling Churchyard, Norway

1941

+BURTON, Robert

RCAF. Sergeant (Pilot). R/60228. Died 09/04/1941. Aged 19. Son of Robert and Margaret Isabella Burton, of Marigold, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Hawarden (St. Denial) Churchyard, Flintshire. Dungannon WM

+FRIEL, C

RN. Enniskillen WM. Possibly Ordinary Seaman. P/JX 210012. Date of Death 09/04/1941. H.M.S. Voltaire. Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 50

+HOUSTON, Frank

RNR. AB. P/6632 C. Died 09/04/1941. Age 39. HMS Voltaire. Son of Frank and Jane Houston; husband to Mary Catherine Houston, of Belfast. His father had drowned at sea during World War 1. (Belfast Weekly Telegraph 26/07/1941). Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 60

+LIGHT, Jack

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South Wales Borderers, 8th Btn. Lance Serjeant. 3906431.
Died 09/04/1941. Age 35. Son of Albert and Catherine Light;
husband to Agnes Light, of Feeny, Co. Londonderry.
Christiansborg War Cemetery, Ghana

+SHAW, John

RAFVR. Aircraftman 2nd Class. 1053902. Died 09/04/1941.
Aged 35. 916 (County of Warwick) Balloon Squadron, which
was part of Number 6 Balloon Centre at RAF Wythall. Son
of Arthur C. Shaw and Kathleen Shaw; husband to Adrianna
Shaw, of Belfast. Belfast City Cemetery, Glenalina

1942

HMS HERMES

HMS *Hermes* was the world's first ship to be designed as
an aircraft carrier. She was commissioned in 1924. *Hermes*
was berthed in Trincomalee on 08/04/1942 when a warning
of an Indian Ocean raid by the Japanese fleet was received,
and she sailed that day for the Maldives with no aircraft on
board. On 9 April a Japanese scout plane spotted her near
Batticaloa, and she was attacked by several dozen dive
bombers shortly afterwards. With no air cover, the carrier
was quickly sunk by the Japanese aircraft. Most of the
survivors were rescued by a nearby hospital ship, although
307 men from *Hermes* were lost in the sinking.

+BRADY, Robert William

Royal Marines. Marine. PLY/X 905. H.M.S. *Hermes*. Died
09/04/1942. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 74, Column 3.

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+CAUGHEY, David Smyth

RN. Engine Room Artificer 5th Class. D/MX. 59143. HMS Hermes. Died 09/04/1942. Son of Annie Caughey, Belfast. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 68

+MOORE, Alfred

RNR. Seaman. D/X 18007A. Date of Death: 09/04/1942. Age: 41. H.M.S. Hermes. Son of David and Esther Moore, of Ballymartin, Co. Down; husband to Eliza Jane Moore, Ballymartin. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 75

+QUINN, Vincent

RN. Able Seaman. D/JX 156549. Died 09/04/1942. Age 20. HMS Hermes. Son of Sophia Quinn, Whitehouse. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 35

+WARNE, Alfred

RN. Leading Stoker. D/KX 98520. Died 09/04/1942. Son of Elias and Grace Ann Warne; husband to C. Warne, of Belfast. Plymouth Naval Memorial

+WILSON, Thomas

RN. Leading Cook (S). D/MX 61660. Died 09/04/1942. Age 29. HMS Hermes. Son of Samuel and Elizabeth Wilson, Comber. Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 72. Comber WM

1943

+KELLY, Hugh Desmond

Intelligence Corps. Att 9th HAA Regt. Corporal. 6142816. Died 09/04/1943. Aged 24. Son of Hugh Montgomery Kelly and Annie Elizabeth Kelly, of Londonderry. Alexandria

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(Hadra) War Memorial Cemetery, Egypt. Derry Cathedral
WM

1945

+McGOLDRICK, Mary Jane

WAAF. Aircraftwoman 2nd Class. 2145651. Died
09/04/1945. Aged 25. Daughter of John and Catherine
McGoldrick of Leggs. Mulleek (St. Michael) Roman Catholic
Churchyard

1945

+McCORMICK, William Myles Colbert

RAF. Corporal. 537072. Died 09/04/1945. Aged 27. Son of
William and Julia McCormick, Belfast; Husband to Stella
Valletta McCormick, Belfast. Aughlishnafin (Imaculate
Conception) Roman Catholic Churchyard

**Every day is a Remembrance
Day**

We will remember them

**To return to Home Page - click on Remembrance NI
masthead.**

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Information about individuals who served - please forward to remembrance ni at

houstonmckelvey@mac.com

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

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