Richard Kitchener (Kit) Johnston B.E.M

& Jessie Johnston

Richard Kitchener (Kit) and Jessie Johnston were murdered 31 years ago today as a result of the Enniskillen Poppy Day Massacre committed by PIRA terrorists on 8th November 1987. Kit was aged 71 years and Jessie 61 years at the point they were murdered.

They were described as pillars of society at their funeral service and that was a perfect summary of those two wonderful people. Richard Kitchener and his twin brother Robert French were named after Lord Kitchener And General French who their father served under as a soldier in the First World War.

Lord Kitchen died the year Kit was born. He was born and raised along with his brothers and sisters at Cherrymount just outside Enniskillen. In the early 1950s he began working with the ambulance service at the Erne hospital and remained there until his retirement in 1981. He was awarded a B.E.M in 1975 of which he was extremely proud. He was an Elder in the Scots Presbyterian Church and was a sincere Christian man. When he retired from the ambulance service he spent any spare time making car trailers, visiting the elderly or helping out in all sorts of situations with anyone he came across who was in need of help.

Jessie Margaret Johnston was understood to be a loving kindly gentle lady. She was born at Letter, County Fermanagh. She was raised with her older sister and brother. They all attended a little school at Muckross. Her brother was sent off to Methody college in Belfast to receive his further education but as she would say in those days the girls didn't receive further education.

After leaving school she followed her sister Lucy into a nursing career. Following training as a nurse in Belfast she returned to Fermanagh where she worked in the County hospital and the Erne hospital in Enniskillen where she remained nursing until 1986 when she retired but even then she would be called upon to help out in times of need. She was a very much respected nurse.

She loved working in her garden at her home in Drumgay. She liked to play the piano and was so pleased when her little granddaughter Sharon wanted to learn. Jessie had a great talent to draw and paint but her life was so brutally robbed from her just after she had retired.

The family recall powerful memories that can never be taken away. Granda Kit took his grandson Richard fishing on Drumgay lake from a very early age and to this day Richard is said to still enjoy fishing.

Kit is remembered on SEFF’s latest Memorial Quilt, ‘A Patchwork of Innocents.’ The images used are; a grass mower complete with a silhouette of a man. The scriptural verse also included is; Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path (Psalm 119 vs 105) Meanwhile Jessie is remembered through the images of a Nurse’s uniforms, paints and brushes.

Kit and Jessie lived life as it should be lived and their legacy lives on alike the other Enniskillen innocents.

SEFF remembers the Johnston family today and every day.