



REMEMBERING RAMSEY'S FALLEN 1939 - 1945

ERECTED
IN MEMORY OF
THE MEN OF RAMSEY
WHO SERVED IN HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES

COMPILED BY RAY FERGUSON

RAMSEY BRANCH THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Ramsey Branch released its publication, 'Remembering Ramsey's Fallen 1914 – 1918' to record the sacrifice of those men whose names are inscribed on the Towns War Memorial who had given their lives in the Great War. The War to end all Wars as it was later called, failed to live up to that aspiration and in 1939 the world, once again, went to war.

As had happened in the 1st War, there was no shortage of volunteers from the Island and Manxmen and women served across the globe during six years of conflict.

Ramsey offered up scores of its townsfolk to fight against the tyranny raging across Europe, the Far East, North Africa and beyond. Many paid the supreme price.

In this year as we commemorate and remember the 80th anniversary of the ending of the 2nd World War, I was keen to revisit the Ramsey Memorial and capture the stories of those fallen from 1939 – 1945. This booklet attempts to describe their part in the war and in doing so, ensure that they are not forgotten.

Before the war they lived normal lives as milkmen, farmers, lawyers, shopkeepers and a host of other occupations. They were swept up in events they didn't start but went willingly and played their part in helping to end the war.

I am indebted to Brigadier Norman Butler CBE, for so kindly agreeing to pen the foreword to this booklet and for his kind words of support.

Whether they fought in the air, on the land or on the sea, they were all heroes,
Ramsey heroes.

"They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,

We will remember them".

FOREWORD BY BRIGADIER NORMAN BUTLER CBE

I regard it as a privilege to provide a foreword for this outstanding piece of research into the details of the Ramsey men who fell in the Second World War.

The Second World War dwarfed its predecessors in scale and casualties: the awful consequences of the Totalitarian States winning would still have been with us today.

454,000 British service personnel and civilians died in the six year conflict and the Isle of Man suffered its share of the losses. The Island made a significant contribution to the British War Effort: The Steam Packet playing a major and costly part in the vital Dunkirk evacuation and the Manx Regiment providing the Light Anti-Aircraft support for the legendary 7th Armoured Division "The Desert Rats" in battle after battle from 1940 to 1945.

I believe that eighty years since the final Victory in Europe and Japan is the perfect time for the publication of this comprehensive record of the 49 Ramsey men who fell in that dreadful War.

This book will help us to continue to remember their sacrifice to preserve our precious Freedom so early in their short lives.

Norman Butler

April 2025

DONALD CRAIG BIRKETT (age 17)

BOY 1st CLASS

ROYAL NAVY

DECEMBER 1941

Donald Craig (17) Grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Brown, Ramsey.

Commemorated on Panel 49, Column 3 Plymouth Naval Memorial, Devon, U.K.



Prince of Wales arrives at Singapore, 4 December 1941 (Imperial War Museums)

In what was to be her final action, Craig Birketts ship, HMS Prince of Wales, attempted to intercept Japanese troop convoys off the coast of Malaya as part of Force Z when she was sunk by Japanese aircraft on 10 December 1941, two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

A torpedo struck her on the port side wrecking the outer propeller shaft, destroyed bulkheads along the shaft causing uncontrollable flooding and put the entire electrical system in the after part of the ship out of action.

Further attacks took place and Prince of Wales was hit by three more torpedoes. Finally, a bomb penetrated the main deck where it exploded causing many casualties.

At 13:15 the order to abandon ship was given, and at approximately 13:20 *Prince of Wales* capsized to port, floated for a few brief moment's upside down, and sank stern first.

She was sunk alongside her consort, the battlecruiser HMS *Repulse* in what were the first capital ships to be sunk solely by air power on the open sea.

There were 327 fatalities including Donald Craig Birkett, Boy 1st Class.

DOUGLAS GORDON BRYAN (age24)

SERGEANT (PILOT)

R.A.F. (VOLUNTEER RESERVE)

JAN 1942

Son of Sydney Gordon Bryan and Catina Bryan, of Waterloo Road Ramsey and brother of Sydney who died later in the war.

Buried in Kirk Christ Lezayre (Holy Trinity) Churchyard. Block D, Grave 83.



Serving with 144 Squadron, Sgt. Douglas Bryan took off from North Luffenham RAF base along with his wireless operator Sgt. J.C. Bradshaw at 06:15 in a Hanley Page Hampden 1 aircraft. The crew was completing a training exercise when the airplane crashed in unknown circumstances near Duddington in North Hants. Both crew members were killed.

An extract from the Ramsey Courier, Friday, January 16, 1942

SERGT.-PILOT DOUGLAS BRYAN

As we were going to press on Friday afternoon last the sad news arrived that Sergeant-Pilot Douglas Bryan, R.A.F., second son of Mr and Mrs S. G. Bryan, of 59, Waterloo Road, Ramsey, and a former member of the reporting staff of the "Courier," had that day lost his life on active service, and a brief reference was included in our issue then in course of publication.

Sergt.-Pilot Bryan gained his wings about six months ago. and was recently home on leave just before the New Year prior to proceeding to the station of a noted operational squadron, which incidentally another Ramsey airman, Pilot-Officer Turner Chrystal, who has been closely associated with Douglas Bryan since they both joined the R.A.F. Pilot-Officer Chrystal is one of the principals of the firm in Ramsey where Mr S. G. Bryan, father of Douglas, is employed, and the two young airmen had done much of their training together.

Sergt.-Pilot Douglas Bryan was educated at the Ramsey Grammar School, and afterwards joined the reporting staff of the "Ramsey Courier." where he remained for some years. Just prior to the war he was accepted in the Metropolitan Police Force, and at the outbreak of hostilities was on special duties for some time and making excellent progress in his new sphere. He was in the thick of the enemy raids over London and witnessed many heart-rending sights, and it was this more than anything that prompted him to apply for release from his duties to join the Royal Air Force so that he might, as he put it. 'wipe off some scores' against an enemy whose inhuman methods of warfare he had seen for himself. Only after persistent efforts on his part was he eventually released from the Police Force and allowed to join the R.A.F. for training as a pilot going on operations.

SYDNEY BRYAN (age 21)

TELEGRAPHIST

ROYAL NAVY

FEBRUARY 1945

Son of Sydney Gordon Bryan and Catina Bryan, of Waterloo Road Ramsey and brother of Douglas who died in an aircraft crash 1942.

Buried in Ambon War Cemetery Indonesia. Plot 29, Row A, Grave 12

In March 1942 Sydney Bryans ship, HMS EXETER was taking part in what became known as the Battle of the Java Sea when they were ambushed by Japanese cruisers HAGURO and NACHI escorted by four destroyers and were soon engaged in a running fight with the enemy vessels. A direct hit in her boiler room and the loss of the director control for the main armament meant that EXETER was severely hampered, and she received more hits despite a smoke screen being laid. Fires broke out and all her electrical power supplies failed. The order to abandon ship was given after over three hours in action and she was finally sunk by torpedo.

54 crew were killed and 651, including Sydney Bryan, were rescued by Japanese ships and taken to the island of Celebes where they were incarcerated in Makassar Prison Camp from which many never returned. A dysentery epidemic broke out in January 1945, and the men's health was so lowered by the hard work and poor food that wholesale deaths resulted.

Sydney died in the camp on 17th February 1945 just six months before the camp was liberated by allied troops.



Ambon War Cemetery - CWGC

Sydney Bryan is buried in AMBON War Cemetery, Indonesia, where most of the 800 British casualties belonged to the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force; nearly all the naval dead were originally buried at Makassar.

In 1961, at the request of the Indonesian Government, the remains of 503 graves in Makassar War Cemetery on the island of Celebes were added to the cemetery.

ERNEST FRANK CAINE (age 32)

CORPORAL

SOUTH AFRICAN TANK CORPS

SEPTEMBER 1942

Son of Mr and Mrs F Caine, Hanley Villas, Ramsey (formally of Marsden Terrace)

Died in hospital

Buried in Thaba Tshwane Military Cemetery, South Africa. Grave 148A.

Corporal Frank Caine died in hospital in South Africa following head injuries. He was formerly in the Palestine Police Service but joined the South African Forces.

He had received severe head injuries, and it was reported from hospital that he seemed to be making progress but unfortunately his injuries must have been of a more serious nature than was thought and he died on 30th September.



Frank Caines headstone in Thaba Tshwane Cemetery

THOMAS EDWARD (TEDDY) CHRISTIAN (age 23)

SERGEANT

41 ROYAL MARINE COMMANDO

SEPTEMBER 1943

4, College Street, Ramsey

Son of Robert and Jane Christian

Killed in Action

Buried in Salerno War Cemetery, Italy. Plot V, Row B, Grave 5

Sergeant Thomas Christian died during operations at Salerno, Italy.

On 9th September the Marines disembarked at Vietri-sul-Mar as part of Operation Avalanche. They engaged in operations against the enemy along with Army Commandos at 41 Commando Hill above Piegolelle, The Pimple, and White Cross Hill.

41RM Commando were engaged in operations at the valley south of La Molina and the nearby hills close to Vietri. Their task at Salerno was to secure the La Molina Pass and prevent the Germans from bringing soldiers down from Naples to interfere with the landings.

It was supposed to be a 24-hour mission, but it lasted nearly a week.

Sgt Christian was killed in action on Sunday 12th September.



SOLERNO WAR CEMETERY, ITALY. (CWGC)

ENOS HENRY CLARKE (age 24)

SEAMAN

ROYAL NAVY

MAY 1941

9, King Street, Ramsey

Son of Mr and Mrs W.H. Clarke

Lost at Sea (Missing presumed killed)

Commemorated on Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Panel 50, Column 2.

After German troops landed on Crete on 20 May 1941, Enos Clarke's ship, HMS Gloucester was tasked with preventing any efforts to reinforce the German forces on the island.



She took part in attacks on invasion craft in Kithera Channel on 21st along with other warships from Force B. However, on withdrawal from Kithera Channel the next day the ships came under intense air attack from German dive-bombers. One survivor spoke afterwards of the sky 'being black with bombers.' The ships themselves were low on ammunition with Gloucester down to about 18% of her AA quota. Defence was difficult and when they run out of ammunition virtually impossible.

She was hit several times causing major explosions and fires broke out along with serious flooding. Eventually the disabled ship had to be abandoned.

HMS Gloucester sank after about 90 mins.

Whilst in the sea the survivors were machine gunned by several Luftwaffe aircraft.

Seaman Enos Clarke had, just a few weeks earlier, been rescued from HMS Dainty after that destroyer had been torpedoed and he was subsequently transferred to HMS Gloucester.

Initially the Admiralty advised family that he had probably been captured and was presumed 'safe and well', before advising later that they were unsure whether he had been on board or not.

The Red Cross had no records of him being a Prisoner of War.

Many long months passed before the Admiralty was able to confirm that Seaman Clarke was missing presumed lost at sea.

CYRIL COLEMAN (age 23)

FLIGHT SERGEANT

ROYAL AIR FORCE

SEPTEMBER 1941

4 Albert Road, Ramsey. Formerly of Norton, Yorkshire.

Killed in road accident on Isle of Man

Buried in Jurby Churchyard. Grave 338 (Coll, A, 5).

Flight Sergeant Cyril Coleman was married only six months before the car accident that resulted in his death.

He was a passenger in the car which was being driven along Douglas promenade about 10:30 at night when it crashed into a post at the corner of the Recent Hotel (the site of one of the promenade camps). All three men in the car were injured and were taken to hospital where Sergeant Coleman died from cerebral haemorrhage due to a fracture of the base of his skull. He recovered consciousness only long enough to recognise his young wife by his bedside.

An inquiry revealed that a red light was so obscurely placed on the camp post that none of the three occupants of the car could see it as they approached. The inquiry also established that all three men had not been drinking alcohol.



ARTHUR VINCENT COLLINS (age 22)

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT

ROYAL AIR FORCE

FEBRUARY 1944

Son of Arthur Vincent and Edith Mary Collins, of Waterloo, Lancashire but formerly from Ramsey.

Killed in Action

Commemorated on the Air Forces Memorial, Runnymede, Panel 201.

F/LT Collins, who was a Ramsey Grammer School old boy, was based at RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk as part of 149 Squadron flying Short Stirling heavy bombers.

The Short Stirling was a British four-engine heavy bomber of the Second World War. It has the distinction of being the first four-engine bomber to be introduced into service with the Royal Air Force.

However by December 1943, the Stirling was being withdrawn from frontline service as bombers but remained in service for minelaying operations in the vicinity of German ports, electronic countermeasures, dropping spies deep behind enemy lines at night and towing gliders.

It was on a mine laying operation that F/LT Arthur Collins took off in Stirling Bomber EF307 just after 17:00 to lay mines in the Kiel Bay area of Germany.

The aircraft and her seven crew were lost without trace during the operation.

Note: The Ramsey War Memorial incorrectly names F/LT Collins as Arthur F. Collins.



SHORT STIRLING MKIII

ARTHUR CORKISH (age 28)

PRIVATE ROYAL ARMY ORDNANCE CORPS (RAOC) DECEMBER 1940

Waverley Terrace, Waterloo Road, Ramsey

Killed while on service in U.K.

Buried at Kirk Maughold Churchyard. West of church.

Arthur Corkish was a dispatch rider who died in a military hospital from injuries received as a result of an accident.

He was well known in Ramsey and was a grocer by trade having served his time in the Maypole and other grocery establishments.

His funeral took place with full military honours along with an escort from his unit who had travelled to the Island with the body.

His widow, Betty, received a letter from Arthurs Company Commander who wrote:

"Your husband was a very keen and a very good soldier and he was held in high regard by everyone, and we all regret his death which was caused by circumstances beyond anyone's control".



JOHN CEDRIC CORLETT (age 21)

FLYING OFFICER

ROYAL AIR FORCE (VR)

FEBRUARY 1944

Waterloo Lane, Ramsey

Son of William James and Margaret Edith Corlett. Brother of Gunner Percy L Corlett who died in a Japanese POW Camp in August 1943

Killed on Operations

Commemorated on the Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Column 279



Flying Officer John Corlett served with 227 Squadron flying Bristol Beaufighters. The squadron spent most of the war on anti-shipping and maritime reconnaissance operations in the Mediterranean and Aegean areas. They were also used for attacking targets on Crete and provided fighter cover for allied convoys.

On 22nd February 1944 at 12:25 Flying Officer Corlett and his Navigator F/O Gwynfor Williams took off in their Beaufighter JL731/Q from RAF Berka 3 in Benghazi, Libya. During the flight they were attacking an enemy ship off the coast of Crete when they came under aircraft attack themselves and were shot down by a German Bf-109 fighter approx. 10 miles east of Dia Island, Crete.

Pilot John Corlett was killed but his Navigator survived and became a Prisoner of War.



BRISTOL BEAUFIGHTER

JOHN WILLIAM CORLETT (age 22)

AIRCRAFTMAN (1st Cl.)

ROYAL AIR FORCE

DECEMBER 1941

'Granville', Brookhill, Ramsey

Son of John James Corlett and Annie Corlett, of Ramsey.

Killed in Action

Buried at Tobruk War Cemetery. Plot 7, Row S.

Aircraftman John Corlett was serving at RAF Gambut, a complex of six airfields in Libya at the time of his death.

The Ramsey Courier reported John Corletts death on Friday, January 02, 1942.

Ramsey Aircraftman Killed on Christmas Eve on Bomb Disposal Work in Middle East.



AIRCRAFTMAN JOHN CORLETT

Word was received on Sunday by the parents of Aircraftman John Corlett., Granville, Brookhill, Ramsey that this young Airman had been killed whilst on bomb disposal duty in the Middle East.

The telegram read: "Deeply regret to inform you that your son. No. 611514, Aircraftman, First Class, John Corlett, lost his life on 24th December 1941. while engaged on bomb disposal duties. Letter following. Please accept profound sympathy."

A/C John Corlett was 22 years of age. He served his apprenticeship as a joiner with Messrs Jas. Callow and Sons, Ramsey, and joined the Royal Air Force about a year before the outbreak of the war. He was drafted to the Middle East in February last, and his parents had received cheery letters from him in which he stated that he had been enjoying a game of football.

His twin brother, Pat, is serving in the King's Regiment.

KENNETH CARR CORLETT (age 21)

PRIVATE

1st LINCOLNSHIRE REGIMENT

JANUARY 1945

63, Waterloo Road, Ramsey

Son of Edward Corlett, and of Charlotte Corlett, of Ramsey

Died of Wounds in Burma

Buried in Taukkyan War Cemetery, Myanmar. Plot 4, Row C, Grave 3.

Private Corlett had been a member of the Ramsey Company, 2nd Manx Battalion, Home Guard before signing up to the Army as soon as he was able to.

He was formerly an apprentice printer with the Ramsey Courier newspaper.

His Regiment fought the Imperial Japanese Army in the Burma Campaign and took part in the Battle of the Admin Box, the first major victory against the Japanese in the campaign, in early 1944.

The successful allied offensive throughout late 1944 to mid-1945 succeeded in the liberation of Burma.



Pictured with him (front) is his older brother, Bobby, who had been a prisoner of war but was repatriated at the end of 1943.



Taukkyan War Cemetery is the largest of the three war cemeteries in Burma (now Myanmar). It was begun in 1951 for the reception of graves from four battlefield cemeteries at Akyab, Mandalay, Meiktila and Sahmaw which were difficult to access and could not be maintained. The last was an original 'Chindit' cemetery containing many of those who died in the battle for Myitkyina.

PERCY L CORLETT (age 29)

GUNNER

ROYAL ARTILLERY

AUGUST 1943

Son of William James Corlett and Margaret Edith Corlett, husband of Evaline Frances Corlett, of Claughbane Road, Ramsey and brother of Flying Officer John Cedric Corlett who was killed in February 1944

Died in Japanese POW Camp

Buried in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery Thailand. Plot 8, Row G, Grave 38

Gunner Percy Corlett served with 3 Battery, 6 Heavy Anti-Aircraft (HAA) Regiment. The regiment arrived in Singapore in January 1942 and took part in the Battle of Singapore. They came under daily air attack, and some of the gunners were shifted to AA positions at airfields in the north of the island. Once their guns were out of action, they manned trenches as infantry or joined anti-tank gunners as the defensive perimeter shrank.

Following the surrender of Singapore the survivors, including Percy Corlett, were imprisoned in PoW camps in and around Changi Prison. Later many were moved to work on the notorious Burma Railway on which many died, including around 60 of Percy's fellow gunners from 6th HAA Regiment.

Gunner Percy Corlett died of dysentery and cholera in Kinsayoke (Kin Sai Yok) No 1 camp on 4th August 1943 and was buried in the prison cemetery.

In 1946 he was reinterred in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery.



HERBERT CREER (age 35)

DRIVER

ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

FEBRUARY 1942

Church Street, Ramsey

Son of Herbert George and Isabella Creer, of Douglas, Isle of Man; husband of Ada Creer.

Lost in sinking of POW ship in Mediterranean.

Commemorated on the Alamein Memorial, Egypt. Column 74

Driver Herbert Creer served with Troops Company, 1st Armoured Division and had arrived in the Middle East in November 1941.

In January 1942, the Division was attacked by Axis forces and forced to retreat. Driver Creer was taken prisoner during the advances made by enemy troops.

On Friday 13th February the Italian steamship Ariosta left Tripoli with around 300 allied POWs onboard, mostly in the forward hold. On the evening of 14th she was attacked by RAF aircraft flying out of Malta, but no significant damage was caused.

However early the next day Ariosta was hit by two torpedoes fired from Royal Navy submarine P38. The ship sank after a few hours with 138 POW's lost, almost half the contingent.

Note: The Italians didn't identify their ships that were transporting Prisoners of War although there is evidence to support that the allies were aware of such transports as British Intelligence had broken the ULTRA code and had information on enemy shipping operations. Several vessels carrying POWs were sunk by allies in the Mediterranean in 1941-1942 with the loss of over 2000 allied lives.



The Alamein Memorial (CWGC)

EWART HARRISON CRELLIN (age 27)

SERGEANT

ROYAL AIR FORCE (18 Squadron)

OCTOBER 1939

Son of Ewart and Lily Lee Crellin, of Ramsey.

Shot down on operation over Germany

Buried in Cologne Southern Cemetery, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. Plot 4, Row AA, Grave 17



Sergeant Ewart Crellin was an observer serving with 18 Squadron. The Squadron was a medium bomber squadron that up until May 1939 had been equipped with the Hawker Hind biplane – the last of the RAFs biplane light bombers. It then received the new Bristol Blenheim Mk I.

On 30th October 1939 Sgt Crellin took off from Metz airfield in France in Blenheim L6694 on a reconnaissance mission over the Siegfried Line.

At around 11:00 they were attacked by a German Bf.109 fighter piloted by German fighter ace Werner Mölders and shot down near Klusserath, Northeast of Trier. All three crew members were killed.

Sgt. Crellin was educated at the Ramsey Grammar School and at King William's College. He served in the College O.T.C. and left to become an aircraftman apprentice in the R.A.F. He was awarded The King's 100 At Bisley, 1938, for rifle shooting.

A message from his Wing Commander stated that Sergeant Crellin had had a long experience in navigation and was 'one of the best air observers in the Squadron.'

His father, Ewart Crellin (1887 - 1950), designed the Douglas War Memorial and also the Memorial at Lezayre Parish, Churchtown, (on which his own son's name would eventually be inscribed).

TERENCE (Terry) CRUMMEY DSM & BAR (age 24)

LEADING TELEGRAPHIST ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINES JANUARY 1942

Son of Joseph Crummey and Eileen Mable Crummey, Ramsey

Lost at Sea

Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 68, Column 2

Terrence Crummey (Terry) DSM & BAR was one of nine brothers and one sister. He was born in Hartlepool before relocating to Ramsey Isle of Man.

Terry joined submarines in 1932. During the war he served on HMS SPEARFISH, surviving a thirteen-hour, 79 depth charge attack, leaving SPEARFISH badly damaged and on the sea bed, with no power or lights. Somehow the engineers managed to surface, and after a 36 hour wait on the surface she was found by British destroyers and was towed back to port.

For his service in HMS SPEARFISH he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.



While SPEARFISH was being repaired Terry was drafted into HMS TRIUMPH as the senior ASDIC operator (the boat's sonar equipment) and later operated the boat's internal telephone exchange. Following a depth charge attack on TRIUMPH on 25 October 1941, Terry was commended by his CO in the patrol report: *"...operated the telephone exchange calmly efficiently and with a welcome dash of humour"*

For his service in HMS TRIUMPH, he was awarded a Bar to his Distinguished Service Medal *"for daring, enterprise and devotion to duty in successful patrols in HM Submarines"*.

HMS Triumph departed Alexandria on 26th December 1941 on patrol of the Aegean Sea. The patrol started with the task of landing a joint MI9/SOE party as part of special operation "Isinglass" on the Greek island of Anti Paros. She reported making the landing on the 30th, but did not show up on 9 January 1942 when she was to pick the party up again. She was declared overdue on 14 January 1942. It is believed she struck a mine and was lost with all hands.

CHARLES WILLIAM DOGGETT (age 28)

PILOT OFFICER

ROYAL AIR FORCE

JANUARY 1941

Formerly of Windsor Terrace, Ramsey

Killed in flying accident, January 17th, 1941

Buried in Epping Cemetery, United Kingdom. RC Section, Grave 26.

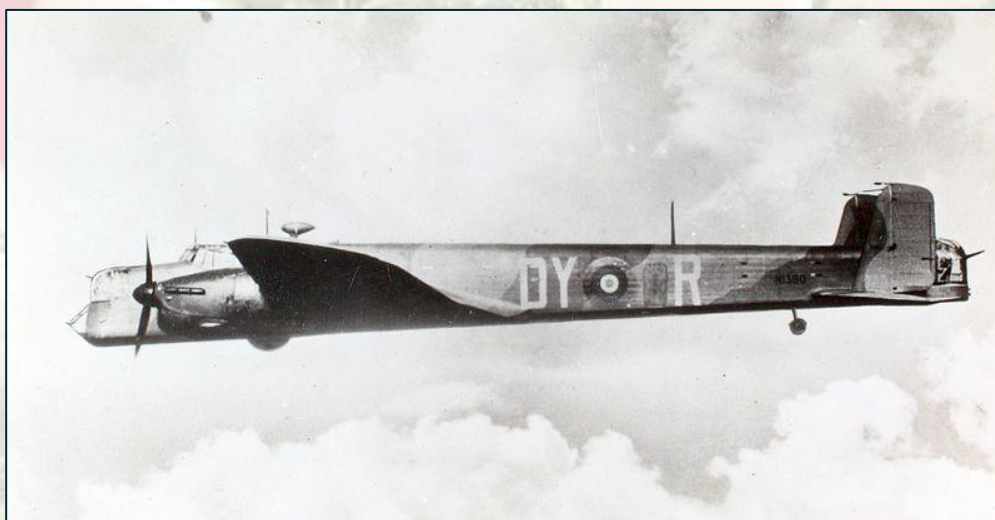
Pilot Officer Doggett was part off No 10 Operational Training Unit flying Whitley V bombers based at RAF Abington, Oxfordshire.

There were six crew onboard when their aircraft (Serial NB1494) took off on a night bombing exercise.

During the flight a snowstorm developed and due to icing, the aircraft lost the use of one engine and subsequently crashed. Two crew survived having managed to escape the aircraft by parachutes. Pilot Officer Doggett and the other three crew members died.

He had been married just eleven weeks before the accident.

The Armstrong Whitworth A.W.38 Whitley was a British medium bomber aircraft of the 1930s. It was one of three twin-engine, front line medium bomber types that were in service with the Royal Air Force at the outbreak of the Second World War.



CECIL WILLIAM SINCLAIR DOWNES (age 23)

SERGEANT ROYAL AIR FORCE VOLUNTEER RESERVE APRIL 1943

12 Squadron (Air Gunner)

Son of John Ernest and Frances Downes, of Ramsey, Isle of Man.

Commemorated on Runnymede Air Force Memorial. Panel 148.

Sgt Downes Lancaster Mk.III ED408 PH-A of No.12 Sqn took off from RAF Wickenby for mining operations in the Spinach region (Heligoland) of the North Sea. It was a night operation with estimated 32% moonlight. He was the Mid-Upper Gunner.

The aircraft was shot down by German night fighters and all seven crew were lost.

A letter from his Squadron Commander to Mrs and Mrs Downes stated, "*Your son was a most popular member of the Squadron and all ranks wish to convey to you their sincerest sympathies. The whole crew was without doubt one of the best in the Squadron.*"



The crew of the ill-fated Avro Lancaster ED408 were all lost on 29th April 1943

ALFRED DOWNWORTH (age 26)

GUNNER

15LT AA Reg TA (The Manx Regiment)

AUGUST 1944

Son of James and Alice Downworth of Ramsey

Accidentally killed

Buried Bayeux War Cemetery France. Plot 23, Row A, Grave 16.



Gunner Alfred Downworth was one of four Ramsey brothers, three of whom served with the Manx Regiment. He was employed by the Northern Water Board before joining up.

In August 1944 the Regimental Head Quarters was in the area of Bayeux with a strength of 3 batteries of two 6 gun Troops each.

The Regiment guns shot down several enemy aircraft and when the RAF started to gain air superiority the Manx guns were used to support ground troops.

They then took part in the advance to the River Seine.

Alfred was accidentally killed on the 22nd August when his machine gun fired as he was laying it on one side. He was shot through the head and death was instantaneous. His brother George was nearby at the time and later wrote to their mother,

"He is buried in a very lovely spot near Falaise, quite close to a little French farm. Our padre, who used to be the vicar of Lezayre, buried him. I, along with Alfs mates were at the burial. Alf was a good soldier, one of the 'old ones'."



BAYEUX WAR CEMETERY, FRANCE. (CWGC)

DENNIS KEWLEY GALE (age 21)

PRIVATE

BORDER REGIMENT (1st AIRBORNE Bn.)

JULY 1943

Son of May Gale and foster-son of Mrs A Sayle, 29 Church Street, Ramsey

Killed in Action on 10th July during Operation Ladbroke as part of the Invasion of Sicily.

Commemorated on the Cassino Memorial, Lazio, Italy. Panel 7

1st Battalion became the first British unit to join a major engagement by glider, when it landed in Sicily as part of 1st Airborne Division.

However, they suffered heavy casualties as many of the gliders were released too early and some, including Private Gales, were shot down ending up in the sea with many soldiers drowned. Other aircraft missed their Landing Zones. Of the 72 gliders that took off on 9th July, 44 came down in the sea.



Cassino Memorial (CWGC)

On the day of Private Gales death, the Battalion records show:

10th July 1943

Place: Syracuse area

Glider loads put down on land were too widely dispersed to reach any pre-arranged RV's, though all except 2 were within 10 miles of Syracuse. Enemy posts and batteries in the area were numerous, and many small parties of the Bn, 5 to 10 men strong, did a useful and necessary job of work in neutralising or destroying these, and spreading confusion and dismay, leading ultimately to surrender in other Italian troops.

Of the 796 officers and men who had gone to Sicily, the Battalion returned to North Africa with just 200.

ROBERT HENRY GARRETT (age 27)

SEAMAN

ROYAL NAVY (RNPS)

DECEMBER 1942

6, Maughold Street, Ramsey

Son of Robert Henry and Elsie May Garrett. Brother of Walter Garrett.

Died of Wounds from enemy action

Buried in Hull Northern Cemetery. Plot 134, Grave 36.

Seaman Robert Garrett was severely wounded as a result of enemy action having sustained damage to his right leg and being in a serious condition. Although he received all possible help he unfortunately succumbed to his injuries.

At the time of his death his wife was in a maternity home expecting the birth of their child.

Before joining up, Robert was a baker with Mr. W Corlett in Ramsey.

His six brothers all served in the forces.



WALTER GARRETT (age 34)

CIVILIAN

(EX REGULAR ARMY)

JUNE 1943

Formally of 6, Maughold Street, Ramsey

Husband of Mary Garrett, 169 St. Radigunds Road, Dover. Brother of Robert Garrett.

Killed during German shelling of Dover

Buried in Dover Municipal Borough Cemetery

Walter Garrett served in the army before the war as a private in the Prince of Wales Volunteers. He was recalled to the colours on the outbreak of WW2 and went with the British Expeditionary Force to France where he was wounded. He was medically discharged and employed with the Post Office in Dover as a telephone operator.

The night of 28 June 1943 saw a German convoy of three merchantmen with an escort of E-boats traversing the Dover Strait on which coastal British gunners opened fire. The Germans on the French coast retaliated, and many shells hit Dover.

One large shell hit the General Post Office in Biggin Street/Priory Street on the Priory Street side, killing Walter Garrett, George Kerry and John Parfitt.



Post Office, Priory Street, shelled on 28 June 1943 killing Walter Garrett, George Kerry and John Parfitt. Kent Messenger.

JOHN WILLIAM GAWNE (age 20)

SEAMAN

ROYAL NAVY (RNPS)

OCTOBER 1942

Son of John and Florence Gawne of Ramsey

Killed in Action, Ship loss.

Commemorated on the Lowestoft RNPS Naval Memorial, Panel 8, Column 3.

HMT Lord Stonehaven on which John Gawne served, was requisitioned by the Admiralty in August 1939 and served as an anti-submarine vessel based at Plymouth as part of the Royal Naval Patrol Service.

On Friday, October 2nd the German motor torpedo boat, (E-Boat S-112) attacked HMT Lord Stonehaven twice off the English coast at Eddystone in Cornwall.

During the first attack three ratings were killed and in the next attack she was hit by a torpedo, nearly blown in half, and foundered with the loss of eighteen crew, including Seaman John Gawne. Out of the ships complement of thirty-six, half were lost. Survivors were picked up by HMS Rhyl, an anti-submarine frigate.

In a sad twist of fate, John Gawne had written to his mother saying that he would be home for leave on Saturday (3rd) and asked if she could she meet him at the boat. She went to meet him in Douglas, but he did not come. When she returned home the tragic telegram was waiting.



HMT Lord Stonehaven

WILLIAM GILMOUR (age 21)

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT DFC

ROYAL AIR FORCE

AUGUST 1942

Son of Jack and Margaret Gilmour; husband of Margaret Gilmour, Middlesex.

Killed in Action

Buried at Heverlee War Cemetery, Belgium. Coll. grave 6. C. 20-23.

F/LT William Gilmore was a Wellington Bomber pilot in 156 Squadron, a pathfinder squadron whose role was to mark out the target area for the aircraft coming behind them.

On 28th August 1942 he took off at 20:30 in his Wellington, serial number X3728, from RAF Huntingdonshire for a raid on Nuremburg. The pathfinders were able to place their target indicators with great accuracy and much damage was caused in the Altstadt and the Nazi rally area in the south of the city. It was a low-level attack and of the 159 aircraft dispatched there were over 14% losses including Wellington X3728 which although homeward bound from the target area, was attacked and shot down by a German night fighter from the St Trond (Sint-Truiden) airfield outside Brussels. William Gilmour's aircraft crashed at Perek in the NE suburbs of Brussels with the loss of all five crew.

F/LT Gilmour was Gazetted for the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) in September 1942 for an earlier raid in August.

His citation reads:

Flight Lieutenant William GILMOUR (42214), No. 156 Squadron. One night, in August 1942, this officer was captain of the leading aircraft of a bomber force detailed to attack an objective at Kassel. Despite heavy anti-aircraft fire, Flight Lieutenant Gilmour eventually identified his correct target over which he released his flares with such accuracy that all following aircraft were enabled to bomb their objective successfully. Although his aircraft was badly damaged; Flight Lieutenant Gilmour flew it back to base. By his tenacity and skill, this officer, contributed much to the success achieved. He has participated in numerous sorties and has invariably displayed high qualities of leadership and determination.

(London Gazette No. 35712, Dated 1942-09-22)



JAMES HEANEY (age 42)

GUNNER

ROYAL ARTILLERY (61 Lt AA REGT.)

OCTOBER 1943

Victoria Chambers, Parliament Street, Ramsey

Son of Jessie Heaney and husband of Elsie Mona Heaney, Ramsey

Died whilst serving overseas.

Buried at Benghazi War Cemetery, Libya. Plot 3, Row D, Grave 25.

Gunner James Heaney joined the Manx Regiment before the war and later transferred to his current unit, being sent overseas in 1942. He was too young to join up for the First War but later entered the army and served some years in India.

He had previously been wounded during the fighting in Sicily but had returned to duty. Sometime later however, his wife was informed that he was dangerously ill, apparently from the effect of his earlier wounds. Shortly afterwards she received a telegram advising that he had died on 6th October.

In a sad postscript to his loss, the local newspaper reported from the Ramsey War Memorial Remembrance service held just a few short weeks later that,

"A touching reminder of the present conflict, which brought tears to the eyes of many of the womenfolk present, occurred when, after the official wreaths had been laid, a little boy and girl – Teddy and Phoebe Heaney – slipped quietly away from their mother's side to place a bunch of flowers at the Memorial in tribute to their father, Gunner James Heaney, who died a few weeks ago in Benghazi Hospital, after being wounded in the North African fighting".



Benghazi War Cemetery (CWGC)

ROY HUGHES (age 22)

DRIVER

9th ROYAL TANK REGIMENT

OCTOBER 1944

Born in Liverpool, his Mother resided in Ramsey

Killed in Action

Buried in Heverlee War Cemetery, Belgium. Plot 1, Row H, Grave 3

Trooper Roy Hughes served with the 9th Royal Tank Regiment who landed in France shortly after D-Day and took part in many battles from Saint Omer in France to Roosendaal in the Netherlands.

9th RTR moved into the Netherlands and took part in enlarging the Nijmegen Salient in support of British infantry divisions. Later in the Dutch campaign, the 9th participated in Operations which led to the capture of Roosendaal and aided the clearing of the banks of the River Scheldt.

On 29th October the Regiment including Roy Hughes, was engaged with German troops and taking anti-tank fire as they approached Roosendaal. He was in the act of getting aid for a pal when he was hit.

The Regimental Diary records that,

"A Sqn began to move up and Anti-Tank fire was fairly heavy from area and S.P. (Self-Propelled Artillery) very active but infantry again met with little resistance. Soon reached the village and the S.P.'s withdrew. While infantry mopping up in village, A Sqn steadily losing tanks but had to push on, despite losses, to ensure infantry took over their objective. A Sqn had now only 3 tanks left from the eleven that started. Casualties – 1 Officer and 4 OR's killed. 4 OR's missing believed killed. 11 OR's wounded. 8 tanks knocked out".



EDWARD KERMEEN (age 39)

PRIVATE

KINGS REGIMENT

MARCH 1943

Albert Road, Ramsey

Died in Hospital

Buried at Bebington (Plymyard) Cemetery, Merseyside. Section A (CoE) Grave 469

Edward Kermeen was well known and respected in Ramsey. Having been passed healthy and fit for the Army he developed an abscess on the lung just after entering service.

He was in hospital in Douglas for some time before being flown to a military hospital in Cheshire for further treatment but unfortunately his condition deteriorated, and he died there.



JOHN HENRY KITCHIN (age 26)

CAPTAIN

ROYAL TANK CORPS

AUGUST 1942

Formerly of Ramsey

Son of James and Margaret Joanna Kitchin, of Wimborne, Dorsetshire.

Killed in Action

Buried in El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt. Plot X, Row B.

Captain Kitchin, another Ramsey Grammer School old boy, served in the 40th (The King's) Royal Tank Regiment (40 RTR) an armoured regiment of the British Army. It was part of the Royal Tank Regiment, itself part of the Royal Armoured Corps.

It was originally formed by converting the 7th Battalion, King's Regiment (Liverpool), a Territorial Army infantry battalion that recruited mainly in the Bootle area, to a tank unit.

Equipped with Vickers Valentine tanks, the regiment served with the 23rd Armoured Brigade in North Africa. It fought at El Alamein and acquired the nickname "Monty's Foxhounds" during the long pursuit of the Afrika Korps and the Italian Army across Egypt and Libya and into Tunisia.

The Battle of Alam el Halfa in which the 40th Battalion and Captain Kitchin fought, took place between 30 August and 5 September 1942 south of El Alamein.

On 31st August German and British tanks engaged in combat near Alam el Halfa but there was no conclusion to the battle by nightfall as the British refused to fight in open terrain as the Germans had wanted. German tanks broke off the attack at sundown after losing 22 tanks. The British lost 21 tanks in the day's battle. Next day British Wellington bombers attacked German supply lines between Benghazi and Tobruk, Libya. The negative impact of such attacks was felt during the day, as only some of the Axis tanks were able to attack the Allied lines at Alam el Halfa due to inadequate fuel. The German Commander, Erwin Rommel (the Desert Fox), decided that he would withdraw since he could not gain the initiative in battle. Allied forces counterattacked partially successfully but suffered heavy casualties in the process.

Captain John Henry Kitchin was killed on 31st August.

FREDERICK ERNEST KNEALE (age 37)

SEAMAN

MERCHANT NAVY

FEBRUARY 1945

15, Maughold Street, Ramsey

Died of injuries sustained at sea.

Frederick Ernest (Ernie) Kneale had taken part in operations at Dunkirk and on D-Day with the Steam Packet Company and had sailed on the Ben-my-Chree, Mona's Queen and the old Mona's Isle.

A very experienced merchant mariner he was on a six month trip which had begun in January when his wife received a message from the shipping company to say that he had been injured in the leg.

He is thought to have been put ashore on February 23rd in Gibraltar where he underwent an operation on his fractured leg.

Later Mrs Kneale was informed that he had unfortunately died following the operation and was buried on February 28th.

WILLIAM HERBERT RADCLIFFE KNEALE (age 27)

CORPORAL

ROYAL AIR FORCE

APRIL 1940

18, Strand Street, Ramsey

Died of Pulmonary Tuberculosis at Great Barrowdale Sanatorium, Chester

Buried at Kirk Christ Lezayre (Holy Trinity) Churchyard. Grave 846.

Corporal William Kneale was based at Jurby serving with 5 Bombing and Gunnery School.

The Isle of Man Examiner, Friday, April 12, 1940, reported:

CORPORAL BURIED WITH MILITARY HONOURS

Full military honours were accorded to a young corporal of the R.A.F. whose funeral took place at Lezayre on Wednesday. He was William Herbert Kneale, aged 27 years, nephew of the late Mrs J. R. Christian, of 18, Strand Street, Ramsey. He served in the marine section of the R.A.F. and after continued ill health he entered a hospital in England where he died last weekend. His remains were brought to the Island on Tuesday and the funeral left Strand Street for service on Wednesday at St. Paul's Church. The service in Church was conducted by the Rev. M. W. Harrison, M.A., C.T.C. (Vicar) and was fully choral.

The boy choristers led the singing of the hymn "Abide with me," Mr T. J. Mullineux being the organist. At the graveside at Lezayre a last salute was fired, and the Last Post was sounded by buglers.



W.H. KNEEN

W.H. Kneen has become a bit of an enigma, as our extensive research, which included deep dives into Military and Civilian records, 8000 pages of newspapers reviewed and a host of other search platforms, has unearthed no definitive answer as to who this person was.

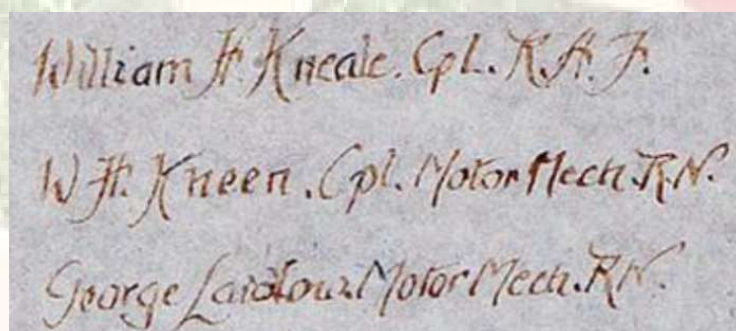
St Pauls Church ROH reveals that he was a Corporal (Motor Mechanic) in the Royal Navy, but the rank is not common in that service.

In 1951 when the Ramsey Courier reported the unveiling of the names of the WW2 fallen on the War Memorial, the newspaper recorded him as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force. In this case, the rank of Corporal fits the service, but it just adds further to the confusion of who this actually is.

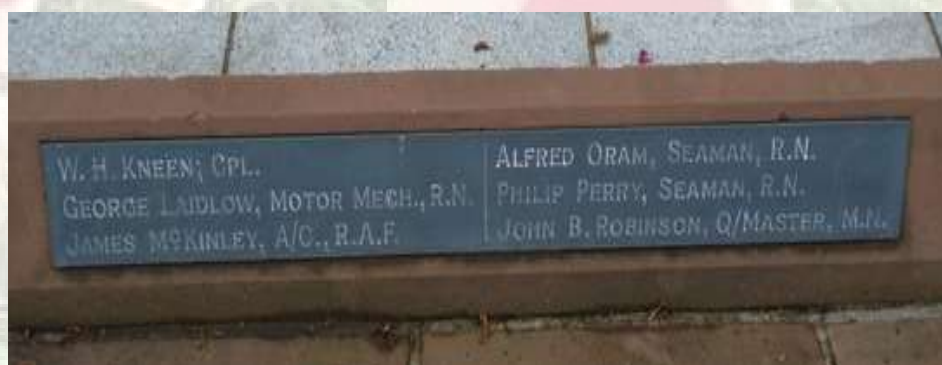
Unusually, the Town Memorial does not record W.H. Kneen's service, only the rank of Cpl.

It's interesting to note that on the Church ROH there is a W.H. Kneale, Cpl. RAF immediately above, and a RN Motor Mechanic, which was not a common trade in the Navy then, immediately below W.H. Kneen. Could it be that somehow the list was accidentally corrupted?

So, over to the great Manx Public and readers of this booklet. Do you know who this might be? If you can offer any information that solves this mystery then we will update our records accordingly.



ST. PAULS CHURCH ROLL OF HONOUR



RAMSEY TOWN WAR MEMORIAL

GEORGE STRACHAN LAIDLAW (age 22)

MOTOR MECHANIC

ROYAL NAVY

DECEMBER 1941

Son of Henry and Elizabeth Laidlaw RoseLea, May Hill, Ramsey.

Missing presumed killed when his ship was sunk in Middle East.

Commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 56, Column 2.



George Laidlaw served on HMS Salvia, a Flower Class Corvette that was based in Alexandria and was engaged in convoy support.

On 23 December 1941 she was escorting a convoy between Tobruk and Alexandria when passenger ship Shuntien, a Defensively Equipped Merchant Ship, who was carrying between 850 -1100 Axis (German and Italian) prisoners of war was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat.

HMS Salvia rescued 48 crew members and an unknown number of gunners and prisoners and then made her way towards Alexandria.

A few hours later, at about 01:35 on 24 December, and approximately 100nm west of Alexandria, Salvia was attacked by U-boat. The torpedo broke the corvette in two. The stern sank rapidly while burning oil spread across the sea and the fore part followed a few minutes later. All four officers and 54 ratings were lost together with the 48 crew members and an unknown number of gunners and prisoners from the Shuntien.



HMS SALVIA (*Imperial War Museum*)

Note: The Manx National and the Ramsey Memorial have incorrectly inscribed George Laidlow, not Laidlaw. George, who was born at the Point of Ayre Lighthouse where his father was a keeper, was the first Ramsey man to register for military service.

JAMES McKINLEY (age 20)

AIRCRAFTMAN

ROYAL AIR FORCE

JUNE 1941

Son of James Duncan McKinley and Charlotte Campbell McKinley; husband of Moyra McKinley, of Ramsey.

Missing presumed killed in aircraft accident.

Commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey, England. Panel 56.

Leading Aircraftman James McKinley was based at No 5 Bombing and Gunnery School at RAF Jurby.

On Monday 30th June 1941 he took off on board Blenheim Z6269 on a training flight.

Shortly after take-off it is believed that a fire started in one of the engines and the plane crashed into the sea approximately one mile east of Douglas.

A/C McKinley and A/C Albert Day were reported missing after a search and rescue operation failed to find them. Pilot Sergeant K.S. Browning was injured but survived the accident.

It was noted that several records, including the Commonwealth War Graves Commission have James's surname as McKinlay.



The Air Forces Memorial, or Runnymede Memorial, is a memorial dedicated to some 20,456 men and women from air forces of the British Empire who were lost in air and other operations during WW2. Those recorded have no known grave anywhere in the world, and many were lost without trace.

ALFRED ORAM (age 33)

SEAMAN

ROYAL NAVY

AUGUST 1941

Market Place, Ramsey

Son of Alfred and Francis Oram, of Ramsey, Isle of Man;
husband of Ethel M. Oram, of Ramsey, Isle of Man.

Royal Naval Patrol Service - HMS Skudd III

Killed in Action.

Commemorated on the Lowestoft Naval Memorial. Panel
6, Column 2.



SKUDD 3 HMT was a British Royal Navy Whaler requisitioned in November 1940 and used as a Minesweeper. She was bombed and sunk at Tobruk on the 27th August 1941 by Junkers Ju 87 aircraft of the Luftwaffe with the loss of six of her twelve crew. Seaman Alfred Oram, who was mason in Ramsey before enlisting, was initially reported missing but several days afterwards his wife received a telegram from the Commodore of the Navy Patrol Service that read,

"There can, I fear, be no hope that your husband is still alive, and I should therefore like to express, on behalf of the officers and men of the Royal Navy, the high traditions of which your husband helped to maintain, sincere sympathy with you in your sad bereavement"



Alfred Oram is commemorated on the RNPS Memorial in Belle Vue Park, Lowestoft. The Memorial is solely for those serving RNPS personnel who died 1939-46 and who have no known grave.

PHILIP (JAMES NELSON) PERRY (age 19)

ABLE SEAMAN

ROYAL NAVY

APRIL 1945

Son of John James Perry and Susanah Perry of Ramsey.

Died on War Service

Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel 94, Column 1.



Seaman Perry had, at a young age, already served on several Royal Navy ships before joining the aircraft carrier HMS VICTORIOUS. At the time of his death the carrier was part of the British Pacific Fleet in cooperation with US Fifth Fleet.

In April, HMS Victorious along with other aircraft carriers launched strikes against the Japanese island of Okinawa in support of landings taking place there.

On 1st April a low-flying kamikaze plane broke through the outer destroyer screen at 500ft and dove towards Victorious from the starboard side, climbing at the last minute. It then dove towards the carrier on what one commentator described as a steep landing approach from a right-hand circuit.

As HMS Victorious took evasive action swinging under full helm the enemy plane caught its wing on the edge of the flight deck and fell into the sea where its bomb exploded causing minimal damage although a huge quantity of water and aviation fuel were thrown over the ship. Several of the deck crew were injured but it is not known if Philip was one of the injured during this attack. However he was brought to the sick bay on the 13th April in a state of coma and died the following day as a result of a cerebral abscess.

He was buried at sea with full naval honours.

His uncle, Private Philip Henry Perry who served in WW1 with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry is also commemorated on the Ramsey War Memorial.

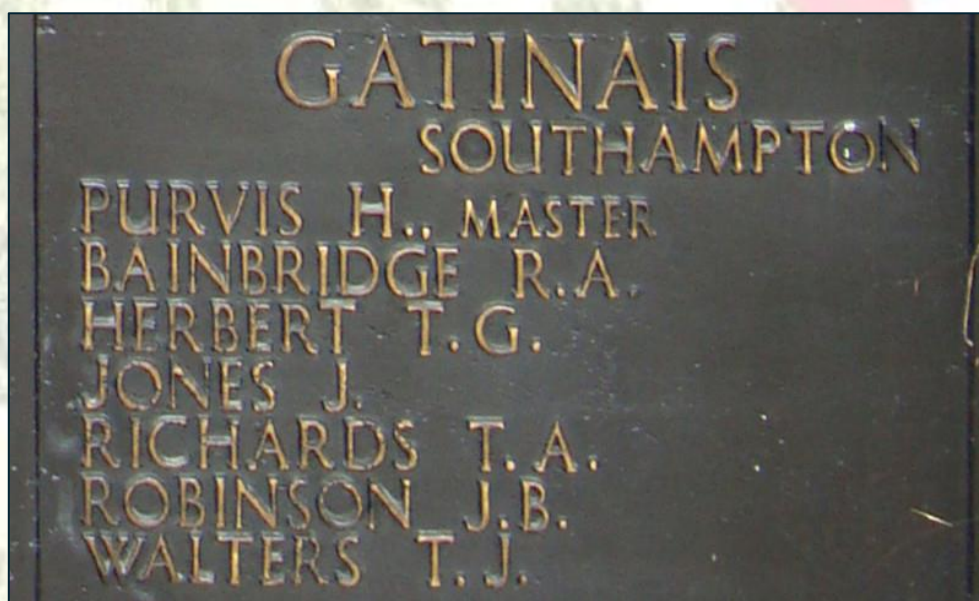
JOHN B ROBINSON (age 37)

CHIEF ENGINEERING OFFICER MERCHANT NAVY DECEMBER 1942

Viking House Ramsey

Husband of Gertrude Mary Isabel Robinson

Commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial. Panel 51.



John B Robinson was serving on the MV Gatinais, a British cargo vessel that was, like many coasters and trawlers of the time, defensively equipped with a forward gun. On 3rd December she was on route from Portsmouth to Llanelly with a cargo of scrap iron when she was attacked by a German E-Boat just 5 miles off Start Point, Devon. She was torpedoed and seven crew and her gunner were lost.

In 1940 MV Gatinais (then part of the French Navy) took part in the Dunkirk evacuation bringing 159 troops back to England. She was then taken over by the Ministry for War Transport.

NOTE: John is listed on the Ramsey War Memorial as 'Quartermaster' but the Commonwealth War Graves and other records show his rank as 'Chief Engineer Officer'.

WILLIAM RALPH READ (age 31)

FLYING OFFICER ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE DECEMBER 1943

3, Chapel Lane, Ramsey

Son of Ernest Stowell Read and Catherine Read.

Lost on operation over Germany

Buried in Berlin 1939-1945 War Cemetery. Plot 5, Row K, Grave 9.

Flying Officer William Read was serving with 460 (Australian) Squadron as an air gunner in Lancaster bomber JB298. On 29th December 1943 the seven-man crew took off from Binbrook RAF station in Lincolnshire to take part in a night bombing raid on Berlin as part of a total force of 712 aircraft (457 Lancasters, 252 Halifaxes and three Mosquitos).

As they flew over the target area JB298 was either hit by flak or by a German night fighter and the aircraft exploded, crashing at Grosszieten, close to Berlin city centre.



The Battle of Berlin that F/O William Read took part in was the third "air offensive" launched by Bomber Command in 1943. It followed those mounted against the Ruhr (March - July) and Hamburg (July - August). It consisted of a series of sixteen raids on the German capital, the first on the night of 23 August 1943 and the last on the night of 24 March 1944.



JOHN HUBERT ALASTAIR SCOTT-KERR (age 21)

SUB-LIEUTENANT

ROYAL NAVY

MAY 1941

Mount Auldyn, Ramsey

Son of John and Helen Scott-Kerr, of Blackrock, Co. Dublin

Lost at Sea (HMS Hood)

Commemorated on Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Panel 45, Column 2.



After John joined the Navy, the family lived on the Isle of Man.

John was assigned to H.M.S. Exeter as a Midshipman in May 1938. He was promoted to Acting Sub-Lieutenant in May 1940. He joined HMS Hood in March 1941.

On 22nd May 1942 HMS Hood in company with battleship Prince of Wales and a fleet of six destroyers sailed from Scapa Flow to provide cover and support to Royal Navy Cruisers in the Denmark Strait following a report that Bismarck and the Prinz Eugen had left Bergen and were heading for the Atlantic.

Next day at approx. 19:30 when south of Iceland the Hood force altered course to intercept the enemy following a report from the cruiser SUFFOLK that Bismarck had been sighted.

Early on the morning of 24th May the battleships met and at 0552 hours at a range of about 25,000 yards HOOD opened fire on the leading German ship

which happened to be the Prinz Eugen. The German ships returned fire and Hood was hit by a salvo fired from Bismarck causing her to blow up and sink within 3 – 4 minutes.



There were only three survivors from a total ship complement of some 1418 crew on board.

HMS Hood (Courtesy of Maritime Quest)

JAMES C SHIMMIN (age 31)

LEADING SEAMAN

ROYAL NAVY

DECEMBER 1940

Mona Street, Ramsey

Lost in HM Submarine Triton

Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel 37, Column 1.

Leading Seaman Shimmin served as a torpedo operator on the submarine Triton.

Triton was deployed in the North Sea at the beginning of the war in 1939 and carried out several successful attacks on enemy ships sinking them with loss of several hundred enemy personnel.

She transferred to the Mediterranean in September 1940 where she was deployed for interception patrols based in Alexandria. She added several more enemy sinkings to her tally and also carried out shore bombardments at enemy bases.

On 28 November 1940, Triton left for a patrol in the southern Adriatic Sea. On 6 December, the Italian merchant Olympia was torpedoed by a British submarine in the area. Her distress message was picked up by the Royal Navy, which assumed that the attack had been carried out by Triton although that was not confirmed. However, the submarine was never heard from again and was declared lost with all crew on 18 December.

Her unexplained lost may have been due to being sunk by Italian defensive mines which were known to be in the area. The Italian Navy claimed that Triton was sunk by torpedo boats, but the date they cited was several days after contact was lost.

A family headstone for Leading Seaman James Shimmin is in the Churchyard of St. Andrew in Andreas.

His father, William James Shimmin, was lost on the SS Ellan Vannin in 1909 where he worked as a fireman (stoker).



WILLIAM ALEXANDER WESLEY STARKEY (age 24)

SEAMAN

MERCHANT NAVY

APRIL 1948

Son of Ernest and Mary Starkey, Ramsey

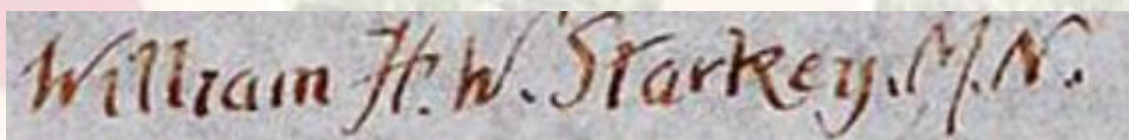
Died at Ramsey Lifeboat House.

Interred in Maughold Churchyard.



Seaman Starkey died in 1948 at the family home in Ramsey Lifeboat house after a long illness. His name was not inscribed on the Memorial at the time of the unveiling of the 2nd War dead in November 1951, but a new tablet bearing his name was added sometime afterwards.

William Starkey's father, Ernest, was a well-known lifeboat coxswain in Ramsey during and after the war years.



Note: St Pauls Church Memorial has William H.W. Starkey recorded.

William's name is absent from the National Roll at St Johns.

ALEXANDER A.F.T. STEAVENSON (age 56)

FLYING OFFICER

ROYAL AIR FORCE (VR)

SEPTEMBER 1941

Son of Joseph and Jeannie Steavenson; husband of Violet Carmen Steavenson.

Seafield, Ramsey

Died in Noble's Hospital from pneumonia

Buried at Kirk Maughold Churchyard. East boundary.

Alexander Arthur Fenwick Towry Steavenson was based at RAF Ronaldsway working with the Administrative and Special Duties Branch (For Administrative Duties).

Educated at King Williams College, he left in 1903, went to Sandhurst and was commissioned into the Royal Irish Rifles. He left the Army in 1912 to go tea-planting in Assam but re-joined his regiment as a Captain in the Great War when he was wounded in France in 1915. Placed on the sick list he was taken off the Battalion strength but later served with the General Headquarters (GHQ), Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

After the war Alexander Steavenson returned to India and the tea plantations he had previously worked. While there, his service continued and in 1924 he was serving as a Private with the Surma Valley Light Horse Auxiliary Force (India) when he was awarded the Volunteer Forces Long Service & Good Conduct Medal.

He retired home to the Isle of Man in 1935 and on the outbreak of the Second World War he joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve serving as a Flying Officer at RAF Ronaldsway.

Alexander A.F.T. Steavenson is buried in the same grave as his parents in Kirk Maughold Churchyard.



Kirk Maughold (CWGC)

THOMAS HENRY STEPHEN (age 28)

SIGNALMAN

ROYAL CORPS SIGNALS (RCS)

DECEMBER 1940

His Father, Thomas Patrick Stephen, was born in Ramsey and is interred in Lezayre Churchyard.

Died whilst on active service. Tower House, Coombe Road, Salisbury.

Buried in Walton (St Johns) Churchyard. South side of church, Grave 159.

Thomas Henry Stephen, who was a nephew of Mr. W.L. Stephen of Queens Pier Road, Ramsey, was employed in the Douglas Post Office for several years and was then transferred to Warrington as a Postal Clerk. He joined the Territorial Army as a telegraphist in 1939 and was mobilised on the outbreak of the war.

He was drafted to France where he served at Army Headquarters, returning to England during the evacuation of the B.E.F. and continued to serve on the General Headquarters staff.

In December, just weeks before he was due to marry, he contracted a chill which developed into pneumonia, and he subsequently died in hospital.

He was buried with full military honours.



GODFREY RICHARD THOMPSON (age 29)

LANCE BOMBARDIER ROYAL ARTILLERY (4 Maritime Regiment) JAN 1944

Approach Road, Ramsey.

Son of Richard and Elizabeth Thompson, of Ramsey; husband of Hilda Thompson, of Ramsey.

Died in hospital in England (Natural causes)

Buried in Kirk Maughold (St Maughold) Churchyard. South East corner of churchyard.

Godfrey Thompson had joined his ship as Gunner just before Christmas 1943. He was taken suddenly ill on board the ship and was rushed to hospital. As all his kit was on the ship it took a little while before his relatives on the Island could be informed. As soon as word of his condition was known, his wife crossed to England to be near him and his sister, Mrs Elizabeth Callister, who was a trained nurse, was granted permission to nurse him.

It was hoped that he would recover but unfortunately complications ensued, and he passed away on Friday 7th January.

Before joining up Godfrey Thompson managed the family's dairy business and was a familiar figure in Ramsey with his pony and milk float.

A local newspaper extract reads,

"He was of a particularly bright disposition and had a cheery word for everyone. He was the life and soul of the St Pauls Church concert party and had taken part in plays promoted by the Northern Players".

The Maritime Royal Artillery was established in 1943 and organised into six regiments each with a designated area of responsibility. Godfrey Thompsons regiment (4th) was responsible for shipping in the Mersey area with their HQ based in Southport. The Regiment trained and provided gunners for the merchant navy and were responsible for the defensive armament on those ships.

They also provided shore-based protection to the dock areas and manned AA guns.



Men of 4th Maritime Regiment at 'Action Stations' in Liverpool 1943 (IWM)

THOMAS LEONARD THOMPSON (age 26)

SEAMAN

ROYAL NAVAL PATROL SERVICE

AUGUST 1940

42, Santon Terrace, Tower Road, Ramsey

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Thompson, and stepson of Lily Eleanor Thompson, of Ramsey,

Lost in HM Trawler Marsona

Buried at Rosskeen Parish Churchyard, Scotland. Section C, Grave 44.



On the 4th of August 1940 Marsona set out on her usual minesweeping duties to keep the entrance to the important naval base at Cromarty Firth free from mines. It was not entirely clear what happened that day as the skipper and all his crew of eleven men, including Thomas Thompson, were to lose their lives when the ship was lost in an explosion less than three miles from the defensive boom for the Cromarty Firth.

The subsequent naval enquiry determined that as the Marsona reached the open water beyond the defensive booms, two huge explosions tore the trawler apart killing her crew. Although German archive records don't clearly attribute any mines in the area to a specific U-boat, the subsequent enquiry surmised that the Marsona had caught one mine in her sweep and simultaneously collided with a second mine. Despite the efforts of the crew of HM Trawler 'George Cousins' who was also minesweeping in the area, only five bodies of the crew were recovered including Thomas.

His family later received a message from the King which read,

"The Queen and I offer you our sincere sympathy in your great sorrow. We pray that your country's gratitude for a life so nobly given in its service, may bring you some measure of consolation."



HM Trawler 'Marsona'

RANDOLPH C UNDERHILL (age 26)

ABLE SEAMAN

MERCHANT NAVY

MAY 1940

46 Maughold Street, Ramsey

Son of Randolph Keating Underhill and Catherine Annie Underhill; husband of Annie Underhill, of Ramsey

Lost on SS 'Mona's Queen'

Commemorated on Tower Hill Memorial, London. Panel 71

Mona's Queen was one of the first vessels to make a successful round trip to Dunkirk during the operation, arriving back in Dover on 27th May with about 1,200 troops on board.

In the early hours of 29th May, the 'Mona's Queen' set sail for Dunkirk from Dover loaded with water canisters because troops on the Dunkirk beaches were short of drinking water. However, the ship struck a magnetic sea mine outside Dunkirk harbour at 5:30am. The Mona's Queen sank in two minutes.

Thirty-two sailors were rescued, but 24 crew, 17 of whom were from the island, died.

The IOM Examiner reported that "Mrs Underhill was waiting on a phone call from her husband when Mr. James Bell, the Steam Packet's Ramsey agent, called to give her the bad news."



Mona's Queen struck a mine on a return voyage to Dunkirk. (IWM)

ROBERT ALFRED WALKER (age 21)

FLIGHT SERGEANT (BOMB AIMER)

RAFVR

JULY 1943

Son of Horace Thomas Walker and Alice Isobel Walker of Ramsey

Shot down on bombing mission over Aachen

Buried in Les Hayons Churchyard in Belgium. (Collective Grave).



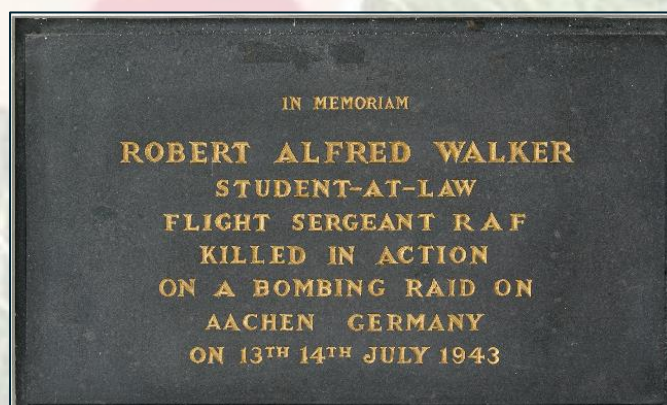
Prior to joining 115 Squadron in April 1943 Flight Sergeant Robert Walker served with 10 Squadron in Halifax bombers. On 12th March 1943 he was on a bombing raid to Essen when his aircraft sustained substantial flak damage to the tail fins, rear turret, starboard engine and bomb doors, but the crew were able to bring the stricken aircraft back to base.

On 13th July, this time flying in a Lancaster Bomber (DS690), Sergeant Walker took off at 2359 from East Wretham, Norfolk, on a bombing operation to Aachen in Germany.

A strong tail wind led to the main force arriving early and when PFF marked the target, so many aircraft were waiting that the town appeared to erupt into flames.

In total, 374 aircraft were involved in the raid of which 20 were lost, including Robert Walkers Lancaster DS690, which was shot down by a night-fighter and crashed near Les Hayons, Luxembourg Province, Belgium, with the loss of all crew.

Robert Walker was a student-at-law before joining the RAF and a memorial to him can be found in the Douglas Courthouse, Deemsters Walk



FRANCIS ERNEST AYTON WILKINSON (age 40)

2nd ENGINEERING OFFICER

MERCHANT NAVY

FEBRUARY 1943

Son of Ernest and Francis Emily Wilkinson; and Husband of Mona Margaret Wilkinson of Ramsey

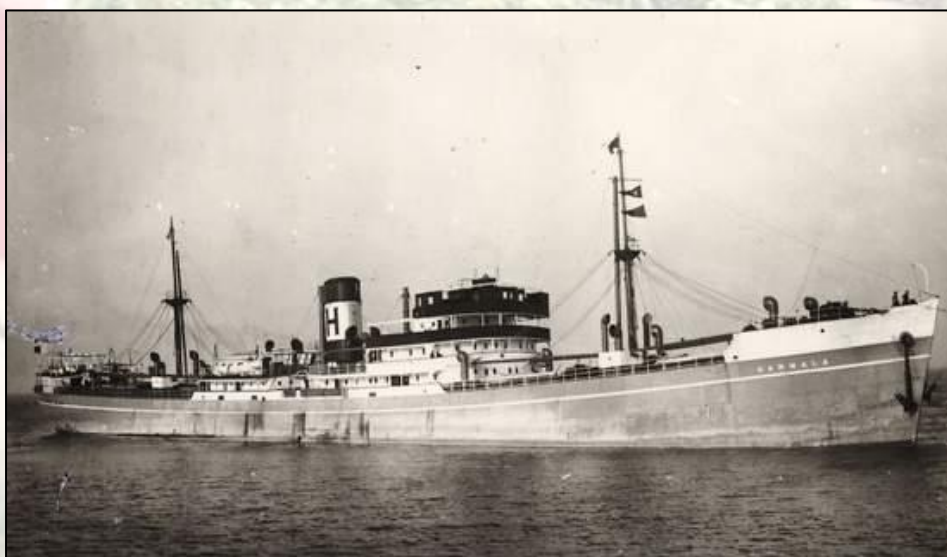
Lost at sea during enemy action.

Commemorated on the Tower Hill Memorial, London. Panel 55

In February 1943 Francis Wilkinson was an Engineer Officer on board SS Harmala, a freighter carrying iron ore from Brazil to Middlesbrough. There were fifty-four people on board. On the final leg of the journey from New York to Liverpool SS Harmala was part of a large convoy of ships (61 in total) with a significant escort of destroyers, corvettes, a US coastguard cutter and a rescue ship. On the night of 4th February when convoy SC-118 was mid North Atlantic, the convoy came under attack by U-boats. The attacks continued over several days and 12 allied ships were sunk before the attacks ended. SS Harmala was sunk at 04:11 on 7th February after being hit by torpedoes from U-boat U-614.

Francis Wilkinson, along with 32 crew members, ten gunners and one naval signalman were lost. Eleven survivors were picked up and made it back to the UK.

(U-614 was sunk with all hands in the North Atlantic on 29th July 1943 by depth charges from an R.A.F. Wellington).



SS HARMALA

Photo Courtesy of Library of Contemporary History, Stuttgart

ERIC ARCHIBALD WOOD (age 27)

SERGEANT ROYAL ARMOURED CORPS (11th Hussars) AUGUST 1941

Formerly of Ramsey

Son of Archibald and Clara Ethel Wood of Bromborough

Killed in Action, Western Desert.

Buried in Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery, Egypt. Plot 15, Row C, Grave 5

The Ramsey War Memorial doesn't feature Sgt Wood's rank or Regiment simply stating 'Eric Wood'. His rank and Regiment do however appear on the Ramsey Methodist Church Roll of Honour.

Sgt Wood was killed in action on the 7th August 1941. An extract from the Regimental Diary reads:

"At 09:10hrs our line was in some way penetrated by two hostile armoured cars in between 2nd Troop (commanded by Sgt Wood) and 1st Troop (commanded by Lieutenant Petch). The enemy cars were thought to be friendly Marmon Herrington's but by the time this supposition was found to be incorrect, the enemy cars had approached the rear of 2nd Troop on the open flank having come straight down the boundary track. The armoured cars attacked with great speed and our Troop was taken completely by surprise with both the Troop Leader and Troop Corporals cars being knocked out and set alight. The enemy then made off West through the wire taking three prisoners with them. 1st Troop, who took over the patrol, buried four dead, including Sgt Eric Archibald Wood, that night".

Sgt Wood had served with 11th Hussars in pre-war Palestine and subsequently during the war in North Africa.



Ramsey Methodist Church ROH

GEOFFREY CLARE WORRALL (age 44)

WARRANT OFFICER

ROYAL NAVY (HK RNVR)

DECEMBER 1944

Son of William Clare Worrall and Elinor Mary Worrall, of Ramsey, Isle of Man.

Died in Japanese Prisoner of War Camp.

Buried in Yokohama War Cemetery, Japan. British Section, Plot P, Row A.

Geoffrey Clare Worrall served in WW1 as a Lieutenant with the British Expeditionary Force. After the war he joined the Asiatic Petroleum Company and went to Hong Kong to work for the business. Whilst there he volunteered for the Hong Kong Naval Reserve.

He was captured when the Japanese over-ran Hong Kong and was interned in the Amagasaki Camp, near Osaka in Japan where he was made camp commander.

A former pupil of King Williams College, the school magazine remembered him in their May 1946 edition writing...

"The members of the camp were loud in his praise for the fearless and courageous way he stood up for them against the brutalities of the Japanese guards and commander. Eventually the Japanese, in anger, dismissed him from the command. He was treated so badly that he died in the camp hospital, deeply regretted by all the men he had served so gallantly"



Note: Geoffrey's name was incorrectly inscribed on the Ramsey Memorial and the National Memorial at St. Johns as Geoffrey M Worrall. The 'M' was later over scribed with the correct initial 'C' on the Ramsey Memorial.



Although this booklet is primarily about those named on the Ramsey War Memorial who fell during the 2nd World War, the following servicemen all had a connection to the Town but their names are not on the Memorial.

We remember them too.

Flight Lieutenant B.J. Rofe. Royal Air Force.

From Cronk Ruagh, Ramsey. Killed in a flying accident in Canada on 12th January 1942. He was 21.

Thomas Hatfield Lawton. Merchant Navy.

Chief Engineer on the MV Frederick S Fales, drowned at sea following torpedo attack on 22nd September 1940. From Glen Auldyn, Ramsey, he was 52 years old.

W. J. Quayle, L/Cpl, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

Died following accident in November 1941, aged 26. Formerly of Milntown, Ramsey.

We ask that you contact the Ramsey Branch if you are aware of any other fallen from the Town during 1939-1945 so that their names can be added to the book.

KOHIMA EPITAPH

The Kohima Epitaph is engraved on the Memorial of the 2nd British Division in the cemetery of Kohima, (North-East India). It reads:

***"When You Go Home,
Tell Them Of Us And Say,
For Your Tomorrow,
We Give Our Today."***

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO RAMSEY TOWN COMISSIONERS

This e-book publication is entirely due to the support, advice and commitment from Ramsey Town Hall staff who readily agreed to host the two 'Remembering Ramsey's Fallen' books on their web page and created QR codes so anyone with an electronic device can access the stories of the Towns fallen from both World Wars.

Whist a limited number of hard copies of the book are available from Ramsey Branch RBL, the increased availability of the e-books via the RTC website will ensure that a far greater number of people will become more aware of those men who are commemorated on the Ramsey War Memorial.

Ramsey Town has a unique record how they ensure their war fallen are remembered and honoured. The Legion Wood, the WW1 centenary crosses and now this collaboration with the two World War books are fine examples of what can happen when RBL and RTC work together.

We acknowledge, with thanks, the continuing support from RTC.

Ramsey Branch, The Royal British Legion

Ramsey Branch Royal British Legion (BR 1686)

Isle of Man Charity Registration Number 624

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