**The Herron Family**

**7th April 1976**

SEFF remembers William (Willie), Elizabeth (Beth), and Noeline Herron who were murdered together on 7th April 1976. Willie was aged 64 years, Beth, 58 years and Noeline, 26 years.

On 7th April 1976 William, Beth and Noeline were sleeping in the flat above their drapery store in Dromore, County Down where an incendiary device planted by PIRA terrorists started a fire. All three were overcome by smoke and died.

Two sisters from Portaferry and a man from Downpatrick were convicted of manslaughter over the outrage.

Daughter Joy Bingham painfully recalls: "The shop was engulfed with flames. I saw my father at the open upstairs window - he was still alive. The flames were engulfing the window and my father couldn't get out. That was the last time I ever saw him; my last vision of him still alive."

Turning to those convicted, Mrs Bingham added: "Jeanette Griffith was a 16-year-old schoolgirl when she walked into the drapery shop that day. It was Marion Clegg, her elder sister, who planted the device while Jeanette bought a pair of socks”.

"Marion was 27 - nearly the same age as Noeline - when she was charged. She had got married two weeks after my family died and had two children when she was sent to Armagh jail."

The sisters were released early in 1985 under a Royal Prerogative.

**William (Willie) Herron**

William (Willie) Herron was born in 1912 at Dechomet near Ballyward, he was the eldest son of John and Ellen Herron and a brother of James, Tommy, Robert and Mary. After his school days he left the family farm to serve his apprenticeship to the drapery trade in Rathfriland followed by Walkers in Banbridge before coming to Jameson’s in Church Street, Dromore.

Willie met Beth Scott at a Church Social function at First Dromara Presbyterian Church; they married in 1941 and set up home at Kinallen where their twin daughters were born, Carol and Joy. Willie established his own business in Dromore but on expansion he purchased bigger premises on the corner of the Square and Bridge Street, the family moved into the accommodation above the shop, a second set of twins were born, Derrick and Alistair and the family was then complete with the birth of Noeline in 1949. In the years that followed Herron’s drapery business prospered in Dromore and in manufacturing band and other uniforms and regalia.

The family had premises on Royal Avenue Belfast; they were destroyed by a bomb so the business relocated to Wellington Place.

Willie was viewed as a hardworking, pleasant individual who made many friends and was always willing to offer his time, expertise and support to initiatives which would benefit the town. He also had a strong faith.

**Doreen Elizabeth (Beth) Herron**

Doreen Elizabeth Herron (known as Beth) was born in 1917, she was the eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs James Scott from Mossvale, Artana, she was sister to Helen and Eric.

Beth had many interests outside her role as a homemaker, from Meals on Wheels to the OWA and Artana WI.

She also played an active role in the family business. A Dove as a sign of ‘peace’ was chosen to represent Beth on the Memorial Quilt.

**Noeline Helen Herron**

Noeline was the youngest sibling in the Herron family; she was born in 1949 and was involved in the family’s drapery business. She worked in a smaller shop her father owned in Dromore which sold household goods, curtain material, fabrics and so on.

A patchwork symbol was chosen for the Memorial Quilt to capture Noeline’s work.

All three members of the Herron family had a strong Christian faith; they were all committed to supporting each other, at home, in business, church and social activities.

They are very much missed and remembered by their surviving family members each and every day.

Willie, Beth and Noeline are remembered on SEFF’s latest Memorial Quilt - A Patchwork of Innocents.

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