**Hyde Park and Regents Park bombings**

**20th July 1982**

On 20th July 1982 eleven soldiers on ceremonial duty were murdered as two Provisional IRA bombs rocked London’s Royal Parks.

The first bomb, packing 30lb of nails, went off at 10:40am. It had been stashed in the boot of a Morris Marina parked on South Carriage Drive in Hyde Park. It exploded just as soldiers of the Household Cavalry were passing as part of the Changing of the Guard procession. Explosives experts believe it was triggered by a Provisional IRA terrorist looking on at the scene.

Three Blues & Royals soldiers, Anthony Daly (23), Simon Tipper (19) and Jeffrey Young (19) died on the day. The fourth victim, Roy Bright (36), a standard-bearer, died from his wounds three days later.

Other soldiers in the procession were badly wounded, and seven of the regiment's horses were either killed by the blast or put to sleep due to the severity of their injuries.

Just across town, musicians of the Royal Green Jackets were performing songs from the musical Oliver! on a bandstand in Regent's Park. At 12:55pm, with a crowd gathered to enjoy the music, a bomb hidden under the stage was triggered by a timer. The seven bandsmen who lost their lives were Graham Barker (36), John Heritage (29), Robert Livingstone (31), George Measure (19), John McKnight (30), Keith John Powel (24) and Laurence Smith (19).

18 soldiers, a police officer and three civilians were hospitalised as a result of the blasts. Most were treated in Westminster Hospital, where striking workers called off their action to respond to the needs of the casualties.

The Provisional IRA admitted responsibility and echoed Margaret Thatcher's declaration of war on Argentina, made not long before, about the right of self-determination, stating that "the Irish people have sovereign and national rights which no task or occupational force can put down".

Mrs Thatcher responded with "These callous and cowardly crimes have been committed by evil, brutal men who know nothing of democracy. We shall not rest until they are brought to justice."

Justice has proved elusive so far.

In 1987, a 27-year physics graduate named Gilbert McNamee was found guilty of bombing offences that included the Hyde Park bomb, and he was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

However, he was released in 1998 under the terms of the Belfast Agreement. Later that year his conviction was overturned by the Court of Appeal, which ruled it "unsafe" on account of withheld fingerprint evidence that implicated other bomb-makers.

In 2013, John Anthony Downey, who has a conviction for IRA membership in the 1970s, was charged with murder in relation to the Hyde Park bomb. However, his trial collapsed after it emerged he was one of the 187 'On The Runs' who received letters assuring them they did not face arrest and prosecution for IRA crimes.  This assurance was erroneously based. Even so the judge ruled that it would be an abuse of process for him to stand trial for the Hyde Park murders. He walked free.

In 2019, a civil case was successfully brought against John Downey on behalf of Sarah Jayne, daughter of Geoffrey Young who was murdered in the Hyde Park bombing. John Downey was found to have civil liability for his involvement in the Hyde Park bombing.

Mrs Justice Yip ruled that ex-Provisional IRA terrorist John Downey, was an 'active participant' in the bombing and was jointly responsible with others for 'wicked, pre-meditated attack' that claimed the lives of four young men and 'indelibly altered' many others.

To date no-one has been charged in connection with the Regent’s Park blast.

A memorial marks the spot of the Hyde Park bombing and the Household Cavalry honours it daily with an 'eyes left' and salute with drawn swords. A plaque commemorating the victims of the second attack also stands in Regent's Park.

Atrocities have many ripples beyond the toll of the dead and obviously injured and can manifest many years later. In Sept 2012, Sergeant Michael Pedersen, 51, who miraculously escaped serious injury in the Hyde Park bomb took his own life and those of his son Ben, seven, and daughter Freya, six, after he separated from their mother. The link between his Hyde Park experiences and these terrible actions cannot easily be proved but neither should they be easily dismissed.

Behind these stark facts lie a myriad of emotions and perspectives, which some of those affected by them have agreed to share with us:

Judith Jenkins is the widow of Cpl. Jeffrey Young who was one of the four Household Guards killed by the IRA bomb. Judith says “the bomb turned my life upside down and my whole world collapsed, it saddens me each day that my two children grew up without knowing their father. My eldest daughter Sarah Jayne Young has been particularly impacted, as she was only four at the time. When Sarah Jayne was growing up I considered her naughty or spoilt, but it was when she turned twenty six and she was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that I realised the tragic loss of her father had long-term effects. I feel like a very bad mother, as I didn’t speak about him - I thought this would be more painful for my daughters”.

Sarah Jayne Young is the daughter of Cpl. Jeffrey Young and remembers “the discreet smile on her father’s face as he gazed up at her - they weren’t allowed to wave back at us - I watched with pride. I then remember the juddering blast that shook the nursery, several storeys up in a tower-block at the barracks...hearing the panic in the courtyard below...seeing the walking wounded trudging back, their uniforms bloody and torn. Worst of all I remember then being told that he wouldn’t be coming home. The teacher was there comforting us, of course, but I just remember feeling so lonely. I felt as though I was all on my own”.

Mark Tipper is the brother of Cpl. Simon Tipper who was age nineteen and killed during the Hyde Park Bombing. Mark has been heavily involved in the Hyde Park Justice Campaign and states "one thing that would help us greatly is to learn the truth of who was responsible and see them held to account”.

“It is frustrating that over the years instead of backing us, the Legal Aid Agency has refused again and again to fund this case on irrational grounds, including, absurdly, that justice in this case isnʼt in the public interest. How can it not be in the public interest to bring suspected terrorists to trial? In February 2018, when the families were eventually awarded legal aid Mark Tipper advised “the funds will help us in our quest for the truth. I’m elated that we have got this far. There has been a lot of fighting to get to this day. I honestly didn’t think we would get legal aid. When you have been refused five times, you just don’t think it will ever come about. Now we are at the stage where the funding is in place and we can start for the first time really looking forward and trying to get chief suspect John Downey into a civil court. We, as the public, if we can do this, it might help other victims find the strength to carry on forward.”