

LOCKERBIE REMEMBRANCE

Christopher Cook

Remembrance is always painful. But to remember in the company of friends and colleagues eases that pain - a little. Such was the case in Westminster Abbey on December 21st last year as we met to remember those who died when the terrorist bomb exploded on Pan Am flight 103 twenty-five years ago. Not just Syracusans, so to speak, but so many others who had lost family and friends at Lockerbie filled the Nave of this great building whose past is embroidered deep into the history of England itself. This is where the nation remembers.

Much was said. Meredith Hyde read a memoir by Roy Scott, which was all the more moving to those of us who knew and loved him as Roy had died after a long struggle with cancer earlier in the week. It was a moving memory of a fearful December night, but told with that lightness of touch of which Roy was the master. Jim Swire, whose daughter Flora died, and others too who had lost children and family talked about forgiveness but reminded us that justice matters too. There were hymns, Ancient and Modern, and there were prayers.

But what stays in my mind is firstly the silence as we waited after Big Ben had chimed the hour for it to become 7.03pm, the moment when the bomb exploded. All thoughts and all feelings directed to a single moment.

Then I remember the roll call of the 270 people who lost their lives that night in 1988. As their names were read lit candles were carried to a table in the centre of the Nave. I was privileged to be one of those invited to read; and to hear again the names of those 35 Syracuse students who we had taught just weeks before their death still leaves me fumbling for words.

We read our names, the five of us, in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the West End of the Abbey, buried there in 1920 and honoured every November when we remember the men and women

who have given their lives for their country. As I returned to my seat in the Abbey after the last Lockerbie name had been read and the final candle lit, the lines of poetry by Laurence Binyon that accompany this annual remembrance all through the United Kingdom slipped into my mind.

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left
grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them. "

We did on December 21st 2013; and we shall.