

Ladies and Gentlemen on behalf of the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society I extend a welcome to you all and in particular a welcome to our friends from west Belfast. Tonight we not only remember the two innocent men from east Belfast that were murdered but also the four murdered in west Belfast.

Five were murdered by the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the sixth was murdered by republicans while he watched the annual Whiterock parade. All six men were innocent, all six murders were blatantly sectarian and all six men are missed by their families.

In 2003 the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society built and opened this Memorial Garden on a beautiful summers evening. Never did we think on that beautiful summer night that this Garden which means so much to the families that it would become the target of repeated sectarian attacks by our people from Short Strand.

The attacks have ranged from simply stealing the flag to destroying the headstone, ruining the floral tributes and scattering paint over everything. Each time the thugs from Short Strand attack the garden they demonstrate that they are heartless. They have no morals and simply don't like the truth.

For years republicans have pedalled the myth that "a baying mob of loyalists" attacked the chapel across the road following an orange parade. As usual the poodles in the local media simply repeated and nauseum the republican lies and never scratched beneath the surface. If they had they would have found out that the sectarian murders in this side of Belfast were just a continuation of the planned day of violence by the Provisional IRA that started while Tommy Reid was watching the annual Whiterock parade, which spread to the Woodvale and then across the Lagan to east Belfast.

There was no baying mob of loyalists that night; all there was innocent Protestant people going about their normal business of a Saturday night, enjoying themselves. Unfortunately the Provisional IRA led by Billy McKee had other ideas, they wanted to murder and maim as many innocent Protestant people as they could and it mattered not whether they were men, women or children.

For years and years the republican myth was used by the press and was only questioned when the East Belfast Historical and Cultural Society stood up and told the truth, no myths just the plain simple truth. The truth hurts the Provos. They don't like as it exposes them as sectarian murderers. They told us for decades that Henry McIlhone was one of their members, murdered by people from this community as he defended Short Strand against the big bad people from Ballymacarrett.

A few weeks ago the Historical Enquiry Team blew that myth apart and declared McIlhone as innocent and that he was shot by the Provos, namely Denis Donaldson exposed as a spy and shot by his community. So if that myth has been exposed as a lie I think it is safe to say the rest is also a load of lies. Nothing new there then.

Meanwhile the Historical Enquiry Team has yet to make a statement on Jimmy McCurrie or Bobby Neill. As far as we are concerned they are innocent victims of a Provo murder squad. Why can the HET not come out and say that? We will not hold our breath as their behaviour to date regarding these murders has been to say the least poor.

In the past year the Society has met the Victims Commission and the PSNI and complained bitterly about the attacks on our garden. During the year the McCurrie family

have met the HET. It is fair to say that all are unsatisfied with what we have heard. The HET release an inaccurate report, the PSNI fail to prosecute anyone for any of the attacks and the Victims Commission want us to meet the residents from Short Strand.

The failure of all three is a sad incitement of those charged with addressing the problems. This Society will never sit down with residents from Short Strand until they stop these unprovoked attacks and issue a full and unreserved apology to the families involved.

To the residents of Pitt Park/Susan Street the Society would like to thank you for your magnificent support over the years and in many instances your valiant defence of our garden. We deplore the attacks on your property by republicans. We demand that the PSNI deploy the necessary resources to defend our and your property. We demand that the press give equal coverage to the attacks on our property, our houses and our people.

The attacks on migrants are to be condemned but all we ask is equal treatment. Our homes are attacked, our people are attacked and this garden is attacked yet they get minimal press coverage, compare that to the extensive coverage given to recent attacks on migrants.

Attacks on our community should not happen but it is clear that republicans in Short Strand do not want to move forward. They want to stay in the old days. How sad are they?

To the PSNI a message is clear, be proactive, the attacks are one way traffic, charge and ensure there are prosecutions of these people who hate simply hate Protestants.

To the families we will always support you.

To you we say safe home and to our friends from west Belfast have a great Whiterock parade tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen – No Surrender