

Ladies and Gentlemen on behalf of the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society I extend to you all a warm welcome to our memorial parade.

Almost 31 years ago the Provisional IRA commenced their vicious sectarian campaign of hatred by murdering Sandy Gould, Freddie Loughins and Bobby Kincaid in the Woodvale area, whilst Tommy Reid was murdered when they attacked the annual Whiterock parade.

Later that same evening the Provos opened up a third front when they opened fire on our community here in east Belfast and murdered two local men Jimmy McCurrie and Bobby Neill. Not only did they murder Jimmy and Bobby they also shot and seriously injured 28 other men, women and children.

It was the start of a vicious Provo campaign that despite what certain people would have you believe continues to this very day. The Provos are still functioning, still targeting, still involved in illegal fundraising, still purchasing guns etc.

This is not the Society stating this but the security forces and both the British and Irish governments. How are we therefore supposed to sit around the table with the representatives of this organisation and build a new Northern Ireland – we can't.

On the 30th March our memorial garden was attacked by these same republicans. It was attacked by those only with sectarian hatred in their hearts, paint was thrown over it, flowers destroyed and the headstone itself attacked with a hammer.

As the Society phoned the families to tell them what had happened it did so with a heavy heart. The Society knew that this would re-awaken for the families those terrible events of 31 years ago. It seems republicans will not let the men remembered in this garden rest in peace.

The people from Short Strand who attacked this beautiful garden got away with committing this crime despite leaving a clear train to their homes. The CCTV installed on our turf so to speak failed to do it's job and saw nothing. With the help of local residents and our community in general it wasn't long before the garden was almost back to new.

The Society wishes to thank you all for your support during that difficult time. It was I know appreciated by the families who are gathered here tonight.

A few days after our memorial was attacked another memorial to another Protestant murdered by republicans was attacked, this time in Whitewell Road area. The memorial belongs to young Thomas McDonald. Thomas a young 16 year old was murdered and the person responsible Alison McKeown received a miserable two year sentence. This person is now out of prison and enjoying being with her family. Meanwhile the McDonald family continue to suffer at the hands of republicans.

Their memorial has been attacked on numerous occasions, their home is now a fortress, they are serving a life sentence, and their lives are made hell because of republicans. Ladies and Gentlemen we the people of east Belfast offer our support, our friendship, our sympathy to Thomas and Pauline McDonald and the rest of their young family. To the McDonald family we say if there is anything the people of east Belfast can do to help please ask. We will not be found wanting.

To the families gathered here tonight to remember their loved ones the people of east Belfast will maintain this beautiful garden to the highest standard in loving memory of Jimmy McCurrie, Bobby Neill, Tommy Reid, William Kincaid, Alexander Gould and Daniel Loughins. Our community whilst moving forward must never forget.

To the people of east Belfast, indeed all gathered here tonight the Society makes a plea that we come together as a community. Division should and must be a thing of the past. It is only by unifying and working together that we will safeguard our future for our children's children in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Ladies and gentlemen celebrate our culture, enjoy the marching season and above all remember...

No Surrender.
