

QUEEN'S OWN HIGHLANDERS REMEMBER

Forty members of the Regimental Family travelled to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire last week-end (19th – 21st September 2014) to attend the annual Service of Remembrance for all those members of the British Forces who gave their lives whilst serving in Northern Ireland.

Starting in Inverness, the coach went on to pick up members of the Association in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Gretna before going on to the British Legion-run site down in the Black Country. All in all there were 29 members on the bus, with another 11 travelling from all parts of England to pay their respects to the eight Queen's Own Highlanders who lost their lives over the thirty year period known as the "Troubles" - but to the countless numbers of soldiers serving in the Province, remembered as simply doing an Op Banner tour.

Without exception, all those members of the regimental family attending the service thought it was extremely important for them to remember the many servicemen and women who gave up their lives whilst helping to bring stability to the people of Northern Ireland – but in particular to remember the eight soldiers from our own regiment who tragically made the ultimate sacrifice.

For those of you who don't know, the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire is an area of calm and tranquillity run by the Royal British Legion and is dedicated to British Servicemen and women who lost their lives in the various conflicts since the Second World War, as well as those in the civil community who gave their lives in the line of duty, such as the police and fire service. It is therefore the United Kingdom's year-round Centre of Remembrance, specifically designed to celebrate and honour the men and women who served the nation in their many different ways. It is set in 150 acres of woodland and gardens with over 300 unique memorials, each with their own story and symbolism. The focal point of the site is the Armed Forces Memorial, which commemorates those who were killed on duty, or as a result of terrorism from the end of the Second World War to the present day. Those of us who had never visited the Arboretum before were totally overawed by the sheer size of the site and the very neat and orderly way all the memorials were scrupulously and meticulously cared for.

The actual service of remembrance was organised by the Northern Ireland Veterans Association and was attended by representatives from many of the various regiments who had served in Ulster over the years of the Troubles. After a moving ceremony in the packed, purpose built Chapel of Remembrance, a random selection of names of the fallen were read out. The veterans then marched to the Ulster Grove, where a lone piper in the shape of Colin Hughes played a selection of Slow Aires whilst the poppy wreaths were being laid.

It should be noted at this stage that there are over 700 young trees in the Ulster Grove, each with its own name tag and dedicated to those members of the Forces and Police Service of Northern Ireland who had lost their lives during The Troubles. Amongst those present in our party were Mrs Anne Blair, the widow of Lieutenant Colonel David Blair, the regiment's Commanding Officer at Warren Point, and the most senior army officer to have lost his life on an operational tour during the many years of conflict in the Province. Anne was accompanied by her son, Andrew. Also present was Ritchie Turner, the father of Dominic Turner, who tragically lost his life during a tour of duty in Belfast in 1990.

Lieutenant Colonel James Murray, Chairman of our Association, laid a wreath on behalf of the Regiment, Anne Blair laid a wreath in remembrance of David Blair, Ritchie Turner laid a wreath in memory of young Dominic Turner, and Chalky Whyte laid a wreath on behalf of RAF Lossiemouth.

After the service had finished, our group had a short time to locate all the individual trees in the Ulster Grove dedicated to our fallen Queen's Own Highlander comrades. Simple crosses of remembrance were placed on each of their trees as an act of commemoration before we then marched back from the Ulster Grove and gave an eyes left to a group of widows and relatives of the fallen.

Despite the solemn nature of our trip down to the National Memorial, the group also had a chance to socialise and partake of a few refreshments, both at the Beefeater Restaurant attached to our accommodation at the Premier Inn, and also at the British Legion Club at Alrewas. Pete Wason, who travelled up from Jersey was particularly delighted to make contact with members of the regiment after so many years away - and ten out of ten must also go to John & Sandra Westwood who broke their journey coming back from holiday in France to join us. I will draw a veil over who socialised the best over the weekend; however photographs taken by SeorasMacIntosh will probably give you all the relevant clues!

Our Northern Ireland Roll of Honour:

Name	Place of Death	Date of Death
Pte William McIntyre	Dungannon (Bomb attack whilst att 1 A&SH)	11 th September 1972
Pte James Hesketh	Belfast (Sniper)	10 th December 1973
Pte Allan McMillan	Crossmaglen (Booby Trap Bomb)	8 th July 1979
LCpl David Lang	Bessbrook (Helicopter Crash)	24 th August 1979
LCpl David Wares	Bessbrook (Helicopter Crash)	24 th August 1979
Lt Col David Blair	Warren Point (Bomb attack)	27 th August 1979
LCpl Victor MacLeod	Warren Point (Bomb attack)	27 th August 1979
Cpl R Dominic Turner	Belfast (Gunshot Wound)	27 th February 1990

THOSE ATTENDING THE SERVICE WERE:

Highland Pickup: James Murray, Bob Towns, Shirley Towns, SheddieCarr, Helen Carr, Archie MacKinnon, Ronnie Sinclair, Betty Sinclair, Ian Whyte, Elsie Whyte, SeorasMacIntosh, Ruth MacIntosh, Arthur Anderson

Edinburgh Pickup: George Givens, Anne Blair (widow of David Blair), Danny Carruthers, Norman Robertson, Bobby Munro, Ritchie Turner, Alec Sinclair, Eddie Maley, Danny Mullan

Glasgow Pickup: Tam Balloch, Duncan MacLeod, Ian Forsyth

Gretna Pickup: Charlie Duncan, Glen Lawson, Sandy Cowie, Terry Bashford (From NI)

Travelling from Liverpool: Jimmy Ryan, Colin Hughes, Bobby Hughes

Travelling from Jersey: Pete Wason

Notts Branch: Mick Bird, Jimmy Riddell, Lachie Stewart, Don Wilson

Travelling from London: Andrew Blair (son of David Blair)

Travelling by Motor Home: John and Sandra Westwood

You will find photographs of the trip on the photos page courtesy of SeorasMacIntosh and Glen Lawson (thank you both for the time you took helping to chronicle our trip)

Can I give a big thank you to everyone who donated prizes for the two raffles held on the coach and to Charlie Duncan for organising a lunch at his hotel in Gretna on the return leg of our journey.

May I also personally thank everyone who took part in the trip – the craic was excellent and it was an absolute delight to be with such a good natured group of friends and old comrades.

CFGB

George Givens
Chairman
Edinburgh Branch