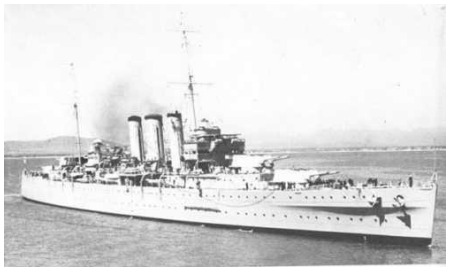
Section 3

World War Two

Biographies and Memories

Unlike the Great War, the Presbyterian Church in Ireland did not produce a Roll of Honour for the Second World War and the war memorials for the Fitzroy Avenue and Donegall Pass congregations only list the men who died, not those who served. The Crescent congregation produced an elaborately decorated Book of Remembrance (reproduced in the War Memorials section) which lists the men and women who served and/or died in the Second World War.

Whilst there is not as much information available to enable personal details to be researched, the following information has been obtained from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website.

	**Leading Telegraphist Alexander Wilson Brown** (Service Number: P/UD/X 1452) was the son of Edward Kirkwood and Elizabeth Brown and the husband of Mary McKee Brown. He served on *HMS Hurworth* and was killed, aged 28, on 22nd October 1943; his name is commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial
	**Leading Aircraftman Robert Dunlop** (Service Number: 2211185) was the son of Frank and Winnie Dunlop. He served with 52 Squadron Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and was killed, aged 24, on 25th July 1946. He is buried in the Rangoon War Cemetery in Burma (now called Myanmar).
	**Leading Seaman Herbert Mason Jordan** (Service Number: D/J 19351) was the husband of Lillian Gertrude Jordan. He served on *HMS Dorsetshire* and was killed, aged 46, on 5th April 1942; his name is commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial.
	**Guardsman William Gill Moore** (Service Number: 7020985) served with the 2nd Battalion, the Irish Guards and was killed on 17th September 1944. He is buried in the Valkenswaard War Cemetery.

	**Rifleman George McAllister** (Service Number: 7009594) was the son of George and Elizabeth McAllister and the husband of Mary McAllister. He served with the 2nd Battalion, the Royal Ulster Rifles and was killed, aged 37, on 7th June 1944. He is buried in the La Delivrande War Cemetery in Douvres.
	**Trooper Frank Osterfield** (Service Number: 7912649) was the son of John Francis and Ellen Osterfield and the husband of Mary Osterfield. He served with the 1st Royal Tank Regiment (Royal Armoured Corps) and was killed, aged 29, on 3rd August 1944. He is buried in the Bayeux War Cemetery.
	**Aircraftsman (1st Class) Raymond William Peden** (Service Number: 1901334) was the son of William and Charlotte Peden. He served with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and was killed, aged 22, on 8th June 1946. He is buried in the Yaba Cemetery in Nigeria.
	**Private John Cecil Verran** (Service Number: 4756220) was the son of Mabel Holmes. He served with the 1/5th Battalion (Sherwood Foresters) of the Notts and Derby Regiment. He was killed, aged 29, on 9th October 1943 and is buried in the Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery in Burma (Myanmar).
	**Company Sergeant Major (WO2) Thomas Lyons** (Service Number: 7009916) was the son of James and Charlotte Edith Lyons and the husband of Charlotte Lyons. He served with the 6th Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and was killed, aged 41, on 15th June 1945. He is buried in the Celle War Cemetery.

Brigadier Sir Ian Fraser DSO OBE DL MD FRCS FRCSI [1]

Ian Fraser was born in Belfast on 9th February 1901 and was educated at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution, where he was a member of the Officer Training Corps during the First World War. His father was a doctor but Ian Fraser's decision to follow his father's profession was heavily influenced by the experiences of two Instonians in the First World War – JA Sinton VC[2] and GDF McFadden.[3]

In 1918 Ian Fraser joined the Officer Training Corps when he matriculated at Queen's University (where he came under the instruction of Professor WWD Thomson[4], who held the Chair of Medicine from 1923). Fraser received numerous accolades and awards during his time at Queen's and graduated, first in class, with a first class degree in 1923. He took first place in Ireland when he gained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland in 1926, becoming a member of Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons (and gaining his Masters in Surgery) in 1927. He worked in major hospitals in London (Guy's and the Middlesex), Paris (Hôtel Dieu and Hôpital Necker) and Vienna (Allgemeines Krankenhaus) before returning to Belfast.

In 1931 he married Eleanor Margaret Mitchell (of Quarry House, Strandtown) in Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church and they settled at 33 Wellington Park – this was to be their home (barring the war years) for the rest of their lives. In 1938, Fraser was appointed resident surgeon at the Royal Victoria Hospital and, in 1939, he was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in Edinburgh. In 1940, he became an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for his work with the St. John Ambulance Brigade, having been appointed as the first Commissioner of the Northern Ireland District in 1932.

At the start of the Second World War, Fraser enlisted with the Royal Army Medical Corps with the substantive rank of Major and was posted to the 37th General Hospital in Gillingham in Dorset. Fraser was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and posted to Accra in the Gold Coast, embarking on the *Highland Princess* on 7th May 1941 – the Commanding Office was Major Dr. John McFadden, the elder brother of G.D.F. McFadden. In Accra, Fraser was responsible for establishing the 37th General Hospital which provided 1,000 beds – 200 for Europeans and 800 for Africans. In December 1942, he was appointed as Colonel Consulting Surgeon for the West Africa command which included Gambia, Sierra Leone, Gold Coast and Nigeria. However, as there was no military action in West Africa, Ian Fraser requested a transfer to North Africa, being prepared to revert to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

[1] Much of the information in this section is drawn from "A Surgeon's Century – The Life of Sir Ian Fraser" (Richard Clarke) and the obituary published in the British Medical Journal (03/07/1999)

[2] [3] [4] Biographies of these men appear in the Great War section of this booklet.

Before his transfer was effected, Ian Fraser had a spell of home leave. However, three weeks into this leave, Fraser was called to the War Office to be told that he was to become the Army's expert on a new drug called penicillin (although he had never even heard of it). He was to report immediately to Professor Howard Florey at Oxford to learn about the new drug. He eventually embarked for North Africa on 3rd May 1943 on a hospital ship, the *Newfoundland*. Although based at a large hospital in Algiers, Fraser insisted on going to the battlefield at the earliest opportunity so that the new drug could be tested as soon as casualties occurred. By conducting these pioneering battlefield trials he was instrumental in ensuring that penicillin was able to play a vital part in the treatment of battlefield wounds. This was the start of several intensive years of battlefield experience and experimentation.

In July 1943 when the Eighth Army landed in Sicily, Fraser and his medical team treated the wounded men at the frontline and on hospital ships moored off-shore. He followed the Eighth Army throughout the Sicilian campaign and, in September 1943, was with the British 10th Corps at Salerno. There he operated on the beach, under heavy fire, for 24 hours, at the end of which, totally exhausted, he insisted on doing the last useful thing he could by giving a pint of his own blood before falling asleep.

For his courageous work under fire at Sicily and Salerno, Ian Fraser was awarded the Distinguished Service Order in January 1944, the citation reading:

"By his gallant, fearless and devoted action, regardless of personal risk and safety, this officer, a brilliant and experienced surgeon, not only set an inspiring example of coolness under fire, but by employing a new technique for the first time in forward surgery, has established a new and most valuable wound treatment."

Fraser was again involved in front-line medical treatment after the Normandy landings, operating on Allies and Axis soldiers without discrimination. One German officer, Colonel Karl Zulch, had this to say:

> "*Mr Fraser is a man I shall never forget. It was he to whom I owed my life after having been badly injured in the Normandy battle against the Guards Armoured Division. He saved me not only by his surgical skill but by the strong emanation of his personality. Indeed he is a real physician."*

On 29th October 1944, following a brief period of home leave, Fraser embarked on a seaplane flight to India where he took up the position of Consultant Surgeon to the Central Command, with promotion to Brigadier at the start of 1945. He was to spend nine months in India, mainly in administrative duties, with some lecturing and hospital inspections.

Brigadier Fraser was demobilised in September 1945 and returned to Belfast and Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church. In addition to his work at the Royal Victoria Hospital and the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, Fraser was honorary consultant to the Army in Northern Ireland and to the Royal Ulster Constabulary. He was also, at various times, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland and the British Medical Association.

In addition to the DSO, Brigadier Ian Fraser was awarded the following Campaign Medals during the war:

1939-45 Star

Africa (8th Army) Star

Italy Star

France & Germany Star

Ian Fraser was also awarded many international honours, including the following (of which he was either a Commander or Chevalier):

Ordre de la Couronne (Belgium)

Order of Orange Nassau (Holland)

Ordre des Palmes Académiques (France)

Légion d'Honneur (France)

However, the highest award that he received was a Knighthood – he was invested by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, in Buckingham Palace on Tuesday 5th February 1963. Sir Ian Fraser died, aged 98, on 11th May 1999 and a memorial service was held for him in Fisherwick Presbyterian Church in Belfast.

This portrait hangs in the Great Hall of Queen's University, Belfast

John Mills

John was born at Ballyhay, Donaghadee in 1921. His father, Samuel Mills, owned an art and picture framing shop in Howard Street in Belfast, and his mother died when he was only six years old. The family moved to Newtownards in 1929. Two women played an important role in his upbringing – his Auntie Nellie, a "pilgrim" with the Shankill Road Mission, and Edith Corry, a neighbour. John left school when he was fourteen and started an apprenticeship as an electrician – he earned the sum of two shillings and sixpence per week, but his bus fare was three shillings and thruppence.[5]

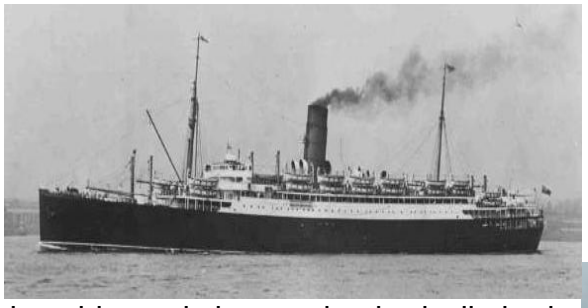
At the age of seventeen, John Mills joined the Royal Air Force on 20th December 1938 as he knew that war was coming and he did not want to be conscripted into the army. He did his basic training at Cardington in Bedfordshire and then attended a "Wireless Operator and Air Gunner" course at Yatesbury in Wiltshire. During the course, John was hospitalised with measles and by the time he was discharged from hospital, the course had been completed and he had missed out on the opportunity to crew Blenheim bombers. John recalls that this disappointment was softened by the fact that there were heavy losses amongst Blenheim crews.

John was then transferred to 12 Group H.Q. where he was classified as a Clerk (Special Duties). On one occasion, John recalls being instructed to deliver a message to Air Vice Marshall Leigh Mallory at his house. When he arrived at the house, there was no answer to his knock at the door, so he went into the house to see if he could find AVM Mallory. Whilst searching upstairs, John saw AVM Mallory standing at the bottom of the stairs watching him. John says that he was "shaking like a leaf" when he came down the stairs and presented the message. Mallory told John to wait a few minutes and he thought that he was going to be put on a charge, but Mallory returned with a torch so that John could find his way down the path in the dark. John always regarded Air Vice-Marshall Mallory as a man who cared about the men under his command.

In 1940, John volunteered to join the British Expeditionary Force in France. His father, who had served in the Great War but never talked about it, was opposed to John going to France but John was insistent and was posted to Arris.

[5] In today's currency 2/6 equals 12p and 3/3 is 16p.

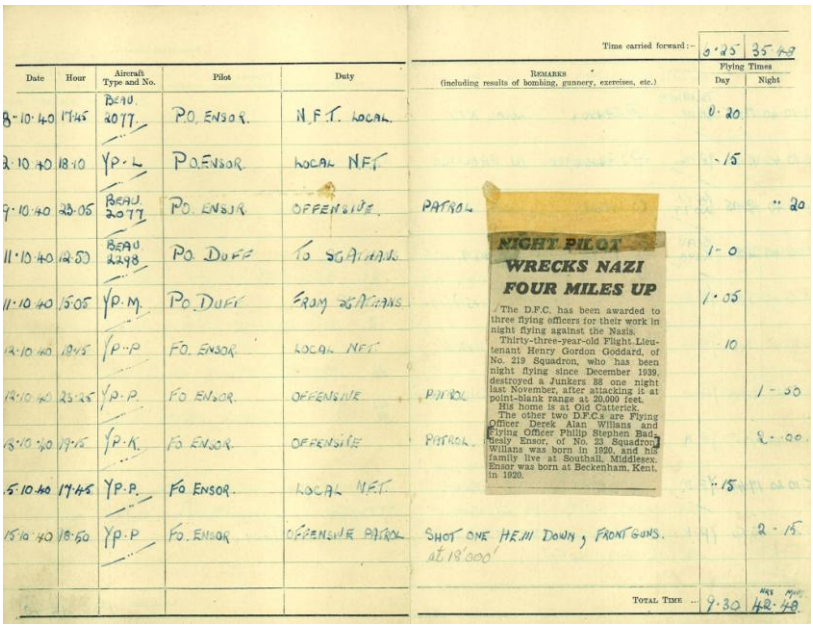
Whilst manning a Lewis Gun post, John received a call to return to the depot with the Lewis Gun. When he reached the depot, he was instructed to get in the back of a lorry with the gun. Once the lorry set off, John asked where they were going and was told that they were pulling out. John, who took great pride in personal hygiene, was aghast as they had had to leave all their kit behind, he did not even have a clean handkerchief or fresh underwear. The unit headed to Dunkirk but, upon seeing the masses of soldiers waiting to be evacuated, they headed for Cherbourg. On the way, they stopped at a small town where John was more interested in having a bath than getting food. Cherbourg was in flames when they reached it and so they headed on to St. Nazaire on a train – the sign above the sliding doors stated that the carriages could hold "40 Men and 8 Horses". The carriages were packed with a combination of refugees, soldiers and RAF personnel and the train was travelling at a walking pace when it came under attack from Stuka dive-bombers and German paratroopers. Army and RAF personnel climbed onto the top of the carriage to fight off the German paratroopers, but had to cease firing when the danger of hitting the refugees became too high. However, the train now picked up speed (probably 30 m.p.h.) and managed to get away from the attacking force.



They arrived at St Nazaire, but were too late to board *HMT Lancastria*, a converted Cunard White Star liner, which was subsequently sunk when it was hit by four bombs dropped by Junkers JU-88 aircraft – the German aircraft also opened fire on people who had abandoned the ship and those who had climbed on the hull of the overturned craft. The official government announcement, which had been delayed by six weeks, stated that 5,300 people had been on *HMT Lancastria* and that 2,500 had been rescued. However, the ship's crew reported that they stopped counting at 6,000 and that there could have been as many as 8,000 people on board when the ship sank. This was Britain's worst maritime disaster, claiming more lives than the combined losses of *RMS Titanic* and *RMS Lusitania.*

John's unit was given the option of continuing to Spain or returning to Cherbourg. They chose the latter as continuing to Spain would have meant internment for the remainder of the war. John's unit was eventually evacuated from Cherbourg and they landed at Weymouth, to be greeted, much to John's surprise, as heroes rather than as a defeated force.

John's unit returned to Yatesbury for a period of recuperation but it was not long before he volunteered for Air Crew duty (with the rank of Sergeant) and, on 27th July 1940, was posted to 23 Squadron. The Squadron, operating Bristol Blenheim night-fighter aircraft, provided Channel and North Sea defence duties during the Battle of Britain. The aircraft on which John served downed a Heinkel HE 111 bomber on 15th October 1940. When 23 Squadron switched to the Douglas Havoc and Douglas Boston aircraft, Flight Lieutenant Ensor, his pilot, had to choose between John and his comrade, Oliver, and he selected Oliver.



Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	Remarks (including results of bombing, gunnery, exercises, etc.)	Flying Times Day	Flying Times Night
					Time carried forward :-	0·25	35·40
8·10·40	17·45	BEAU. 2077	P.O. ENSOR.	N.F.T. LOCAL.		0·20	
9·10·40	18·10	YP·L	P.O. ENSOR.	LOCAL N.F.T.		·15	
9·10·40	23·05	BEAU. 2077	P.O. ENSOR.	OFFENSIVE.	PATROL		·· 20
11·10·40	12·50	BEAU. 2298	P.O. DUFF	TO SCAMPTON.		1·0	
11·10·40	15·05	YP·M	P.O. DUFF	FROM SCAMPTON.		1·05	
12·10·40	18·45	YP·P	F/O. ENSOR.	LOCAL N.F.T.		·10	
12·10·40	23·25	YP·P	F/O ENSOR.	OFFENSIVE	PATROL		1·30
13·10·40	17·15	YP·K	F/O ENSOR.	OFFENSIVE	PATROL		2·00
15·10·40	17·45	YP·P	F/O. ENSOR.	LOCAL N.F.T.		·15	
15·10·40	18·50	YP·P	F/O. ENSOR	OFFENSIVE PATROL	SHOT ONE HE.111 DOWN, FRONT GUNS. AT 19000'		2·15
					TOTAL TIME ...	9·30	42·40

NIGHT PILOT WRECKS NAZI FOUR MILES UP

The D.F.C. has been awarded to three flying officers for their work in night flying against the Nazis.

Thirty-three-year-old Flight Lieutenant Henry Gordon Goddard, of No. 219 Squadron, who has been night flying since December 1939, destroyed a Junkers 88 one night last November, after attacking it at point-blank range at 20,000 feet.

His home is at Old Catterick.

The other two D.F.C.s are Flying Officer Derek Alan Willans and Flying Officer Philip Stephen Bad[illegible]ensor, of No. 23 Squadron. Willans was born in 1920, and his family live at Southall, Middlesex. Ensor was born at Beckenham, Kent, in 1920.

In March 1941, John transferred to Group Captain Peter Townshend's 85 Squadron which operated Havoc night-fighters. These were fitted with searchlights in the cone, which John felt made the aircraft a sitting target. A few weeks after joining 85 Squadron, John discovered that the aircraft being flown by F/Lt Ensor and Oliver had been shot down, and that both of his former comrades were dead.

In 1944, John was transferred to Swanton Morley to undergo training and information gathering in preparation for the Normandy landing. John, along with other members of the landing forces, was issued with the following letter from General Eisenhower before joining his landing craft for an eight-hour crossing to be landed at Gold Beach.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944 ! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned ! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory !

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory !

Good Luck ! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

On leaving the landing area, John remembers seeing lines of helmets at the side of the road. He later discovered that these had belonged to members of the Green Howards, which had suffered heavy losses. John also remembers the ration packs in which tea, milk and sugar came in a combined cube, which tasted ghastly. The pack also included four sheets of toilet paper. John recalls having to dig emergency foxholes in which to shelter from the heavy German bombardments which were designed to cause maximum damage to aircraft on the ground. John recalls suffering from extreme tooth-ache shortly after the Normandy landing and being surprised to find that there was a fully-equipped dental surgery facility. John remembers the sight of destroyed villages and the smell of death during the Allies' sweep through France, Belgium, Holland (where progress was temporarily halted at Arnhem) and into Germany. John's unit went through Osnabruck, where he was impressed by the standard and quality of facilities at the military bases, and ended up at Lubeck where the Allies joined up with the Russians. His unit passed Belsen and he recalls a soldier describing the horrors that he had witnessed at the camp and asked for any spare clothing or blankets for the prisoners. John had seen enough horrors and declined an invitation to visit the camp.

After the end of the war in Europe, John returned to the UK and immediately embarked on the *HMT Andes*, a passenger liner converted into a troop ship, for the long journey to Australia via the Panama Canal. John, as a Clerk (Special Duties), was part of the ground crew for the Dakota squadrons transporting supplies to the Allied forces in the North Pacific and South China Sea. John was in Australia for a year and the return voyage took four weeks and three days, by the end of which there was only one record (Bing Crosby's "Don't Fence Me In") that was still playable.

John was demobilised in 1946 and went to work in his father's shop before moving on to work as a telephonist with the Post Office. At this time, John met Rose who was undergoing teacher training at Stranmillis and went on to teach at Euston Street school. They were married at Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church and lived in Vernagh Garden Village.

During the war, John Mills was awarded the following campaign medals, which he proudly wears every Remembrance Sunday and at the anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation:

1939/45 Star
(Battle of Britain Clasp)

Air Crew Europe Star
(France/Germany Clasp)

Defence Medal

War Medal

1939/45 Star – given to personnel who had completed 6 months service in a specified operational area overseas between 3rd September 1939 and 2nd September 1945. RAF flight crews who took part in the Battle of Britain received the 'BATTLE OF BRITAIN' clasp.

Air Crew Europe Star - Awarded for flying operations over Europe from UK bases for a minimum of two months between 3rd September 1939 and 4th June 1944.

France & Germany Star - Awarded for service in France, Belgium, the Netherlands or Germany between 6th June 1944 and 8th May 1945. Those entitled to this star who had already received the Atlantic or Air Crew Europe Star only received the 'FRANCE AND GERMANY' clasp.

Nessie Walsh

The Walsh family moved to Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church when Mr Walsh became the Church Officer and his family moved into the house at the back of the church. Nessie lived in the Church Officer's house (which occupied what is now the Minister's Room and the toilets on the ground floor and the Committee Room on the first floor) until 1957, when Mr Walsh retired. At that time the corridor behind the church ended outside the old Minister's Room (now the office). At the end of the corridor was a staircase to the Halls and a door out into the yard behind the Church Officer's house.

Nessie was seventeen when the Second World War broke out but had, from the age of fourteen, been working in the office of a textile company called Richardson Sons & Owden, where she performed a variety of administrative tasks which eventually included book-keeping and wage preparation duties. The company's main premises were situated on Donegall Square North and later became the Belfast Water Office before being renovated and incorporated into the Marks and Spencer store

Nessie recalls the church halls being occupied by a group of around thirty despatch riders from the Royal Corps of Signals. The upstairs hall was their sleeping quarters whilst what is now the downstairs kitchen was their washroom, and they had their meals in the 9th Old Boys Hall in Fitzroy Avenue.[6] The church retained the use of three ground-floor rooms which now constitute the L-shaped room and the Office. The soldiers were entertained in their homes and in the church by members of the congregation. George Wood was one soldier who was a regular visitor to the Walsh's home and frequently attended evening worship services. Nessie corresponded with him after the war and visited him in London.

Nessie particularly remembers one soldier, Dick Wilson from Guernsey. He had fallen ill after an inoculation at the Medical Officer's house (119 Fitzroy Avenue) and had been taken to the Walsh's home for attention. Dick told the Walsh family that his wife, Eve, and their son had managed to leave Guernsey before the German occupation. Dick's family eventually came to lodge at the Walsh's home and Mrs Walsh was instrumental in obtaining a house for the family in Jerusalem Street. A daughter, Anne, was born during the family's stay in Belfast.

[6] Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church received annual rents of £165 (Church Hall) and £130 (Old Boys Hall) from the military authorities.

The friendship continued after the war and Nessie was a regular visitor to the Wilson's home in Guernsey, her last trip being in 2004. Mrs Wilson is still alive and her children, Richard and Anne, recently visited Belfast.

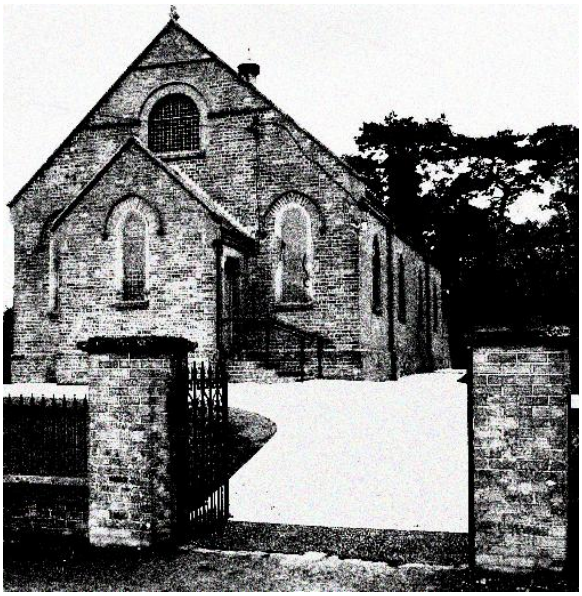
During the Belfast Blitz, Mr Walsh was responsible for ensuring that lighted windows in the church were adequately blacked out and he frequently went out to inspect the church property after air raids. Whilst there was no damage to the church or the surrounding area (Sandy Row was the nearest area to be directly affected by the bombing), shrapnel was often to be found in the church grounds.

The Young Person's Guild continued to meet throughout the war and midnight rambles were frequent. Nessie remembers one meeting in particular as it involved a talk from a representative of the Air Raid Protection squad, which was based in Assembly's College. The talk ended with a call for volunteers, a call which was answered by Nessie and two other young women from Fitzroy, all of whom lived in the immediate vicinity of the church, as soon as they reached the requisite age. Nessie remembers going to Academy Street to collect her uniform and she recounted that, "*The tin hat was so heavy, you would almost have fallen over with the weight of it*". She and her friends manned the telephones a couple of nights a week and at weekends.

The layout of the church was slightly different to that of today, as this picture shows. There were pews on both sides of the transepts and there were also pews facing the pulpit on either side of the chancel. The choir, of which Nessie was a member, sat in the pews adjacent to the wall on which the memorial tablet to the Rev. Dewar is now located. The organ console was located immediately in front of the pulpit and the communion table was immediately before the first row of pews in the nave. Nessie recalls that church services continued throughout the war years but were no more sombre than those held before the war, although the evening services did not attract as many attendants as before the war. Nessie remembers that Sunday School was held in the church rather than the parlour and that the Badminton Club stopped meeting because the upper hall was occupied by troops.

Rosemary Vance (née Nelson)

Rosemary, the youngest of five children in the Nelson family, grew up on Lagan View farm in the Broughmore townland, near the village of Broomhedge. The family lived according to strong Christian ideals and attended Broomhedge Methodist Church, where Rosemary's father was a lay preacher. Three paternal uncles were ministers in the Methodist Church and one of them had served as a Forces Chaplain during the First World War. Two of Rosemary's other uncles had also served in the First World War, and one had suffered from shell-shock. Rosemary's maternal aunt had also served as a Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurse in the First World War. Rosemary trained as a teacher and taught in local schools before moving to Taughmonagh Primary School. She and her husband joined to Fitzroy in 1968.



Rosemary was only four when the Second World War started and she remembers the day that war broke out. Her father and elder siblings were out at church, whilst she and her mother remained at home. She remembers an announcement on the wireless after which her mother sat down, folded her hands in her lap and stared into the fire. Rosemary knew that something was wrong because her mother never sat in front of the fire when there was work to be done, but she did not know what it was. When the rest of the family returned home, her mother simply said, "It has happened" to her father.

Rosemary attended the Preparatory Department of Wallace High School, where two sisters and a brother were in the senior school, and she recalls carrying a gas mask to school and the children having to take reading books into the air raid shelter, despite the fact that it was pitch black and the books could not be read.

During the Belfast Blitz in 1941, Rosemary recalls her father lifting her up to a window from which she could see the flames of the city burning. This was a worrying time for the family as her elder brother, Eric, was an Assistant Minister at Newtownards Road Methodist Church (which was destroyed during one raid) and her eldest sister, Muriel, was training to be a nurse at Purdysburn Fever Hospital. As telephones were not very common in country homes at that time, it was several days before they knew that her brother and sister were all right. Eric was involved in comforting members of his congregation who had lost loved ones or had been made homeless. Rosemary also recalls her father donning his tin helmet and going out on patrol several times a week.

At that time a lot of Belfast people were moving out to the countryside and Mr Nelson converted several outhouses into living accommodation for evacuees. Several families lived on the Lagan View farm but Rosemary particularly remembers one working class family of five children from North Belfast. One of the children, Reine, was her own age and they became playmates and Rosemary's vocabulary was expanded, although not in the best of ways. Rosemary clearly remembers her father taking her aside and telling her that he did not want to hear her repeating certain words again. The family stayed until the end of the war and a sixth child was born in the farmhouse, delivered by Rosemary's aunt (who was now a midwife).

There were servicemen billeted at Long Kesh Military Airfield, which was about two-three miles away, and members of a Medical Corps were housed in train carriages in a siding at Broomhedge Halt. The church ran a canteen for soldiers twice-a-week and several became regular attendees at church services. Soldiers also regularly visited the Nelson farmhouse, the principle attraction being Rosemary's sisters. Rosemary has particular memories about one soldier called Bob Lowe because he had a child of roughly her age. Bob continued to correspond with the family, and to send Rosemary small presents, even after he was sent overseas. Rosemary remembers having a letter from Bob in which he said that he could not say much about the paper, except that it had been used by someone very important.

In 1942, Rosemary's 17 year old sister, Joan, joined the Women's Royal Naval Service and was initially posted to Millhall in London before being stationed at Great Yarmouth. Rosemary recalls that the day that Joan left was the first time that she had ever seen her father cry. Of course, unlike her parents, she was not to know the dangers that her sister would face.

Whilst the family, living as they did on a farm, fared well for food during the war, Rosemary remembers receiving food parcels from a friend of her mother who lived in Canada and she especially remembers the sweet taste of red apples. It was not until after the war that Rosemary recalls tasting ice cream or bananas.

Rosemary remembers going on holidays to Bangor throughout the war and it was whilst the family was on its annual holiday that the war in the east came to an end.

Jack McWhirter

Jack was born in 1920 and grew up on Great Northern Street and Ember Street. After leaving school, Jack had a variety of jobs including message boy for a chemist's shop on the Lisburn Road and working for Pat Montgomery's tea blending company in Anne Street. One evening, when he was hanging around outside Great Victoria Street Baptist Church, he was approached by two young women who invited him along to McClure Street Mission Hall, which was the start of Jack's long association with the Mission Hall and the Belfast City Mission. One of those women was Maisie who was to become Jack's wife on 16th December 1942, the service was held in Fitzroy Avenue Presbyterian Church and conducted by the Rev R. E. Alexander. They remained together until Maisie's death on 21st September 1991.

During the war, Jack worked as a riveter in the Short Brothers & Harland aircraft factory on Queen's Island, where the world-famous Sunderland Flying Boats were constructed. In addition to his workshop duties, Jack carried out Air Raid Protection duties at the factory. He remembers the Easter Sunday 1941 air raid which caused considerable damage to the docks and Queen's Island, although the aircraft factory was soon back in production. Jack remembers that prayer meetings were held in the factory during the war.

Jack was living the Ormeau area at this time and he remembers the barrage balloons that were tethered above Ormeau Cricket Club to keep the enemy aircraft at higher altitudes. He also remembers people leaving their homes during the blitz and going to the open countryside at the top of the Ormeau Road to get away from the bombs. He recalls the people standing and looking back at the burning city.

Like many other people from the war years, Jack remembers rationing and shortages of butter and eggs. However, Jack's years in the tea blending trade stood him in good stead as he was kept in tea supplies by Wilfie Hughes, a travelling tea salesman who lived in Stranmillis Park.

Despite deteriorating eyesight and hearing, Jack remains active and still carries out odd-jobs around Fitzroy Church and he knows the depths of all the drains in the church grounds. Jack is a regular, and vocal, member of the congregation and he maintains an interest in Kimberley Street Mission Hall.