

Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Association

(Northern Ireland Branch)

Regimental Gathering and Commemoration 11- 13 September 2009

In spite of this week's well publicised events, Northern Ireland is a place that has changed almost beyond recognition and it is easy to forget that many Queen's Own Highlanders made a contribution toward the ultimate creation of a stable society, of course in some cases, laying down their lives.

The 30th Anniversary of Warrenpoint this year was felt to be a fitting moment in which to commemorate those that we lost throughout the conflict and to allow members to witness for themselves the physical transformation of the Province.

Based at Ballykinler Training Centre, much of the team gathered on the Friday evening. The location added a certain gravitas and poignancy with the resident Battalion 2 Rifles soon to have returned from Afghanistan having lost 13 of their own.

There were 3 key events during the weekend, the first of which was a Service of Remembrance at the Memorial Garden at Palace Barracks. Later in the day a service was held at the site of the gatehouse at Narrow Water, Warrenpoint and the next day a final commemoration at St Martins in the Mourne, Ballykinler in which the Queen's Own Highlanders memorial window is located.

As a regimental veteran in his own right, it was wonderful to have had the leadership, empathy and strength of Reverend Dr David Coulter who conducted the services in a way that gave great comfort to all. He reminded us of the need to remember but also to move on and look forward; an important message for all who serve in whatever theatre.

Major General Seymour Monro gave a moving and fascinating personal recollection of his own experience of the Warrenpoint incident and linked this with what was actually going on at Narrow Water at the time. It was an education to many in the Battalion at the time who were busy with their own tasks and were unable to get detailed information.

On the Sunday morning at Ballykinler, Brigadier Nick Ridley gave us a timely reminder that PIRA did not get it all their own way and that there were significant successes for the Battalion on that South Armagh tour. He also told us about some of the key events later on which helped to move the violence to an ultimate conclusion.

The turnout for the event was outstanding with all ranks represented from a wide geographical area as far afield as Iraq. Old battles were refought not just from Northern Ireland but throughout the short life of the Queen's Own Highlanders and memories were enriched. One got the sense that those who came gained much.

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It was however, particularly special to have been able to welcome Anne Blair, Ritchie Turner and Keith Lang who added much by being with us. We hope that they too gained something for being with us.

Commemoration, difficult memories and the need to celebrate the positive outcomes is a difficult balance to achieve but it was clear from the response of those that attended that we managed to achieve this.

And so it is time to move on, but spare a thought as we do for those we lost along the way.

LCpl W McIntyre

Pte J Hesketh

Pte M Carnie

LCpl D Wares

LCpl D Lang

Lt Col DNA Blair

Pte A Mc Millan

LCpl R Turner

“As long as mist hangs o’er the mountains

And water runs in the glens

The Deeds of the Brave will be remembered”

Caber Feidh gu Brath