Garda Officer Henry Byrne - 7th July 1980

SEFF remembers Garda Henry Byrne who was murdered 30 years ago today by INLA terrorists. On the afternoon of 7th July 1980 the Bank of Ireland, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon was robbed of £41,000 by two armed and masked men. Having made their escape, the raiders, (three of them in all), burned their getaway car and transferred to another a short distance away and headed towards Castlerea.

Garda Henry Byrne with colleagues Sergeant Michael O’Malley, D/Garda John Morley and Garda Derek O'Kelly intercepted the raiders at Aghaderry, Shannon’s Cross, some five miles from Ballaghaderreen, where the raiders’ vehicle collided with the patrol car. One of the raiders shot at the windscreen of the patrol car. The other two raiders then opened fire on the patrol car killing Garda Byrne. Having pursued the raiders Detective Garda Morley was shot dead a short distance away.

Henry Gerard Byrne was born on 24th March, 1951, came from Wingfield, Knock, Claremorris, Co. Mayo. He joined An Garda Síochána on 8th March, 1972. He served at Mullingar, Multyfarnham, Granard and Carlow. At the point of being murdered Henry was aged 29 years, a married man with three children, Paul (5), Henry (4) and Aisling (who was born 4 months after his murder).

Henry was posthumously awarded the Scott Gold Medal on 16th September, 1982.

Sadly, there were many other members of the Garda who met a similar fate at the hands of those who were stealing from what they claimed were “their own people” so that they might have the financial resources to further their campaign of terrorism.

Henry’s hobbies included cards, he also played Gaelic football at local level for Kiltimagh GAA, these interests are represented on his patch within the Terrorism knows NO Borders memorial quilt.

John is fondly and lovingly remembered by his family, colleagues and friends alike. SEFF’s thoughts and prayers are with the Byrne family today and every day.