

Ladies and Gentlemen on behalf of the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you all on this September evening. Many months ago the Society decided to embark on the Wall of History and Culture, which we are here to open and dedicate tonight. In the early days the Society had two objectives: -

1. Ensure that when completing the project the Society consulted widely with the residents, the local church and publican as well as the owners of the wall. **I am pleased to tell you that all have supported the project.**
2. Secondly, capture as much as possible of our rich and varied history and culture on the murals. **This Ladies and gentlemen has been the difficult part, simply because we have so much history and so much culture.**

Republicans peddle the myth that we in the Protestant/Loyalist/Unionist community have no culture and no history. How wrong Republicans are. Ladies and Gentlemen we would have needed a wall much, much bigger than this to depict our culture over the centuries.

Let me take you on a brief walk through time: -

Mural 1 – starting at the Cock and hens end of Thorndyke Street this depicts what for some is the start of our history the Ulster Scots or as some refer to it as Scotch – Irish connection. Due to the persecution of the Protestant religion, mainly Presbyterian in Ireland during the 17/18thth century some 250,000 people emigrated to the USA, where they became the first citizens on that country.

Mural 2 – Oliver Cromwell Lord protector of the Commonwealth defended the Protestant faith against a brutal Catholic regime that was intent on the mass murder of our forefathers.

Mural 3 – this depicts the Siege of Derry, which for people in the Fountain Estate and other parts of the city continues to this day. Republicans continue to attack our homes, our culture and all that we hold dear. Our slogan beneath the mural states “the city is saved” in 1688 it was. Ladies and Gentlemen we ignore the plight of our fellow Loyalists in Londonderry at our

peril. **The people of east Belfast must support all isolated Protestant communities no matter where they are.**

Mural 4 – The Orange Order and the other loyal orders are part of the fabric of our society. They stand for everything that we, indeed all hold dear. The attacks by Sinn Fein/IRA over the years on our parades and our culture have resulted in our community being stopped from walking many routes. Now the Parades Commission made up of 7 old men are now poodles of the Republican machine. As a community we behaved ourselves on the return leg of the parade on the 12th July. Republicans didn't they rioted for hours, injured many members of the security forces and caused thousands of pounds worth of damage. Their reward, no further marches past the Ardoyne shops, exactly what they wanted. It is our community that has been penalised. The society appeals to the loyal orders not to accept these immoral and corrupt decisions. As our mural states we hold dear "Civil and Religious Liberty for All" and that includes Protestants.

Mural 5 – The Home Rule crises in the early part of the 20th century saw Ireland, which was united under British rule ripped apart as Republicans demanded freedom from Britain. Fortunately for us, Unionists were led by men with vision, men who put their community first and men who were prepared to die for Ulster. We think of Sir Edward Carson, Colonel E J Saunderson and finally Major Fredrick Crawford whose tenacity and bravery ensured that the men of the Ulster Volunteer Force were equipped to defend Ulster and ensure that we remained British.

Mural 6 – On the 1st July 1916 the 36th Ulster Division and many other men from the rest of Britain and the Commonwealth went over the top to fight the Germans. Thousands upon thousands paid the ultimate sacrifice so that today we retain our freedom. We must never forget the price that so many paid.

Mural 7 – How many people know that during the Second World War Northern Ireland and Belfast in particular was bombed by the Germans? The air raids devastated many parts of our great city, where planes, ships and munitions were manufactured. East Belfast due to its proximity to the manufacturing plants suffered greatly. Our mural depicts Westbourne Street in ruins. Fortunately no one from the street perished during the raids. The same cannot be said

for the street in which we stand. The death toll for such a small street was high and those who lost their lives are remembered in this mural.

Mural 8 – From 1970 up until the present day Republicans have waged a vicious sectarian murder campaign to force you and I into a 32 county socialist Ireland. Many gathered here tonight are too young to know that in the 1970's the IRA killed men, women and children for fun. It happened day and daily throughout our beloved country. To defend ourselves against this campaign of ethnic cleansing our communities united together to defend ourselves. The vigilantes became part and parcel everyday life here in Northern Ireland. They had the full support of the community because they were the community.

Mural 9 – United we Stood. As a community we stood together and defeated the British Government as they imposed an unjust system of government on the people. All worked together for the common good, together as one we defeated Harold Wilson's Labour government. We were not spongers in 1974 and we are not spongers now. We play a full role in making Britain great. Ladies and Gentlemen our message to you tonight is United we Stand – Divided we fall.

Mural 10 – The brave men and women of the Ulster Special Constabulary also referred to as the B Specials and the Ulster Defence Regiment defended our borders against Republican aggression for years. The B Specials were formed in November 1920 and disbanded to appease republicans in April 1970. Tim Pat Coogan an Irish historian stated, "**The B Specials were the rock on which any mass movement by the IRA in the north has inevitably floundered.**" In February 1970 the Ulster Defence Regiment was formed. The first recruits were a Protestant and a Catholic. Initially some 40% of the UDR were members of the Catholic faith that was until the IRA began to intimidate and murder the men and women of this fine British Regiment. Between 1971 and 1991 the UDR lost many members, all murdered by violent Republicanism. It is our opinion that **their** sacrifice has been betrayed by Governments to appease the United Nationalist front.

Mural 11 – Cluan Place not far from here was attacked by Sinn Fein/IRA in a determined effort to remove the British presence from that small cul-de-sac. Through many months of a bitter sectarian campaign our community stood firm. Our homes were attacked, our defenders shot,

our women bombed and our children taken to hospital as a result of Republican aggression. One woman epitomised that spirit of unity and that was Annie Blair. On more occasions than we care to remember Annie's home was attacked. She refused to leave, Annie never left when Hitler sent her bombers and as sure as hell she was not leaving to keep Joe O'Donnell happy. Annie later died, we remember her defiance with pride.

Mural 12 – the centrepiece of the project stresses the fact that we are part of a United Kingdom and that our loyalty is to the Queen and to God.

The murals are not finished simply because of the poor summer. The society will continue to work at them. We need to educate our own people and those who visit east Belfast. Hopefully these murals will do just that.

The Society acknowledges the help it has received from NIE, the residents, the Iron Hall, the Cock and Hens and Harbour bars, the British Ulster Alliance, the Ulster Scots Agency, Friends of Cluan Place Scotland. These murals would not have been completed if were not for the talented mural painters and they are Ann, Ashley, Blackie, Dee, Ken, John, Mac and Noel. To those who helped in anyway and in particular all those from the Society and the East Belfast Concerned Womens Group we say a big thanks also. **Ask for round of applause.**

One person the Society wishes to thank in particular is Nan Clements. Nan is over 21 years of age and has allowed the mural painters access to her home at all times of the day and night for many months. We thank her for her help and would ask her to come forward so that Ashley can present her with a small token of our appreciation and declare the murals open.

Finally, there is a collection tonight to pay for the murals please give generously and remember folks...

No Surrender!
