**William Heenan**

**3rd May 1985**

SEFF remembers William Heenan who was murdered on 3rd May 1985.

William James Heenan was born on the 17th Dec 1933 and was brought up in the townland of Legananny at the foot of Slieve Croob in one of the most rural parts of Co Down. William was an only child and worked in a number of manual jobs until he secured employment in the DOE Roads Service. In the late 1950s he enlisted in the ranks of the Ulster Special Constabulary and served with them until they were disbanded in 1970.

He married Eva Perry in 1971 and their only child Sammy was born in 1972. William was an enthusiastic member of all the Loyal Orders and was a staunch Unionist. He was a foundation member of Legananny Accordion Band and seldom missed a parade. Today it is one of the largest Accordion Bands in the country with over 50 members.

William suffered a devastating blow when his mother died in 1981 and four months later his wife Eva died suddenly in 1982 with a brain haemorrhage aged only 43 years old. He was dedicated to his only son Sammy and adapted to all the roles required to raise a child and run a home whilst continuing to work in the Roads Service.

On the 3rd May 1985 at 7.10am in the morning William went out to feed his small number of hens before work. As he approached the top yard a gunman was waiting in an outside toilet. The gunman approached him from behind, forced him to his knees and shot him twice in the back of the head at point blank range. The gunman dragged William by his feet to conceal the body at the side of a barn. The lone gunman made his escape in William’s car.

The shots wakened his son, 12-year-old Sammy, who witnessed the gunman drive off. As Sammy approached the yard he saw blood and followed the trail where he found his father’s body. Sammy tried frantically to get his bike from the barn to get help, forgetting they had a phone installed the previous week. He ran to the nearest neighbours house half a mile away like he did when his mother died to get help and arrived in a very distressed state.

The South Down command of the PIRA claimed responsibility stating their victim was in the RUC Reserve. William’s son was then brought up by his father’s cousins and to this day is active within the Loyal Orders and Legananny Accordion Band. He plays his part within the innocent victims’ fraternity in ensuring that the truth of the past is properly conveyed to future generations.

SEFF’s thoughts and prayers are with William’s son Sammy and his family today and every day.