

ANZAC Commemoration Service 2018 at The Ballance House

ANZAC Day is a National Day of Remembrance in Australia and New Zealand which commemorates in those two countries those “who have served or died in all wars, conflicts and peace-keeping operations”. The day was originally designed to honour those members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) who fought and died at Gallipoli in 1915-1916. In Ireland, we also remember on this occasion those Irishmen who also fought and died at Gallipoli.

Following the practice of recent years, the Commemoration was held outside in the yard at The Ballance House, near Glenavy, between some very heavy showers of rain which nearly caused a realignment of the whole event, but thankfully divine intervention prevailed. The annual commemoration took place on the afternoon of Sunday 22 April and was attended by a large crowd of visitors and friends from near and far including a couple who were on holiday from Whanganui.

We were honoured on this occasion to have the Rt Hon and Rt Rev Lord Eames with us who gave a most powerful and moving address. The Service was led by Rev Paul McAdam, Rector of Aghalee with the choir from Aghalee Parish Church. The lesson was read by Mr Paul Hewitt, Chairman of The Ballance House Directors while Tom Johnston, aged 7, and proudly wearing his great, great-grandfathers WW1 medals, gave a delightful reading of a short poem “Poppy”.

Representatives of the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Royal Irish Fusiliers, Royal Army Medical Corps, Royal Military Police and the Malay & Borneo Veterans Associations were on parade, many with their Association Standards. Following the Act of Remembrance, which was led by Mr Andrew Cathcart, a recently retired New Zealand serviceman, wreathes were laid by:

The High Sheriff for County Antrim
Prof Sinclair Stockman, Hon NI Consul for NZ on behalf of the New Zealand Government
The Mayor of Lisburn and Castlereagh
Colonel Stewart Douglas on behalf of all the Irish Regiments
Mrs Kristan Nelson on behalf of her fellow Australians
Mr Andrew Cathcart on behalf of the New Zealand Armed Forces
Mr Raymond Corbett on behalf of Lisburn Royal British Legion
Mr Freddie Hall on behalf of the Ulster New Zealand Trust.

The last wreath to be laid was brought forward by Mr Ashley Eves on behalf of Whanganui Council. The Ballance House was the birthplace of John Ballance who became one of New Zealand’s more enlightened Premiers. John Ballance lived in Whanganui from his arrival in New Zealand until his death. After only two years in office he died exactly 125 years ago on 27th April in 1893.

Following the wreath laying, Connor Linden, one of three sixth form tutors from Dilworth School in Auckland and currently at Dungannon Royal School read “The Anzac Declaration”. The Commemoration concluded with the singing of the National Anthem followed by tea and anzac biscuits.

The afternoon concluded with Mrs Hilary Bracefield giving a fascinating presentation on “The Songs of the New Zealand Division in World War 2” with many of the recordings having been made in the North African and in Italy in 1942-1944 by soldiers serving under General Freyberg VC.