Mary Travers 8th April 1984

SEFF remembers Mary Travers who was murdered 36 years ago today on 8th April 1984 by [Provisional IRA](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Provisional_Irish_Republican_Army) terrorists trying to assassinate her father, Thomas, a [magistrate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magistrate).

Mary Travers was a teacher and aged 22 years at the time. She, her parents and siblings had left St Brigid's Catholic Church in Derryvolgie Avenue in south [Belfast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belfast) when two gunmen opened fire. Mary was shot once through the back and her father was shot six times. One gunman brought his gun to point-blank range at her mother's face and attempted to fire twice, but the gun jammed.

In a letter published in [The Irish Times](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Irish_Times) in 1994, Thomas Travers (Mary’s father) wrote:

"Mary's murder was carried out by member of an evil and brutal criminal organisation. Some of her killers were members of the murder machine, self-named Provisional IRA. At least one was a member of political [Sinn Féin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinn_F%C3%A9in). May I say that on the day my lovely daughter was murdered her killer tried to murder my darling wife also. At that time Mary lay dying on her mum's breast, her gentle heart pouring its pure blood on to a dusty street in Belfast. The murderer's gun, which was pointed at my wife's head, misfired twice. Another gunman shot me six times. As he prepared to fire the first shot I saw the look of hatred on his face, a face I will never forget."

After the attack the IRA claimed that Mary’s father, Thomas Travers had been a legitimate target because of his role in the British judicial system. They also tried to claim that the bullet which killed the young schoolteacher had passed through her father's body first but a post mortem found she was shot directly in the spine.

[Mary McArdle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_McArdle), then aged nineteen, was arrested shortly after the attack and charged "after two hand guns, a grey wig and a black sock concealed in bandages were found strapped to her thighs." Two months later, 33-year-old IRA member Joseph Patrick Haughey was arrested and charged in connection with the attack. At the trial two years later, McArdle was found guilty and received "a life sentence for her role in the murder of Mary Travers and an 18-year concurrent sentence for the attempted murder of Mr. Travers".

Haughey was acquitted due to lack of forensic evidence and doubts over his identity, although Thomas Travers had positively identified him.

McArdle served 14 years in prison before being released early under the terms of the [Belfast Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belfast_Agreement).

In June 2013 the [Northern Ireland Assembly](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Ireland_Assembly) passed a bill to bar anyone with a serious conviction from being named a special political adviser (SPAD). The bill was put forward by [Jim Allister](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Allister) who was inspired by Ann Travers' campaign. Mr Allister said "She (Ann Travers) has done right and done well by her late sister and father, and we all owe her a great debt of gratitude." About the bill, Ann Travers said: "I'm so pleased, and everything I've done has been for the memory of my beautiful sister Mary ... Hopefully, it will give victims that bit of hope that their voices will start to be heard now, and then we can all progress to a better, shared future."

Mary is fondly remembered by her sister Ann and other members of the Travers family. Ann continues to campaign on behalf of Mary and all other innocent victims and survivors of terrorism and ‘other Troubles related violence.’

SEFF’s thoughts are with the Travers family today and every day.