

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

BY JOHN HULME OF THE CARRICKFERGUS AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Grave in Ballycarry

THE HUTCHINSON FAMILY OF 261 YORK STREET, BELFAST: FORMERLY OF BALLYCARRY

In the early hours of Wednesday April 16, 1941, William Hutchinson, his wife Sarah, children Mary, Lily, Rita, Sadie and Martin huddled in fear downstairs in their paint and wallpaper shop just opposite what is now Tesco store and in front of the Nelson Street off-slip from the M2. Hundreds of motor vehicles pass this spot each day oblivious of the fearful tragedy of so many years ago in the area.

The so-called Easter Nazis air raid was raging over Belfast and a bomb fell on the building exploding and setting fire to the building that consumed the entire family. That night it is estimated around 950 men, women and children perished in Belfast due to enemy action. Apart from London, this was the worst in these islands in one night up to then.

But the Hutchinsons could have been safe in Ballycarry, a village 17 miles from Belfast where their relatives still lived. Unfortunately William had bought some paint of such poor quality that was impossible to sell, and in order to bear the loss and stay in business they moved to Belfast and lived over the shop.

My father was a personal and business friend of William Hutchinson and on Sunday, 14 April 1941 my parents with me as an infant visited the family at the shop. My mother recalled the rooms were festooned with primroses and other spring flowers from a visit Mary and the children had made to Ballycarry the day before. On leaving that Sunday evening my Mother invited them to return the visit to our house the following Sunday and suggested a visit to the nearby Bellevue Zoo with a picnic to Hazelwood. My Mother recalled the children squealed in delighted anticipation. Later that week my Father passed near the bombed out shop and was informed by a policeman that the remains of the family had been taken to the morgue at St. George's Market. They now all lie together in one small grave in Ballycarry.

The family is long forgotten in Belfast but each Remembrance Sunday both they and others from the village who lost their lives in the two World Wars are recalled by having their names read out in the Churches in Ballycarry.