

World War One Reminiscences

William James Pelan was born in 1888 in Belfast and married Francis a girl from Birmingham; both were Presbyterians who attended Newington Presbyterian Church on the Limestone Road in North Belfast and is remembered on the church's war memorial. William was originally a house painter before starting working in the Belfast shipyard at Workman and Clarke. William didn't join the 36th Ulster Division but joined the army in October 1914 and headed off to the war with the Royal Garrison Artillery on the May 13th 1915 attaining the rank of corporal.

He appeared in the London Gazette of April 22nd 1916 announcing his award of a Distinguished Conduct Medal. This medal is regarded as a level below the Victoria Cross. At the time of his death he was the father of two young children both under 5 years old and lived in Lilliput Street in the Tigers Bay area of North Belfast. Lilliput Street is there only in name as the original street is long gone. He died on the September 29th 1916, serving with the "X" 49th Trench Mortar Battery and is buried in LONSDALE CEMETERY, AUTHUILE, France.



Official intimation has been received in Belfast that Corporal W. J. Pelan, R.G.A., has been killed in action. It is only a few weeks ago since Corporal Pelan was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, the deed for which he received the decoration being described in the "Gazette" as follows:—

For gallantry and devotion to duty. He was tireless in his endeavours to keep his gun in action, digging it out four times in one day under heavy fire. He did gallant work carrying men to the dressing station. Deceased, who had previously been mentioned in orders for bravery, enlisted in October, 1914, prior to which he was employed by Messrs. Workman, Clark, & Co., Ltd. He leaves a wife and two children, who reside at 74 Lilliput Street, Belfast. His captain writes:—

Your husband had served with me for nearly a year in trench mortars, and I had soon realised what a splendid soldier he was. Ever since he was first promoted to be a bombardier he redoubled his efforts, which resulted not only in his obtaining further promotion, but also his D.C.M., of which we were all very proud. The task he undertook when he was killed, poor fellow, was a most dangerous one, but this never bothered him in the least. He was looking after the safety of two of his party when he met his death, having previously seen to it that the remainder were safely under cover. He never did have a thought for himself where others were concerned, and I do hope that he died so heroically may be some consolation to you in your great bereavement. As his commanding officer I want to express the great loss that all his officers and comrades have suffered by his death. He was a big favourite.

Midsummer Madness for Meningitis



It's all about laughter, sunshine, friends, family, good times – and raising funds for a vital cause...and you're invited to join in... Meningitis Research Foundation is appealing to everyone to come along and help mark their 20th anniversary with a Family Fun Day in Crawfordsburn Country Park on Sunday 21st June 2009. Kids will enjoy a 1.5 mile sponsored Meander along the scenic North Down coastal path with Marvin. There will also be balloon modelling, face painting, our mascot Marvin ofcourse and much more so please join us and bring family, friends and work colleagues. All participants will be provided with life saving literature and refreshments on the day. To join Marvin in the fight against meningitis and septicaemia please contact Keli Wilkinson on 02890 321283 or email keli@meningitis-ni.org.

Talking About...



BY JOHN MACVICAR

Ostrich like approach

For the past twelve months and indeed probably longer Sinn Fein/IRA have repeatedly said dissidents! What dissidents? They have continued to deny that their ex members are alive, well and continuing to kick. The murder of two soldiers and a police officer should have been enough for them understand that beyond any doubt. In recent weeks senior members of Sinn Fein/IRA have been attacked with one of the more recent attacks against Bobby Storey in West Belfast. Instead of bleating about not allowing these attacks to deter them from their objectives of a united Ireland why don't they do the decent thing and inform the PSNI?

Election sooner not later

Almost a full month has gone past and every single day we have been sickened as the Daily Telegraph has revealed the depth of the trough at Westminster. Whilst it would appear our local MP's have so far been relatively unscathed, they are by no means blameless as details of claims for food and mortgage payments have been revealed. We are part of the United Kingdom and therefore when the mudflies everyone gets a taste. The reality is there are some of those elected representatives at Westminster have just milked the system well beyond everyone's expectations, some have faced up to the wrath of their constituents and indeed some have taken the honourable step and effectively fallen on their sword. What needs to happen now is a complete clearout of the Mother of all Parliaments, complete transparency and a reconnection with the people.

D Day snub

Saturday June 6th saw veterans back on the beaches of Normandy for as in some cases the last time to pay tribute to the sacrifice of their comrades. As these proud old soldiers, sailors and airmen reflected on those who did not come home the ceremony has been mired by the blatant snub by the French President in that no invitation was sent to Her Majesty the Queen. Many of those present at Arromanches and Ronville had small photographs of the Queen in their lapels. There has always been an antipathy between France and England, but President Sarkozy should be reminded it was the young lives of the British and Allied servicemen who fought for every grain of sand on the beaches of Normandy as they began the fight to secure the freedom of the people of France.

Other Interfaces

There are many of our readers who have suffered because of interface violence. The statistics speak for themselves for example the 370 recorded attacks over a two year period on the people of Twaddell Avenue. The same can be replicated in respect of interfaces all across our community. But sometimes we forget that other PUL communities across the Province are also suffering. No more so than the people of the Fountain estate in Londonderry, there are just 300 people living in the Fountain surrounded by about 70,000 nationalists and republicans. They are being subjected to daily and nightly attacks of paint bombs, bricks, bottles, stones and in a recent sinister twist one family have been targeted with sickening messages written on footballs kicked over the wall into their home. It is unfortunate that as a community all we can do is empathise. What we can also do is ask our political representatives what they intend doing about this situation. Or is the Fountain to follow Torrens and Suffolk?

And finally

Bristol Zoo has a car park outside with space for 150 cars and 8 coaches. It has been manned by the same charming and polite car park attendant with his ticket machine for the past 23 years. Just over a week ago he did not turn up for work. The management at the zoo contacted council officers asking them to send a replacement. The council officer said, 'That car park is your responsibility.' The zoo manager replied 'But he told us he was employed by the Council' Gone missing from his home is a man who has been taking the car park fees amounting to about £400 per day for the last 23 years.....!

And finally, finally

Yes it's Summer and that is official. So don't be surprised I have just received my first Christmas catalogue. So you are no doubt waiting to hear 197 shopping days left.

Booklet launch and Charity presentations

Members of the City of Belfast Grand Black Chapter were joined by representatives of a number of charities at the launch of the 2009 Demonstration Booklet. In addition to the appropriate formalities as the Demonstration Booklet was launched cheques totalling £1,000 were handed over to representatives of The Loyal Orange Widows Fund (£150), Lord Enniskillen Orange Orphan's Society (£150), City of Belfast Black Benevolent Fund (£450) and Diabetes UK Research Northern Ireland (£250).



Pictured at the launch were L-R Andrew Johnston, Alan McIntosh, Ed Spence, Billy Mawhinney, Jenny McGivern (Diabetes UK NI) Mervyn Bishop, John Richardson, Steven Gallagher, Eric Brewster and Brian Kerr.