



Altnaveigh Massacre - Remembered 98 Years On

"I didn't expect that of you, Willie" - The Altnaveigh Massacre.

Those were the last words of the elderly Elizabeth Crozier after her husband Thomas had just been murdered by IRA attackers. She was then shot in the face and killed. It was clear - she knew her attackers.

On 17 June 1922 the small hamlet of Altnaveigh, outside Newry, witnessed a barbarous attack. Planned by the 4th North Division of the IRA, under the command of Frank Aiken, a party of IRA men left Dundalk barracks and headed north.

As a supposed 'reprisal raid', in response to B-Special activity in Armagh, this event would live long in the minds of the local Protestant community. Before daylight, Protestant homes were attacked and burned, with 6 members of that small rural community being brutally murdered.

Some local IRA members were apparently shocked at the attack. Others among their ranks justified the targeting of Altnaveigh because all the families concerned were "Orangemen and B Specials." In fact, none of those murdered were members of the security forces.

Those murdered were Thomas and Elizabeth Crozier, James Lockhart (21), Joseph Grey (20), John Heaslip (50) and Robert Heaslip (17). Several others were injured as homes and farms were burned.

A memorial to this terrible incident was erected in Altnaveigh Orange Hall and to this day, the actions of that night are remembered by the Orange family in the Newry area and across the broader community.

This was an act of sectarian and ethnic motivated terrorism and sadly those same motivations have been present within this place across the century that has followed.

We pray for and will continue to work towards a day when sectarian and ethnic hatred is not practised, and nor is it tolerated or condoned.

