

IUNVA Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony

By Sgt Wayne Fitzgerald

On the 25th May 2014, the Irish United Nations Veterans Association (IUNVA) held their annual wreath laying ceremony in remembrance of all Defence Forces personnel, members of An Garda Síochána and civilian personnel who died on UN peacekeeping missions throughout the world. Their names are inscribed on the memorial stone in the IUNVA HQ Memorial Garden on Mount Temple Road, Dublin 7, behind Arbour Hill Church and Cemetery – so that we never forget the sacrifices they made for world peace. The garden was officially opened by President Mary McAleese on the 8th November 1998.

What makes this a special year is it the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Irish UN Veterans Association (IUNVA) and it's their 16th annual wreath laying ceremony. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the formation of UNICYP, were in April 1964, 606 members of 40 Inf Bn arrived in Cyprus and it is also the 50th anniversary of ONUC, were in June 1964 the 2 Inf Gp left the Congo. The ceremony started at 12am with the Parade Commander, Sgt Major John Egan (ret'd) marching the UN Veterans into position, and then the MC, Comdt George Kerwin (ret'd) introduced IUNVA Chairman Michael Butler, to address all those present.

DCOS Sp Rear Admiral Mark Mellot DSM addressed the parade, he thanked IUNVA for making sure the memories and names of all those that made the ultimate sacrifice for world peace are remembered. Chaplain to the Forces, Pat Mernagh and the Very Rev John Marsden, Dean of Kildare lead those present in prayers and then a poem 'Fallen Friends' was read out by its author Airman Michael Whelan. A 'Roll of Honour' was read out by members of IUNVA Posts from around the country, they were: William Keane (Post 6, Limerick), Cormac Beacon (Post 21, Bray), Michael Thompson (Post 27, Portlaoise) and Michelle Tarpey (Post 15, Cavan).

Wreaths were then laid in memory of all those named, on behalf of the Defence Forces by Airman Michael Whelan (Air Corps), Pte Tadgh Luby (7 Inf Bn) and A/B Michelle Thompson (Dublin Unit, NSR).

A wreath was laid by a representative of foreign armed forces.

After representatives and families laid their wreaths a one minute silence was observed by all before a piper's lament was played followed by Last Post and then the National Flag was raised, then the bagpipers were joined by two members of the Army Band in playing the National Anthem.

The day went very well, considering it is a solemn occasion it was very well spirited and the majority enjoyed the parade and prayers to which they were in great company remembering lost loved ones.