Robert Keys 28th November 1972

SEFF remembers Robert (Bobby) Keys who was murdered 47 years ago by PIRA terrorists when they launched an RPG7 (rocket propelled grenade) which penetrated Belleek Police Station. Robert died at the scene.

Robert was a serving member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary having previously served within the Ulster Special Constabulary.

It was said to be the first time that the RPG7 was used and used with such devastating impact.

The attack was a well planned operation carried out on the morning when the guard force changed locations. 50% of Assault troop A Sqn 16/5L had left Belleek and 50% of the relieving force had left Omagh.

The RPG 7 round entered the police station through the armoured shutter covering the stair window. Robert Keys had a small cupboard on the stairs from which he sold cigarettes, sweets, matches etc.

The RPG warhead came through the shutter hit Robert in the chest and went through a wall before stopping. The remaining troops stood to and returned fire. An estimated 6-9 gunmen took part in the attack with the firefight lasting 15 minutes.

Robert affectionately known as Bobby, lived on a farm at Bannaghmore, Kesh with his wife Lillian and six children. He was a devoted family man and servant of the community and was viewed as an excellent Policeman.

Bobby had been a member of the USC since the 1930's and on the 26th April 1969 joined the RUC and was stationed at Belleek RUC Station therafter.

The symbol chosen for the quilt patch is that of a fisherman as Bobby very much enjoyed going fishing. He was also a loyal member of the Orange Order.

SEFF's thoughts and prayers are with the Keys family circle on Bobby's anniversary andevery other day of the year.