



MILLOM TOWN COUNCIL

On Sunday Millom Mayor Cllr Simone Faulkner and Deputy Mayor Cllr Joan Kellett were kindly invited to attend the ceremony below.

Kenneth Bannerman and the Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust

NFLA/ Mayors for Peace Chapter Secretary Richard Outram's speech at the ceremony:

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Let me start with a dramatic announcement.

You are standing on the target site for an atomic bomb!

That got your attention.

As it did the British army and RAF personnel who at the start of the Cold War arrived at RAF Millom in gritty anticipation of some testing training. In a place called Doomtoun. For that is what RAF Millom became. For the curious amongst you a short video can be found on You Tube under 'Doomtown AKA Downtown' from 1955 which is a Pathe News reel. The news reel opens with a description of Doomtoun 'A desert of wrecked houses on the Cumbrian coast where men battle grimly against fire and smoke, where rescue squads check each other cautiously for radioactivity, the deadly aftermath of an atom bomb. This is what nuclear war means.

The disused RAF Millom became 'Britain's biggest mobile defence training centre', a make-believe town 'destroyed' by an atomic bomb where 'blooded, bruised and broken' make-believe casualties could be found amidst the rubble by service personnel being trained how to evacuate and treat them with great care. And thereafter - it being England - the casualties and their rescuers were then treated to tea and cake at the NAAFI. That's how many thousands of National Servicemen spent their final month in training, learning rescue methods in the atomic age. RAF Millom was of course the right place to bring them for it was the home of modern mountain rescue methods first developed during the Second World War; methods then readily transferred to the rigours of Doomtoun.

Let us now spend a moment to reflect on what this splendid memorial means.

For it is a fitting epitaph. And I am confident that in the decades to come it shall serve as a fitting reminder. That in this place, when Europe was engulfed by a monstrous evil, and Britain was in its greatest peril, many thousands of men and women came here to serve selflessly their Country, their King and the cause of Freedom.



Amongst the almost fifty guests at the unveiling were local former veterans, relatives of former RAF and civilian personnel who had served at the airbase, civic dignitaries including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Millom Town Council Cllrs Simone Faulkner and Joan Kellett, the Chair of Millom Without Parish Council Cllr Carl Carrington, and Cumberland Councillors Bob Kelly and Andy Pratt, and prison staff.

Especially welcome were the widow of the late John Nixon and members of the Nixon family. John Nixon, a former prison officer at HMP Haverigg, played an instrumental role in documenting the history of the airbase in his book 'The History of RAF Millom and the Genesis of RAF Mountain Rescue' and in his retirement opened an air museum on site in buildings leased from the Prison Service.

Sadly, John died in March of this year, so it was only fitting that Kenneth and Richard invited Mr Nixon's son and daughter to join them in unveiling the memorial in remembrance of his pioneering work.