

## The Frizelle family of Ballycastle, County Mayo.

### Michael Nugent

In late 2019, I was contacted by a Johnny Frizelle who asked if I could carry out research into two of his relatives who he believed, had served in the Great War. To assist my research, Johnny forwarded items of family information and details of some research that he had already carried out

When I sat down to start researching, it quickly became apparent that throughout the family, there was unsurpassed service to the Crown extending over a century. What amazed me was that as I researched one family member, I uncovered links to other family members that I was unaware of. When I had completed the research, I realized that there was a story which needed to be brought to the attention of a wider audience. Johnny Frizelle has given me permission to compile this article, for which I am indebted.

In the course of carrying out research, various spellings of the family surname were encountered, including Frizzell, Frizzel, Frizzelle and Frizzle as well as the accepted Frizelle.

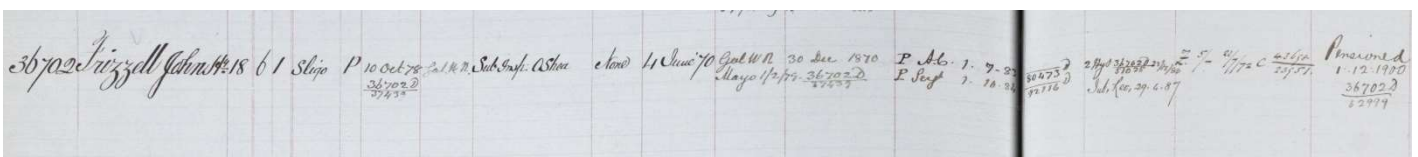
### Sergeant William Frizelle 2738 Royal Irish Constabulary

Although not the first family member that I researched, the patriarch of the family was William Frizelle. William was born at Limerick in 1823. He enlisted in the Royal Irish Constabulary in 1849, service number 2738, and in keeping with the Constabulary policy of posting recruits away from their home area, William was initially stationed in County Donegal. It was there in 1851 that he married Jane McNeely<sup>1</sup>, doing so at Ballyshannon. This necessitated a further transfer and William was posted to County Sligo where he was to remain for the rest of his service. From court records of the time, it appears that William was most diligent in carrying out his duties. William retired from the Police in the rank of Sergeant on 1 May 1875, most likely after completing 25 years' service. Records show that he was in receipt of a pension of £72 per annum, a not inconsiderable sum for the times. William died at Sligo in 1907 aged 84

William and Jane had nine children, six of whom survived to adulthood. Two sons followed William into the ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary. William Robert was born at Ballymote, County Sligo on 24 April 1864. Prior to enlisting in the ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary he had been employed as a Draper's Assistant. William junior enlisted at Sligo on 10 October 1881 aged 17 and a half. Issued with the service number 47840, he was posted to County Westmeath in February 1882 however, his Police career ended later that year on 21 September, when he was discharged as 'Unfit for duty.'

### Sergeant John Henry Frizelle 36702 Royal Irish Constabulary

William and Jane's eldest son John Henry Frizelle, was born at Sligo in 1852. The earliest available record for John relates to his appointment as a Constable in the Royal Irish Constabulary on 4 June 1870 with the service number 36702.



It is believed that John was first stationed in County Galway and it was there that he met his future wife. John married Caroline Matilda McNeice at St Joseph's Church of Ireland, Spiddal, Co. Galway on 10 October 1878. At the time of the marriage, Caroline was a Schoolmistress and was resident at Spiddal. John was transferred following the marriage to County Mayo on 1 February 1879.

Between 1879 and 1889, John and Caroline had five children:

William Robert, born 16 October 1879 at Knox's Street, Ballina, Co. Mayo

Frederick John, born 15 May 1881 at Ballina

Edith Jane, born 31 March 1883 at Castle Road, Ballina

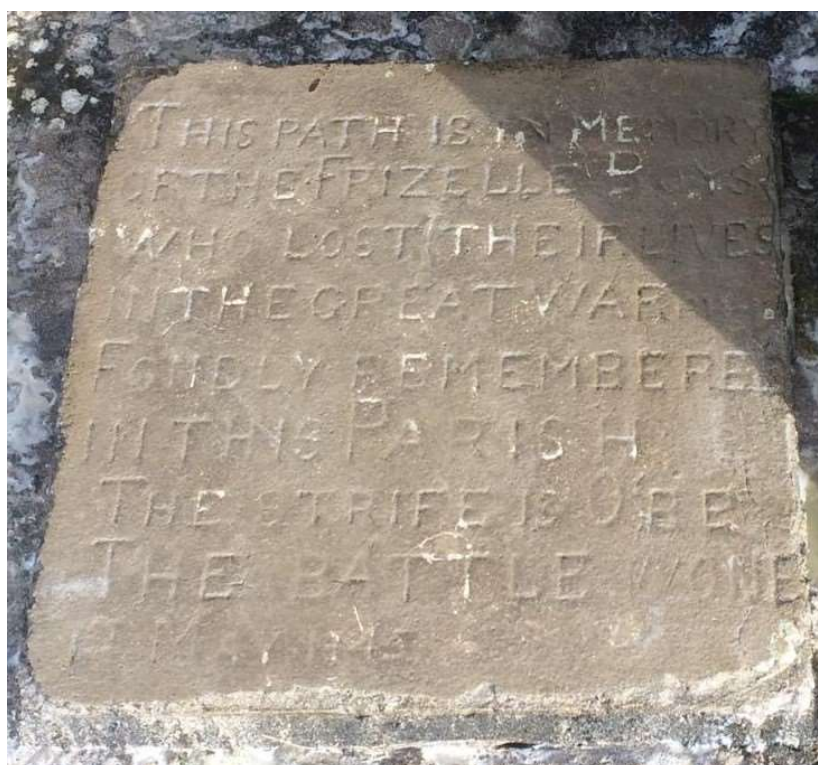
George Henry Herbert, born 5 March 1886 at Newtown Cloghans, Co Mayo

Archibald, born 21 July 1889 at Swinford, Co. Mayo.

During this period, John was promoted to the rank of Sergeant on 1 October 1884. Records indicate that unfortunately Caroline died in 1895. Following Caroline's death, John continued to serve in the Royal Irish Constabulary until 1 December 1900 when he retired having completed 30 years' service. On retirement, records indicate that John was in receipt of a yearly pension of £53-14-08. The 1901 Census of Ireland shows John as resident with his son George and a Housekeeper at North Gate Street, Athlone.

On Wednesday 27 May 1908, John was married for the second time. He married Belinda Laing, a Spinster and Lady Farmer from Killala, Co. Mayo, at Ballinglen Presbyterian Church, Killala. The 1911 Census of Ireland shows the couple as resident at Ballinglen, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo. At that time, John is described as a Farmer.

When originally contacted by Johnny, he mentioned a memorial path at the Parish Church at Ballycastle, a photo of which he kindly forwarded to me.<sup>2</sup>



When he initially contacted me, Johnny was unsure as to who the 'Frizelle boys' named on the path were and whether they were brothers or cousins. This started me off on the military side of the research, where I discovered that three of John and Caroline's sons had served in the Great War.

### **Second Lieutenant Archibald Frizelle, 75th Brigade Royal Field Artillery**

Archibald was the youngest of John and Caroline's children, being born on Sunday 21 July 1889 at Swinford, Co. Mayo. Following his mother's death in 1895, Archibald appears to have resided with his paternal grandparents. The 1901 Census of Ireland shows him as resident with them at Wolfe Tone Street, Sligo.

Archibald was educated at Ranelagh School Athlone and Mounjoy School, Dublin. Records indicate that he was also a member of Wanderers Rugby Football Club, Dublin. Although no emigration records survive, research shows that Archibald emigrated to Canada in 1910 and was employed by the Department of Railways and Canals, Dominion Government of Canada, as a Transitman and Leveller on the Hudson Bay Railway from 1910 to 1914.

Following the outbreak of war, Archibald returned to the United Kingdom and enlisted in the Irish Guards, being posted for training to Warley Barracks, Essex. He was attached to the 3rd (Reserve) Battalion Irish Guards and issued with the service number 7956. By October 1915, Archibald had been promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal and at that time he applied and was recommended for a commission. In his application, Archibald requested a commission to a Howitzer Battery of the Royal Field Artillery. His application was successful with notice of his appointment to the rank of Second Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery being published in the London Gazette of 8 November 1915.



**Second Lieutenant Archibald Frizelle**

Following training, Archibald was posted to 75th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. This Brigade formed part of the Divisional Artillery for the Guards Division. 75th Brigade were equipped with Howitzers.

These guns fired a high explosive shell in an arc, targeting enemy dugouts and defensive structures. Archibald arrived in Belgium on 24 March 1916 and was posted to B Battery. At the time, the Brigade were at Ypres, Belgium. From information available, it can be established that 75th Bde were in action near Vlamertinghe, a small village two miles west of Ypres at the end of April. The war diary for 1 May 1916 states:

HQ returned to advanced wagon line at Rome Farm Vlamertinghe. Batteries remained in action.

Archibald was killed in action on the first of May, having been with his unit for only five weeks. Research indicates that he was the only member of 75th Brigade killed that day. He is buried at grave I.A.20 at Vlamertinghe Military Cemetery. The family arranged for the inscription, 'Deeply mourned by father, sister and brothers' to be placed on his headstone.

Archibald's sacrifice is commemorated on War Memorials and Rolls of Honour at Mayo Peace Park, Castlebar, Ranelagh School Athlone, Wanderers Rugby Football Club, Dublin and at Holy Trinity Church, South Woodford, London, along with his brother Wm Robert.<sup>3</sup>



### **Private William Robert Frizelle 9573, 2nd Battalion Irish Guards**

William Robert was John and Caroline Frizelle's eldest child, born on Saturday 16 October 1879 at Knox Street, Ballina, Co. Mayo. Little is known of William's early years and in fact, he does not appear on the 1901 Census of Ireland or on any census in the United Kingdom.

The 1911 Census shows William as resident with Daniel and Martha Dollard at 46 Dagnan Road, Balham, London. His occupation is given as Schoolmaster (Private) not currently in employment. The Dollards were originally from Dublin. Daniel Caulfield Dollard was an Artist and Martha had been born Martha Duigenan, her father being a Surgeon. They were married on 16 February 1904 at the Roman Catholic Pro Cathedral, Dublin and at the time of the marriage were resident at 57 Mountjoy Square, Dublin. This was an upmarket location and residence to Politicians, Literary, and Artistic figures.



William appears to have formed a relationship with Martha and the couple had a daughter, named Martha Frizelle-Dollard, born on 11 October 1915.<sup>4</sup> Although they never married, William and Martha resided as a couple from this time. The 1915 Street Directory shows William as resident at 28 Church Lane, Tooting, London, and on the 1918 Electoral Register, William and Martha are listed as resident at 46 Alexandra Road, Wanstead, London.<sup>5</sup>

It is believed that William enlisted in the Irish Guards sometime late in 1915. Issued with the service number 9573, he was posted to 2nd battalion in September 1916. He saw action with the battalion at the Third Battle of Ypres and the Battle of Cambrai in 1917. By April 1918, the battalion were in action near Hazebrouck, northern France countering the second phase of the German Spring Offensive. On 12 April, the battalion took up positions near Vieux-Berquin six miles south-east of Hazebrouck. Unfortunately, the battalion war diary has no record of the events of 12-15 April however, the official history of the battalion records the events:

On the morning of 13th a message was received that the enemy had broken through the Grenadier Guards positions between Vieux-Berquin and Le Cornet Perdu. No 3 Company dispatched at once with orders to counter attack and fill the gap. No more was heard of them. They went into the morning fog and were either surrounded and wiped out before they reached the Grenadiers or were totally destroyed with them.

Unfortunately, William, a Lance Corporal in this Company, was one of those killed. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission records that 38 men from the battalion were killed in action on 13 April.<sup>6</sup> Of these, only five have a known grave. William, along with the majority of his comrades is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing.<sup>7</sup> In addition, William's sacrifice is commemorated on the Mayo Great War Memorial and, along with his brother Archibald on the Roll of Honour at Holy Trinity Church, South Woodford, Essex. This was Martha's local church.



Roll of Honour Holy Trinity Church

From my research, I believe that these are the 'Frizelle boys' referred to on the memorial path at the parish church at Ballycastle.

One other brother however, served in the Great War and survived.

### **Sergeant George Henry Herbert Frizelle 13739, Royal Engineers**

George Henry Herbert Frizelle was born on Friday 5 March 1886 at Newtown Cloghans, Ballina, Co Mayo. He was John and Caroline's third son. Shortly after his 18th birthday on 21 April 1904, George enlisted in the Royal Engineers at Athlone. He initially enlisted for three years with a further nine years on the Army Reserve and was issued with the service number 13739. On enlistment, George gave his occupation as a Telegraphist and although there is no unit mentioned on his service record, it is likely that he was posted to one of the Engineer's Signal units. In May 1905, George extended his service to eight years with the colours and the following year was awarded a first Good Conduct Badge. In 1910, George was attached to 2nd Cable Telegraph Company and in January of that year was appointed as an unpaid Lance Corporal. After a month however, George reverted to the rank of Sapper at his own request. Two years later in February 1912, George again extended his period of service, this time to 12 years. The following month, he was promoted Lance Corporal, this time retaining the rank.

In January 1914, whilst attached to K Signal Company RE, George made a successful application to be transferred to the Army Reserve, most likely due to an offer of employment and he left the Regular Army on 17 January 1914. George's time as a civilian was however, short-lived and the day after the outbreak of war on 5 August 1914, George was mobilized for active service at Aldershot. As so many men were coming forward to enlist, anyone with previous military service was highly regarded and he was appointed to his previous rank of Lance Corporal on mobilization. Nine days later, George embarked for France with the British Expeditionary Force.

George remained in France for only three months, returning to the United Kingdom and being posted to the Royal Engineers Signals Depot at Fenny Stratford, Buckinghamshire in the rank of Corporal.<sup>8</sup> George remained at the Royal Engineers Signals Depot as an Instructor for the remainder of the war, an indication that he was highly skilled at his trade. He also became a Drill Instructor at the Depot when he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in July 1916.

As George had been mobilized for the duration of the war, following the Armistice, he was eligible for demobilization. George was transferred to Class Z Army reserve on demobilisation on 31 March 1919. Class Z meant that he could be recalled to duty if Germany failed to adhere to the peace treaty. He was finally discharged from his military obligations on 31 March 1920. Having completed just short of 15 years military service, George's military character on demobilization as described as Exemplary. On demobilization, he gave his address as The Glen, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo.

In May 1920, George gained employment with the Post Office as a Skilled Workman and later that year married Maud Elizabeth Tomlinson at East Retford, Nottinghamshire, an area where he remained until his death in 1968 at the age of 82.

### **Sergeant Frederick John Frizelle 59994, Royal Irish Constabulary**

John and Caroline's second son, Frederick John was born at Ballina, County Mayo on 15 May 1881. He was employed in the Drapery business before following his father into the ranks of the Royal Irish Constabulary, being appointed on 1 February 1901 with the service number 59994.

Records indicate that Frederick was initially stationed at Brown Square station which is just off what is now Millfield, close to Belfast City Centre. This was the Headquarters station of what was the RIC's Belfast C District. The other stations in the District being Antrim Road, Craven Street, Leopold Street, Ligoniel and Shankill Road. As a Headquarters station situated between the Shankill and Falls Roads, Brown Square would have been a very busy posting.

Frederick remained at Brown Square until August 1912 when he was posted to Magherafelt. This posting would have been influenced by his impending marriage, as RIC policy was again to post officers away from areas where close relatives resided. On Wednesday 6 November 1912, Frederick married Elizabeth McKee at St Andrews Church of Ireland, Belfast.<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth was from Burnaby Street, Belfast, her father Andrew was a Publican and her mother Jane was a Grocer.<sup>10</sup>

Following the marriage, the couple set up home at Garden Street in Magherafelt. Magherafelt was again a Headquarters Station supporting outstations at Ballyronan, Bellaghy, Castledawson, Draperstown, Gulladuff, Innisrush, Maghera and Moneymore. On 13 September 1913, the couple had a daughter, Caroline Winifred, born at the family home in Magherafelt. Unfortunately, the little girl died of burns received in an accident at her home on 8 June 1916 when she was aged 2.<sup>11</sup>

Following the death, Frederick and Elizabeth remained resident at Garden Street, records indicating that Frederick was also a member of Masonic Lodge 532, based at Curran on the outskirts of the town. On 1 July 1921, Frederick was promoted to the rank of Sergeant. Records indicate that he was most likely posted to the RIC station at Ballyronan, on the shores of Lough Neagh.

During the Irish War of Independence, the IRA waged a savage war against any entity supporting the British Government. Chief among these, and frequent targets were the officers and men of the Royal Irish Constabulary, the visible manifestation of British rule in Ireland. Many barracks, mainly in isolated areas were attacked and officers targeted both on and off duty. This campaign had the intent of discouraging Irish men from joining the force and the more subtle consequence of increasing support for the IRA as murders of Police Officers were often followed by reprisals which frequently targeted the guilty and innocent alike.

On the evening of Wednesday 3 May 1922, Frederick was on patrol in Ballyronan at around 10.30 pm. He was accompanied by Special Constables Thomas Hunter aged 22 and Edward Hegarty, aged 20. Three men came up behind the Police officers who turned and commented on the weather as they stepped aside to let them past. As they drew level, the men fired a number of shots fatally wounding the two Special Constables, one of whom managed to return fire.

Frederick was seriously wounded by a gunshot wound to the abdomen and managed to run to the Police Station to raise the alarm. The attack appears to have been a concerted one as reinforcements summonsed from Antrim came under sustained gunfire in an ambush near Castledawson, and a further ambush took place between Castledawson and Toome in the early hours of the following morning.

Frederick was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, where he passed away on the evening of 4 May. His funeral left from his father-in-law's home at 229 Grosvenor Road, Belfast to Belfast City

Cemetery. Following Frederick's murder, Elizabeth was awarded a widow's pension of £119-11-08 annually.

**SINN FEIN WAR ON ULSTER**  
**THREE VILE MURDERS.**  
**Cowardly Attack on Derry Police Patrol.**  
**SERIES OF AMBUSHES.**  
The fifth, sixth, and seventh murders of the present rebel campaign in Ulster were committed on Wednesday night in South Derry, when three police were shot under circumstances bearing the stamp of the Tipperary or Cork gunmen. The police casualties since Wednesday are five dead and seven wounded.  
The cowardly and vile attack, which was of a type only too common in the South before the "truce," was made about 10.30 p.m. at Ballyronan, a South Derry village on the shores of Lough Neagh. Three men, outwardly peaceable country folk, passed a police patrol of three, and wished the constables "good night." Then suddenly they turned round, drew revolvers, and opened fire.  
Constable Hunter was shot dead, Constable Hegarty fell mortally wounded, and Sergeant Frizell, who was shot in the abdomen and died in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast, at 10.30 last night, struggled on to the barracks, where he collapsed. Very lights were sent up to bring reinforcements.

**FUNERAL OF SERGEANT FRIZELLE.**  
There was a large and representative attendance yesterday at the funeral to the City Cemetery of Sergeant F. J. Frizelle, who was murdered at Ballyronan (County Derry), the cortege leaving the house of his father-in-law, Mr. Andrew M'Kee, 239, Grosvenor Road. The chief mourners were—John Frizelle (father), Ballycastle, County Mayo; Andrew M'Kee (father-in-law), J. J. M'Farland (uncle), Andrew M'Kee and Frank Toal (brothers-in-law), Cecil M'Farland (cousin), and Andrew M'Kee (nephew).  
The funeral arrangements were in the hands of the firm of Messrs. Adam Turner.

The Belfast News Letter 5 May 1922 & The Northern Whig 9 May 1922

Thinking that I had finished with the military and police service of the Frizelle family and to complete research on the family, I turned my attention to John and Caroline's daughter Edith.

### **Edith Burton nee Frizelle and Major Louis Burton 70th Brigade Royal Field Artillery**

Edith was born on Saturday 31 March 1883 at Castle Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo, the only daughter of John and Caroline Frizelle. Following her mother's death in 1895, the 1901 Census of Ireland shows her as resident as a boarder at school in Celbridge, Co. Kildare. The school is not named however, it is titled, 'The incorporated Society for promoting Protestant Schools in Ireland.'

On Sunday 15 December 1907, Edith married Louis Burton at Athlone Parish Church of Ireland, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. At that time, Louis, who had been born at Heigham, Norwich, Norfolk, in 1874, was a Battery Sergeant Major in the Royal Artillery. Louis had enlisted as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery on 17 May 1900 at Ipswich. Aged 25 at that time, he had previously been employed as a Bank Clerk and was a part-time soldier in the 3rd Battalion, Norfolk Artillery.

In the years following the marriage, Louis was deployed to India with the 10th Ammunition Column and Edith accompanied him there. A daughter, Winifred Edith was born at Bangalore on 14 March 1909 and a son, William John, was also born at Bangalore on 31 October 1911. In June of 1911 with his period of enlistment drawing to a close, Louis had re-engaged with the Army to complete 21



years service. The family returned to England in 1912 and two further sons followed, Louis Archibald, born 1 August 1914 and Howard Frizelle born 21 June 1916.

By the outbreak of war in August 1914, Louis was an Instructor at the School of Gunnery in the rank of Sergeant Major. With the massive influx of recruits at the beginning of the war, experienced NCO's were required to make up a shortage of officers. On 26 September 1914, Louis was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery. As the war progressed, Louis moved up the ranks and by June of 1917, he was a Major in charge of D Battery, 70th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. This Brigade provided Artillery support to the 15th (Scottish) Division. As the officer in command of the Battery, Louis would have been in charge of 200 men.

At the beginning of June 1917 Louis' Brigade was at Conchy-sur-Canche, 30 miles west of Arras. On 8 June whilst near the village of Galametz, Louis observed a runaway wagon pulled by two heavy draught horses charge past him. He immediately mounted his horse and took off in pursuit, followed by an Orderly. After a pursuit of around 400 yards, Louis' horse skidded and fell, trapping him and pulling him along the ground. He received immediate medical attention however, later that evening complained of severe pain and was taken to No 6 Stationary Hospital at the nearby town of Frevent. A telegram was sent to Edith at Broadwater Avenue, Letchworth, Hertfordshire, to the effect that Louis was dangerously ill.

Despite medical attention, Louis died the next day of a ruptured intestine. A court of enquiry was held into his death and no blame was apportioned to him, in what was a tragic accident. Louis was buried at St Hilaire Cemetery, Frevent, Grave 3. Edith arranged for the inscription, 'Only goodnight beloved, not farewell. Your loving wife Edith' to be placed on his headstone.

Having completed research into all the members of the Frizelle family, I was fairly confident that I had captured all the details of their service however, I was premature in that assumption.

Whilst researching Major Louis Burton at the National Archives, Kew, I came across a letter in his file from the Air Ministry, dated September 1934 and enquiring into the circumstances of Louis' death, as his youngest son, Howard Frizelle Burton had applied for a King's Cadetship at the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell. This led to another fascinating story of service and bravery.

### **Wing Commander Howard Frizelle Burton DSO, DFC and Bar, Croix de Guerre (France)**

Howard was known throughout his RAF career as 'Billy' and was born on Wednesday 21 June 1916 at Letchworth, Hertfordshire, the youngest son of Louis and Edith Burton, nee Frizelle. He was educated at Bedford School, an independent boarding school in the county town of Bedford. Following this in 1934, Howard applied for a King's Cadetship to the Royal Air Force College, Cranwell. His application was successful, and Howard was admitted to RAF Cranwell as a Cadet in 1935.

Whilst there, on 7 October 1936, Howard was involved in a fatal flying accident. He and another pilot, Flight Lieutenant Roy Bartlett were flying Hawker Fury aircraft carrying out camera practice when their planes collided. Howard baled out and survived though injured. Flight Lieutenant Bartlett was killed in the accident.

Notwithstanding this incident, Howard was an excellent student and passed out of RAF Cranwell at the end of 1936 having been awarded the Sword of Honour for the most outstanding Cadet. On graduation, Howard was posted as Pilot Officer to No 46 Squadron at RAF Kenley, Surrey, on 18

January 1937. At that time, the Squadron flew Gloster Gauntlet aircraft. This was a single seat biplane fighter and the last RAF fighter to have an open cockpit. Howard was promoted to Flying Officer in June 1938 and in February the following year, the Squadron was re-equipped with the Mk 1 Hawker Hurricane.



**Wing Commander Howard Frizelle Burton**

On 26 June 1939, Howard was posted to RAF HQ 12 Group. This was a command organization which controlled a number of squadrons in an air defence role. Howard's stay there was not long. Four days after the outbreak of war, Howard was posted to No 66 Squadron as Commander of B Flight.

No 66 Squadron was initially based at Duxford and moved shortly after Howard's arrival to RAF Coltishall, Norfolk. Flying Spitfires, in early 1940 the squadron was involved in providing cover for bombers attacking targets in occupied Holland and were then involved in offensive patrols covering the evacuation from Dunkirk.

In June 1940, Howard married Jean Feredith Maxwell Robertson at Leatherhead, Surrey. A 21 years old Secretary, Jean was the daughter of Air Commodore Edmund Digby Maxwell and Evelyn Jane Robertson.<sup>12</sup> Jean's elder brother, Duncan Maxwell Robertson was a BBC employee before the war and enlisted as Flying Officer Air Gunner (Service No 70570). He was killed on 28 October 1940 when the aircraft he was in stalled whilst making a sharp turn as it climbed away from a target during a live firing exercise in Lincolnshire. He is buried at Manby (St Mary's) Churchyard, Lincolnshire.

On 3 September 1940, Howard was appointed Acting Squadron Leader and was posted to 616 Squadron, initially based at Kirton-in-Lindsay, Lincolnshire, before moving to RAF Tangmere, West Sussex, as the Battle of Britain intensified.

RAF Tangmere housed three Squadrons of Spitfires, 145, 610 and 616, all part of HQ No 11 Group commanded by Wing Commander Douglas Bader DSO, DFC. Bader and his superior, Air Vice Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory favoured what were called 'Big Wing' tactics. This involved the three squadrons working in unison against German formations. From records it appears that Wing Commander Bader favoured flying with Howard's 616 Squadron. He was a notoriously aggressive fighter pilot, pushing himself exceptionally hard and expecting everyone else to adhere to the same standards. He also had an abrasive personality and frequently clashed with those higher in rank and his own colleagues. Before he was shot down and captured in August 1941, it was reported that the Squadrons under his command were on the verge of mutiny over his leadership style.

Howard's rank of Acting Squadron Leader was made substantive on 1 September 1941. On 19 September 1941, Howard was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation read:

This officer has led his squadron with commendable skill and coolness. He has participated in fifty-four sorties over enemy territory during which he has assisted in the destruction of two Messerschmitt 109's, probably destroyed a Heinkel and damaged a further two enemy aircraft. Squadron Leader Burton has on all occasions proved an inspiration to his unit.

On 29 September 1941, Howard was posted to HQ No 11 Group as Squadron Leader-Tactics. Later that year he was posted to RAF Hawkinge, near Folkestone, Kent. This was the home to several Squadrons although there is no definitive role mentioned for him.

On 11 April 1942, Howard was posted to RAF HQ Middle East and in October of that year was appointed Squadron Leader HQ No 212 Group based at Benghazi, Libya. He only remained there a month before transferring to No 243 Group also at Benghazi, flying Hurricanes against the Afrika Corps troops of the then General Erwin Rommel. In December of that year, he transferred again to No 243 Group, flying Curtiss Kittyhawks. This was a fighter-bomber regarded as a 'tankbuster' and Howard achieved much success against Afrika Corps armoured columns, despite the fact that the RAF formations were outnumbered three to one by German and Italian squadrons.

On 13 February 1943, Howard was promoted Acting Wing Commander and ten days later was awarded a Bar to his DFC, the citation reading:

Since he assumed command of the wing in December 1942, this officer has taken part in nearly all its sorties. On one occasion, the formation was attacked by a very large force of enemy fighters, one of which Wing Commander Burton shot down. He has displayed great keenness and devotion to duty.

In April 1943, Howard was again decorated, this time with the Distinguished Service Order, the citation reading:

Wing Commander Burton is the commanding officer of an exceptionally successful wing. Recently, he has taken part in several sorties involving low level attacks on heavy armoured fighting vehicles. His brilliant leadership has contributed in a large measure to the great success achieved.

Around this time, Howard returned to the United Kingdom on leave. On 3 June 1943, he boarded an RAF Lockheed Hudson at RAF Portreath, Cornwall for the Flight back to North Africa. In addition to Howard, the passengers comprised three Wing Commanders, a Group Captain and two Squadron Leaders. The aircraft was intercepted by a long-range German Junkers JU 88 fighter-bomber aircraft over the Bay of Biscay and shot down. There were no survivors. An officer surely destined for much higher rank, Howard was killed two weeks before his 27th birthday.

Howard's remains were never recovered. He is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, the Battle of Britain London Monument at Victoria Embankment, London, and the War Memorial at Ashted, Surrey, where he had resided with his wife, Jean.

Having initially started research to identify two family members who may have served in the Great War, I have been amazed by the depth and breadth of service within one family. I have been honoured to have had the opportunity to carry out this research and as I uncovered new links and facts, the thought struck me that if this is the service attributable to one family, what are the chances of similar stories waiting to be uncovered?

Michael Nugent

Researcher and Author

January 2020

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<sup>1</sup> Also spelt McNeilly

<sup>2</sup> The church is St John's, Dunfeeney in the Diocese of Tuam, Killala and Achonry

<sup>3</sup> It is believed that Archibald's name was included at South Woodford by Robert's widow, Martha.

<sup>4</sup> Martha used the surname Frizelle until her marriage to Douglas Albert Jeffrey in January 1942. A Schoolteacher before her marriage, she died in 2009 aged 94

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Dollard enlisted in the Rifle Brigade in May 1916 and later transferred to the Cheshire Regiment, service number 53093. He was wounded with GSW to the right leg and discharged with the Silver War Badge in June 1919.

<sup>6</sup> [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)

<sup>7</sup> The Commonwealth War Graves Commission states that William was 43 when killed, he was in fact 38.

<sup>8</sup> Fenny Stratford now forms part of Milton Keynes

<sup>9</sup> St Andrews Parish church was situated at Hope Street, Belfast, just to the rear of Great Victoria Street Railway Station. It was closed in 1971 and demolished with a new church bearing the same name being constructed at Glencairn.

<sup>10</sup> Burnaby Street ran from Distillery Street to Roden Street.

<sup>11</sup> Caroline died three days after the accident, on 11 June 1916.

<sup>12</sup> Edmund Robertson had enlisted as a Naval Cadet in the Royal Navy in 1902. Originally a Gunnery Specialist, he qualified as an Admiralty Flying Officer in March 1914. He was permanently transferred to the RAF in 1920 retiring in the post of Air ADC to King George V in August 1935. He re-engaged at the outbreak of War and served until 1945