**John McKeegan**

**19th November 1981**

SEFF remembers John McKeegan who was murdered on 19th November 1981. John was from the Glenview area of Donemana, and was 40 years of age when he was murdered by IRA terrorists. He had married his childhood sweetheart Lila and between them they worked hard to rear their young family of two girls and a boy.

John had served in the Ulster Special Constabulary, and moved over to part-time service in the Ulster Defence Regiment when the B-Specials were stood down in 1970. John’s service in the security forces meant that he was under constant threat, something that the entire family had to live with.

Someone within the republican movement, either in the IRA or a sympathiser, had identified John McKeegan as a member of the security forces who held a civilian job based in the strongly nationalist town of Strabane. On 18th November the IRA had set in train their plan to murder John McKeegan. A young female IRA operative placed a bogus order for building supplies with the builders’ merchant where John McKeegan worked as a delivery man. The delivery was to be made to an address in Olympic Drive in the Ballycolman area of Strabane. That same day the IRA murdered John’s cousin’s husband in Londonderry.

On the morning of the 19th, a 3-man IRA gang took over the house belonging to the elderly couple that had supposedly ordered the building supplies the previous day. The goods were duly dispatched. As John walked up the path to the door of the house, the killers struck, shooting him twice in the back. He died at the scene. The terrorists also fired at his workmate, the lorry-driver, but he managed to escape uninjured.

At the funeral two days later, just before John’s remains were removed from the family home, his youngest daughter took three attempts to summon the strength to be able to say her final goodbye to her beloved Daddy. Lance Corporal McKeegan was buried from St. James Parish Church in Donemana, with full military honours. The following year, a window in his church was dedicated in John’s memory.

A man was jailed for his involvement in John’s murder, and received further sentences amounting to one hundred and ninety-nine years for sixteen other offences, including bombing the offices of Strabane District Council and the Fir Trees Hotel, needless to say he did not serve that sentence.

John is included in SEFF’s most recent Memorial Quilt, A Patchwork of Innocents. He had a number of hobbies and interests and was said to be very talented. John played both the pipes and drums in Donemana Pipe Band; this is why the pipes and drums were chosen for John’s patch on the Quilt.

John was also a member of all the loyal orders, the Orange Lodge, the Apprentice Boys of Derry and the Royal Black Preceptory.

SEFF remembers John’s surviving family, his widow Lila and the wider McKeegan family circle this day and every day.