



SEFF
SOUTH EAST FERMANAGH
FOUNDATION

VSS
Victims & Survivors Service

Peace 
Northern Ireland - Ireland
European Regional Development Fund

Supporting Victims and Survivors, Strengthening Communities

James Elliott: Abducted and Murdered 17th – 19th April 1972



James Elliott: Abducted and Murdered

17th – 19th April 1972



James Elliott, a 37-year-old Protestant from Rathfriland was married with three sons; Jim 12, Cyril 9 and Lester 4. James was a part time member of the UDR holding the rank of Corporal. James was abducted on Monday 17th April 1972 at the border crossing point

at Killeen by 6 members of the Provisional IRA, and his body was found on Wednesday 19th April on the Mullaghduff Road, Altnamackin, in the Newtownhamilton area of South Armagh.

On the evening he disappeared, 2 females called at the family home and informed his wife May about his abduction. There was no further information for the next 2 days, until on the Wednesday his wife May was informed by a local Minister that a body believed to be James had been found on. May was informed of the discovery just as she was about to watch the local lunchtime news bulletin. The coverage described the events surrounding the finding of James's body, which reported that he had been discovered between 7 and 8am that morning.



Journalist James,
May 1917,
The 1st Division,
London Road,
(1917)



It was claimed that after his abduction James was in the process of being taken to a place for interrogation when he drew his weapon and fired at his abductors, and therefore was shot.

This claim was rejected by the RUC who said that medical evidence shows that James had been held for a day and a half before being fatally shot; evidence would suggest he was interrogated before being murdered. A large device of 500lbs of explosives had been placed close to the body, a command wire ran to a farm building located just across the border in the Republic of Ireland. In addition 6 claymore devices were used to booby trap his body. The ambulance that removed James to Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry was stoned on route. The ATO attending the scene, Warrant Officer Peter Dandy described the abduction and murder as “a bestial act comparable to the tactics of the 'Mau Mau’”.



No one was charged with James murder, despite 2 persons being arrested at the firing point just across the border in the Republic of Ireland. The funeral was held at Ballyroney Presbyterian Church and James was buried in Banbridge Cemetery. His

3 sons who attended the funeral and returned to school within a couple of days; there was no counselling in those days or very little other support for the bereaved.

James was a hard-working man and a regular church attender, in the evenings he served his country as a member of the UDR, he had also previously been a member of the 'B' Specials. His family and homelife came first, he was a talented woodworker and at Christmas he would have made toys for his sons, one year he made an airport and in another a rocking horse. In his spare time James had a love of fishing, hunting and motorbike racing. The family were totally devastated in their loss of a husband and a father, he never got the to see his sons growing up or to meet his grandchildren.

On special occasions such as family weddings, there is always someone missing; happy events are always tainted with a touch of sadness. May held the family together taking on a dual role of Father, whilst still being a loving Mother to her 3 sons. She never really came to terms with the loss of James. May sadly passed away on the 7th March 2022 after several years of failing health.



On 25th May 1972, James Kilfedder, MP for North Down, said of James murder in the House of Commons:



“Then there is the case of Corporal James Elliott, a member of the UDR who was kidnapped on 17th April. On 19th April his body was discovered at Crossmaglen on our side of the frontier.

A 200 lb. bomb was attached to his body and claymore mines were placed in the vicinity in order to cause havoc to those who came to rescue the corpse.

Numerous bullet wounds were in the body and the head and there were wounds in the hands. All this showed that the man had experienced great agony.

One of his relatives said that they were horrified at the look of torture and agony still visible on the face.

The fingers of both hands were blackened to the knuckles and holes were punched in the finger tips. Handfuls of grass and earth were clutched in the hands.

One side of the face was smashed by what could have been either the heel of a boot or a rifle butt, to the extent that the nose was broken and displaced to one side.

Both arms seemed limp and the genitals had been kicked until swollen out of all proportion. The teeth were smashed, he was shot through the wrists, the mouth, the neck, the throat and several times in the chest.”



“My Living Nightmare” by Jim Elliott

We walked across the newly refurbished site of Kilkeel harbour, stopping for ice cream, we enjoyed a good day before having to get home so that Dad could get some rest before another busy working week. I got up the next day and went to school, It was a nice spring day and I got home from school as normal but I knew something was wrong when neighbours came to our house, that

evening mum sat us down and told us that our dad had been abducted, it was from that moment onwards that our life would change forever. We waited eagerly for news as members of the community rallied around to search for him and support us in our desperation. On the 3rd day our local minister had been made aware of a body recovered, he sat down with Mum and then she delivered the life changing news.



As a 12-year-old boy this news was utterly in-comprehensible and the days, weeks, months and years ahead followed with the same heart retching grief. I recall following the hearse as hundreds of mourners turned out to pay their respects to my father who was held in high regard in the local community.

Dozens of Local and National Press attended and covered the story. To me that story is my living nightmare, the unanswered questions, the torture, the heartache, the grief. Why? Why did an innocent man face such barbaric treatment? Why was my Dad taking away from me? Why will he never get to meet his grandchildren? Why have those involved never faced proportionate reprimand? Those are some of the thoughts that I live with on a daily basis. 50 years of questions and hidden truths yet to be uncovered.

We know that the truth will not fix our broken hearts, bring our dad back or change a lifetime of lost memories, but in this world or the next those who knew about who carried out or covered up such callous acts will face their conscience.

“The Loss Of My Father” By Cyril Elliott

Looking back 50 years, is a long time to deal with the trauma and heartache, of being robbed of my loving father at nine years old. I did not, choose or decide, to live most of my life father-less, but it was the way the I.R.A did it for me.



I was denied the love of my father every day, in normal life and on special occasions, just to think no cuddles from daddy or a bit of advice. My wedding day my children's grandfather and great grandfather. All taken away at a tender age. Thankfully I have a few good memories of daddy, that those vile people can never take away or erode from my memory.

I had a wonderful mother who overnight just had to adapt very quickly to act as a father and mother with what was left of our family. In those days no counselling or help, but my mother did a wonderful job in the next fifty years.

Mummy, who I have just lost in the last few weeks, lived and hoped with my brothers and I, that someday, the truth of daddy's terrible murder will be told and justice would take its course. Once again I would like to let everybody know, we have been let down on many occasions! Is this what our politicians really want? To let history be rewritten and the perpetrators decide our way. Please never let our loved ones who gave their lives, so as we could live ever be forgotten. My father's love will never fade away and our family will never let his memory be forgotten.

Lest We Forget

“No child should grow up without a parent” By Lester Elliott



No child should grow up without a parent. No man has the right to take a parent away from their children. Nature can be cruel, but never as cruel as the hand of man. I was 4 years old; my brothers were 9 & 12. Our Father was taken from us, not by nature, but by cruel, evil men.

I never had the chance to know my Father. We all lost the chance to know the love and guidance a Father has to give his children growing throughout their lives. I too am a Father now and I wonder every day if I am doing that special job the way I should. The older I become the more I wonder.

The more I realise just what we have missed out on and it hurts. Throughout my life I have looked for answers to why this happened to us, our family? They murdered a family that day, not just my Dad. They deprived us of a loving, caring husband, a father, grandfather and great grandfather, BUT, they deprived my Dad of his right to life.

He was simply protecting his local community from the threat everyone lived under from terrorism. History is being distorted lies, mis-truths and heartache daily but never any justice for the real victims left to deal with it all. As a Family, our struggle continues.

“Someone’s Choice” by Mark Elliott (Grandson of James)

“Child of the ceasefire”, is what myself and my friends were known as, the “first generation of peace”. Whilst a larger majority of my generation may have lived lives relatively unscathed by the terrorist campaign that destroyed my parents and grandparents’ generations, the impacts can still be seen and felt by so many of us to this day.



Over 3,500 people lost their lives during ‘The Troubles’, each of those people left behind a family. My family is one of those who were impacted. One day my grandfather was taken away from his family, leaving behind a wife and three sons. My father was 4 years old when his father was abducted, tortured and murdered.

I never met my grandfather; my father never got to know his own father. I can’t imagine how difficult it would have been, trying to be a father and never having anyone to show him how. The constant daily doubting each decision you make because you’ve had no one to guide you. This life was not a choice made by my father or his family.

This choice was made by someone else, somebody completely unrelated to us decided one night to deprive my father and his brothers of a parent, and my grandmother of a husband. I may not have ever met my grandfather, but I was witness to the consequences of this person’s choice every single day of my life.

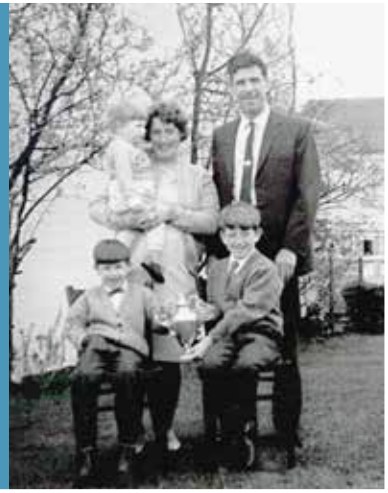
Every Christmas, Birthday, Christening, school play, family holiday and every single day someone has been missing from our lives because of someone else’s choice.

I often wonder how different my father's life, and my own might have been if these individuals had chosen differently. My family would not be broken. There would not be daily reminders of a missing person as my grandfather would be there. There would be no grief, no anger, no frustration, no anguish or conflict. I will never know what that feels like, to be from a normal family.

"Child of the ceasefire", "first generation of peace", that's what we were called. I might have been a child of the ceasefire, but I certainly wasn't a child of "peace".



James Elliott's Sons: Cyril Elliott, Lester Elliott and Jim Elliott



James Elliott - We Will Remember You

