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Local & National

Families recall La Mon massacre 30 years on

Monday, February 18, 2008

By Emily Moulton

Around 100 people, mostly relatives and survivors, gathered at Castlereagh Council's civic buildings yesterday for the 30th anniversary of one of Northern Ireland's worst ever IRA attacks.

Twelve people died and several dozen were seriously injured after an incendiary bomb, which had been placed by the IRA along window grills, ripped through the La Mon hotel just before dinner time on February 17, 1978.

More than 400 people were at the venue that Friday night attending events run by the Irish Collie Club and the Northern Ireland Junior Motorcycle Club.

All the dead were Protestant and included an RUC reservist, three married couples and seven women.

Yesterday, families of the victims paid their respects to their lost loved ones at a private ceremony organised by Castlereagh Borough Council.

The memorial, which was led by the Rev David McIlveen, was attended by most of the local councillors as well as some senior DUP MLAs such as Iris Robinson and Jimmy Spratt.

DUP leader Ian Paisley stayed away after families threatened to walk out of the event if he attended.

UUP Castlereagh Borough councillor Michael Copeland, who was at the memorial, said it was a "very moving ceremony".

After the hymns and prayers, each name of those killed was read out and family members were invited to lay a single flower in remembrance: "I think the most moving part for me was when the relatives walked up the centre carrying a lily for their loved one," Mr Copeland said. "Local musician Jeremy Doherty also composed a very moving song called La Mon."

Mrs Robinson said: "The La Mon bombing was an absolute tragedy which has caused untold hurt.

"Real closure can only be brought for the victims of La Mon when those responsible for the crime face the full rigours of our justice system.

"I will not relent on that case regardless of who or where the perpetrators be," she said.

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