Royal Naval Air Service

The Royal Naval Air Service or RNAS was the air arm of the Royal Navy until near the end of the First World War, when it merged with the army’s Royal Flying Corps to form a new service (the first of its kind in the world), the Royal Air Force.

When the RFC was founded on April 13, 1912, it was intended to encompass all military flying. The Navy, however, was not pleased at all forms of naval aviation
being moved to an Army corps, and soon formed its own, unauthorised, flying branch with a training centre at Eastchurch. Command of this group was given over to Murray Sueter, who had been working on airship development for the navy. At the time, the Admiralty, not for nothing known as the "Senior Service", had enough political clout to ensure that this act went completely unchallenged. The Royal Naval Air Service was officially recognised on July 1, 1914 by First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. The new service was completely separate from the RFC except for the Central Flying School, which was still used, and the RNAS became in effect a rival air force.

By the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, the RNAS had more aircraft under its control than the RFC. The Navy maintained twelve airship stations around the coast of Britain from Longside, Aberdeenshire in the northeast to Anglesey in the west. In addition to seaplanes, carrier borne aircraft, and other aircraft with a legitimate "naval" application the RNAS also maintained several crack fighter squadrons on the Western Front, as well as allocating scarce resources to an independent strategic bombing force at a time when such operations were highly speculative.

Inter-service rivalry even affected aircraft procurement. Urgently required Sopwith 1½ Strutter two-seaters had to be transferred from the planned RNAS strategic bombing force (for which the type was in any case quite unsuitable) to RFC squadrons on the Western Front because the Navy had "cornered" Sopwith production. In fact this situation continued - although most of Sopwiths
products were not specifically naval aircraft. Thus RNAS fighter squadrons obtained Sopwith Pup fighters months.

Jack McCleery was born in Belfast in 1898, the son of a mill owning family. He joined the RNAS in 1916 as a Probationary Flight Officer. During the next ten months he completed his training at Crystal Palace, Eastchurch, Cranwell, Frieston, Calshot.

and Isle of Grain, flying more than a dozen landplanes, seaplanes and flying boats, gaining his wings as a Flight Sub-Lieutenant. In July 1917 he was posted to the newly commissioning aircraft carrier HMS Furious, which would be based at Scapa Flow and Rosyth. He served in this ship until February 1919, flying Short 184 seaplanes and then Sopwith 1½ Strutters off the deck. He also flew a large number of other types during this time from shore stations at Turnhouse, East Fortune and Donibristle. He served with important and well-known naval airmen including Dunning, Rutland (of Jutland) and Bell Davies VC. He witnessed Dunning’s first successful landing on a carrier flying a Sopwith Pup in 1917 and his tragic death.
a few days later. He also witnessed the Tondern raid in 1918, the world’s first carrier strike mission. He took part in more than a dozen sweeps into the North Sea by elements of the Grand Fleet and Battle Cruiser Fleet. He carried out reconnaissance missions off the coast of Denmark, landing in the sea to be picked up by waiting destroyers. He witnessed the surrender of the High Seas Fleet. Promoted to Captain, he acted as temporary CO of F Squadron for a time post-war. The book is available from Amazon and in Kindle format.

before the RFC - and then replaced these first with Sopwith Triplanes and then Camels while the hard-pressed RFC squadrons soldiered on with their obsolescent Pups. An account of this scandalous situation is to be found in the book “No Parachute” by Arthur Gould Lee.

On April 1, 1918 the RNAS was merged with the RFC to form the RAF. At the time of the merger, the Navy’s air service had 67,000 officers and men, 2,949 aircraft, 103 airships and 126 coastal stations.

The RNAS squadrons were absorbed into the new structure, individual squadrons receiving new squadron numbers by effectively adding 200 to the number so No. 1 Squadron RNAS (a famous fighter squadron) became No. 201 Squadron RAF.

The Royal Navy regained its own air service in 1937, when the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Air Force (covering carrier borne aircraft, but not the seaplanes and maritime reconnaissance aircraft of Coastal Command) was returned to Admiralty control and renamed the Naval Air

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
Branch. In 1952, the service returned to its pre-1937 name of the Fleet Air Arm.

**HMS Hibernia and Shorts combine to make naval aviation history**

Commander C Samson of the RNAS takes off from HMS Hibernia in his modified Shorts S.38 “hydro-aeroplane” to be the first pilot to take off from a ship underway at sea. The S.38 T.2 aircraft had air-bag floats to enable landing on water and was launched via a trolley-shuttle system off of a ramp which stretched from Hibernia’s bridge to bow, over her forward 12 inch guns.

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
ROLL OF HONOUR WW1
ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE

ANNESLEY, Francis
RNVR. RNAS. Sub-Lieutenant. Before he was 21 years of age he sailed from Liverpool to Vancouver, around Cape Horn, serving as a sailor before the mast. Later he crossed the Atlantic on board a three-masted schooner yacht Karina as one of the guests of Robert E. Todd of the New York Yacht club. He was a noted big game shot.

Prior to joining 2 (Naval) Squadron, RNAS at Eastchurch, he distinguished himself serving with the RNAS Armoured Car Division, with his armoured motorcar in helping to check the advance of the Germans on Brussels and in the Defence of Antwerp.

He was last seen alive on 6/11/1914 leaving Eastchurch, England in a Bristol TB8 Biplane, serial 1220, flown by Flight Lieut C F Beevor, RNAS, bound for France / Flanders. They were never seen again. His death was presumed on 2/12/1914. Two German prisoners had been interrogated and it was established that the two aviators had been shot down when a German shell had hit the petrol tank of their aircraft and it had fallen in flames near Dixmude.

Francis Annesley, 6th Earl Annesley, was the only son of Hugh Annesley, 5th Earl Annesley and his first wife, Mabel Markham. He was born on 25/2/1884 at Castlewellan. On 14/2/1909 he married Evelyn Hester Mundy. They had no children. Between 1884 and 1908 he was styled as Viscount Glerawly. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College.

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
Cambridge. He succeeded as Earl 15/12/1908. St John’s Parish Church, Newcastle WM. Castlewellan WM

**CHAMBERS, Henry Douglas**  

**EDGAR, James**  
RNAS. Petty Officer. Crimea St., Belfast. Duncairn - PCI RH

**ENGLISH, Maurice Graham**  
RNAS, RFC. RAF. Lieutenant. Initially served in the RNAS, joining in early 1916. Commissioned as an observer in 1917. After the 01/04/1918 merger of that branch with the RFC he served as a lieutenant in 202 Squadron of the 61st Wing of the newly-formed RAF. He flew with English flying ace Lieutenant Lionel Arthur Ashfield, as well as Lieutenant N. H. Jenkins in an Airco De Havilland4 (A7868). Not long before his death, he was wounded while engaged in perilous photographic work over Ostend.

On 16/7/1918, Lieutenant English's Airco De Havilland 4, serial (A7868), was shot down while returning from Bruges by Vizeflugmeister Hans Goerth over the village of Zevekote in West Flanders, Belgium. The twenty-year-old, who had been acting as observer, died in the aerial combat, as did the pilot Lieutenant Ashfield. During World War I, the German flying ace Hans Goerth was credited with seven aerial victories. The downing of English's de Havilland was the third of seven victories for Goerth.

Maurice English was the second son of John Graham English and his wife Ellen "Nellie" Jane English, Marlborough Street,

**RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance**
Londonderry. A native of the city, he was born in the second quarter of 1898 and attended Foyle College. He was a member of the First Derry Presbyterian Church. Interred at the Ramscappelle Road Military Cemetery near Nieuwpoort in West Flanders. Diamond WM, Londonderry. First Derry - PCI RH

GRAHAME - WHITE, C
RNAS. Flight Commander

GREEVES, Thomas Malcolmson
RNAS. Flight Sub-Lieutenant. 12th Squadron, 5th Wing. Died 23/12/1917. Age 22. This Squadron was based at Petite-Synthe, just outside the seaplane base of Dunkirk, and was primarily a training squadron, but some aircraft were recorded as having seen action on the Western Front. Son of Alfred and Annie Frances Greeves, Fernbank, Strandtown, Belfast. Dunkirk Town Cemetery. Strandtown WM. Family memorial Belfast City Cemetery.

HERRIOT, George Hodges

McCULLOUGH, Frederick James
Royal Flying Corps 53rd Squadron - Secondary Unit Royal Garrison Artillery. Died 08/11/1917. Frederick was born on 27th September 1897, the son of F W and Sara McCullough of Longford Villa, Antrim Road, Belfast, later of "Belgravia", Ulsterville Avenue, Belfast. His father was the chief engineer for the city of Belfast and president of the Institution of Water Engineers. After Inst, he attended Queen's University Belfast, where he studied engineering and was a member of the Officer

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
Training Corps. On 15th November 1915, he was appointed to the Royal Naval Air Service (Russian Armoured Car Division) as a Petty Officer. He served in Russia under Commander Locker-Lampson before returning home to be commissioned to the Royal Garrison Artillery on 13th October 1916, where he served with the Brigade Head Quarter's staff in France.

Frederick was subsequently transferring to the 53rd Squadron Royal Flying Corps, as an observer. Frederick was killed in action on 8th November 1917. A report was received from the officer commanding the 10th Loyal North Lancashire Regiment stating that on 15th November: "when in the lines my unit found the bodies of 2 British airmen in "no-man's land", they were recovered and buried in the Northern end of Hollebeke Church. A chequebook and letters were found on one of the bodies which showed it to be that of 2nd Lt L W Middleton RFC". This officer was reported missing when flying with Frederick, so it was accepted that the other body was his. Frederick was re-interred in Voormezeele Enclosure Number 3 (ref XV A 17), Flanders. His name appears on the RBAI War Memorial, the Queen’s University Belfast War Memorial and QUB Officers’ Training Corps Roll of Honour.

McLAUGHLIN, Edmond Charles

TYRELL, Walter Alexander Tyrell
RNAS. Petty Officer. 32nd Squadron RAF. MC. Alexander attended RBAI (Inst) and the Belfast Municipal Technical Institution. He was a member of the Queen's University Belfast Officer Training Corps and was working as an apprentice motor

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
engineer. He served in the RNAS (Armoured Car Section) as a Petty Officer from 26/12/1914 to 24/11/1915. During this time, he spent 8 months in France and suffered an injury, when an armoured car crushed his foot. Subsequently he used a specially made boot.

He commissioned into the Royal Flying Corps in July 1917. Alexander was Ireland's fourth ranked air ace, with 17 victories. The first was on 30/10/1917 over Passchendaele, the last two being at 1845 and 1850 on 6/6/1918. He was awarded the Military Cross, the citation for which read: "For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. On one day this officer attacked two enemy triplanes, destroying one and driving down the other out of control. After this he was attacked by two other machines, one of which he forced to land, taking the occupants prisoners. On various other occasions, he has destroyed or driven down out of control enemy machines."

One particular victory, his second, on 11/11/1917 was described thus: "Three 32 Sqn DH5s flown by 2nd Lts Howson, W A Tyrrell and Claydon, were engaged on an OP. At 1000 over Westroosbeke, Clayton & Tyrrell first intercepted an Albatros with a yellow and green fuselage and yellow nose. Claydon was forced to pull out of the fight with a gun jam, but Tyrrell carried on the attack. The German began a staggering flutter in a downward direction. As the pilot attempted to pull the stricken Albatros out of the dive, Tyrrell fired again, his bullets striking the pilot's head and the instrument panel in front of him. The Albatros reared upwards before spinning down again. Tyrrell lost sight of his quarry at 300 feet as it fell through and below other circling German aircraft - it was too dangerous to follow. There no German pilot fatalities on this
Alexander was killed, at the age of 19, while flying his Fouquerolles SE5a biplane. He was brought down by enemy machine gun fire from the trenches. Born 23/8/1898. Son of John Tyrrell and Jeanie Tyrrell (nee Todd) of Fairview Buildings, Crumlin Road, Belfast, and later Ballyholme. Beauvais Communal Cemetery, Oise, France. Bangor WM. RBAI WM.

**WW1 THEY SERVED**

ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE

**CURRIE, Richard**
RNAS. RAF. Renumbered on joining RAF, 241988. Served with 57 Squadron RAF. Brother David, RIR, died of wounds, France 08/10/1918

**DICKEY, Eric**

**DICKEY, Richard Frederick Lea**
RNAS. Flight Lieutenant. DSC granted in recognition of gallantry during active operations against the enemy at sea.. Londonderry

**DUNVILLE, John**
RNAS. CBE. He joined as a Flight Lieutenant in March 1915. He was promoted to Flight Commander in January 1916 and Squadron Commander in June 1917. He transferred as a Temporary Lieutenant-Colonel, Kite Balloon Officer, to the RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
Royal Air Force in April 1918 and was demobilised in 1919. John Dunville was born in Holywood, County Down, and was educated at Cambridge University. He became chairman of his father’s whiskey distillery Dunville & Company in Belfast. He became interested in aeronautics. In his balloons “La Mascotte” and the “Banshee,” he twice won the Northcliffe Cup for the greatest distance travelled in a balloon. In 1908 he held the record for the longest time in the air and flew from Holyhead to Dublin in one hour and fifty minutes.

**EMERSON, Charles Ernest**  
RNAS. Sub. - Lieut. b. 27th February, 1896, son of Mrs. R. Emerson, Tandragee, Co. Armagh. Campbell College

**GRAHAM, Robert**  
RNAS. Belfast. Newtownbreda - PCI RH

**GRIEVE, Alexander**  
RNAS. HMS Ramillies. Londonderry. Second Derry, Great James’ Street - PCI RH

**HAMILTON, R.**  
RNAS. 1st A/M. Cregagh Road, Belfast. McQuiston Memorial - PCI RH

**HANNA, Alexander**  

**HEMMING, Geoffrey William**  
RNAS/ RAF. Flight Sub Lieutenant.DCS. A flying ace credited with six aerial victories. He joined 4 Naval Squadron just after its foundation. It was equipped with Sopwith Pups, and based at Ostend, Belgium. Hemming piloted Pup No. N6177 to victory over a Siemens-Schuckert D.I, destroying it on

**RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance**
12/05/1917. He switched to No. N6199 for his victories on 6 June, when he destroyed another Siemens Schuckert D.I, and drove a third one down out of control. He then upgraded to Sopwith Camel No. B3841 for his triple win on 22/8/1917, when he drove down three Albatros DVs out of control. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, “In recognition of his services with a Wing of the RNAS at Dunkirk between March and September, 1917, during which period he has been continuously employed on the Belgian coast, and on many occasions has been in charge of a flight. On 22 September 1917, he led his flight against a formation of twenty enemy aircraft, and engaging three consecutively, brought them all down.”

Geoffrey Hemming married Dorothy May Woods, daughter of Mr. and Mrs R. J. Woods, of Princetown Lodge, Bangor, on 07/02/1923 at St. Comgall’s Parish Church, Bangor. Dorothy Hemmings' son, Desmond Wettern, was Naval Correspondent of The Daily Telegraph. Geoffrey William Hemming perished in a flying accident with a Fairey III D at RAF Calshot on 26/02/1926.

**HERRIOT, Thomas Hunter**

**JARDINE, James F**
RNAS. AM. Newtownards. First Newtownards - PCI RH

**JOBLING, Thomas S**
RNAS. Warrant Officer. Belfast

**RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance**
JOHNSTON, William  
RNAS. Petty Officer. Malone Church, Belfast. Malone - PCI RH

KELSO, George  
RNAS. 2nd Engineer. Court Street, Belfast. Clifton Street - PCI RH

KEMP, William F.  
RNAS. Lieutenant. Holywood. High Street - PCI RH

KERR, Robert C.  
RNAS and RAF. Corpl. Mechanic. Hornby Street, Belfast. Megain Memorial - PCI RH

LONGMORE, -  
RNAS. Wing Commander

LOVE, George  
RNAS. Private. Lismurphy, Coleraine. Terrace Row - PCI RH

MACK, Jonathan C.  
RNAS. Private. Walnut Street, Belfast. Great Victoria Street - PCI RH

MacKEOWN, Robert W  
RNAS. Tamlaght. Ballygoney - PCI RH

MANN, Alfred Henry  
RNAS. Air Commodore. Union Masonic Lodge 23. Newry

MAXTON, Leonard Graeme  
RNAS. Transferred to RAF. Squadron-Leader, 1931. Awarded Air Force Cross, 1926. 1940, Norwegian Campaign,

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance

McCANCE, Robert Alexander
RNAS. CBE. FRS. A Dunmurry man who piloted an observation aircraft from a warship and later became the first Professor in Experimental Medicine in the UK at Cambridge University.

After war service he worked on a farm and went to Sydney Sussex College, Cambridge with the intent of taking a Diploma in Agriculture. However, he was persuaded that a career in medicine might be more practical. Together with Elsie Widdowson, they pioneered work typified by their classic textbook, “The Chemical Composition of Foods”. He completed a PhD in biochemistry and went to Kings College, London, to complete his medical studies. He was involved in the discovery of insulin.

He accepted an invitation to be a Reader in Medicine at Sydney Sussex on condition that he brought his team with him. The transfer took place during the Munich crisis of September 1938.

In 1941 he was appointed Chairman of a Royal Naval Committee on the Care of Shipwrecked Personnel. McCance’s research helped establish that seawater should never be drunk in response to dehydration after a shipwreck. In 1945 he became the first Professor of Experimental Medicine in the UK. He retired as Professor in 1953. CBE 1953, Hon DSC, QUB 1964.

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
Born 09/12/1895, son of John Stouppe Finlay McCance and Letitia Bristow, Woodbourne House, Dunmurry. (Site of the present police station at Suffolk). The family owned a linen business in the Dunmurry area. Married in 1922 Mary Lyndsey MacGregor, a student at Girton College. Died 03/03/1993.

McCANDLESS, R Cecil
RNAS. Mechanic. Harmony Masonic Lodge, Londonderry

McCLEERY, J. M.
RNAS. Flight Sub. Lieutenant. He joined the Royal Naval Air Service in 1916. During the next ten months he trained at Crystal Palace, Eastchurch, Cranwell, Frieston, Calshot and the Isle of Grain, flying more than a dozen aircraft, and gaining his wings as a Flight Sub-Lieutenant. In July 1917 he was posted to the newly commissioning aircraft carrier HMS Furious, based at Scapa Flow and Rosyth. He served in this ship until February 1919, flying Short 184 seaplanes and Sopwith 1½ Strutters off the deck. He also flew a large number of other types from shore stations at Turnhouse, East Fortune and Donibristle. He served with well-known naval airmen including Dunning, Rutland (of Jutland) and Bell Davies VC. He witnessed Dunning's first successful landing on a carrier flying a Sopwith Pup in 1917, and his tragic death a few days later. He also witnessed the Tondern raid in 1918, the world's first carrier strike mission. He took part in more than a dozen sweeps into the North Sea by the Grand Fleet and Battle Cruiser Fleet. He carried out reconnaissance missions off the coast of Denmark, landing in the sea to be picked up by waiting destroyers. He also witnessed the surrender of Germany's High Seas Fleet. He kept an extensive wartime diary which with letters home and hundreds of photographs provided the basis of a book by Guy Warner on service life. B Belfast 1898. Son of
Duncairn - Presbyterian Church RH

McGIFFEN, T
RNAS. Petty Officer. Templemore Avenue, Belfast.
Westbourne - PCI RH

McKEOWN, Robert W
RNAS. Private. Masonic Lodge, Moneymore

MOIR, George R
RNAS. Captain. Masonic Lodge 313, Whitehead

MONTGOMERY, Frederick
RNAS. Gainsborough Drive, Belfast. Ekenhead - PCI RH

MOORE, J A
RNAS. 2nd Lieutenant. Dunedin Terrace, Coleraine. Terrace Row - PCI RH

MURPHY, J H
RNAS. Ballymacaraney. Ballyroney - PCI RH

NESBITT, Samuel
RNAS. Petty Officer. Inglemere, Fountainville Ave. Belfast.
Newtownbreda - PCI RH

NICKELS, Walter
RNAS. Petty Officer. 15th Squadron. Jerusalem Street, Belfast.
Crescent - PCI RH

QUIGG, Thomas
Naval Wing. 2nd Aircraftsman. Third Cookstown - PCI RH

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
REYNOLDS, Samuel G  
RNAS. L. Mechanic. Cookstown Masonic Lodge

ROBB, Robert Campbell  
RNAS. Sub-Lieut. Competed in Olympic Games, London, 1908. B 20/02/1883. Son of Kirker Robb, Somerton Road, Belfast. Campbell College

SMITH, William A  
RNAS. Petty Officer. Richmond Masonic Lodge, Belfast

SPEERS, Thomas  
RNAS. Private. Lewis Street, Londonderry. Second Derry - PCI RH

STAUNTON, S G  
RNAS. Private. Drumrainey. First Magherafelt - PCI RH

STEWART, Thomas  
RNAS. Sergeant. Gilnahirk - PCI RH

THOMPSON, Arthur  
RNAS. Dundonald Masonic Lodge

WALKER, Herbert  
RNAS. Private. Agnes Street, Belfast. Agnes Street - PCI RH

YOUNG, Thomas  
RNAS. Born Carrickfergus 1895. Governor’s Place  
Carrickfergus. First Carrickfergus - PCI RH

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Inst in the Great War, Presbyterian Church Roll of Honour, CWGC,Lennon roll of Campbellians, Masonic Order RH.

RN Northern Ireland - In Remembrance
HELP REQUESTED
Please send names of Ex RN/RM/WRNS who served in either of the world wars. Details also appreciated.

CIRCULATION - Please share ‘Brave Report’ with your former service colleagues - and we will post direct to them if they simply send an e-mail to: houston.mckelvey@btinternet.com, placing Brave Report in the message bar, and give their name and former arm of service, and if they are members of the RNA or RBL, having knowledge of their branch would be appreciated. There are specific areas where we need information from!

PUBLICATION NOTES
Please note all the material in Brave Report is copyright.
Brave Report is collated and published by The Very Rev. Dr Houston McKelvey, OBE QVRM TD.

Dr McKelvey served as chaplain for 29 years with 102/105 (Ulster & Scottish) Regiment, Royal Artillery TA; for 20 years as Chaplain to the RBL - Northern Ireland Area, and for a period as chaplain to the Belfast Branch of the Burma Star Association. He was involved in the life of HMS Caroline and HMS Hibernia. He was appointed an Honorary Chaplain to the RNR. He is a Past President of QUB Combined Services Club.