

# REMEMBERING THE INNOCENTS OF CLAUDY



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**SEFF**  
SOUTH EAST FERMANAGH  
FOUNDATION

**VSS**  
Victims & Survivors Service

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# FOREWORD

## BY BARRY MCGUIGAN

The Claudy bombing had the single greatest impact on me of anything that happened during the Troubles.

It grips me like a freezing cold hand on the back of the neck.

It is the one event that has had the most resounding affect on me, and perhaps on a subconscious level it has taught me to always try to treat people delicately and fairly, and to be good natured to everybody – no matter what area they were in, no matter where they were from, no matter where I went.

As an amateur and as a professional boxer I would go in and out of Belfast during much of my career.

When I was part of the high-performance team with boxing coach Gerry Storey, I would have been sparring with the guys in the Holy Family Boxing Club in North Belfast, and then we would go up to the Holy Trinity Boxing Club in Turf Lodge, which was a deeply republican area. Then we would go into the Shankill which was a deeply loyalist area. I always tried my best to create harmony between people.

The Claudy bombing affected me because we, in the McGuigan family, were very close to one of the families who lost a loved one, a child named Kathryn Eakin.

We had a grocery shop on the Diamond in Clones and across the road were the Mealiffs, who had five children – Linda, David, Sandra, Sammy and Ross. We were very close to them.

The Diamond was like the nucleus of the town. We had a grocery business and they had a hardware business, a smaller grocery business and a small, 12 bedroom hotel.

Sandra, who would become my wife, had just spent a week in Castlerock with Kathryn and Mark Eakin. Kathryn was only eight years old, the poor child. She was a beautiful, gorgeous little girl with blonde hair and blue eyes. She was just

a super kid; lovely, cheeky, and fun.

I was 11 at that time, Sandra was also 11, and Kathryn was eight. Sandra's closest cousins were Pauline Mealiff and Kathryn. She had just come home from Castlerock and suddenly this tragedy, this disaster happened.

We were all so shocked and devastated for them. It just destroyed the family.

The death of a child in any circumstance is awful, but this was something else.

It was a dreadfully callous act to put three bombs into the centre of the village, where people would run away from one bomb straight into another. It was despicable and awful.

Both Catholics and Protestants were killed. The village had a mixed community who got on very well together and they were decimated.

The absence of an admission of guilt has meant the families have had to deal not only with the loss of their family members, but also the fact that the culprits were saying 'it wasn't us'.

It's hard to truly articulate just how dreadful and awful the situation was. Many people will just shake their heads in disbelief.

The Claudy bombing reverberated throughout the UK and the world. It was shocking. It was such a terrible disaster.

Although we lived in the south, things were every bit as tense as they were in the north because we were in a border town, but nothing ever affected me like Kathryn Eakin's death, with the ramifications and reverberations that caused. It was just a dreadfully sad situation that ravaged Claudy and destroyed families, both Catholic and Protestant.

I was a Catholic but my nearest neighbours were Protestants. I married Sandra and we broke all the rules, I suppose, back in 1981. However we are still together almost 41 years later and still very much in love.

My daughter died three years ago, on July 23rd, and we are still suffering. We will do for the rest of our lives so I understand the pain of losing a child. Danika's middle name is Kathryn — Sandra and I did that as an acknowledgement of Kathryn Eakin's life.

# INTRODUCTION

Three car bombs were delivered to the heart of a small, rural village during the height of the Northern Ireland Troubles on July 31, 1972 and exploded.

Nine people – including three children – were killed and dozens more were injured.

These pages describe how horror, grief and suffering were inflicted upon the people of Claudy 50 years ago, on what has come to be known as ‘Bloody Monday’, and how the scars remain half-a-century later.


While no organisation has ever claimed responsibility for the carnage of that day, the Provisional IRA is widely believed to have been responsible.

Central to this work are the first-hand testimonies, written by the grieving families in their own words, of the loved ones that were lost in the slaughter that unfolded on that Monday morning, 50 years ago.

Survivors, those injured when the bombs went off, also share their memories of how a normal Monday morning in a quiet village was visited with death and destruction as three explosive devices, filled with shrapnel, ripped through the quaint, rural townlet.

The bombing survivors describe on these pages how the physical and mental injuries inflicted upon them have remained throughout their lives.

The massacre that took place in the quiet village was one of the single most horrific incidents of the entire 30-year history of the Northern Ireland Troubles and, yet, it has never received either the infamy or the international attention associated with several other mass killings that occurred during the conflict.



The Claudy bombing has been described as a forgotten atrocity, but the families of those killed and injured, along with the community in Claudy, have not forgotten.

This publication also describes the myriad investigations, allegations and attempts to seek justice for those who died in Claudy after the car bombs detonated.

Sadly, the full truth of what happened has never been made public.

The past 50 years have revealed how the suspected role of a Catholic priest in the bombing was quickly identified by investigating police officers, before being suppressed by both the Church and state.

It would take almost 40 years before the alleged role of Father James Chesney would come to widespread public attention.

This work will set the decision to drive three car bombs into the heart of the village within the wider context of the Northern Ireland Troubles, and examine the bloody seven months of 1972 leading up to the bombing of Claudy.

It will describe what is now known about the events of July 31 that year, and the sadness endured by the people of the village in the immediate aftermath.

These pages also contain a summary of the twists and turns the attempts to deliver justice have taken over the years, through the RUC, PSNI, Police Ombudsman, the courts, and the investigative efforts of the Northern Ireland media.

Here, for the first time the nine families – Connolly, Eakin, Hone, McClelland, McCloskey, McElhinney, McLaughlin, Miller, and Temple – share their grief, loss and suffering as the landmark anniversary approaches, and as Claudy reflects on the most traumatic event inflicted upon the village in its history.

A memorial to those killed and injured by the bombing was erected on Claudy's Main Street in 2000.

It shows a bronze sculpture of a kneeling girl, by Elizabeth McLaughlin, and is mounted on a stone plinth.

A number of plaques are affixed to the wall enclosing the statue.

Efforts are now well underway to redevelop the Claudy bombing memorial, and this work is intended to function as part of the remembrance process.

# PERSONAL REFLECTION

## BY NIALL DEENEY

I began my career in journalism in County Derry around ten years ago, long after the bombs exploded in Claudy and inflicted so much suffering on the people of the village.

Fresh out of university in my early 20s, and with my journalism qualifications under my belt shortly thereafter, I set out in the early 2010s to find stories worth telling and to tell them well. I soon found myself working for weekly and daily newspapers.

And each summer as the anniversary of the Claudy bombing was marked, and the dignified way in which the people of the village remembered their loved ones was given attention in the local media, the events of July 31, 1972 would become something with which I would grow somewhat familiar – or so I thought.

Over the past 50 years, as several investigations were carried out by various bodies, a picture has developed of what led to the tragic and sudden loss of life on the streets of Claudy. It is a murky picture and it is one that is obscured by decades of rumour, theory, conjecture, suspicion, allegation and counter-allegation.

In compiling this work, I would have liked to have been in a position to have offered a definitive account of the events of the day, to have named the people responsible for the horror that unfolded, and ultimately to have described how justice was delivered for the innocent, grieving families forced to deal with the most sudden and terrible loss imaginable.

Sadly, that is not the story of the Claudy bombing.

Instead, this work offers only an incomplete account of what happened. It paints a murky picture. It does not offer a definitive list of names of those responsible. It describes, ultimately, the denial of justice because sadly that is the story of the Claudy bombing. This is a story of loss, of grief, of suffering and of how truth was denied to the families of those who died.

But it is my sincere belief that the work that has gone into this publication has been entirely worthwhile.

This work has given me a deeper understanding of pain, of sadness, of the heavy burden of grief and of the pervading sense of abandonment the families involved have been forced to endure – and how the depth of that feeling does not dissipate with the passage of time.

It is my hope that the reader will share in this lesson.

There is also a lesson of love to be found within these pages. Central to this work is remembrance and commemoration for those who died, told in the very words of the people who loved them most.

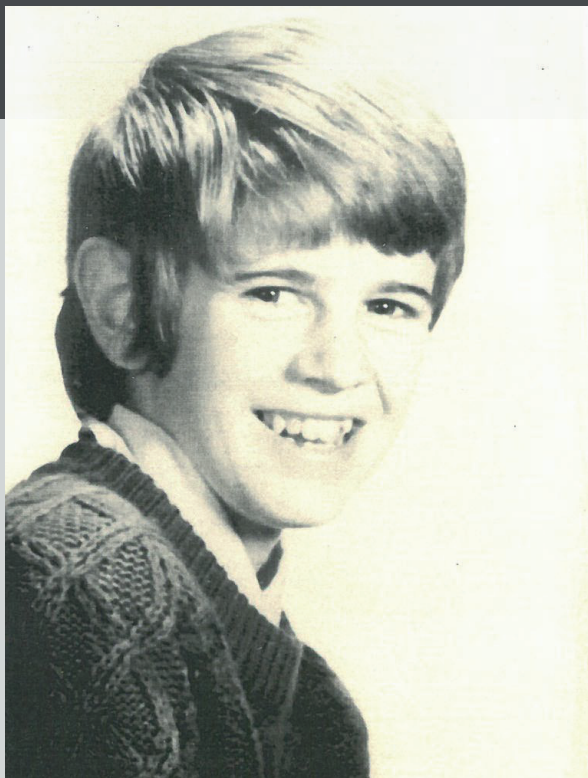
It is around the words put together by the families themselves that everything else on these pages has been built.

It has been a privilege to have helped in this small way with this most worthwhile endeavour, this work of remembrance and commemoration.

I invite the reader to learn from these pages about the children, the men and the women who were taken from their families in such a cruel and sudden way in Claudy, and how their memory lives on through those who cared most deeply for them.

# CONNOLLY, JOSEPH

BY MAUREEN MCELHINNEY



Joseph was the youngest of a family of seven – four boys and three girls. Their parents were Frank and Lena Connolly, and they lived in the family home in Claudy Brae, about one mile outside the village.

He was a great young fellow, who could have talked to the Queen. He didn't speak or say anything until he was four, but he could talk to anyone once he started.

He came to Claudy every evening for cigarettes for my daddy, and for a game of football before going back up to the house. He was back at nine o'clock every evening – not five past nine, but nine o'clock on the button, every night. You could have depended on Joe with your life.

On the morning of July the 31st, 1972, Joseph had an appointment with a youth employment officer to discuss work. Unfortunately, due to 'Motorman', the officer did not get out from Derry.

On finding the Claudy office closed, he called to my house with a packet of sweets for my oldest boy, who was four years old. He would visit when

he came down to the village.

Joseph left me that morning, and I asked him if he would be back that night. I didn't know, because my father had taken a roof off a shed and was getting it fixed up, but he said 'I will see you at night'.

Joseph would stay only a short time in the village before he would make his return back home.

He would stay about a half-hour and have a kick about with some school friends in the local cow market.

During the spring and summer months, he worked weekends with a local farmer. He also helped his dad about the fields.

I didn't think for one minute that there would be bombs. I was in my house when I heard the bombs going off, but it never would have occurred to me that's what it was.

My daddy came to me, it must have been about one o'clock, to ask me had I seen Joe, and I said I had because he was here in the house but it was a long while ago.

Joe was just coming out the door to a cafe to buy the cigarettes for his father, as he always would do, when the bomb went off at McElhinney's



Joe in the tractor drawing Turf

petrol pumps on the Main Street.

I had to go up through the village that evening, and the dust was still rising up. I saw the houses with roofs off, a total, total mess.

Joseph was in hospital for eight days. The family were in to see him, and his other sister nursed him. Some members of the family continue to find it too difficult to talk about that time. It is too painful.

No one had experienced anything like it.

I remember at that time it felt like there was a funeral every day. The whole village mourned together.

Joseph was a happy and light-hearted young boy of 15 years. He was a very innocent and kind-hearted young boy. He was lightly made up and small in stature, but he was a very witty boy. He was very jolly, and he made everyone around him laugh.

Joseph treated everyone with respect and would not pass you without saying hello.

In Claudy, then as now, everybody would have known everybody, and everybody would have known and liked Joe.

He was looking forward to commencing work in the local factory. He missed out on so much because his life was taken away from him. He was just beginning the next stage of his life.

I know he would have lived a good, happy life.

Little did our mother and father think that, on leaving for his appointment that morning, that Joseph would never be back home again.

His injuries were so severe that he made no recovery for the better.

Joseph died on the 8th of August, 1972.

He was sorely missed by his Mum and Dad, who have since passed away.

He will be forever remembered by his brothers and sisters.

May his gentle soul rest in peace.



Joe with a smile that could light up a room

# EAKIN, KATHRYN

BY MARK EAKIN



There were just the two of us, myself and my sister Kathryn.

I was 4 years older and we were very close. Kathryn was a bit of a tomboy, always wanting to hang out with me and my mates. She'd tag along with us on fishing trips, even when we really didn't want her to. She loved animals and she loved being on her bicycle.

Sometimes she'd go next door to a neighbour's house where a woman we called Granny Duffy lived and she'd spend hours helping her bake scones and pancakes.

That was her idea of a great day, footering about at the baking. We lived at the corner of Claudy crossroads. At the crossroads was our shop.

It was a busy store, the sort of place that sold everything from a needle to an anchor and we did funerals as well. The 4 of us lived next door on the Main Street; Mum (Merle), Dad (Billy), myself and Kathryn. Those were the days when you had to earn your pocket money and both myself and Kathryn did many chores around the shop. In July 1972, we had got our school summer holidays.



Eakins Corner 1970s

We had a caravan in Castlerock and we'd gone up there at the start of July. Since mum and dad had the shop, they couldn't stay up there during the week. We would normally only get a few days away at a time. Family friends, the Arthurs, also had a caravan on the same site. They said Kathryn and I could stay with them and initially mum agreed to us staying on for two or three days.

In the end, however, we got to stay for the whole month of July. We had a ball. Ironically, when I think about it now, it was the best month the pair of us had together.

On Sunday, 30th July, mum told us it was time we headed back home to Claudy. We arrived back in Claudy early on Monday 31st July. I set about brushing up the yard while Kathryn was told to

clean the shop windows.

She had a cloth and windolene and the kitchen steps. I came up out of the yard and as I walked past her I saw she had set windolene on the ledge. The pair of us were always fooling around, and I reached for the windolene and squirted some on a bit of the window that she had already cleaned. Kathryn was at the top of the step ladder, and she went mad at me, roaring and shouting .... and the next thing, boom!

I just remember being jetted through the air and, as odd as it seems, I landed back on my feet again. It was as if I had been lifted up and set down again. When I looked around Kathryn was lying on the footpath. She had been blown off the steps. It was approximately 10.15am and little did I know, that was the first bomb that went off up the Main Street outside McElhinneys.



Mark and Kathryn Eakin



Merle Billy Kathryn and Mark 1971

My father had been on his way out of the yard when the bomb went off. He saw all the tiles starting to cascade off the back of the main building as if in slow motion and he threw himself into a corner. Dad then came flying around out of the yard to find us. I was standing there, shaking. I don't think I really knew what had happened. I saw dad down on the ground with Kathryn, and then my grandfather (dad's father), came running too.

Mum was in the shop and all she could do was scream. My granda knew a wee bit about first aid and they carried her into the shop and worked on her there for a while.

Granda carried Kathryn to the health centre. She was unconscious. Dad stayed with mum as mum was inconsolable. There were still no ambulances but the local factory, Desmond's, had minibuses

which were used to bring women from the country into work, and the manager immediately ordered that the minibuses were to be driven to the health centre to start bringing the injured to the hospital. My granda went in the minibus with Kathryn to Altnagelvin Hospital. I don't think that at that point my father had any inkling how bad it was, he was just so dazed himself.

All around us was total devastation. Our wee shop was wrecked and open and dad needed to see to that. In the post office across the street, the people with cuts and bruises were being given tea. Dad went into our house and came out with a bottle of brandy and we sat down on the bonnet of a car outside the post office. Dad had a swig of brandy, he was badly shaken. And then this man who had been working on dry rot on our house came out of our front door and all I remember is him roaring across the street at my father "Look at the numberplates." And I can see it all yet.

I looked down and it was like tights or sacking around the numberplate, and suddenly my father was taking a look in the back of the car, he knew it was another device planted and then he was shouting at me: "Run, son, run."

Now, prior to this, dad had always told Kathryn and me that if we were ever caught up in a bomb, we were to stay near to where it went off because there was always a risk of running into the mouth of another one. So I raced up the street, to where

the bomb had gone off, and then some relatives told me to head for the fields. Myself and my cousins, Peter and John Eakin, went to the field behind their house on the Main Street. Other people from the village came to the field as well. That's when the second and third bombs went off. The second was at the Hotel and the third was that vehicle we saw beside the post office.

The engine from one of the car bombs landed in the garden at the front of Uncle Jack's house. Eventually, we went back to the village and if it had been bad before, then this was a hell of a lot worse. This was total carnage. I stood at the crossroads and no matter what direction I looked, everything was in bits. It was unreal. I saw a lot of things I couldn't really talk about; people were walking about with blood pouring out of them and still trying to help other people. Later



Painting of Kathryn

that day my granda arrived back from the hospital. My mother and father already knew... but I will never forget my granda came towards me saying: "It's all over," Kathryn was dead.

Kathryn died a short time after she arrived at Altnagelvin

Hospital. There was nothing they could do for her. Our family was devastated, totally devastated. My mother talked about nothing else, my father never mentioned it. He just bottled it up. If someone brought up the subject, he'd just change it or just dodge out of the way.

Once, I remember a reporter talking to dad about Kathryn and he just collapsed into a ball of tears. He simply could not go there. That day, we lost Kathryn, we lost our home and we lost our shop. Everything was gone. I have always felt it should have been me up the steps cleaning the window. I was only 3 yards away from her. She had died from a fragment of shrapnel that had pierced her brain. I escaped with some minor cuts. I was 12 at that time. Kathryn was only 8 and was the youngest victim. As for me? the hurt was too great. I couldn't even cry about it, and for years I didn't cry. It was as if some kind of paralysis came over me. This was 1972, mind, and there was no talk of counselling then. You wonder how you didn't go mad, but perhaps in a way I did go a bit crazy. I rebelled at school, I didn't want to be there. Mum, dad and myself stayed with Jack and Deirdre Eakin as our house was destroyed. That's where Kathryn was buried from. The day after the bomb I was with my cousins Peter and John and we were sent to our best friend, Noel Anderson's house. His dad and mum, Canon and Mrs Anderson, took us a run to Portstewart for the day to get away from it all. But walking into a shop and seeing the line of newspapers with

Kathryn's face on front of them all was too much to bare. Aunt Deirdre always used to say that the Lord sent rain that afternoon of the bombs to wash away all the blood from Claudy street. We ended up living for months in a caravan behind Jack and Deirdre's house until we got a place sorted. For years after the bomb the shop was essentially just a makeshift building, a bit like a portacabin. What compensation my father did get took years to come through, but life as we knew it was never the same again.

The shop was restored again, fit for purpose. Dad put the shop up for sale in the early 1980's. However, there were still issues with structural damage and it was hard to sell. My uncle, Jack Eakin bought it from dad. Dad was glad that it was going to stay within the Eakin Family. In 1984 we moved to Castlerock, but we couldn't really ever leave Claudy behind. Dad and mum never had the same love of life again. They had their good days and their bad days, but there were more bad days than good. My mother died in August 2008. She had always blamed herself for Kathryn's death as she had taken us away from Castlerock. I guess she always knew we would have been safe if we had stayed in Castlerock that Monday morning. Dad died six months later. They both were only 77 and their birthdays were only three days apart. They were angry about the bomb until their dying days. They felt it was never properly investigated. I suppose, that's why over the years, I have always wanted answers, but

none of us got the answers we needed. In 2004, Jack Eakin knocked down the shop and all the buildings at Eakin's Corner. Shop units and a number of apartments above it was built in its place. My cousin Peter suggested to me, they would make a clock tower, to be a centrepiece in the village at the corner of the crossroads and the clock would be in memory of Kathryn. I am glad the site is still in the Eakin family name. I've two daughters myself now, and in a way that was hard on my mother. Samantha Kathryn (now 24), was named after Kathryn and then Rebecca (now 22). My mother was so protective of them. "Don't let them in the water, don't let them on the road, don't let them out." Samantha's eighth birthday was a whole ding-dong; mum took it so badly. "My God, she is eight," she would say to me.



Church Window in memory of Kathryn

That's the age Kathryn was when she died. I always think, too, how they have outlived Kathryn. I can't picture how Kathryn would look like now or begin to imagine the life she might have had. To me she will always be eight.

# HONE, ARTHUR

BY ANNE BRADLEY



I married Artie Hone on the 10th of August, 1964 and came to live in Claudy. I was 20 years old and he was 28. We got on well and were happy. We were also planning for the day that we could upgrade the house we were living in, which at that time belonged to the council. I started up my hairdressing salon in Claudy on the 1st of September and Artie worked for 'Betterware' and later for 'Refuge Insurance Co'

Paul was born on the 4th of June, 1966 and Michelle was born on the 5th of September 1969, so we had our hands full – but the delight we had in the children made up for the hard work required. Paul was always very protective of Michelle, especially when she started school.

Artie was a talented musician. He played the violin, bass guitar and double bass, and passed all his music exams up to senior level. He played in a local dance band and was very popular, playing at local concerts etcetera. He was very lively and full of fun. He enjoyed playing games with Paul and Michelle.

Monday the 31st of July, 1972 started off as a usual Monday – washing and household tasks to



Sharing a Joke - Artie and I 1968

be done on my day off work. Artie couldn't get in to work in Derry as the Craigavon Bridge was closed, so he went to Claudy to phone the office. Michelle went with him – she was nearly four years-of-age at the time.

Shortly after 10 o'clock there was an unmerciful bang, which shook the house and my first thought was 'that's a bomb'. I took Paul, who was six-years-old, and ran down to Claudy. The street was a mess, covered with rubble, stones, slates and smashed cars everywhere. I told Paul to stay at the school gates until I came back, which he did, as otherwise he could have been caught in what was to come.

I met Brendan Burns, the local headmaster, and I was crying about Artie and Michelle. He would not let me go down any further – he told me

to stay where I was and he would come back and tell me – which he did a short time later. A woman handed me Michelle and she was crying, and very frightened, but didn't speak. Artie had left her in the car to go into the shop and on his way back the bomb went off. Michelle's dress was covered in splinters of glass and she had a cut behind her ear, which didn't require medical treatment. They were concerned in case her hearing was affected but thankfully there were no after effects. I learned, later, that the roof of the car had collapsed on top of her.

Brendan Burns came back to tell me that Artie was injured and was going to hospital. I later learned that Paul O'Kane (a fireman) and Sean O'Neill had stayed with Artie and prayed until the ambulance arrived. The police were clearing the street, so we went into Mina McClean's house. A few minute's later a policeman came to the door and told us to get out the back door as there was a bomb at Eakin's garage. So Mina, her nephew, Michelle and I went in the direction of the market square – we got to the middle of the square and a bomb went off at the Beaufort Hotel. I heard screaming and looked up. Black smoke filled the air and a large piece of a car – I'm sure it was part of the bonnet and front bumper – landed at our feet.

My first thought was to get back to Paul so I went through the chapel grounds and got back up to the school where Paul was still standing crying –

thank God he had stayed where he was. We ran up to our house and got down on our knees and prayed Artie wouldn't be badly injured. My father arrived at the door and I was never as glad to see him. After gathering a few clothes together we went up to Park, to my original home where my mother, brother and five sisters were.

My father rang my uncle, Fr W McGaughey, who was a priest in the Long Tower parish at the time, and he went over to the hospital. He rang back to say Artie was in theatre and to come in at 4pm. My father, mother and I went in and we were taken into a ward where Artie was. I didn't recognise him as he was all bandaged around his head and his face was swollen. That was when I was told he had serious injuries and had lost a lot of brain tissue, so the outcome looked very bleak. I spoke into his ear and told him I was there and that Michelle and Paul were okay.

He definitely moved his fingers, but that was the last time I got any reaction from him.

On 12th August, at around 7pm, he died. My mum and dad and I were by his side. I was in a complete daze.

Our 8th wedding anniversary was on the 10th of August. I was given two tablets in Altnagelvin and was taken home. My father organised the funeral, which wasn't until the 15th of August as there had to be a post mortem.

Why, oh why, did this have to happen? No words could describe how heartbroken I was. My mother was a very calm, caring person, and was a very good support to me. She comforted me when the reality hit me and listened to my fears. She had passed on her great faith in God to us as children. She said 'put your trust in God and he will see you through this'.

I found it hard to pray. In a way I was angry with God for letting this happen, and angry at the world for letting so many people killed. Where was it all going to end? How was I going to face the rest of my life without Artie? How was I going to keep strong for Paul and Michelle?



Michelle's first day at school 4th Sept 1972 along with Paul

We stayed in Park until the end of August and as Michelle was starting her first day at Primary School on the 4th of September. I returned to

Claudy to prepare for that and I had to go back to work. My friends and customers in Claudy were very supportive of me and I knew everyone was praying and thinking of me as I received many cards of condolences.

In 1974, the opportunity came up to purchase our house in Claudy, so my brother Patrick who was a joiner and had good knowledge of the building trade helped me as I got plans to renovate the house. I went to sign for the deeds – another milestone without Artie. I had to move out of the house for six months while the work was carried out, so again I moved to Park to stay with my parents.

These months staying with my parents were a good help to me, as my mental state was at an all time low and it was a happy time for Paul and Michelle – they had cousins to play with when they came home from school.

In 1975, we moved back to Claudy, to a new house which Artie and I had dreamed of. Sadly, he wasn't there to share it.

He missed first communions, confirmations, special birthdays, Paul and Michelle's wedding and seeing his lovely four grandchildren who he would have delighted in.

Time has moved on. Paul and Michelle have their own homes, and their own families, and I am so happy for the way they have matured – and the

great support and love they have given me over the years.

I am happy to say that after being a widow for 28 years, I married Michael Bradley in 2000. I now have his love and devotion and please God we will get good health to enjoy our years ahead.

## By Michelle McKeever

Thankfully I don't have any memories of the bombing, but over the years I have been told of the details of what happened that day. My daddy drove to Claudy and I went with him. He parked in the Main Street, and he went into McElhinney's shop and left me in the car. He was walking back to the car when the bomb went off and he was thrown onto the road.

Thomas O'Kane, who was living in America, was home on holiday and staying with his sister Rosaleen Burke in a house at the bottom of Claudy. When the bomb went off he rushed up the street and he saw something move in the car I was in, and he thought maybe it was a dog. He went over the car and the roof had fallen in. The car was damaged beyond repair. He realised it was a child and he took me out of the car and passed me to a woman he knew, who then gave me to my mother. Thomas then asked everyone in the area to move any cars that were parked in the street so that the ambulances could get in to help the injured. When all the cars were moved he

noticed a van or var that was still parked outside the post office. He quickly moved everyone away from the car. That car contained another bomb, and Thomas's quick thinking saved a lot of lives.

I have no recollection of that day and I am very glad that I don't. It is a day I would never want to remember. My brother, Paul, was six and I was nearly four when Daddy was killed but, considering the size of Claudy and the damage caused by the bombs, we could have all been killed that day.

Growing up without having a father was very hard but Paul and I were so lucky to have a loving and devoted mother who, at 29-years-of-age, was a widow with two young children. She had to work full time to provide for us as we had no other income. Without her we wouldn't have had such a happy childhood. We also had Granny and Granda, and aunts and uncles, who protected and loved us very much.

Daddy missed all our childhood. He never saw us starting school or making our Holy Communion. He never attended our weddings or got to meet his grandchildren. He was only 37-years-old when he died. He should have had a long life with his family who loved him so much, but that was taken away from him in such a cruel way. It makes me sad that I have no memories of Daddy, only things that I have been told and we have very few photographs of us as a family.



Last photo of Artie, Paul and Michelle August 1971

A relative of mine attended a funeral In 2016 and they met a man who was originally from Claudy but was living in America. They discussed the Claudy bomb and he told them how he had rescued a child out of a car but he didn't know their name. It was Thomas O'Kane and I finally got to meet him a few days later. It was a very emotional meeting – he rescued me and saved countless other lives that day too.

So many people have been killed in the Troubles in Northern Ireland and they are all just statistics to everyone else, but to their families they are a loved one who can never be replaced and are missed every day. No matter how many years ago they died, the hurt and the loss is still the same.

# MCCLELLAND, JIM

BY COLIN MCCLELLAND AND TRACY DEANS



We did not have the privilege of knowing our great uncle Jim, but when we talk to people who remember him, their faces soften and they begin to smile as they talk of a man who was quiet and unassuming, gentle and kind, with a great sense of humour and the loveliest laugh.

They also speak of his strong Christian faith, and his great love for Jesus and the church.

Jim lived and worked all his life in the Claudy area.

Born in 1907, he was the first child of the then newly married Thomas and Fanny McClelland, and although named Thomas James after his father and his father's father, was always known as Jim. There would be eight more children, three girls and five boys including our Granda, Norman, who was the second youngest in the family and always looked up to his big brother Jim who was 12 years older than him.

The family lived on Thomas' farm in Brackfield, and Jim worked with his father both on the farm and in his butchery business delivering and selling their own meat in the Claudy area.

They also grew and sold vegetables, and that was where Jim's heart really lay. He enjoyed working the land; and loved the beauty and peace of the countryside.

The family home was close to Cumber Presbyterian Church where they worshipped, and the church was very much at the centre of his life.

Jim was a devout man with a deep love of God and the Bible. He loved singing in church, especially his favourite hymn, 'What a friend we have in Jesus', and he also enjoyed the different social activities the church ran, especially the bowling club.

Jim was a member of the Apprentice Boys of Derry, belonging to the Claudy Branch Club; and a lifelong Orangeman in his local lodge, Killaloo True Blues LOL 621.

The 12th of July was the highlight of his year, and he loved putting on the bowler hat and all the regalia as well as the parade itself.

Although hard-working, Jim was notoriously hard to get out of bed in the morning with one exception – the Twelfth!

During the 1960s, Jim's life took a dramatic change when the family's land was divested to facilitate the building of the then new A6 road.

He and his father moved to Ervey, where Jim

took delight in planting trees all round their new home.

Ironically, this house has also recently been lost to the new dual carriageway. Following the death of his father in 1968, Jim married Mary Laird, a widow who had lived with them as their housekeeper, and became step-father to Mary's daughter Elizabeth who adored him, and supported us in our fight for justice right up to her death in 2007.

Following the move to Ervey, Jim also had to find new work, and he became a roadman in Claudy. He was responsible for caring for the look of the village and keeping it clean, and he took great pride in his work.

He was well-known round the village, and enjoyed meeting people from all walks of life and having a wee chat and some craic.

On the day of the Claudy bombs, Jim was just a few weeks from retirement and would have been looking forward to life at an easier pace.

As he worked that morning, it would have seemed a very normal day until that first bomb went off outside McElhinney's on the Main Street. When the second bomb was discovered just further down Main Street, along with everyone else, Jim was moved away down to Church Street – unwittingly towards the car outside the Beaufort Hotel containing the third bomb.



Jim's funeral, being carried by his brothers

Along with David Miller and William Temple, he was killed instantly when the bomb exploded. At 65, Jim was the eldest victim of the Claudy bombs.

Our Granda lived in Irwin Crescent at the time and had to pass the spot where Jim was killed every time he left his home and every time he returned, and the pain forced him to make the decision to leave Claudy. He never got over Jim's death.

There are so many people who still carry the pain of what happened in Claudy 50 years ago.

The passing of time does not diminish the horror, loss, or sheer senselessness of what happened,

and nor does it diminish the memories of those who died.

Jim lived a very ordinary life, but the mark he left in the memories of those who knew him is testament to how special he actually was. Jim lived an exemplary life of service to God, his family, and his community, and we are privileged to be part of his family.



In Memory, presented by Killaloo LOL 621

# MCCLOSKEY, JOSEPH

BY DEIRDRE AND DERMOT O'KANE

(DAUGHTER AND GRANDSON)



An old black and white photo adorned our home for many years. It was of a smiling, content man sitting in an armchair wearing a shirt and tie with a cardigan.

It sat on the living room sideboard and through the years moved to different places around the house as time passed, moving around through all the home improvements, redecorations, and even house moves.

It was present as the family began, the family grew and the family moved on. Although the kind man was long since not present himself and not known to the little occupants of the family home, little occupants who grew up to have children of their own, he always remained.

When the photo captured attention of the little minds or hands of those little occupants they asked, who is he and what happened to him. They would be told "He was my Daddy, your Granda Joe and he was killed in the Claudy bombing when your mammy and your aunts and uncles were still very young."

They often found it strange that a young looking,



A young Joe with his Game face on!

healthy, happy man was their Granda and there was a peculiarity in that he was alive in the past but not the present. But the young minds accepted and went on.

Another photo in the family home, this one sourced and developed many years after the first black and white photo, this

one was in full colour and was kept by the front door.

The blue and red of the work uniform, the same man, looking slightly older, with his hair not as combed and neat yet smiling again. This was a photo taken for his work photo pass.

The same occupants, now not so little, grown into their teens, asked about this photo. They'd be told that was the same man, that was their Granda in his work clothes. He worked in DuPont, having previously worked in England for a time and also on a bread run.

To be in both black and white and colour, yet not here now, they found it strange and sad. He was their Granda, whom they never knew nor ever met.

That same photo was the most recent one, after Joe, as he was known to friends and family, was cruelly taken in the Claudy Bombing.

He was only 39. As, has been reported throughout the years, it was his day off from work and he had popped into the village from his home just outside Claudy.

It was in this home where, with his wife Sheila, he was raising his young family. A family of 7, with the eldest only 11 years old at the time of his untimely death.

His children were left with stories to tell their own children.

Stories they could remember and those of others given to them, of their Daddy. They were stories from before the family moved to Claudy, of getting a lift up to the McCloskey family home, which they called Craig, where Joe's mother and siblings lived. They were stories of walking home down the Claudy Brae, holding Daddy's hand.

Aunts and uncles would tell stories of how much good fun he was, how many times over the years he would joke with the shopkeepers and café workers in the shops in Claudy. Great fun he was, they all said, and his kindness and generosity they



Last family photo 11th May 1972

often spoke of too as they reminisced about him with fondness.

Joe's real passion was football and did he take his football seriously. We can see this

in a photograph of a younger still, much more focused looking Daddy in the line-up ahead of a football match.

The now all-grown-up grand children marvelled at the same smiling, friendly looking man looking so different with a neater, tighter haircut and so fit and youthful. Even further back in the past, there he was taking part in something he cared so much about.

Joe's siblings talked about how much he loved football, playing for his local club through all ages, along with his brothers who were all involved with the cub. He loved football so much that when his first child was born, he was in Croke Park at the all Ireland final. Vincent, who the last of Daddy's brothers, passed in 2019, following Tom and Jim.

If one can imagine it possible, the four brothers together in a higher place swapping football

stories – would Daddy believe Derry won an all-Ireland in 1993?

Joe is survived today by his sisters Celine, Margaret and Eileen.

We love and cherish the memories we have, and photographs form a poignant reminder or source to recall special times from the past.

Conversely, the photos that Joe is absent from through the years are evidence of so much that Joe missed out on – how he has been missed on those wedding days, special birthdays, christenings and all family gatherings.

When his first daughter wed on her wedding day, his brother Vincent had taken his place at the wedding table. On other occasions Vincent had taken on duties that Daddy should have been afforded the fortune to be there for.

Taken from us too soon, before we really knew what life was, all of us have kept him in our hearts, never forgotten.

One of the grandchildren, when studying The Troubles in school history class, became more inquisitive and asked the obvious question: "Why had that happened?"

Why had bombs been planted in Claudy that day? And why had no-one "been caught". Why and what for? To what end? There was no answer as no answer would ever satisfy.

Through the years all sorts of enquiries, reports, investigations, arrests and media have produced nothing. Which is apt because nothing will ever replace that which has been lost.

What we would like to remember is the husband, father, son and brother Joe was. Memories held by Joe's remaining siblings and his children are shared and passed on to the next generations and the photographs we hold on to keep his memory alive.

Even without physical memories we need not worry as his legacy continues down through the generations. His children have played on the same football pitches he had and their sons and daughters continued. His brothers and sisters, sons and grandchildren continued to be involved with the local football club until the present day. There is no escaping the legacy that lives on.

Becoming mothers and fathers ourselves, we have all lived longer than our father was afforded. Joe's children – Deirdre, Maeve, Shirley, Emmett, Sinead, James and Pauline – have raised our own families and watched our children grow.

Instilled within us were some his own values; hard working, love of family, friendship and good fun—and football of course!

In all family gatherings there is laughter and love of life. Joe McCloskey is a grandfather-of-14 and great grandparent of 9. He has grandchildren

who have been to America and as far as Australia, university graduates, musicians, and parents now themselves.

This year is the 50th Anniversary of the Claudy Bombing. We are just one of 9 families who

lost a loved one on July 31, 1972. We remember the happier times and look forward with hope, together, to a continuing peace.

Fifty years is a long time in any lifetime. So much has passed. So much has happened that has been good. So much that Daddy would have been so proud of. Our accomplishments are his. And his legacy is through us. His triumph is in all we have won. The laughter and fun that we have had through the years are the laughter and fun he had. The points scored are all his.

Joseph McCloskey was a victim, unjustifiably killed at the age of 39. But his epitaph is much more. He is a Son. He is a Brother. He is a Husband. He is a Father. He is a Grandparent. And he is a Football Fan. He lived a joyful successful life, taken from him too soon, and he will always have lived, always will live.



Last photo of Joe, taken from a Work Pass

# MCELHINNEY, ELIZABETH

## BY TESS O'LOUGHLIN



Elizabeth McElhinney was one of five siblings born and reared on Gorse Road, approximately three miles from Claudy village. Commonly known as 'Lizzie', she had one sister Annie (Quinn) living in Achill Island and three brothers; John, Tom and Joe.

John stayed at home on the family farm whilst Joe resided in Wales and Father Tom was a missionary priest in China.

Lizzie was married to Eddie McElhinney, a prominent business man in Claudy village, and they had no children.

As Lizzie's God child and infant of 3 months at the time of this catastrophe, I wish to share the remarkable stories I have unearthed, 50 years on, about a remarkable lady whose every actions were truly altruistic.

Elizabeth McElhinney; a modern day Florence Nightingale is how Lizzie might be fondly remembered within the confines of Claudy Village.

A “lady” by all accounts and a private individual, who having trained as a nurse in England, brought that same professionalism and caring nature to all those she attended.

“Always helpful”, “very kind”, full of wisdom”, “a generous, selfless individual”, are some of the words echoed about the character and charisma of this local lady.

In her earlier years, Lizzie worked as a Sister in Altnagelvin Hospital and was renowned as a strict lady who commanded respect and had exacting standards. Often stories were cited about ‘Sister McElhinney’: ” When you heard the click of those heels coming, the nurses would run to straighten the bed covers and make sure everything was in its place”.

That same professionalism and attention to detail was reiterated by the employees of McElhinney’s pub and shop when Lizzie helped out in her husband’s business in her later years.

She punctually provided 10 o’clock tea and dinner at 12.30, daily, for the shop workers. At the same time, she would often enquire as to their well being and offered advice and home made remedies to those she felt were in need of it.

Her kindness and unwavering dedication endured long after her nursing career on the

wards.

Lizzie was the ‘go-to’ person in the village in times of sickness and it was often recalled if Lizzie was spotted running down the street “some poor critter was in need.”

Several stories relayed how Lizzie might make a diagnosis and then liaised with the local doctor and the hospital, if necessary, to ensure a bed was available that night if hospital treatment was required.

One story, in particular, told of how a local lady required surgery and Lizzie made contact with the then surgeon, Dr Fenton of Ballyarton. The lady in question was subsequently admitted to hospital that afternoon and surgery carried out that same evening.

Frequently on Sunday evenings, and when off duty, Lizzie was also known to visit the various wards in Altnagelvin, checking in on any locals from the Claudy area — once again depicting the kind and generous spirit and the love of her vocation.

Always at everyone’s beck and call, irrespective of language or creed; her unfaltering devotion to those in need was apparent.

That sunny July morning was a fateful day when

Lizzie's life, along with eight others, was so tragically and needlessly stolen from her.

It was Monday morning and the workers had arrived on their tea break when the bell rang for the petrol pumps. Typically, Lizzie jumped to her feet to attend the pumps and let the staff enjoy their break.

In a split second, and in the selfless act of giving, her life was decimated and destroyed, leaving a family in mourning and a community robbed of a devout carer. Her death was a great loss to one and all.

This poem by Francis Duggan is a fitting tribute to Lizzie and very apt for her legacy so that we can cherish the very special lady that she was:

Those born to altruism in any way not small  
The gifts of love and kindness are the greatest  
gifts of all  
To help those in need of helping, they go out of  
their way  
They are the unsung heroes of the Human  
world today  
For their acts of love and kindness, greater  
credit they are due  
Special people of this world to the higher self  
be true

# MCLAUGHLIN, ROSE

## BY THE MCLAUGHLIN FAMILY



Our mother was born in Munigh, she was one of nine children. In her early years she went to work in Learmount Castle as an auxillary nurse. Mum met dad and they were married in 1950. In those days people didn't move far from where they were born, and she could see her home from the street where she now lived.

Mum had 8 children – 4 boys and 4 girls with little age gap between them. When Evelyn was born it was cold with frost and snow and the ambulance had trouble getting out to her. When mum came home with the baby the smell of baby powder would linger in the room and the fire would be burning and we would all gather with her in the room.

Combing curly hair before school: -

Liam's earliest memories are of Mammy taking a wet comb to Kieran and his hair to make sure the curls were all in place before sending us off to walk to Kilgort Primary School (which we dreaded every day). Anyone who attended Kilgort Primary School needs no further explanation on why.

Another memory I have is when Seamus, Kieran, and I were being boys. We were playing with a

piece of farm equipment with which we were quite intrigued. I think it's called a grubber. There is a bar that is used to attach it to a tractor and Seamus, and I were lifting the bar while Kieran stuck his hand underneath. We were too weak to hold up the bar and it landed on Kieran's hand. He had a tiny cut on his finger and was crying like a big, big baby. He would not stop crying. I looked at Seamus and he at me, and together we decided we need to get out of Dodge. Sadly, the last train had left the station. So, we did the next best thing, which was to run across a field and climb a tree. We sat there for hours until one of our sisters came to negotiate us out of the tree. We agreed to come down only if mammy promised to not to punish us. Maybe I am wrong, but we only came down because it was dark.

Being altar boys: -

Nothing made mammy prouder than having her three youngest sons as altar boys.

Buying the business: -

In 1963 Mum and Dad had a chance to buy a local business in the village of Claudy. For our family this was about to be a huge change in our lives. During the next 9 years they both worked extremely hard. Rosemary remembers only being in Claudy once before for her confirmation. We visited the shop after the service and Mrs Donaghy, who owned it then, allowed Rosemary to pick a bar of chocolate. She picked a Cadbury's

flake.

At the time it was unusual for a woman to look for a bank loan. Mum wanted a better life for her family and worked very hard to succeed. Her plan was to buy another shop in another location. Being successful in the shop gave her the confidence to look at other ventures. Our mother was a brilliant businesswoman.



James and Rose on their wedding day

In the early days dad stayed at home as we were all very young, aged from 3 to 12, while mum went off to work. In the early days of the café Mick would have travelled with Mammy to Claudy as he was attending secondary school and he would have worked with Mammy after school.

Nellie McDaid, who had worked for Mrs Donaghy, stayed on and helped Mum in the cafe. The days started with breakfast and the usual people would come in and then come back again for lunch time. After school Seamus, Liam, Kieran,

and Evelyn would help to prepare the potatoes for the evening rush. Friday afternoon was always very busy with Desmond's factory closing at 1.30pm/2pm. The buses would stop and let the girls out to get their fish and chips. Mum worked hard and enjoyed the banter with the girls. When the new chip pan came it was twice the size of the old one and it was electric. Mum took great pride in developing her business.

Swearing while making chips: -

One of the joys of mammy and daddy owning the café were the lessons we learned. Seamus, Kieran, Evelyn, and I were peeling spuds and making chips every day. We didn't get paid but we didn't hate it because in the chipping area no one was around, and it was the only area we could swear like sailors. We felt grown up. We could never, ever swear around mammy! Oh, and we'd also sneak out and play soccer against the courthouse wall – and Seamus remembers sneaking the odd bottle of orange from the storeroom. She often caught us at that.

Tom Jones was mum's favourite singer and on a Sunday night work had to be finished early so she could sit with a cup of tea and her digestive biscuits.

American Pie: -

Years later Seamus and Brigid were in Chicago for their honeymoon. We were having breakfast

at our local diner, when the song American Pie by Don McLean came on the Jukebox. We didn't realize but we both felt a deep sense of sadness come over us whenever we heard that song. It was the number one song in the world in 1972 and was never off the jukebox in the café. I suppose at this point in my life, I like to hear the song just to keep the memories alive.

That Day

Curtains blowing – Liam's memory: -

July 31, 1972. My memories of that day are flashes. Kieran and I shared a bedroom in the front of the house. The first memory I have is being awakened by the first bomb going off and



Back row L to R Evelyn McLaughlin, Patricia McLaughlin, Rose McLaughlin, Michael McLaughlin, Kathleen McLaughlin, James McLaughlin, Philomena McLaughlin, Rosemary McLaughlin

Front Row L to R Seamus McLaughlin, Kieran McLaughlin, Liam McLaughlin



Nurses - Rose  
McLaughlin,  
Middle

the fluttering of the lace curtains. For the longest time I thought it was the bomb that blew the curtains in, which is quite silly. Mammy opened every window, every day, before she went to the café to take in the early morning deliveries

Walking up to the café: -

I remember walking out of the Crescent and seeing a plume of smoke rising above the rooftops. Then, I am standing at the back door of the café and it's locked. I am turning the corner at the public bathrooms and I see the scene of devastation the first bomb left on the streets. Then, I am passing some of the victims and will never forget seeing their horrific injuries. I am at the café door, there is a step down into the café and daddy is standing at the door with a trickle

of blood on his forehead. He says "she's dead". I looked around him toward the dining room and mammy was lying face down. I turned around and there were so many people screaming, but I don't know who. I think it was my sisters. I started walking back home – this was probably less than 5 minutes after the first bomb went off. I turned the corner and Kieran and Colin Lynch, our good friend who sadly became a victim of the troubles 4 years later at 18 years old, were on the opposite side of the street. The look on Kieran's face is the most vivid memory I have of that day. He didn't know what had happened, but he knew by looking at me that it was bad. He asked what was wrong and I said, "don't go up there". I don't know if he listened.

Laying down (and getting up): -

The shock was setting in and feeling faint I lay down on the grass verge opposite the Beaufort Hotel. I lay only for a short time, fortunately, because I was within 10 feet of the second bomb location. I made it home before the 2nd and 3rd bombs went off.

Katie (Mick's wife) was pregnant and when the bombs went off, she fell to her knees. We were all in shock.

Rosemary recalls: -

On Monday 31 July 1972 our lives changed forever when the bomb went off outside the shop. On

the Sunday night we were out at a dance, so mum let us have a lie in, when the bomb went off, we hurriedly got dressed and ran to the shop. I didn't go inside the café to see mum, dad just said your mum's dead and she was then taken to Altnagelvin hospital. All 8 children witnessed the carnage on the streets of Claudy on that day as they ran to the cafe to check on our mother, images which never disappear from memory no matter the number of years which pass.

I visited mum in hospital and gave her rosary beads and I felt a slight movement when I spoke to her, she survived for three days and passed away on the Thursday morning.

While mammy was in hospital some of the family went to stay in Park with our aunt's, Agnes and Maggie, and some of the family stayed in Claudy. Daddy had to give us the awful news that mammy was dead.

After the funeral we, as a family, were in limbo, the business was gone and nobody in the family had the heart to do anything. Further down the years Philomena and Kieran started up the business again with the support of the Claudy community, they continued the legacy of the work our mum and dad had started.

Life for daddy after the bombing was horrendous because everything they had worked so hard for was gone and his life was shattered. His brother Charlie, who he was very close to, was a great

support.

There isn't a day that goes by when we don't think about our mum and how she would have enjoyed her grandchildren and have been proud of all their achievements as she would have been of her own children.

Mick, Rosemary, Philomena, Patricia, Seamus, Liam, Kieran, Evelyn, Katie (Mick's wife), Kieran (Rosemary's husband), Brian (Patricia's husband), Brigid (Seamus's wife), Maryann (Liam's wife), Deirdre (Kieran's wife)

Grandchildren: Damian, Roisin, Clare, Stephen, Paul, Veronica, Linda, Kiera, Cam Ly, David, Shaun, Keely Rose, Jack, Ryan, Mark, Dean

Great-Grandchildren: Oliver, Rose, Matthew, John, Mary Rose, Claire, Jamie



L to R Mena O'Neill, Mary Celine Kerlin, Rose McLaughlin, Carmel O'Neill, Michael McLaughlin

# MILLER, DAVID

## BY THE MILLER FAMILY



David Miller 1911-1972

Husband, Father, Grandfather and Friend

A man who knew no malice  
But rather to forgive  
In life he thought of others  
He died just as he lived

Davy, as he was affectionately known, was a loving husband to Annie, father to Jean, Derek and Gordon, devoted grandfather to all his grandchildren. A friend to all that knew him, he was always ready to offer a helping hand to those in need. His mild, unassuming nature shone through in every situation. Davy had various jobs throughout his life. He had been a member of the 'ROC', the Royal Observation Core, and served as a B Special before working for Derry city council in his later years.

He loved singing, and, as well as being a member of his church choir, he was known to give a rendering of well-known songs in Eakin's Bar and in the Beaufort Hotel. Two of his favourites were 'Amazing grace' and 'Along the Faughan side'. His interest in music led him to become the 'Big Drummer' in Tullintrain pipe band.



Davy and Annie with their first born Grandson, Alan,  
sadly all are no longer with us

His son Gordon had four young sons at the time Davy was so brutally murdered. It was a traumatic time for the family and the scars of that day still remain with us all. Gordon's daughter Judith was born ten years after the Claudy bomb, (1982). But to this very day she has a deep regret of being deprived of knowing her Grandad. This poem was written with her in mind:

I never knew my Grandad  
Or looked into his face,  
I never held his hand in mine  
Or felt his warm embrace  
I only have his picture

To look at with regret  
For if things has been different  
He might have been here yet.

I never sat upon his knee,  
His voice I'll never hear  
I didn't have the chance to say  
"I love you Grandad dear".  
For he was gone so quickly  
Ten years before my time  
Without a chance to say "Goodbye"  
To those he left behind.

That fateful day in Claudy on 31 July 1972 was an unbelievable act of terrorism in a quiet rural village. People lived side by side, happy and content with what they had. Davy didn't have a car but rode his bicycle along the country roads to wherever he happened to be working. In fact, that particular day, a friend asked him to swap duties which was how Davy happened to be working in the village.

As it was, he saved lives by bringing families down to his house to safety, wrapping the children in blankets and hurriedly helping the parents out of harm's way. As Davy, accompanied by his friend and workmate Jim McClelland, hurried back a bomb outside the Beaufort Hotel exploded, killing them both.

Davy, like all the other victims on that day, deserved to grow old with his family around him, not to be annihilated by evil, faceless terrorists.

To date, no organisation has ever claimed responsibility for the bombing but it is widely known that the IRA were involved—possibly in response to operation ‘Motorman’ which had just started in nearby Londonderry.



Davy and Annie in their new Choir robes. Davy had a great love of singing for their Church

We, as family members, are still seeking justice. A Police Ombudsman’s report was released on the 24 August 2010, but only focused on one individual priest. The PSNI, however, stated there may have been up to 18 others involved. No one has been investigated properly in recent years about Claudy, even though a ‘Spotlight’ programme identified a number of people, including an individual referred to as Man A, who was now back in the country.

There are also past RUC investigating officers who have information on Claudy and, to our knowledge, they have never been spoken to.

We have had meetings with the PSNI’s new investigating team but questions put to them were not answered satisfactorily. The PSNI told us previously that they had the money and resources to investigate Claudy properly but, again, this was never followed through.

All of this has had an absolutely devastating effect on our family—none more so than David’s son Gordon, who had never been able to come to terms with this atrocity.

We all suffered horribly throughout the years with this ‘open wound never healing’ and with no hope of justice or recompense. With no counselling services available back then Gordon tried to get on with his life, but the trauma of the Claudy bomb affected him so badly that no later than 2011 he was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress and



Davy and Annie in happier times. Who was to know how their future would change

underwent intensive trauma counselling. This also affected the family as we all had to make sense of his abnormal actions and try to make sense of his disruptive coping mechanisms and alcohol abuse.

Although his mental health suffered continuously, he did his best for us all and he always clung on to the hope that something positive would eventually be achieved and justice would be done.

Sadly, Gordon passed away on 25th March, 2018 with no closure, no answers, and no one having been held to account. We have promised that we will fight on and finish what he had started. We have come to learn that post generational trauma is passing down through the family and this will not ease until we have the truth and potential closure we deserve. All we want is to understand why Claudy was blown apart and for our wounds to heal so as we can return to a normal life. Sadly, Gordon will never see this day but we hope and pray we will make him proud when we get the answers we crave and the closure we deserve.

So let us now remember  
Each one of those who died  
Their names are carved upon our hearts  
Those names we say with pride  
And pray that all the evil  
Throughout the world may cease  
That each and every one of us  
May live in perfect peace



Taken on one of his many visits to Limavady. Special memories for his son Gordon and family

# TEMPLE, WILLIAM

BY DAVID TEMPLE



I was brought up to treat everybody as your friend. I went to Roman Catholic schools, I attended college – back then everybody looked out for each other. It didn't matter if you were Catholic or Protestant.

In '69 the terrorist campaign started. Everything went well until '72. I remember that day – 31st of July – when my brother was murdered in the Claudy bombing. I remember that day as if it was yesterday. I remember my uncle calling us at work and telling us to come home. We all came home and sat in the house. My father and mother were there, we were all sitting on the sofa and my uncle Ernie says 'there's one of youse missing'. And I says 'what's wrong' and he says 'I want to tell you that you lost your brother – he's been killed in Claudy'.

At that time it was hard to take. We didn't know why this had come upon us, because we liked both sides of the community and we were a well respected family in and around Donemana.

As time went on, we had a lot of grieving and a big funeral with many people calling at our home. Our own friends called, Roman Catholic people

called, clergymen called, politicians called – everybody called. But they couldn't bring William back.

The next thing then was my father couldn't take the strain of rearing a son 'til he was 16-years-of age, and at 16-years-of-age he was taken away from him.

He couldn't take it any more and he died after a short illness. I remember getting the whole family together and saying 'David, you are the head of the household, you have to keep going, you have to look after the family, I will stay in the house and you work'.

I was 22-years-of age at that time, just started out working, and I worked long hours – day and night – to get the family a good standard of living.

We always think of wee Billy, he is always in our thoughts and prayers. Claudy never seemed to go away. Even to this present day Claudy is always on our minds. I look for justice for Billy and for the others injured and bereaved in the Claudy bombing.

It has come out that a Catholic priest was involved - Father Chesney. Manys a time Catholics have come and shook my hand and said 'David we are ashamed to be Roman Catholics when we know a priest was involved in the bomb that killed your

brother'.

I know that at the present minute there are a lot of people out there who know everything about Claudy. Then, as you move on, the people I look to to give me answers are the RUC/PSNI, the British Government, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Irish Government. I know myself that the answers lie somewhere within these groups. I know that people from within those groups know who did it.

My good friend Michael Gallagher from Omagh gave me advice. He said 'David, keep fighting'. And fight I will until I get justice. I owe it to my brother, when I get to meet him in heaven, so that I can say to him 'I tried my best down there to get justice for you sir. Martin McGuinness once said he wanted to meet the people of Claudy. Had he met them? No. Why did he not meet them? The people of Claudy waited. I remember sitting in Claudy and a woman was sitting there with rosary beads and she said to me 'David I am ashamed to be a Roman Catholic'. I said 'don't worry about it, your loss is the same as my loss'.

I want a future where we work together, we die together, we die naturally together. I want a future where everyone's culture is accepted and respected, where everyone is equal under the law, and where justice is done and is seen to be done. That's the kind of future I want – not the

one that is being offered to us today.

As a family we will not leave this unturned. I will use every court in the land to get justice for my brother. The Roman Catholic Church has always tried to cover its tracks. As time moves on there have been other things that they tried to cover up. There are people who know about who is responsible for Claudy. The politicians – they always talk about it but they never seem to admit what they know.

To me, justice means that at least when I go to heaven I will know that I tried my best for wee Billy, for all the people of Claudy, for all the victims in the Troubles. I want to keep fighting for them.

My brother  
The day that God called your name  
It broke my heart in two  
But heaven needed an angel  
And the one he picked was you  
I just wish he could have waited  
And let you stay with me  
But you have left memories in my heart  
And that's where they'll always be.  
From sister, Joyce Galbraith

I always remembered the way you looked  
The way you used to smile  
The little things you said and done  
Are with me all the while

Your name I often mention  
My thoughts are with you still  
You haven't been forgotten  
And you know you never will  
From Desmond and Ernie

A very sudden parting,  
I often wonder why  
The hardest part of all  
You never said goodbye  
A little tear falls gently  
Which others do not see  
For a kind and loving brother  
Who meant the world to me  
From David and Adrian

# SURVIVORS

In addition to the nine lives stolen away in the attack on Claudy, dozens more suffered serious and often life-changing injuries. More still suffered psychological harm from the horror inflicted upon the people of the village that Monday morning. Here, blast survivors share their memories of that day, and how their lives were forever changed. Four people – Marjorie Leslie, Mary Hamilton, Michelle McKeever and Paul O’Kane tell their stories.

**Marjorie Leslie, who is now a retired social worker, said she remembers the events of the day “as if it was yesterday”.**

## ***This is her story:***

That morning, Noel my husband was working in Eakin’s garage. I was in the house. I came back from Desmond’s factory. Maurice was coming down to pick me up that Monday morning and of course Operation Motorman was going on. I didn’t realise the traffic in Derry wasn’t getting out the same. My mum was there. She worked in Eakin’s shop actually, but she wasn’t working that day. She was in my kitchen and I was in the living room. My kids were young – only four, three and two years-of-age.

I heard a bang, and I heard mummy shouting ‘oh my God’. I came running in and said ‘what’s

wrong’, and she said ‘look at the smoke, there was a big, blue flash’. I knew immediately it was a bomb, and I knew it was up the street. I lived in Pinewood Crescent, so I came out and I was at Church Street, opposite the hotel. Of course my instinct was to say ‘I’m going to look’.

I came out onto Church Street and there was just devastation. People were coming, crying, people were coming with blood. Dr Deacon was carrying Kathryn [Eakin]. Somebody was shouting ‘Mrs McElhinney is on fire’. Somebody shouted ‘get to f\*\*\*\* down that street, there’s another bomb’. I didn’t actually get up to the junction of the street. I had two girls that worked in Eakin’s shop, and I had my two arms around them telling people ‘come on back to my house for a cup of tea’. Little did we know there was another bomb at the hotel. And just as came to the hotel; boom, and then boom again. My first instinct was, from the first one at the hotel, that I would never hear another person speak in my life ever again. When the second one went off I thought no one is going to survive this day, we are all going to be dead.

Obviously, panic set in. The girls ran and I ran. As I ran down, the garage at the health centre door was open because that’s where I ended up. It was sheer black. I really thought ‘this is the end’. In the garage I couldn’t see, and I thought the

end of the world is here, this is it. But I sort of got myself gathered up, and then I could see light at the garage door. I came out, and as I did that I laughed. I just, I just laughed. I was walking down the footpath and I was just past the health centre and a neighbour of mine shouted 'holy Jesus Mrs Leslie, your foot is hanging off you'. I looked down, and my left foot was as if somebody had put a pot of strawberry jam on my ankle. I didn't feel it. So she took me into the health centre and that was complete chaos. The very dogs' paws were bleeding. There were people crying, people sitting with bandages. The nurse put me down in a chair, and the doctor came over and he said 'that's a hospital case'. He put a bandage around my foot to stop the bleeding. I still laughed.

There were no ambulances available because of Operation Motorman in Derry, so they were using Desmond's Factory vans, their Bedford vans. There was seating up the sides and an aisle up the middle. There were three others and me. Dr Deacon and the nurse came out, carrying Kathryn. They were going to put Kathryn in the middle. Now, I looked after Mark and Kathryn because I lived next to them on the Main Street before I got the house on Pinewood Crescent. At that, her granda came – granda Eakin – and said 'no, I want to nurse her'. He sat opposite me. I remember Dr Deacon bringing her in, and her wee head was in his arm. Her wee arm was just hanging. I said 'be careful of her arm'. The doctor just looked at me.

I can remember going up into Church Street and into the Main Street of Claudy – oh my God almighty. Cars were burning, roofs were off premises, debris on the street. It still didn't register with me. We got down to Killaloo, and at Killaloo Orange Hall is where the junction meets the main Glenshane Road, or it did in those days. I remember as we turned onto that Glenshane Road, the pain set in my foot. I'll never forget that pain. It had to have been the shock, because I didn't have any instant pain.

When we got to Altnagelvin Hospital I thought 'thank God'. I was the last to get out because I couldn't walk at that stage. I had to get a wheelchair. It was the old A&E in those days, and when I came Granda Eakin was standing and he came over and took me by the hand. Mr Bennett, who was a consultant, pulled off his mask and shook his head. We knew Jathryn was dead.

Anyway, I got an x-ray. Nobody ever came near me, but there was a young priest from Waterside who came to me. I was just sitting, crying my eyes out. He came over and took the wheelchair and said 'this lady needs attended'. Mr Bennett was the orthopaedic consultant, and I said to him 'please put me to sleep'. I didn't know and Dr Deacon didn't know that I still had the metal in my foot, so when he put the bandage on there was swelling. I was in hospital for a week. I came out the following Monday.

At that time, all roads into Claudy were manned by the UDR. We came in and I remember saying

to Noel 'I can't do this, I can't'. I was so scared. I was petrified. The fear was just so awful. I had been away for a week and when I came back, obviously the village was clean but it was like a wee ghost place. That fear still grips me.

I remember getting ready to go to bed, with plaster of paris from my toes to my thighs. We eventually got me up the stairs, and my big worry was if another bomb went off I would never come down again, never. That was Monday. On the Wednesday, we were going to the Isle of Man. Mr Baird had agreed for me to go in early to get my stitches out. It was a bit premature, so he bandaged me very, very heavily. We had no car, so Noel got a Hillman Imp [a small, economy car] from Jack Eakin. There were four adults, two children and all the luggage in that wee small car going to the airport.

After her return from the family holiday in the Isle of Man, Mrs Leslie described how she spent some time undergoing physical therapy before regaining the ability to walk unimpeded. The mental scars, meanwhile, proved more permanent.

Here, she describes the years after the horror of Claudy on July 31, 1972.

"I couldn't get into a lift after it. I never went over the bridge in the city for four years after it. The thought of having to go through that again petrified me.

"I went back to work in the January, and when the doors came down at night – the bang of them – made me think 'I can't work here'. I went into Gransha to become a nursing auxiliary, and from there I went to Fort James and became a social worker.

I never had an opportunity to fully tell my story until three years ago, when I took part in the production of 'The Crack in Everything' by Jo Egan.

That taught me that, no matter what class, creed or colour you come from, we've all got the same emotions and we're all looking for answers, which we'll never get.

I was at Claudy the day the Ombudsman came down to give the final report, and I have to say I was very angry. It was just the victims who were there. I was angry because the Cardinal, Willie Whitleaw, and the RUC chief constable were judge and jury. These three people decided that this man, Chesney, wasn't going to stand trial. I was told that they were scared if they arrested him, that the UDA, UVF or whoever would go and kill a priest. I didn't want anybody shot, but there was nine people killed. That stirred up some feelings that I was getting resentful against the authorities because they said the police didn't have records, they were stored in a police station in Co Tyrone, I find it all very hard to believe. No one ever interviewed me after the Claudy bombing. People didn't care, and I think if we look today at all of the inquiries that have

happened it shows that we can't trust anybody. I feel now that we will never get justice.

**Mary Hamilton, meanwhile, went on to pursue a successful career in local politics following her experiences of Claudy.**



***This is her story.***

My late husband Ernie was born into a farming family in Donemana. I was born into a farming family in Lifford and my father and uncle were prominent men in the community, and dedicated members of Loyal Orders.

When we got married we knew we didn't want to pursue farming so when the Beaufort came up for sale, we thought seriously about it and prayed for guidance. We bought it in 1971 and never regretted it.

We had the bar, lounge, bed and breakfast and also our home. We had a lot of friends as customers. It was a place to meet and enjoy your neighbours. The ladies would go into the kitchen and have some coffee or tea, and friendship. Ours was a half-way house for everyone.

July 31, 1972 was just a normal, working day.

It was Monday morning and little did we know that it was going to change our lives forever. Our good friend and neighbour Annie Miller was in our home as she brought the paper every day and had her morning cup of tea.

Suddenly, we heard a loud explosion and everyone rushed out and up the street to see what had happened. Very soon, people became aware that it was a bomb. The sight we saw was an atrocity. People had blood streaming down their faces. A lady who had been filling petrol at the pump was on fire. People were still on the pavement. Children were calling for help, calling for their mothers. Someone noticed a van outside the post office with wires attached, and we realised it was another bomb so we were ordered down the street – not aware that we were walking into the path of another bomb outside the Beaufort. Three people were killed outright, slaughtered. One man, his body was

so badly injured that he was unrecognisable. He was identified by a button on his shirt that his wife had sewn that morning. Another victim, a little lad aged 16, was on his first day of his first job. He spoke to me about the first bomb and told me he had got his hand hurt. The next instant he was blown up. How can anyone ever forget the graphic sights? One minute you are talking to someone and the next they are gone forever. Ernie and I had the feeling of our bodies being sucked in, and feeling as if you were going to burst. Our legs were cut and bodies were embedded with shrapnel. I had three operations for the lacerations on my leg and to remove shrapnel. I still suffer to this day because the shrapnel is too deeply embedded.

We both suffered all our lives.

There was panic to get people to hospital and all the ambulances were in use, so we had to use vans or any form of transport to ferry the injured to Altnagelvin. When we arrived at the hospital it was a state of pandemonium. People were crying for help. There were bodies lying on the floor. Extra doctors and nurses were brought in to tend to the wounded and families were trying to find their loved ones.

These memories and feelings never leave you. It is so hard to talk about it. We had lost our business and our home, and worst of all some very good, lifelong friends. But we want the world to know what life in the Troubles was like.

The week after the bombing was difficult as all

the funerals were taking place, and reality was beginning to set in.

There had been unrest in the village for some time and the telephone exchange had been blown up three weeks before, so there was no way of giving a warning – only through the police. On that morning, some boys went into the chemist in Dungiven and told the assistant to warn the police about three bombs in Claudy – and if anyone was killed it would be their fault. Can you imagine the arrogance, and the cheek, of bombing a village and trying to blame a young shop assistant. The warning was too late. The three bombs had been planted at three premises owned by Protestants – Eakin's garage, the Post Office and the Beaufort. I believe those behind the bombing were no strangers to Claudy.

We had to buy a caravan to live in. Can you imagine the contents you would have in an eight bedroom home and business? Nothing was left. We bought a hut to try and carry on our business, and to build our home again. Financially, it was not easy as we were only starting out in life.

Mary also reflected on the long-lasting pain inflicted on the people of Claudy, and people across Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

The Troubles left behind many awful, emotional memories and physical pain that affects us all. Tragedy would strike our family again, when in December, 1972 Ernie's brother Ellis, a part-time

UDR soldier, was shot dead. We all miss him very deeply. I remember the fear of living in the caravan, without four stone walls around us, if something else were to happen.

In those days there was no help, counselling or support in those days to help to erase some of the memories. You ask the question: Why? I am still wary of strangers and if I see crowds around cars or vehicles, I think they are going to explode.

Mary and Ernie, meanwhile, went on to pursue a successful career in local politics following their experience of Claudy.

We were active members of the Ulster Unionist Party for many years. Sadly, Ernie lost his life in 2018 due to Parkinson's. Life is so different without him. I will always keep his memory alive in every walk of life. We were both members of the council in Londonderry, and we both served as Deputy Mayor. I retired from council in 2019 but still support and help anyone I can.

When I think of all of the atrocities across the Province, and the Claudy one, it is hard to come to terms with it. Others can get justice but it seems that Claudy does not matter. No one would stand up and tell the truth. I will keep on fighting for I owe it to all the innocent people to get justice. We deserve the same as others.

We talked with clergy and heads of state, and we know Martin McGuinness would have known about Claudy. He said he didn't and we invited

him to come and meet the victims of Claudy and tell them what he did or did not know. He did not come. I wonder why?

They came into the village  
At the dawning of the day  
And they created havoc  
And the innocent had to pay  
No one ever did admit  
The terrible crime they had done  
But they left the broken hearted  
Father, mother, daughter, son  
It's 50 years ago today  
And no one had to pay  
But our Father up in heaven  
They will meet on judgement day

**Paul O’Kane, a firefighter who lived in Claudy and was off-duty at the time of the bombing, shares his memories of July 31, 1972.**

***This is his story***

It was 50 years ago but it’s still raw in my. I was married to a girl from Claudy. We lived in the Bogside and, obviously it was the Troubles, and I was in the fire brigade. It seemed like every time I was on nights there was rioting and she couldn’t get sleeping, so we decided to move out to her mother’s in Claudy. We lived in Irwin Crescent. I was to be on nights that night, on the Monday, so I lay on in bed. It was quarter past ten. I heard the bang, an almighty bang. I knew rightly what it was, and where it was. I knew it was dangerous because we were used to them [explosions] in Derry.

I went up the street, up Irwin Crescent and turned right past the Beaufort – past the car parked on the road – on up we went. The place was a disaster. I walked around and I seen two people. There was something smouldering at the petrol pumps outside McElhinney’s pub. It was Mrs McElhinney, who was a nurse in Altnagelvin. Now, when I first looked I wasn’t sure what it was – it could have been anything – but she wore a particular type of slipper. Dr Scholl’s was a leather pair of slip-ons, so that’s how I knew who she was.

Down the street, there was a man lying on the

footpath. That was Artie Hone. Artie was lying on his back. Now, I didn’t know this until later on but Artie had his daughter with him. Artie was lying with his head on the road.

I went to him and he was alive, I know he was alive, he had the stare in his eye. But he was badly injured. I worked with him. I did this and I did that, and a Doctor arrived who had a big roll of cotton wool with him. I said ‘give us that’ and I wrapped Artie’s head with it. He was definitely alive at the time. This seemed like hours to me. A policeman came to clear the road, he was a boy called Sergeant Jones and I got to know him well. I said ‘I’m going nowhere, I’m working with this man’. I wasn’t forceful but he said ‘well, there’s a bomb in that car outside the Post Office’. Of course, I was down on my knees so I said ‘I’ll take me chances’.

There was a car between us so that’s why I said I’d take my chances.

There was an almighty bang. The wee house in front of me, at the corner, the slates all lifted up from the roof and then came down again. They came down around me, I was peckled, cut. The doctor tells me I’m full of wrinkles so you’ll never see the scars! I was cut on parts of my face. For a few seconds, I looked and that car was still sitting there. When that car went off, it hit Artie and it hit me - the metal. It hit Artie in his head, but what damage was done inside his clothes I don’t know.

People say the car outside the post office went

off first, but to me it was as if it was the same time.

The damage to me was shrapnel in my side. It's still there. The side of my face, my arms, my whole left-hand side.

After that, I don't remember a lot. What I do remember is being in the Market Square. Then I was in the hospital. Someone in the hospital said to me 'that's some cut you have there, will you have to lose the leg?'. That was the first time I knew I was really hurt. I was in hospital for three or four weeks. While I was in, a councillor – I think was called Gormley - was there and asked me would I talk to Anne Hone. I said 'I will', so I spoke to her. I know she had the wee girl and the boy, Paul. I was hurt, and it was bad. That's the way it was. There were investigations, well there were a few investigations, but the police were out with me and they told me I was taken to the hospital in one of Desmond's vans. I was strapped up and they told me who I was talking with. They said I had a statement, but I didn't even remember giving a statement. I was wrapped up like a mummy. The only things I remember was Market Square, then the hospital.

I have no real affiliation now with Claudy. My Eileen died nearly 20 years ago, then I met Eilish. But just the word Claudy – I won't sleep tonight thinking about this. My mind was damaged.

I am hoping that with this 50th anniversary it will bring peace of mind to me. There are still a few people there who I know. I was at an event

and people were saying 'that man there, no one knows what he did', but I didn't do anything. I just seen a man there who was hurt and, okay, there were bloodstains and I was hurt, but I'm here to talk about it. I am glad, now, that this anniversary is coming up because I will be part of it. My physical injuries have healed but the injury to my mind is still there.

# THE CONTEXT

The year of the Claudy bombing, 1972, was the bloodiest in the 30-year period of conflict known as the Northern Ireland Troubles.

On January 30 that year, 13 people attending a civil rights demonstration were shot dead by British soldiers in Londonderry in what has come to be known as Bloody Sunday.

And on July 21, less than a fortnight before the bombing of Claudy, the Provisional IRA detonated a series of bombs in Belfast that killed five civilians, two soldiers and one RUC reservist in what has come to be known as Bloody Friday. Before 1972 drew to a close, a total of 497 people had been killed. In the seven months leading up to the Claudy bombing, 273 people would lose their lives. In July alone, including the nine victims in Claudy, 97 people perished.

On the day of the bombing, in the early hours of July 31, a large-scale operation had been launched to wrest control back from republicans of so-called 'no go areas' in the urban centres of

Derry and Belfast.

Known as Operation Motorman, it was at that time the single largest military operation executed by the British military since the 1950s. Bulldozers and other large vehicles were used to break through barricades, before the targeted areas were flooded with smaller, lighter armoured vehicles and troops.

While the full truth about the reasons for the Claudy bombing have never been made public, one theory suggests Operation Motorman had prompted the IRA into an attempt to divert the attention of security forces away from Derry.

Claudy, 11 miles from the city, was perhaps judged to have been both suitably close and still far enough away to make for an appropriate target. Whatever the reasons, the Monday-morning bombing would unleash horror and suffering upon the innocent people of the quiet, rural village.

# THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS ON THE DAY

On Monday, July 31, 1972 three car bombs were armed in the countryside surrounding the village of Claudy.

The explosives were packed into milk churns and surrounded by metal objects and other debris, designed to act as shrapnel and add to the damage the blasts would cause.

One was placed in a Ford Cortina, another in a Mini Traveller, and the third in a Morris Mini Van. All three vehicles had been stolen.

It is believed the three vehicles were driven in convoy into the heart of the village.

Press reporting from August that year revealed that police believed the bombs had been prepared in a “hide-out” off a laneway in the townland of Craigavole, near Swatragh in the south of Co Londonderry.

Once in Claudy, the Ford Cortina was parked on Main Street, close to a local bar. The Mini Traveller was also parked on Main Street, near the Post Office.

The Morris Mini Van, meanwhile, was parked outside the Beaufort Hotel on Church Street.

After driving the car bombs to their locations, the bombers are believed to have attempted to deliver a warning to the police about the explosives so that the area could be evacuated. The warning was too late.

A report into the Claudy bombing, published in

2010, found that a car that had been travelling in the direction of Claudy stopped at the village of Feeny. A passenger got out and entered a telephone box, which was later found to be out of order.

The local telephone exchange had been out of order due to an earlier IRA attack.

Instead, shop assistants in a shop in Dungiven were asked to inform police that there were three bombs in Claudy.

By the time police in Claudy got the information, the first of the three bombs had exploded.

Within the space of 15 minutes, all three had gone off.

The first car bomb, in the Ford Cortina parked outside McElhinney’s bar on Main Street, exploded at around 10.15am. Three people were killed instantly.

Elizabeth McElhinney, a 59-year-old retired nurse who worked in the bar, was attending to a petrol pump.

Joseph McCloskey, a 39-year-old father-of-seven who worked in a factory, was also nearby when the bomb went off.

And Kathryn Eakin, a nine-year-old girl, was cleaning windows at her family’s shop.

A further three people would suffer serious injuries in the initial blast and die in the days that would follow.

Rose McLaughlin was a 52-year-old mother-of-eight who ran a local cafe. Arthur Hone was a 38-year-old father-of-two who worked for an insurance company. Joseph Connolly was 15-years-old and had been hoping to meet with an employment officer about starting his first job. After the initial blast, suspicions were raised about the stolen Mini Traveller outside the Post Office.

A police officer and a member of the public discovered the bomb in the rear of the vehicle, and the area around the vehicle was cleared of people.

Sergeant Desmond Jones, a 37-year-old father-of-six, had been in Claudy while on holiday. Press reporting from the time reveals that after the initial explosion, the RUC Sergeant considered the possibility of further bombs in the area and conducted a search.

At the Mini Traveller, a milk churn with two wires leading to an alarm clock was discovered. Sergeant Jones attempted to lift the device but was unable. Instead, he shouted for people to stay clear.

Sadly, some of those who were told to move out of harm's way would move towards Church

Street, where another car bomb was ready to explode.

About fifteen minutes after the first explosion, the remaining two bombs went off in short sequence. Thanks to the last-ditch efforts in clearing the area around the stolen Mini Traveller, there were no fatalities despite the devastation the bomb wreaked on Main Street.

The bomb in the Morris Mini Van, however, would claim a further three lives.

James McClelland was a 65-year-old who was just a few weeks from retirement from his job as a street cleaner. David Miller was a 60-year-old father-of-three who worked for the local council. William Temple, a 16-year-old who was a milkman's helper, also lost his life.

Contemporaneous press reports indicate that Mr Miller had been helping in rescue efforts following the initial blast when he was killed by the explosion at Church Street.

A fire chief described the scene in the village as "absolute carnage".

Another eyewitness, local grocer Terence Peoples, told reporters: "People were squealing in terror."

# IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

The funerals of six of those killed in the Claudy bombings were held within days. All business was suspended in the now-devastated village. The Desmond's factory, which had been the main employer in the area, remained closed in the immediate aftermath. The funerals were held for both the youngest and the oldest victims of the bombing — Kathryn Eakin and James McClelland — on Wednesday, the second of August. The following day, the funerals were held for David Miller, Joseph McCloskey, William Temple, and Elizabeth McElhinney.

The people of Claudy, both Catholic and Protestant, turned out in large numbers to pay respects at the funerals of those killed.

The attack prompted widespread horror, revulsion and sympathy with the people of Claudy.

Northern Ireland's last governor, Lord Grey of Naunton, had reportedly sent a message of sympathy to the Lord Lieutenant for the county, John C Drennan.

Lord Windlesham, Northern Ireland Minister of State at the time, said: "This was a most mindless and terrible act of violence — particularly in a small community like this where relations have always been good".

The IRA would deny that it was responsible for the attack. The chief-of-staff of the Provisional IRA at that time, Sean Seán Mac Stíofáin, would deny the involvement of local units in the attack

on Claudy. Later, in his book 'A Revolutionary Ireland', the paramilitary leader would repeat the denial. He wrote: "I turned on RTE. The news was appalling. A terrible tragedy had struck the small town of Claudy in Co Derry. Three car bombs had exploded there. Six people had been killed outright. 30 people were injured, and some subsequently died. My heart and everything I had inside me just seemed to tighten up in a knot and sink slowly to the bottom of my stomach. 'Holy Mother of God', I thought. 'Who is responsible for this?'"

Despite the denials, it was widely believed even at the time that the IRA were responsible.

The local MP, Ivan Cooper, was quoted in contemporaneous press reporting that he did "not accept the categorical denial of the provisional IRA". Mr Cooper, who was from the village of Claudy, said within days of the attack and the IRA's denial that he would carry out his own investigation into what happened by interviewing witnesses.

In an article published in the Irish Times on August 2, 1972, Mr Cooper said he was in a position to state "quite firmly that the Provisional IRA statement denying responsibility is not acceptable to me and, I might add, to many of those I represent."

Much of what took place during the RUC's investigation into the Claudy bombing, meanwhile, has been lost to time but a report

published by the Police Ombudsman almost 40 years later shed some light on the force's actions during the aftermath of the attack.

Press reporting from the time, however, also reveals some of what the police force had uncovered during their initial investigation.

A report in the News Letter newspaper, dated August 8, 1972, states that "security forces" had "found the IRA hide-out where the three car bombs were made which brought death to the quiet village of Claudy".

The newspaper reported that the "hide-out" was at Craigavole, Swatragh. The report continues: "Police and men from the 2nd Bn. Royal Green Jackets found two primed 100 lb bombs in the hide-out – a derelict house. And they also found almost 3 cwqt. Of explosives, detonators, 400 rounds of ammunition, a Thompson submachine gun, a .45 pistol, 10 detonators and a crossbow." A police spokesperson is quoted by the newspaper as saying: "It looks as if this is the factory where the bombs were made for the Claudy explosion".

The Ombudsman's report, meanwhile, showed that a man – referred to only as 'Man A' – who owned a car similar to the style and colour of the distinctive vehicle that had been spotted stopping at Feeny to use the phonebox, before driving at speed to Dungiven where the attempt was made to deliver the warning to police through the shop assistants.

Man A was arrested within days of the attack, on suspicion of involvement in what proved to be an horrific massacre of innocent people. At interview, the suspect denied that he had been

involved. He said he had, instead, been at the Parochial House in Bellaghy, Co Derry with a priest known as Father James Chesney. Police records, according to the Ombudsman's report, indicate that both the priest had corroborated this alibi along with a third party who was not named in the report.

At the time, police believed the alibi had been prepared in advance and that Fr Chesney was himself suspected of involvement in the bombing. A second man was also arrested during the first week of August but was also released without charge, having been eliminated from the enquiry. Police would, however, continue to compile intelligence as part of their investigation.

In September that year, a police intelligence report stated that Man A was a member of the IRA, and referred to his direct participation in terrorist acts – including the bombing of Claudy. In October of that year, police intelligence alleged that Father Chesney had in fact formed what it described as an "independent" unit of the IRA and had, in a separate incident, helped Man A evade arrest the previous month.

A police officer would also tell the Ombudsman's investigation that he had, in a series of intelligence reports, connected Father Chesney with the Claudy bombing, alleged that he was a leading member of an IRA unit that had been responsible for bombings in the South Derry area. The officer wished to have Fr Chesney arrested and the parochial house searched. Neither happened.

# ALLEGATIONS, ACCUSATIONS AND COVER-UP

The 1972 attack on the village of Claudy has been the subject of speculation, allegation, accusation and investigation over much of the past 50 years. No prosecutions followed the original investigation by the RUC into the bombing but in the weeks, months and years that followed, some of the same rumours that had begun to crop up within weeks of the massacre would prove to be persistent.

Some new allegations and accusations would also emerge.

Victims and survivors, along with the families of those killed, have been forced for five decades to grapple with the denial of justice as the uncertainty and lack of clarity has added to their suffering.

For the first three decades after the bombing, there would be little to change the murky picture of the Claudy bombing and who carried it out.

For some, the answer to the most crucial question of all—why anyone would do such a thing – has remained elusive.

The anniversary year of 2002, however, would prove to be consequential in shedding at least some light on what had happened in Claudy.

At that time, thirty years , the conflict known as the Troubles was beginning to recede into history following the signing of the internationally lauded Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

The RUC, which had been subject to persistent

accusations of sectarianism, had been disbanded and replaced with the new Police Service of Northern Ireland following the negotiated peace settlement.

And hopes had risen that new light could be shed – and justice secured – over some of the conflict's most notorious and bloody episodes.

By the time of the 30th anniversary of the Claudy bombing in July 2002, a new public inquiry had been up-and-running for around four years into the shooting of unarmed civil rights protesters by British soldiers on what is known as Bloody Sunday.

And in August 2002, the PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Sam Kincaid would commission a review of the RUC's investigation into Claudy.

Later that year, the PSNI would launch its own.

Part of the renewed investigation's remit was to probe the claims that its predecessor force, the RUC, had along with British government and the Catholic Church conspired in a cover-up to keep the role of a Catholic priest in the attack hidden. ACC Kincaid said, in a letter to families, it was not his intention to reveal the identity of the priest suspected of involvement.

By 2002, the initial denial of responsibility for Claudy by the IRA had continued but rumours that had emerged in the weeks after the bombing that a Catholic priest – and the IRA brigade he had allegedly been involved with—had been

behind the attack on the rural village.

The priest would eventually be named as Father James Chesney, who died in 1980.

As early as October, 1972, Fr Chesney was suspected by police of being one of those behind the attack on Claudy.

In December 2002, the body tasked with overseeing the work of the police in Northern Ireland, the Police Ombudsman's office, would

announce its own probe to look at how the investigation into "those matters relating to police misconduct".

Alongside investigative reporting by the media, the report published by the Police Ombudsman in 2010 – incomplete as it was, following the limited-scope investigation – would perhaps give the most complete account to date of what had happened on July 31, 1972.

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## FATHER CHESNEY AND THE FATHER LIAM LETTER

Father James Chesney had been a curate in the small, rural parish of Cullion, near the village of Desertmartin in south Derry, less than 30 miles from Claudy in the north of the county.

In September 2002, a two-page typed letter purporting to be from a Catholic priest based in England would arrive with two people – Ian Starrett and Mary Hamilton.

Mrs Hamilton, who owned the Beaufort Hotel on Church Street and was injured in the bombing, had gone on to pursue a career in local politics and was at the time the Deputy Mayor of Derry City Council.

Mr Starrett, meanwhile, was a reporter for the News Letter newspaper in Belfast who had written extensively about the Claudy bombing – including the title's coverage of the 30th anniversary.

In an article by Mr Starrett outlining the contents

of the letter, its author – referred to as Father Liam – states that he had attended seminary at the same time as a priest who had been "sent to south Derry".

The author, whose true identity has never been publicly revealed, described how in 1972 he went to see Father Chesney in Malin Head, in Co Donegal and how during a late-night conversation the other priest broke down and confessed how he led the unit which planted the Claudy bombs.

The 'Father Liam' letter continues: "He [the south Derry priest] became a member of the IRA and was soon in charge of a small number of volunteers.

"His unit was ordered from Derry City to plant bombs in Claudy to ease the pressure on the IRA in the city and so they planted the bombs.

"It was their intention to phone a warning as they

passed through Dungiven on the way home but found that all telephones were out of order.

“When he heard what happened in Claudy he was horrified.”

The letter’s authenticity has been strongly disputed. The Catholic church, for example, has pointed out how the letter’s author refers to the priest in question as “John”, rather than Fr Chesney’s true name of James or Jim.

The report in Mr Starett’s newspaper article also states that the letter’s author had promised to come forward but this has never happened.

The local politician Ivan Cooper, a Protestant who was instrumental in the civil rights campaign during the early stages of the Troubles, had in the immediate aftermath of the bombing suggested the IRA were behind the attack despite the paramilitary group’s denial.

Also in 2002, Mr Cooper said he had “become aware of the identities” of those involved within months of the attack, and named Fr Chesney.

In a Guardian newspaper article dated September 2002, Mr Cooper is quoted as saying: “Within a couple of days, a man lurked like a scared rabbit outside one of my constituency offices. He told me the IRA was behind the bomb and I had every reason to believe him. He gave no names and I asked no names. That is the way it was then. It was dangerous to know too much.

“But several months later, I became aware of the identities and I have absolutely no doubt that Father Jim Chesney was involved.”

Mr Cooper also suggested police had quickly become aware of the suspicions surrounding the priest, and that the Catholic church had also become aware at a later stage.

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## KINCAID INVESTIGATION REVEALS FIRST HINTS OF COVER-UP

In December 2002, PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Sam Kincaid wrote to the families of those killed in the Claudy bombing to provide an update on a review he had commissioned following the 30th anniversary of the attack.

In his update, the assistant police chief told families the ‘Father Liam letter’ would be included.

“The purpose of the review is to see if there any new or existing lines of enquiry that the PSNI can take forward,” he wrote. “I later amended the terms of reference for the review to include an assessment of a letter purporting to come from a ‘father Liam’.

“This spoke of the involvement of a Catholic priest in the bomb attack.”

The claim in the letter that a south Derry priest, Fr Chesney, had been a member of the IRA were corroborated, ACC Kincaid said, following a search of “1972 papers” that “clearly indicate” a priest in the area had been a member of the Provisional IRA and was “actively involved in terrorism”.

The update given by the senior police officer also stated that Fr Chesney had provided an alibi for a Claudy bomb suspect.

The first hints of what would later be described as a cover-up by both the Church and state were also revealed by this initial review. In his update to families, the assistant police chief said: “Our enquiries have revealed that a member of the public briefed the then Cardinal and a senior police officer on the role of the priest not long after the date of the bombing. We have also discovered papers indicating that in late November 1972 the police briefed NIO [Northern

Ireland Office] officials on some of the priest’s alleged activities.

“In addition, papers were found relating to a discussion held on 5th of December, 1972 between the Secretary of State at the time, William Whitelaw, and Cardinal Conway. On 6th December 1972, the day after the meeting, a briefing letter was sent from a senior NIO official to police headquarters indicating that the private matter discussed related to the activities of the priest.”

The senior officer’s letter to families also indicates that by January of 1972, Fr Chesney – who was not referred to by name in the update – had not been seen in the south Derry area. It also revealed that the possibility of Fr Chesney’s transfer to a parish in Donegal was discussed during the conversation between the Catholic Cardinal and the government minister.

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## POLICE OVERSIGHT BODY STEPS IN

Within ten days of the update delivered to families by the PSNI, the organisation charged with oversight of the police service in Northern Ireland would announce its own investigation into the Claudy bombing. The then Police Ombudsman, Nuala O’Loan, wrote to families on December 30, 2002, to announce her intention to investigate “possible misconduct by

officers in relation to the Claudy bombing”. The Ombudsman told families she had also received a copy of the ‘Father Liam’ letter that had been sent to both Mr Starrett of the News Letter and the bomb survivor Mrs Hamilton, now the Deputy Mayor of the local council.

The letter to families stressed, however, that the investigation would have “no power” to examine

allegations surrounding the role of the Catholic Church, security agencies or the UK Government. It would be eight years before the publication

of the Ombudsman's report, with Nuala O'Loan stepping down to be replaced by Al Hutchinson at the head of the office in the meantime

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## PSNI INVESTIGATION CONTINUES

Meanwhile, the PSNI's investigation of the Claudy bombing would continue. In 2005, three years after the case was reopened, several people – including a local politician – would be arrested. Four people were arrested and questioned in late November that year – a woman aged 58 who was arrested in Dungannon in Co Tyrone, a 50-year-old man in the Portglenone area in Co Antrim, and two men aged 60 and 67 in Dungiven, a 15 minute drive away from Claudy. Among the four arrested was the now deceased Sinn Fein MLA Francie Brolly, who had been interned and detained six months after the Claudy bombings and had spent more than two years in prison. He was never convicted. All four were released without charge on December 1, 2005. Afterwards, Mr Brolly told the media he had nothing to do with the Claudy bombing, had no foreknowledge of the massacre, and expressed the view that he had been arrested simply because he had been a republican who lived around 10 miles away from the village. He was quoted in a BBC article as saying: "Without going into any detail of how the interviews went,

fundamentally the only evidence – if you can call it that – that they were putting forward for my possible knowledge of what happened in Claudy was that I live in Dungiven."

Mr Brolly later lodged an official complaint with the Police Ombudsman regarding his arrest. He also initiated legal action at the High Court in relation to the arrest, but the case was 'stayed' – meaning he didn't pursue the matter. Five years later, in an interview with the English newspaper the Sunday Express, he claimed police officers told him the names of those responsible for the bombing during the course of the interviews. "During questioning, they told me everything that happened," he told the newspaper. "There were four men who made bombs 13 miles away and put them in dairy cans. Police even had the boxes from the clocks which were used."

Following the four arrests in 2005, the PSNI said a report was being prepared for submission to the Public Prosecution Service who would then determine whether there were grounds to merit prosecutions. No charges would be forthcoming.

# OMBUDSMAN DELIVERS FINDINGS, CLAIMS COVER-UP

It would be August, 2010 before the Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman – a post held at that time by the former Royal Canadian Mounted Police Assistant Commissioner Al Hutchinson – would deliver the findings of its investigation and, in the process, lift the lid on how police colluded with the UK government, which had been involved with the Catholic Church, to cover-up the suspected role of Father Chesney in the 1972 bomb attack.

Despite the original papers from the RUC's original investigation of the bombing having gone missing, the Ombudsman's office was able to piece together some of what had went on from documents that it was able to recover.

A covering report written by the police officer leading the original investigation for the original Inquest file, typed witness statements, crime scene maps and photographs, and a host of other documents were recovered.

The Ombudsman's investigation report found that the RUC had come to the conclusion that Fr Chesney had in fact been at the head of the IRA brigade in South Derry.

It found that the RUC at the time believed Chesney had been directly involved in the bombing.

It also found that a detective had wished to arrest Fr Chesney but had been advised by an Assistant Chief Constable of Special Branch that

"matters are in hand".

The report also stated that letters between the police and the UK Government's Northern Ireland Office (NIO) show that the assistant police chief had asked about "what action could be taken to render harmless a dangerous priest".

The Ombudsman's report stated that the letter "appears to have been designed to prompt the NIO to raise with the Cardinal or Bishops of the Catholic Church the issue of Father Chesney's alleged involvement in terrorism".

The document referred not only to the Claudy bombing, specifically, but also to a "positive sniffer dog check for traces of explosives in his car when he was stopped at an RUC Checkpoint in September 1972". Even the discovery of traces of explosives in his car was not enough to prompt the arrest of Fr Chesney.

The Ombudsman also revealed that an official in the Northern Ireland Office had replied in a letter to police stating that the Minister in charge of the office at that time, Northern Ireland Secretary William Whitelaw, had met with Cardinal Conway and expressed "his disgust at Fr Chesney's behaviour". The Cardinal, according to the letter, knew that Chesney was "a very bad man" and had "mentioned the possibility of transferring him to Donegal".

This correspondence, the Ombudsman's report

stated, was then circulated to a number of police officers. The RUC Chief Constable in 1972, Sir Graham Shillington, said that he would “prefer a transfer to Tipperary”.

In the event, Fr Chesney would be transferred to a parish in County Donegal, just across the border from County Derry. He would deny involvement in terrorism when questioned by his Church superiors. The Ombudsman report stated that police inaction meant Fr Chesney’s denial was never tested and he died of cancer in 1980.

Following the publication of the report, the UK government said it was “profoundly sorry” about the cover-up, while the Catholic church said it accepted the findings, calling them “shocking”.

Cardinal Sean Brady, who was the most senior figure in the Catholic Church in Ireland at the time of the report’s publication, is quoted in a BBC article from the time as saying: “Throughout the Troubles, the Catholic Church, along with other Churches in Northern Ireland, was constant in its condemnation of the evil of violence. It is therefore shocking that a priest should be suspected of involvement in such violence.

“This case should have been properly investigated and resolved during Father Chesney’s lifetime.

“If there was sufficient evidence to link him to criminal activity, he should have been arrested and questioned at the earliest opportunity, like anyone else.

“We agree with the Police Ombudsman that the fact this did not happen failed those who were murdered, injured and bereaved in the bombings.”

Owen Patterson, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said: ““The Claudy bombing was a terrible atrocity carried out by terrorists during the bloodiest year of the Troubles.

“I absolutely condemn the actions of the terrorists who were responsible.

“It was a despicable and evil act carried out by despicable and evil people.”

“My anger at the actions of those responsible for the attack is matched in strength by my sorrow that the survivors of the atrocity and the relatives of the dead did not see those responsible brought to justice for their crimes.”

In a statement, Mr Paterson also said: “For my part, on behalf of the Government, I am profoundly sorry that Father Chesney was not properly investigated for his suspected involvement in this hideous crime, and that the victims and their families have been denied justice.”

The Ombudsman, meanwhile, concluded that the actions of senior RUC officers in seeking and accepting the Government’s assistance in dealing with Fr Chesney’s alleged wrongdoing was a “collusive act”.

Mr Hutchinson said the investigation had been compromised and had “failed those who were murdered, injured or bereaved”.

He added that “their actions would have demanded explanation, which would have been the subject of further investigation” had they been still alive.

# ‘MAN A’ TRACKED DOWN

Details of the RUC’s investigation, revealed for the first time in the Ombudsman’s report in 2010, had led to fresh scrutiny on those – including Fr Chesney – suspected of being behind the Claudy bombing. And alongside the priest, the suspect referred to only as ‘Man A’ came under renewed suspicion. It turned out Man A was still alive and a team of investigative journalists working for the BBC in Northern Ireland had managed to track him down. A BBC Spotlight programme broadcast just weeks after the Ombudsman’s report was published featured an interview with the suspect.

Prior to its broadcast, the PSNI had sought a last-minute High Court injunction to try to view the programme and, if that was not permitted by the court, they wanted to stop it from being broadcast. The legal bid failed.

In addition to tracking down the so-called ‘Man A’, journalists working for the programme had also conducted an interview with the police officer who gathered much of the intelligence that put Fr Chesney under suspicion. The former officer, referred to as ‘Police Officer 1’ in the Ombudsman’s report, told the Spotlight programme the intelligence had been graded as ‘B2 level’ – meaning it was considered “very reliable and probably true”.

The officer, by then retired, said: “I am quite satisfied that it was very accurate, and that he [Fr Chesney] was involved.” The programme also reported that “senior republicans in south Derry”

had said Fr Chesney was “a member of the IRA”. A former IRA man was interviewed by the Spotlight team and said the Parochial House in Cullion, near the village of Desertmartin had been a “safe house” for IRA operatives who were “on the run”, and for the testing and development of explosive devices, under the supervision of Fr Chesney.

The Spotlight programme, meanwhile, discovered that Man A had moved to America with his wife and had lived there for some time, in a range of locations in the USA. He had, however, moved back to Ireland.

Confronted with the suspicions about his involvement in the bombing by BBC journalist Enda McClafferty at his home, Man A continued to deny any involvement or knowledge of the Claudy bombing.

The Spotlight programme also reported that, in 2005, the PSNI had considered arresting the senior Sinn Féin figure Martin McGuinness in connection with the Claudy bombing but had decided there was insufficient evidence to warrant such a step. Mr McGuinness, who died in 2017, had by 1972 been the second-in-command of the IRA in Derry.

In 2010, Mr McGuinness admitted going to meet Fr Chesney on his deathbed, having initially denied ever having met the priest.

# POLICE INVESTIGATION CEASES

In 2013, in a hammer blow to families' hopes of finding out the full truth of who carried out the Claudy bombing, the PSNI decided to suspend the investigation it had renewed in 2002.

The decision was taken, police said, due to a lack of evidence. In October that year, a meeting took place between Claudy families, who were accompanied by the politician Tom Elliott, and detectives. Afterwards, a spokesperson for the PSNI said: "Police can confirm that we met with Tom Elliott and members of the families to update

them on the investigation and to inform them we have completed our enquiries identified from a review.

"As a result, the investigation is currently suspended until such times as new information or evidence is received.

"Police would continue to appeal to anyone with information to come forward so that the people responsible for this atrocity are brought to justice."

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## LEGAL ACTION TAKEN AGAINST POLICE, CHURCH AND STATE

In October 2013, just days after the PSNI's decision to suspend its investigation, legal action was taken against the police service, the UK government and the Catholic Church on behalf of a number of families whose relatives were killed in the Claudy bombing.

The legal firm KRW Law said their clients – the families of Jim McClelland, David Miller and William Temple – were concerned about "the historical failure to prosecute anyone (and) the lack of accountability on the part of the various parties identified in the ombudsman's report".

The firm said in a statement that the "primary reason" in bringing the case was to seek

discovery of material, including intelligence, which was "not necessarily made available" to the ombudsman when he did his report.

A spokesperson for KRW added: "We also want to force some measure of acceptance on the part of the state in the flawed decision making that undermined the subsequent police investigations."

In 2019, it emerged that new evidence files had been uncovered in the time since the Police Ombudsman's report in 2010.

In a statement to the News Letter newspaper, a spokesperson for the Ombudsman's office said: "We became aware of the issue of the additional

boxes of information in 2016. Our investigators reviewed them and satisfied themselves they contained nothing which related to the specifics of our investigation into events connected to the Claudy bombing.”

In September last year, the police and the state reached a settlement with the families of Jim

McClelland, David Miller and William Temple.

The PSNI and Northern Ireland Office agreed confidential settlements “without an admission of liability”.

The action against the Catholic Church has not been settled

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## WHERE THINGS STAND TODAY

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# SOUTH EAST FERMANAGH FOUNDATION

## *Supporting Victims and Survivors, Strengthening Communities*

By way of introduction, my name is David Hallawell and I am an Advocacy Support Worker currently employed by South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF). I also help to provide support for all members under the umbrella organisation Innocent Victims United (IVU) and any other innocent victims of terrorism who may seek support.

I was born in Fermanagh and brought up in Londonderry, where we moved as a family due to my father's employment in the RUC. My father John was a community police officer attached to what was then the community relations branch. In the late 70's and early 80's the community relations branch was involved in vital work within our communities in Northern Ireland. Amongst other projects they were involved in was the highly popular 'Blue Lamp Discos' and 'Rambles', all designed to bring youth from all communities together.

Tragically on the 28th October, 1983 whilst organising a community event in Londonderry my father was ambushed and murdered by faceless terrorists.

After my own career in the RUC and PSNI and a period of retirement I felt the need to get back to work and importantly get back to work doing something worthwhile within the community. I

subsequently applied for and was successful in gaining employment with SEFF in April 2021.

The South East Fermanagh Foundation (known as SEFF) based originally in Lisnaskea and currently with Outreach Offices in Rathfriland, Bessbrook, Newtownstewart, Fivemiletown, Lisburn, and London and Manchester (serving GB-based Victims and Survivors) offers support services to all Innocent Victims and Survivors of Terrorism or other Troubles related incidents, regardless of ethnicity, or religious background. The group also supports Victims and Survivors living in the Republic of Ireland and indeed further afield.

The ethos of SEFF is clear, that in the context of "The Northern Ireland Troubles" there never was and never will be justification for terrorism and other Troubles related criminal violence – irrespective of who carried it out. All criminal violence was wrong and unjustified. Our aim is to support the Innocent and in recognising that trauma takes many forms.

I was asked in July 2021 if I would act as facilitator for the Claudy families in the run up to the 50th Anniversary of the Claudy bombing atrocity, 31st July 1972.

Our first meeting with the families was in the Diamond Centre Claudy, on the 29th July 2021. At this time, it was decided that the milestone

Anniversary of the Claudy atrocity would be marked by a service of remembrance, a book telling the story of Claudy and the families of the deceased, and a memorial art project to be completed by both primary schools in Claudy, St Comcille's and Cumber Claudy. Work began in earnest at this time and during the ensuing months a wish has become apparent from the Claudy families for a redevelopment of the existing memorial site in Claudy village. This redevelopment of the site is being seen as a fitting legacy beyond the 50th Anniversary to those killed and injured on that tragic day. I have been truly honoured and privileged to work with the Claudy families and humbled by the manner in which they bear their pain and sorrow.

Claudy has for so long been the forgotten tragedy, by the wider community. The people of Claudy, however, have the events of that tragic day seared into their memory and it is only right and proper that the 50th anniversary and the memories of those Killed and injured, both physically and psychologically, is respectfully captured and remembered.

To the families of those taken on that terrible day I give my thanks for the opportunity of working with them.

"They are not dead,  
Who leave us this great heritage of remembering  
joy.

They still live in our hearts,  
In the happiness we knew, in the dreams we  
shared"

# THE FUTURE FOR THE VILLAGE AND ITS' PEOPLE

Claudy has had a difficult past and beyond the events of 31st July 1972 where nine innocents' lives were stolen through a Provisional IRA bombing spree there were several others over the years of 'The Troubles' whose lives were stolen through terrorism and other Troubles related criminal violence.

But it is very apparent that the people within the local community want better; they want a Society that works for everyone and where people might exist together in harmony.

The work being undertaken by the Schools within the area and which we saw a flavor of during the run up to the 50th Anniversary is deeply encouraging, as is the collaborative approach taken by the denominational Churches and throughout the local community different people are doing a range of things to promote good neighbourliness which is needed now more than ever.

Post the 50th Anniversary, there remains substantive work to be done to heal the pains of The Past and to build trust and confidence within and between people.

A Project which can and will command the involvement of the Claudy families as well as the broader community will be the recalibration of the existing Claudy Memorial.

Families supported by SEFF will continue to

work together collaboratively in realising the redevelopment of the site and in ensuring that the Memorial's longer-term sustainability is secured, the revived memorial and adjoining area will become more intimate for families and others, allowing for reflection.

The Council will be a critical element in all of this and as the owners of the site families anticipate that support will follow and the level of resource required made available.

Beyond the Memorial re-development Project, it is our hope that the Claudy families will become active users of our other services and that they will also wish to be involved in Project initiatives which contribute to the wellbeing of the area and the community who reside therein.

As a village Claudy has immense potential and this potential should not be passed up, within our young people are the leaders of the future, it is they who can augment and further develop what has been achieved in recent years, Claudy's history should forever be honoured, respected and understood but its' future should also come into focus and be embraced by all, and the families who were left devastated by the events of 50 years ago can have a key role to play in all of this.

Yours,

Kenny Donaldson

(SEFF's Director of Services)





## Claudy Schools Art Project - Past and Future

As part of the Programme of activities to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Clady bombings, carried out on 31st July 1972 it was decided that it was very important that young people from the area be engaged with whereby they might contribute their thoughts on the last 50 years (most of which were before they were born) and then looking forward to the next 50 years when it is they who we hope will be the leaders within this Community.

The beautiful piece produced (as above) aptly titled 50 words for 50 years gives a sense of some of the thoughts held by the young people as they were asked to think about concepts of being a good neighbour, what type of community do you want to live within and what values are important to live by.

The structure is 8 feet by 4 feet in size and with a frame and it will be displayed in The Diamond Centre, Claudy or in other venues (including the Schools) as and when deemed appropriate.

Our young people are our strength, they hold the destiny of this place in their hands and we hope and pray that they will understand the necessity and richness of working together in a spirit of tolerance, respect and good neighbourliness, thus ensuring that Claudy and Northern Ireland can have a brighter future.