**William John Clarke**

**3rd August 1980**

SEFF remembers William (Bill) Clarke who was murdered by Provisional IRA terrorists on 3rd August 1980.

On Sunday, 3rd August 1980, Bill set out to deliver potatoes to a friend who lived in Pettigo - a town on the border between the North and South of Ireland. Although Bill was well aware of the guerilla tactics the Provisional IRA employed in using the border as an escape route after an attack in Northern Ireland, he had no hesitation in travelling along that route since he considered the people who lived there to be his friends and neighbours of many years and that he had nothing to fear from them.

Tragically, Bill’s faith and trust was misplaced and on his way to Pettigo, in the townland of Gortinessy, his car was ambushed and 3 Provisional IRA gunmen riddled the car with high velocity bullets. It is almost certain that Bill died instantly since the State Pathologist estimated that Bill had been struck by at least 22 bullets.

William John Clarke was born on 12th June 1921, the second child and oldest boy in a family of eight, and was part of a farming family who lived near the village of Killen, Castlederg. Like most families in the 1920s and 30s, money was in short supply but his childhood was happy and carefree surrounded by his brothers and sisters.

The Clarke cottage was famous as a gathering point for the musicians of the area and the regular ceili evenings brought most of the people from the surrounding areas to the cottage. Probably because of this childhood experience he retained a lifelong passion for music and dance.

He married Elizabeth Sproule when he was 19 years old and started his own family. Bill found work in the Nestle factory in Victoria Bridge and worked there until it closed in 1970. By then Bill and Lily had 4 children, Stanley, Olive, Norman and Derek.

The family moved to live in the town of Castlederg and Bill joined the Ulster Defence Regiment - but all the while Bill supplemented the growing family’s needs by planting potatoes and rearing livestock in the small holding he had at his former home in Killen. Bill not only produced enough food for his own family but was generous with the surplus he grew, giving it to friends and extended family.

Bill Clarke is remembered on SEFF’s Memorial Quilt, Terrorism knows NO Borders.

Our thoughts are with the Clarke family today and every day.