Samuel Clarke 25th November 1975

Ahead of his Anniversary tomorrow SEFF remembers Samuel Clarke who was murdered 43 years ago on 25th November 1975 by PIRA terrorists. In the same attack Patrick Maxwell, a 36-year-old RUC Police Officer with five children was also murdered.

RConst. Clarke was from Castlecaulfied and Const. Maxwell was from Carland Road, Dungannon. Both police officers were killed in an IRA ambush at Clonavaddy near Pomeroy and a 3rd police officer injured.

RConst. Clarke and other officers were travelling in an unmarked Ford Cortina. Gardaí in Monaghan had asked them to inform the occupant of a house that his sister had died across the border. Gardaí made the call around 9:00PM to the RUC in Dungannon.

The constable who had received the call rechecked the call to ensure it was genuine. The Gardaí confirmed the nature of the request. However, the original call to the Gardaí was bogus and was made to lure RUC officers to the area. SGT. Maxwell and RConst. Clarke along with 2 other police officers made their way to the farmhouse.

RConst. Clarke was driving and Sgt. Maxwell was next to him in the passenger seat. As the car tried turning at the laneway that was blocked by a gate, the gunmen opened fire on them. Both police officers slumped over the dashboard. One of the other police officers was injured and the other officer managed to drag him out of the car and take cover behind a hedge. The uninjured policeman radioed for help.

The IRA claimed responsibility for the murders. They said in a statement that it was carried out by their 1st Battalion in east Tyrone in retaliation for "police harassment". Dr. George Simms, Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh said: "the tactics of a bogus mercy mission used by the murderers in this latest attack are sickening, and must surely be despised by all people".

Writing in SEFF's Memorial Quilt booklet, the family advises that:

Samuel was aged 53 years when he was murdered. He left behind a wife and three children aged 10, 13 and 15 years old.

Samuel had also served with the Army during WWII.

He joined the RUC Reserve in 1972 and was wounded in the leg in an ambush attack on the Dungannon-Ballygawley road in January 1973.

Samuel was also a member of the Howard Memorial Pipe Band for whom he played Drum Major hence the symbol on his individual Quilt patch.

At Samuel's funeral a lone piper of the band played as the coffin was borne from the Church. Drummers' call was then played by 8 members as the coffin was lowered.

SEFF's thoughts are with the Clarke and Maxwell family circles today and every day.