

## Opening of Fishing Lake for Veterans Clough, Co. Down

On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May Robert Maxwell the Secretary of 'Let's Do' Veteran's Support Charity, invited SEFF to the opening of a fishing lake in Drumcaw, Clough, Co. Down. Robert was injured in a serious motorcycle accident. He was a serving member of the RIR at the time.

One of the fishing stands has been dedicated to Robert Hill a serving member of the UDR who was murdered in Drumanness by the IRA in 1<sup>st</sup> July 1986 in. His sister Liz Woods a member of SEFF was there to unveil a plaque on the stand dedicated in Robert's memory.

The fishing facility is set in a peaceful and tranquil setting overlooked by the Mourne mountains and will provide Veteran's with a place to escape. It is specifically aimed at those suffering from PTSD. The charity offers a wide range of other activities, with a particular interest in motorcycling. There were a number of veterans across from England for the opening, the majority of whom afterwards headed up to the North West 200 for the weekend.

'Let Do' was set up in 2014 as a UK wide group to help veterans come to terms with disabilities both physical and psychological, Robert was one of the founder members. If you are interested in using the facility or looking further information in relation to the group, Robert's contact details are:- Mobile +44754 341 9833, Email address [rob-ert.maxwell9@btinternet.com](mailto:rob-ert.maxwell9@btinternet.com) and the link to the website is [-https://www.letsdoevents.info/about1](https://www.letsdoevents.info/about1).



Left to right; Alan Barrett, Mandy Hill, Liz Woods, Robert Maxwell and Nigel Cree

Regards Pete Murtagh



# Advocacy for Innocent Victims Newsletter



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**Dear Member,**

Peter has written a piece in this supplement on a particularly apt and current topic—murals. This led on to a debate that was on Talkback relating to the prevalence of Parachute Regiment flags in support of Soldier F. Mark Thompson from RFJ considered it was a hate crime and alleged the banners were being put up by those who were also putting up Unionist election posters. What Mr Thompson failed to mention are the hundreds of murals in Republican areas of NI that laud the actions of Republican terror organisations. He fails to mention the monuments in Fermanagh lauding the actions of Seamus McElwaine, the perpetrator of many murders in the county. Likewise the Loyalist murals supporting Loyalist terrorism are equally abhorrent. There are individual convicted members of all the organisations highlighted in huge murals that cause hurt every time they are seen, especially by the victims and survivors of those terrorists. Mark Thompson cannot refer to the issue of banners supporting Soldier F in a piecemeal fashion. The issue must be dealt with in a holistic fashion as pointed out by Peter. Plastering our country with more and more murals and emblems just adds to the division felt within the community.

The AfIV team will continue to support you in your quest for truth, justice and acknowledgement. It is clear over the last few months that many more of you are coming forward asking pertinent questions as to what happened in the past. We will help in any way we can.

**Yours Faithfully**

**Ken Funston**

**Advocacy Support Manager**



## The True Picture of ‘Comic Book’ and ‘Sistine Chapel’ Murals

Last week there was much publicity after it was revealed that a renowned global travel guide, Fodor’s Travel—<https://www.fodors.com/> - made the distinction between murals in Loyalist areas describing them as “comic-book” compared to those in Republican areas, which it describes as “Sistine Chapel-lite”.

Over recent years there has been a welcome increase in tourists coming to Northern Ireland, this is highlighted by Belfast now being a popular stop off for cruise ships. The likes of the Titanic Museum and various locations connected to the epic TV series ‘The Game of Thrones’ all are now attracting visitors from across the world, these are only a few examples.

For many years Northern Ireland was best known across the world for the ‘Troubles’, and the only time we were under the world media spotlight tended to be because of atrocities and other troubles related events. On these visits to Northern Ireland, international visitors do want to dip into what happened in our troubled times. Being on their holidays, there naturally tends to be little appetite or time for a deep understanding or a detailed factual knowledge of what actually happened. The tendency therefore is for tourists to jump onto an open top tour bus or even into an iconic ‘black’ taxi and be transported around the traditional Loyalist and Republican enclaves of Belfast. Not being bi-lingual myself, it may be presumptuous to suggest that even those with a good understanding of English, there will be many who will struggle to understand broad Belfast accents with its colloquialisms. On top of this you may have the driver or narrator putting their own slant and experience on how they themselves or their communities perceived those troubled years. The Murals are merely two-dimensional representations of the ‘Troubles’, as they say, “a picture paints a thousand words”, but are the words a true reflection of events? The reality is, only a small and very limited part of the story is being told, but there is the potential for them to leave a lasting impression, especially on those who never go on to look in greater depth at the facts surrounding the Troubles



Is this an acceptable mural?

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This really highlights how the Troubles are generally being portrayed globally, as though 1968 to 1998 was some Civil War merely between Catholics and Protestants. Murals do little to ‘paint a true picture’ of the terrorist campaigns of violence mounted by paramilitary organisations from both the extreme Republican and Loyalist divides. These Murals instead tend to glorify and portray individual terrorists and their organisations as the heroes and defenders of that particular community. It is really of no consequence if they are either ‘comic book’ militarisation or try to give a ‘romantic, divine or poetic’ impression of the ‘Troubles’.

What they never represent is the pain and suffering inflicted on innocent victims by the terrorist groupings originating from that particular area, many of these victims from the very community they claim to defend. There are no tourists being taken into old Police Stations or Military Bases with Murals depicting the hostility and suffering that one important small section of the community; those defending the rule of law and what they had to endure from terrorist organisations on both sides of the divide. There is no reflection of the dedicated work of the Police and the Military in bringing both Loyalist and Republican Terrorists to justice, whilst showing remarkable restraint, especially compared to other countries that have had to face similar terrorist campaigns of violence. These murals are now an accepted part of our culture, yet they tend to provide another distorted narrative that needs redressed. Correcting this misrepresentation is difficult, we have to reach out to those that influence these communities and put across that there is an untold story of our past that needs to be told. The illegal organisations whose justification for existence are promoted within these murals need to be banished to the past. We need to achieve this through an objective, measured and factual approach; utilising and engaging with politicians and community representatives from both sides of the communities who reject all forms of violence, both presently and retrospectively. Otherwise, by still being held in this misplaced position of homage, these illegal organisations that some still say, ‘we haven’t gone away!’ will re-emerge in these communities and exploit the continuing political vacuum.

Or this?



*Yours Peter Murtagh*

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