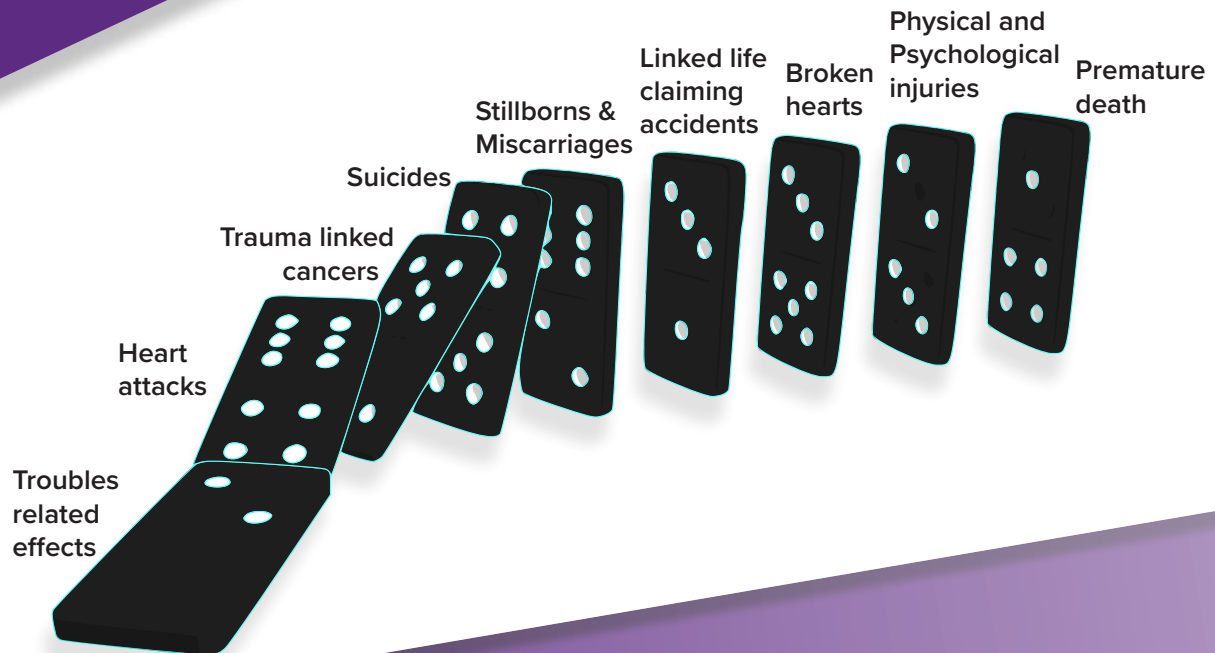


# THE WIDER HUMAN COST OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND TROUBLES

*THE UNTOLD STORY NOT COVERED IN THE STATISTICS*





# PREFACE

The genesis for this Publication is both an acceptance and a belief on the part of SEFF that the official statistics of 'The Troubles' substantively underscore the impact of the violence and the levels of death rate.

We are also very aware that many families throughout Northern Ireland and beyond grieve loved ones who had premature lives as a result of their experiences of 'The Troubles.' And of course, in the case of babies yet to be born, lives ended before they ever had begun outside of the womb.

It is almost impossible to quantify with accuracy the numbers of lives which have prematurely ended as the direct result of 'Troubles' violence however we were determined to conduct an initial study of between 20-30 cases where it is understood (medically and also by families) that their loved one's life ended due to the physical and/or psychological injury experienced.

We wish to commend Donna Deeney for her professionalism and the strong levels of empathy she demonstrated as Project facilitator in engaging with participants (and often other family members)

This initial study brings together in one publication those whose lives were cut short through physical injury, through suicide, heart attacks and broken heart syndrome, cancers, stillborn births and miscarriages etc.



The families of those remembered and honoured have received no compensation and limited recognition for the experiences they have endured, experiences which continue to impact their present.

The levels of trauma sustained over the years of the terrorist campaign and wider 'Troubles' has meant that there has often been domino detrimental effects. Aside from early deaths, other thematic issues which have resulted include; addictions to drugs - proscribed and illegal, gambling, alcohol abuse, relationship breakdowns and ill mental health etc.

This study is but the beginning but we trust it will some way in our objective to encourage debate and policy discussion, it is important that the full consequences of the years of 'The Troubles' are known and we must do better in supporting those without previous acknowledgement or recognition. The lives of their loved one's mattered.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge all of the participants who placed their trust in SEFF and our Contract provider and Project facilitator, Donna Deeney. We trust that we have done you justice, and repaid your courage. And we also sincerely hope that the lived experiences of your family are afforded appropriate acknowledgement and a voice within this Publication.

Yours,

Kenny Donaldson  
SEFF's Director of Services

# FOREWORD

I retired from journalism in 2021 thinking that over the course of my career on the news-desks of all the various print publications where I worked, I had covered every aspect of the Troubles. I'd written about legacy cases, HET reports, inquests, anniversaries, campaigns for justice, bombings and shootings. This project showed me that there was one aspect of our Troubles history, I had not written about before. Not only that, I, like so many others didn't even realise there was another group of Troubles' victims. There are people whose deaths can be connected to the Troubles but whose names have gone undocumented. When I first heard that this group of victims was the subject of this project, I was intrigued and curious to see if this was the case. Could there be lives lost that we had never before considered were as a result of the conflict? I came away from my role as facilitator on this project convinced this is the case.

Over the course of 2022, the group of people whose stories are contained within the pages of this publication, courageously agreed to talk to me and tell me about how



the Troubles claimed the lives of their loved ones. Their deaths were not in an immediate, direct way that would have grabbed the headlines of the next available edition of newspapers and broadcasts. However, without a doubt, I firmly believe it can be argued that if the Troubles that befell our island had not occurred, their loved ones may not have passed away when and how they did.

I want to pay tribute to the men and women who did take time to tell me their stories. I recognise how painful this was, pain that was not diminished by the passing of time. Through their words, the lives of their loved ones were given dignity, humanity and their place in the history of the Troubles. Within the covers of this publication are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and a preborn baby girl who were clearly loved, then and still, all of whom will never be forgotten by their families but who also deserved to be remembered by future generations.

Though their stories and the circumstances of their deaths may differ, the common thread that links all these unrecognised victims of the Troubles is the desire by those left behind to show the world that they mattered, they should not have died, when and how they did and they are missed so much. They should be safe in the

knowledge that through their own words, they achieved this admirably.

I want to also pay tribute to the work being carried out by SEFF and Kenny Donaldson. Kenny and I met and talked many times over my journalism career, so I was well aware of this organisation's hard work and Kenny's dedication to the victims of the Troubles. It is not therefore surprising that SEFF was the driving force of this project. Many of the people I spoke to told me how SEFF has helped them talk about their grief – sometimes after many years of silence. I hope that reading these stories will inspire others to do the same.

**Donna Deeney**

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# Alan IRWIN

In the early 1980s, Stephen Thomas Irwin was a young man growing up in rural County Tyrone, finding his way in life. He joined the Royal Artillery when he was 16 but quickly decided it was not the life he wanted. His uncle Fred had been a part time member of the UDR when he was murdered by the IRA in 1979 aged 43. The death of his uncle unbeknown to his family at the time, weighed heavily on Stephen's mind, affecting his mental health to the extent that on January 25, 1983, Stephen took his own life aged 17. Stephen's father Thomas was also a part-time member of UDR. He was also murdered by



the IRA in 1986. Almost prophetically, the note Stephen left before his death in 1983 said he didn't want to be around to see his father die in the same way as his uncle. Alan Irwin (57) Stephen's twin brother talks about the impact of his brother's death and, how almost three decades later, how this influences the way he supports other bereaved families in his role as a Minister, his lived experiences of loss.

"Growing up, Stephen and I were close but we weren't identical and we weren't telepathic in the way you hear twins can sometimes be. We did



a lot of things together. We attended primary school together and we both went to Omagh Secondary School, now Omagh High School but he was generally more energetic than me. Stephen was more sporty than me, more active but then he became interested in becoming “involved” as they say and becoming a boy soldier. He went into the Army. He was very interested in the Royal Artillery. He did most of his training locally in Ballymena before going to England where he discovered his training should

have taken place. (but didn’t fully complete it.) Whether it was how he was received as coming from Northern Ireland or the perception he had, he came back home whether he went AWOL or he just wanted out at that stage is uncertain, but he resolved it wasn’t for him. Although, the necessary steps were taken to come out of the army, though this meant going back to England for a period, never happened as things took a different turn.

None of us can see the underlying pressures that people face. We put that mask on, that façade but underneath we are paddling like a duck. There was a time leading up to the suicide that he could have been quite aggressive at other times quite calm. That night of the suicide he was actually in good form. Seemingly he had everything in place and that was the difficult thing not knowing how he had got access to the old shotgun because dad was the only one who had the keys and he kept them on him in person. The shotgun was always dismantled and shells were locked away in another cupboard. There was a time afterwards, because I was in the same room as my brother shot himself that I wondered why did I not hear because it wasn’t until mum opened the door and asked “what was that bang?” that I woke.

We didn’t see the note that he left, only given a verbal account of what was written, but once our



uncle Fred who was part time in the UDR had been murdered in 1979 and the way things were going, basically Stephen said he just didn't want to be around to see dad, who was also part time UDR murdered as well. My father was murdered in 1986. That is a memory that sticks with me, with all of us as a family.

At the time it was devastating for my mum Anne. She couldn't go into the room and for years wouldn't go upstairs if the room door was open. You do look back and wonder if it didn't happen what he would have been doing now or what the story would be but while you can speculate the reality is you just don't know. I wonder what

he would think about what I am doing now. I was ordained in 2009 so I am not a long time in Ministry but my experiences with my brother and the other atrocities in the family have given me a better empathy, particularly with those who have lost loved ones to suicide. A while back, I went to the home of a 17-year-old who took his own life, I spent time with the family, and on the day of the funeral, stepping outside the funeral home (and after talking to the family, I came back outside) and saw the sea of young people, it is things like that brings it all back."

# ANDREW ROBINSON



James Robinson grew up part of a large close-knit family living in Fintona, County Tyrone but he was particularly close to his sister Elaine. James worked delivering milk and on the morning of October 19, 1979 as James was taking milk to children in the local primary school he drove into an IRA ambush. The IRA shot James, a 20-year-old part time member of the UDR a number of times and he died at the wheel of his van. His sister Elaine Robinson, aged 19 was so overcome by the loss of her brother, she took her own life just six months

later. Their brother Andrew reflects on how James' brutal murder and the loss of his sister Elaine still reverberates throughout the family today.

"James had mentioned to his UDR colleagues a few days before he was murdered that he thought he was being followed and given what happened he was most likely right. Taking milk to the primary school was something that James did every morning at around the same time, and the morning he was ambushed was no different. He was driving along the Fintona Road and was at a bend where he met another vehicle so he needed to slow right down because there wasn't room for two vehicles to pass. It was at this point they were waiting for him. James died at the scene, slumped over the wheel.

Our mother Madge had died two years before and we were still grieving for her when James was murdered, it was such a terrible time. There were 11 in our family but only five of us were still at home, and James and Elaine were very close. There was only a year's difference between them in age and they were always chatting together, even at night when they were in their own bedrooms, they would still be talking to each other through the



walls. The two of them were natured the same, happy and jolly so when James died, Elaine took it really, really bad. At that time, Elaine had been working in a local factory but shortly after James was murdered, she was laid off her work. On top of everything she was going through mourning and missing James, she had no job, no focus. She just wasn't coping well so went to see the doctor who prescribed medication. The doctor had given my father tablets when my mother died so that was why Elaine went to see the doctor but in the May after James was murdered, Elaine took an overdose and died. I was only 14 at this time and I am 59 now and I have often thought that if James hadn't been murdered, she could still be alive. The IRA shot and murdered James but you could say they were responsible for Elaine's death also.

My father died two years after Elaine, he died of a broken heart. He lost his wife when she was only 52 and two years later, James was murdered. Six months later he had to bury his daughter Elaine. He just couldn't get over the losses. Every time

any of us drove up the road where James was ambushed, it brought up painful memories and at that time there was no help, no counselling to help you come to terms with what had happened. If there had been, maybe Elaine could have been saved and my father too. It's thoughts like these that live on in your mind and you're left to wonder on what might or might not have been.

Since James was murdered, almost 43 years ago, we have been left with so many unanswered questions that have tortured us. There was the police investigation and a second investigation by the Historical Enquiries Team but we got no official answers. We have been told by former colleagues of James and by retired police officers the names of the two gunmen they say ambushed James. These two men are both dead now so if the police and the authorities know it was them who murdered James, why can't they come and tell us officially? That one piece of information would give us peace of mind and bring a degree of closure to the death of my brother.





## ANN DOUGAN

On a cold Friday afternoon in February 1972 Ruby Johnstone was sitting on a bus on way back home to her family in Newtownhamilton from Armagh city where she worked as a live-in nanny and housekeeper. It was a journey Ruby had made every weekend for years but on this February afternoon, a group of faceless youths attacked the bus with bricks, bottles and petrol bombs, one of which landed directly on Ruby's lap. She suffered horrendous burns, from which she did not recover and on March 28, 1972 Ruby passed away. Her

niece Ann Dougan recalls how that act of violence is still felt by those who knew and loved Ruby.

"Ruby was brought up on the family farm with her four sisters and two brothers. She worked as a housekeeper for a solicitor's family in Armagh and every Monday morning she got the bus to Armagh and stayed until the following Friday or Saturday, depending on her work schedule.

I was 13 when it happened so my memories of Ruby are still clear. I would have been close to her



because she was such a beautiful person. She was a quiet, gentle and loving person. She was my mother's sister and they were a large family. They all lived nearby and Ruby was devoted to us all. She was dedicated to her work too and really doted on the children of the family she worked for.

That particular day, she got on the bus at 4.20pm back to Newtownhamilton but as the bus made it way along the Ring Road in Armagh there was a riot. A group of youths were attacking the bus with stones and petrol bombs. One landed on her knee. There was minor damage to the bus but the impact of that bomb fell directly onto Ruby. She was taken to the hospital but she died from her injuries seven weeks later. She was only 38-years-old.

She suffered terribly, she had 35 percent burns to her body and while she was in a stable condition initially, she started to deteriorate. She ended up with pneumonia and kidney failure which caused her death but I think they were as a direct result of the burns to her body.

While Ruby was in hospital, I think it was a few weeks after the attack, she asked to see me and my cousin. We were taken up this corridor in the City Hospital in Armagh and as we approached the door, the Ward Sister came out and told us that we would not see Ruby as we remembered her but warned us not to show any expression of shock which was a lot to ask of two young people.



The memory of what I saw will never leave me. The bed was covered with a white sheet and there was a mirror in the room but it was covered. It was years later that I realised why that mirror was covered. The shock that I got seeing Ruby was dreadful. Her face was burned, her hair was scorched, they had removed some of her teeth to help her breathe, her hands were burned and her legs were burned. That was the last time I saw her.

Years later, I was at a gathering in Armagh relating to the Troubles and a priest stood up and read





a poem about Ruby. A man stood up and said at 14 that was what he did for fun in Armagh. He told the priest that the lady in his poem just needed band-aids. I had to walk out of the room because it was too much for me. Later on in the evening, I introduced myself to him and told him what really happened Ruby. No one was ever held accountable for what happened Ruby. No information, no names were ever told, they just closed ranks and that was something our family never came to terms with. My mother became withdrawn and suffered a lot from depression. All our lives changed and even to this day, every time I am close to the junction where it happened, it gives me a jolt. What was a bit of so called fun for those youths led to Ruby's death and a life time of painful memories and loss for our entire family."



# DAVID KELLY

Private, Paddy Kelly was the first and only serving member of the Irish Army to die as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles whilst on active duty on December 16 1983. He was part of the Irish Defences team taking part in the rescue of Don Tidey, Chief Executive of Ireland's biggest supermarket chain, Quinnsworth, who had been kidnapped by the IRA, 23 days previously. Paddy was aged 36 and left behind his wife Katherine and four sons aged from nine years to 11 weeks. David Kelly, Paddy's eldest son said the death of his father left his mother a broken and vulnerable woman who never quite recovered from her overwhelming grief.

"My mother was naturally a quiet unassuming

woman who was I know very close to my father and her own father. Three months before my father was killed, her father died so she was already grieving for him when she was suddenly left alone with four young boys to bring up including a baby of just 11 weeks. Even though I was only nine when my father died, I distinctly remember that evening. An eerie feeling came over me as I walked up the footpath to the house from school. My mother was busy in another part of the house when I saw members of An Garda Síochána and members of the Irish Army coming to the door accompanied by a priest. The broke the news to my mother and in no time the house seemed to fill up with people. Family, neighbours,

my teacher but I couldn't comprehend the significance or the State funeral which was held the following Monday. My mother's grief was immense, sheer desolation. An emptiness came into our lives from then on, all the life had been sucked out of our family home. It pains me to say it but I feel I lost my mother on the same day as I lost my father because she never recovered, she was a broken woman. In the immediate aftermath people were very good but the world moves on but she couldn't. She also didn't know how to reach out and ask for help. She was struggling to cope, struggling with her mental health but she put on a brave face and hid just how low she really was. About two years later, this man turned up, like a knight in shining armour offering to help but knowing what we know now about coercive control, my mother was a victim of abuse. My mother had a child to this man and shortly after that we all moved away from Ireland to London. I believe my mother was still in trauma, overcome with the loss of my father, she was vulnerable and naive and felt judged by people in Ireland. By taking us all over to London this man took over her life, completely dominated everything she did. It was an awful time, we were in emergency accommodation. To think that we were going through all that in London and to rub salt in our wounds there were some people trying to downplay what had happened to my father.



Eventually in the 1990s my mother gained a small degree of confidence through a course and for the first time, I saw her find her voice and stand up to this man. She got a part time job in a school and eventually found the courage to leave this man and get her own place with the two younger boys she had with this man. BBy this time all four of us boys had moved back to Moate in County Westmeath. It was during a visit over here to see

us for a week's holiday where she spent the first night in Dublin with my brother and then came here to her home town. That was her last day, she died in her sleep suddenly aged 57 from a pulmonary embolism.

When I look back, she was a victim of the Troubles without a doubt. What happened to her husband, killed her. She never dealt with the trauma, she was torn between two countries, caught in an abusive relationship. Had my father not been killed they would have been together in Moate as a family with us four boys. They were making a better life for us but instead she lost her husband, she lost her country and lost her life at such a young age. “



# ERNIE WILSON



Within a fortnight after police told Ernie Wilson, a part time member of the UDR and bus driver that his life was under threat from terrorists, a bomb was placed under the school bus he was driving which then exploded. His son James had earlier checked the bus but had missed the deadly device that left many of the school children and Ernie badly injured. James died by suicide in 1993 aged 27, having never gotten over the guilt

he felt about not seeing the device. His death is still keenly felt by his father Ernie now aged 86. He describes treasured moments they shared and ponders the moments denied.

I worked as a school bus driver but I was also part time in the UDR. The day I signed, I was told to be very careful and a fortnight or so before the school bus blew up in 1988 I was told by police that according to their intelligence, I was going to be shot. Police picked me up every day and took me to the bus and searched it before I set off for the children going to Lisnaskea High School but that particular day, James and I walked around the bus because they police didn't show up. A fella stopped me and asked me if I wanted to buy a day's cutting of turf and while I was talking to him, James said, "give me the keys" and he went to search the bus. James drove the bus out to me and I drove the bus to Lisnaskea which was three miles away. A few children got on at the High School and I moved on to collect a few more and just as I was moving, the bomb under the bus exploded. A number of the children were hurt, one or two

badly and my legs were all burned. James took it very bad and as time went on, he went downhill. He said “I let you down dad” but I told him that where the bomb was, he wouldn’t have seen it and the police wouldn’t have seen it either but he blamed himself and I couldn’t convince him otherwise. I eventually went back to work but James was never the same.

Then one day in 1993, he said “me and you will go to Spain”. I said what about mum but he told me not to worry so me and him headed off to Spain and we had a great time. When we came home, he was in a bad way mentally and even said to me “daddy how can I get away?” About a week after we came back from Spain, my wife was at the doctors and one of the neighbours came to my work and shouted “come on quick, your house is on fire” but it wasn’t on fire. When we reached the house I knew exactly what was wrong. I kicked the big garage door in and pulled James out of the car. That’s where the smoke was coming from. He was taken to hospital but he didn’t make it.

I think it was in James’ head to do that and I think that week we had in Spain was him wanting time alone with me. He told me that when he was away, I could have all his money. I told him that wasn’t what I wanted. I wanted him to get a girl and get married but it made no difference. He was a great son. I think on the conversations we



had. Before the bus blew up, we would often go for walks and he would tell me his hopes for the future and he was happy and he didn’t give me a day’s bother. The way it was with us, if you saw me, you saw James. We were very close and still, I see him every night and every day. I talk to him and I miss him. When I lost James, I’ll be honest, I nearly did away with myself but I think it was the thought of my wife May that held me back. When I am at places and people are laughing and enjoying themselves, I can’t. I just can’t.

# JAIME QUINSEY

Almost four years after her son was shot dead by the Real IRA outside Massereene Barracks in County Antrim, Pamela Brankin passed away. Aged 51, when she died, Pamela is believed by her family to have died broken hearted from the loss of her beloved son Mark Quinsey aged 23. Mark was a Sapper serving with the 38 Engineer Regiment coming to the end of his tour of duty in Northern Ireland on March 7, 2009.

Mark who was due to go to Afghanistan the following day was off duty and had ordered pizza to be delivered to the Barrack. Mark and fellow sapper, Patrick Azimkar (21) were shot dead at the door of the barracks. The gunmen also injured four others including the two pizza delivery workers.

The news that her son had been brutally



murdered plunged Pamela into unfathomable grief from which she never recovered. Such was the depth of her sorrow, during a visit to the County Antrim base, Pamela collapsed on the very spot her son lost his life.

From her home in Birmingham Pamela spent her days trying to get justice for her son – a plight that her family feel destroyed her and hastened her untimely death. In an attempt to block the pain of her grief, Pamela turned to alcohol but remained inconsolable.

Pamela passed away in March 2013 at her home where it is understood she suffered a seizure, a condition, the family say was brought on by the death of her son.

Losing Mark in such a sudden, violent manner changed Pamela from the fun loving “joyful





spirit” to a tortured soul who rarely smiled, fuelled by the knowledge that no one had ever been convicted of her son’s murder.

Two men, Colin Duffy from Lurgan, and Brian Shivers, from Magherafelt, would eventually be brought to trial for the murder of Mark and Patrick and the attempted murder of the three other soldiers and two delivery men.

Colin Duffy was acquitted of all charges against him and while Brian Shivers was initially found

guilty and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment, this conviction was later overturned at a retrial in 2013.





# JEAN FINLAY (UNCLE)



Two days before Christmas 1984 Jackie Hamilton, a former part time UDR member, passed away in his sleep during an epileptic seizure – a condition Jackie developed from injuries he sustained as a result of a gun attack on him three years prior. His niece Jean pays tribute to her uncle whose death at 29 is still remembered with sorrow.

"My uncle Jackie was a lorry driver who was also a part time member of the UDR. One morning – May 5, 1980 Jackie was driving his lorry out of the yard in Castlederg when he came under gun attack. The IRA fired 25 times and Jackie was hit in the neck, head and legs. He was airlifted to Belfast and was in hospital for a long time. He developed epilepsy from his head injuries and the inquest into his death attributed the epilepsy directly to his injuries from when he was shot in 1980. Jackie was such a lovely, lovely man. He was such a family man. When he died, he was married with three young children so they were left to grow up without their father. Although I was only 13 when he died, I have very clear memories of Jackie especially of the Sundays our entire family would gather at my granny's house in Baronscourt. My granda, Robert worked on the estate so they had one of the workers cottages. Jackie was always there with his children and a moto-cross bike that he would have taken us on. He was so loving, so good to everybody and so full of craic. He was the only boy in a family of seven so you can imagine how much my mother,



her sisters and my granny loved and spoiled him.

After he was shot, Jackie was never the same, I mean, how could he have been? Jackie was in hospital for weeks, running into months and when he came home, it was clear the spark had gone out of him. He tried so hard, he still tried to be the fun loving father and uncle he had been but try as he might, we could see the trauma of everything he had gone through had taken its toll on him. The mental anguish was tough and the epilepsy only made things even worse. He was left with so much to deal with.

The night Jackie died was December 23, 1984. He had been in the bar where my mother worked. She had told him not to go home until she could buy him a Christmas drink at the end of her shift but he must have rung my aunt May to come and pick him up before closing time. He got home and lay down on the sofa in their kitchen. When May woke in the morning, Jackie was dead. He had taken an epileptic fit. I will never forget that time, it was awful. He was so young, a man with his whole life ahead of him. Because Jackie died from an epileptic fit, his death wasn't attributed to the Troubles and despite being a member of the UDR who was shot in a hail of bullets that left him with life changing injuries, his name wasn't on the Roll of Honour. That hurt my mother deeply and she fought to get that redressed. My mother died a year ago and I feel I am continuing that fight. I want my uncle remembered as someone who lost his life because of the Troubles. The Troubles were so devastating for so many families from both communities and while there are the lives lost that everyone knows about, it is important too to record, document the lives that were also lost in a less direct way. My uncle Jackie's death changed the dynamics of our family and that is still being felt to this day. It ripples out and reaches into many generations. It doesn't stop at the person who dies."

# JEAN FINLAY (GRANDMOTHER)

Margaret Hamilton was a mother, typical of many in Northern Ireland. She was a woman who dedicated her life to her family, in her case it was her six daughters and her only son Jackie for whom she had a special place in her heart. When Jackie died on December 23, 1984 her heart could not bear the pain of that terrible loss and tragically, she passed away unexpectedly just 13 days later on January 5 1985. Her granddaughter Jean reflects on how the effect of her death rippled throughout the family.

“My granny was very much like so many of her generation, she was a stay-at-home mother whose life was my granda and her children. She was a central figure in the lives of everyone in the whole family including all her grandchildren.

My uncle Jackie died just two days before Christmas 1984 when he was just 29 and the pain of that was more than she could bear. She died 13 days later aged 62 and there was nothing anyone could do to save her. It was so sudden and unexpected. My mother got the call from the doctor who told her to gather everybody up and come to granny’s house that

she was dying. Granny had just given up and her organs were shutting down. She did have angina but that would not have caused so much trauma to all of her organs, so we can only put it down to pure grief at the loss of her only son. She told her sister Mary who lived with her that she wasn’t feeling well and that she was going to go to bed. Mary was obviously concerned enough to ring the doctor and when he came, he knew it was already too late to even send her to hospital. The doctor said she died from a broken heart from losing my uncle Jackie. There was nothing any doctor or hospital in the world could have done to save her. That whole period was such a terrible time for our family but especially mummy and her sisters. They were still trying to cope with their only brother’s sudden death and then their mother died. That is a lot for anyone to have to come to terms with. I remember my mother crying and crying and that went on for months and months but then she stopped and I don’t remember her ever crying again. I think that the hurt and the pain of the losing her brother and her mother in such a

short space of time, especially so unexpectedly was so great, nothing else was ever as bad or as traumatic for her. I don't know that for sure, but I do know she never dropped a tear after that. She lost her brother when he was only 29 and her mother when she was aged 62, both too young to die. Both of their deaths can be tracked to the Troubles. If Jackie hadn't been shot, he would never have developed epilepsy which is what caused his death and if he hadn't died, I am convinced, my granny wouldn't have died when she did. Who knows, the two of them might still be alive today enjoying life and being part of all of our lives. One thing I am proud of is the way my granny brought her family up to treat everyone equally and not to have any bitterness in your heart – that stayed with my mother and despite all the suffering she went through she was never bitter. It would have been so easy for her to hold anger and resentment but she didn't. She was a credit to the way her mother brought her and her sisters and my uncle Jackie up. She passed that down to us and I think that is a wonderful testament to her and to my granny. “



# JUDITH MCGEOWN

When her husband Trevor Harkness was Murdered in an IRA bomb in February 1985 aged 36, Phyllis Harkness was left with five small children to provide and care for. Trevor was a part time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment on patrol in Pomeroy, County Tyrone when the IRA detonated a land mine.

At their family home, Phyllis aged 29 suppressed her grief and did whatever was necessary ensure her children aged from nine years to two years were protected. The stress of this trauma manifested itself ten years later with a cancer diagnosis that would claim her life when she was just 44. The couple's eldest daughter, Judith



McGeown reflects here on how her mother, years earlier, saw the largely unrecognised impact the Trouble had on victims' families.

"When my father was murdered, my mother was 29 with five small children and at the time, her own mother was dying with a brain tumour. She died later that same year. Our granny Harkness lived with us and she was riddled with cancer and died the next year so that was three deaths within 18 months. Mummy had a lot of grief and pain in her life at such a young age within a short period of time.

I was the oldest and I do have some memories of when daddy died. He was part time in the UDR

and that night, he had been asked if he wanted to do an extra shift. It was granda who came to our house to break the news to mummy. It was in the middle of the night and I had slept through it all. I remember I felt guilty that I had been dreaming while my daddy was being killed and guilty that I had slept in. We were all shipped off and weren't allowed at the wake much. Mummy was so traumatised, the doctor had to give her sedatives but I remember looking at her and then going to get her a pillow. I went down the hall but I wasn't allowed to go into the room where daddy was. I never got to see him and didn't get to the funeral. I know mummy had a lot of regrets about that but everyone just took over. She was a young woman, deeply traumatised so she wasn't asked or wasn't involved in the decisions. After daddy's death, mummy realised she needed to be strong for us and she certainly was. I remember when I turned 30 wondering how she coped at that age with five small children, grieving for her husband but she did because she had to. Her strength rubbed off on me and my sisters and we grew up being very independent, able to do things for ourselves and I am thankful to her for that.

When she was 38, mummy was diagnosed with bowel cancer and five years later she was diagnosed with uterine cancer. These were two separate primary cancers which is very unusual.



She died a year after that when she was 44. One thing she said that has remained with me was that there should be an investigation or study on women like her, widowed and traumatised through the Troubles who were diagnosed with cancer.

After her bowel cancer diagnosis, the surgeon said there could be a genetic link and suggested

the girls in our family get tested but we didn't actually complete the process.

As it turned out, ten years after mummy died I was diagnosed with bowel cancer as well. After that my siblings and mummy's siblings all got tested. They discovered Lynch Syndrome which is a genetic misprint in your genes. One of my sisters and I have the gene and we both had bowel cancer. One of my aunts has the gene too but she hasn't developed cancer which to me is interesting because it makes you wonder if the stress, the shock and the trauma of what happened to us in our childhood was the trigger for our cancer. Is that what led to mummy's cancer being triggered and also within my sister and I? Daddy's death didn't cause us to have the gene defect but was his death the trigger that caused the cells to ignite? My aunt has the gene but she didn't have the direct trauma we had and she hasn't had cancer. I think, certainly within my own family but in other families too there is evidence that there could be a link. That was certainly the conclusion my mother, in her wisdom had come to all those years ago"





# KATE CARROLL

When the Continuity IRA murdered Stephen Carroll on March 9, 2009, in Craigavon, County Armagh, shockwaves reverberated everywhere because Stephen was the first member of the PSNI to die at the hands of terrorists at a time when the violence in Northern Ireland was supposed to have ended.

The devastation of the loss of Stephen was most

keenly felt of course by his wife Kate and by his son Shane. While Shane was not Stephen's son by birth, the pair could not have been closer and Shane struggled with life without his father. On May 5, 2020 Shane, overwhelmed by the loss of Stephen, died by suicide. Shane's mother Kate reflects on how "the one bullet took away Stephen and Shane."



“Shane was my only son from a previous marriage and even though there was only eleven years difference in them in age, Shane really considered Stephen his father so when Shane turned 18, he asked Stephen if he could take his name and be Shane Carroll. The two of them hugged and it was so emotional, both men had a tear in their eyes, it was heartwarming to watch the two of them. Shane called Stephen “dad” and Stephen absolutely considered Shane his son, they had such a special relationship. They were always together joking and laughing, they confided in each other and Shane valued Steve’s opinion on this, that and the other. I have often said that the one bullet took away the two best things in my life, Stephen and Shane.

When Stephen died, I remember Shane leaving his children to school then going to the Graveyard and sitting on Stephen’s gravestone and talking to him. Every morning, he did that. I know that because I can see Stephen’s grave from my garden and it used to break my heart to see Shane there. Shane just couldn’t come to terms with his father’s death. I was grieving for him so much myself but I could see that Shane needed help so I arranged for him to see a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist told me that there was nothing behind Shane’s eyes, it was like Groundhog Day, he was trapped in time every day was like the day the police came to the door



and told him his father had been killed. He just couldn’t cope, his health was suffering and he seemed to have given up on life, I knew deep down the loss was killing Shane. At that time, I didn’t want to believe what had happened to Stephen but I was also trying to stay strong for Shane while he was trying to stay strong for me. Shane used to tell me he wished he could cry like me but he couldn’t because he was numb and all he wanted was revenge. I used to tell him I didn’t want him talking like that but he was full of pain and hatred against the people who murdered his father. Thankfully he never acted on it but I could see for myself that he was going downhill day by day. Shane had bipolar and one day, he did tell me he didn’t care about living anymore, he said I don’t have the ability to laugh or joke anymore. I did everything to try and reach out to him and reminded him that he had



bulb moment for so many and it brought people together. Politicians from all sides were at his Requiem Mass and that had never happened before and I think it gave people hope. I hoped that Steve's death would be the catalyst to bring about change in our country. Too many people do not fully understand how deeply the ripple effect travels after a brutal death like Stephen's. Sadly for Shane, it was so deep, he just couldn't see a way forward, life without Stephen had broken him."

me and he had his children.

Shane went from someone who was full of fun and loved life to someone who just didn't care, he didn't care what he looked like, he didn't want to be with other people, he didn't want other people to enjoy get-togethers because his dad wasn't present, people who were close to him all remarked on how much he changed.

After Stephen was killed, I always left a letter to Shane every time I went away from home, I told him how much I loved him and asked him to always remember the important things he had in his life but now when I go away, I know I don't have Shane to write to and I miss him so much, that is so painful. I never realised, I would be looking back on my life having lost both of them. I think when Stephen was murdered, it was a light



# MARIE O'REILLY

On December 28, 1972, Anthony O'Reilly along with his sister, Geraldine stopped off to buy chips on their way back home where Anthony's wife Marie was waiting with the couple's one year old daughter. This slight detour cost Geraldine her life as she was one of two young people murdered when a bomb, planted by loyalist terrorists exploded in Belturbet, County Cavan. The devastation of the explosion not only robbed the family of their beloved Geraldine, it would also bring further losses to Anthony and Marie. Here Marie ponders how deep the effects of the bomb ripped through her family.

"Geraldine had gone into the chip shop and Anthony was waiting on her in the car when the bomb went off around 10 o'clock in the evening. The explosion knocked Anthony out but when

he came round he stumbled out of his car. By then the Guards, fire brigade and a doctor were there. The Guards took him to the chip shop where he had to identify Geraldine's body. In the meantime, I was out in the house with Anthony's parents and our baby Caroline. We heard the explosion but we thought it was the bridge at Aughalane across the border which had been blown up a couple of times before. Someone came to the house and told us about the bomb in Belturbet and that Geraldine had been killed along with someone else. Anthony had been taken to hospital but signed himself out to go to Geraldine's funeral.

During the day Anthony was fine but at night, he kept having terrible nightmares. In 1973 I got pregnant with Jennifer but when I was about



four months pregnant, I was sent into hospital because the doctors said I had had a miscarriage but they weren't sure so they kept me a few days. They later came to the conclusion that I had been carrying twins and one of them had died. Jennifer was 6lbs when she was born, she cried a lot during her first year. The following pregnancy did not go to term, the child had died

in the womb, but I did not miscarry. I was taken into hospital and after a D&C my blood pressure dropped and I went into shock. I remember dreaming about Geraldine and thinking I was dying but Geraldine telling me "it's not your time yet". I woke up crying.

In 1977 I fell pregnant with Josephine, I spent most of this pregnancy in hospital and Thank God she arrived safely. In 1980 Rosemarie was born, again a hard time as the placenta attached itself to the womb. The gynaecologist had to remove it and advised me not to have any more children. However, in 1987 Carmel was born a healthy baby. I believe all the trauma about what had happened to Geraldine and Anthony as a result of the bomb, was going through my body and that was why I was having such difficult pregnancies.

All during these years Anthony was getting deeper and deeper into depression and he started to take a drink to help him sleep (he did not drink before this). He became more anxious and would lose his temper easy. If a car back-fired he would jump, he started to drink more and became an alcoholic. Times where tough.

In 1989 I answered the door to Jehovah Witnesses and at that time, I have to say I was struggling with my faith in God, however I started to study the bible with the Witnesses. Not long



into it I could see it was not God that causes these things to happen but man. Eventually with good advice and help, Anthony decided to stop drinking and since then things have been going well, he has got his life back together. Anthony had been blaming himself for going into town that night, for even coming back to Cavan in the first place. After we got engaged, we had moved to Scotland where we got married and were happy. I was pregnant with Caroline our first child when we returned home, she was a

happy healthy baby.

Anthony would never talk about what happened he would just break down, but around five years ago we got involved with SEFF. They sent us to counselling and they gave us the help and support we needed. Anthony can, at last now talk about what happened, and how it impacted our lives by what happened the night the bomb went off and killed Geraldine.”



# MARTHA O'NEILL

May 17, 1974 in Dublin was a busy day for Martha O'Neill and her husband Eddie who were getting two of their five children ready for their Holy Communion the following day. That evening, three bombs planted by the loyalist terror group, the Ulster Volunteer Force exploded across the city. A fourth bomb exploded in Monaghan 90 minutes later. A total of 33 men, women and children were killed and a further 300 injured. Eddie O'Neill was among those killed in the blast in Parnell Street and two of their five children Edward (4) and Billy (7) were lucky to have survived horrific injuries. The trauma of losing her

husband and watching two of her children fight for their lives was so deep, Martha would just a few weeks suffer another terrible loss – that of the baby girl she was expecting. Martha pays tribute to the life her baby girl she never even got to hold.

"After what happened I was looking forward to the baby coming. She was something positive to look forward to and I had hoped she would give us all a reason to feel bright again and taking the children's minds off what had happened but I never even got to see her. Her daddy saw her before me because she is with him in Heaven.

The day of the bombs I was in the hairdressers with Angela and Eddie Jnr had gone to the barbers with Billy and their Daddy. I heard the explosion but didn't know what it was but people were coming out on to the street. There was talk of the bomb in Talbot Street but there





was no talk about Parnell Street where Eddie was. I made my way home where one of the neighbours came to me and told me Eddie was injured in the bomb. I went to the hospital and I will never forget that sight in A&E. There were coffins lined up against the wall. I was terrified. I went into the room and they were calling out the names of the injured. They called out “Billy O’Neill injured, seriously. Edward O’Neill, injured – 24 hours to live”. Then they called out the dead “Edward O’Neill” I couldn’t believe it. I collapsed. I lost it. They put me into the hospital but I had the children at home including Niall who was a year and three months. I had wanted to die but I couldn’t because I had five children to look after.

I had always had healthy babies who were good weights when they were born and there was no reason up until the bombings for me to think Martha would be any different because all along the doctors had been telling me everything was fine. During one of my check-ups they told me my blood pressure was dangerously low. He wanted to keep me in but eventually he agreed I could go home. All that week I wasn’t well but on the Friday morning I went down stairs to get the children their breakfast and everything went blank. My cousin was with me and she noticed that I had turned blue. It happened again and the next thing I became aware of was a man slapping my face and saying “come back Martha, come back”.

Luckily the R o t u n d a hospital was just around the corner and that’s where they took me. My placenta h a d completely burst inside me and the baby died. Little Martha was



born and died on the first of August. I came out of the hospital empty handed and empty-hearted to go home to the children with no baby for them, no daddy for them, no nothing.

I sit now and look back on things about my baby and how old she would be. I miss her terribly. On her first birthday I went to her grave in Glasnevin and I put a little balloon on her grave and I told her “I miss you and I never even got to see you.” It hurts me to think about the loss of her, the loss of the baby, the loss for the children without their father, the loss for me without my husband, the loss of the home-life, the loss of the happiness we had, the loss of everything.”

# MARY BAGSHAW

Steven Bagshaw, a soldier with the Cheshire Regiment was enjoying a night out with his colleagues at the Droppin Well bar in Ballykelly. He was among 11 soldiers and six civilians murdered by the INLA who planted a bomb in the nightclub on December 6, 1982. The news of his death brought to the door of Steven's family a pain and sorrow that would also contribute to the death of his father Basil, 18 months later. Steven's sister, Mary said the life went out of her father Basil, the day Steven died.

"After the police came to the door of my home in Bournemouth where I was living at the time to tell me that Steven had died, I went straight to Manchester and from the second I saw my father at the railway station, I could see that the spark in his eyes had gone out completely. My younger brother and sister who were with my dad at the



station were comforting one another but my dad was standing there. I gave him a hug and kept saying to myself, "don't break down, don't break down" because I wanted to be strong for him.

When we got home from the train station I saw one of the worst scenes I have ever witnessed in my life. My mother Giacomina was so traumatised, she had Steven's boots on. She wouldn't take his boots off and she was wailing and crying. My mum, was Italian and she dealt with her grief in a very open way so she worked through it but my dad kept all his emotions inside and it destroyed him. He couldn't stand being in the house, he had to get out so he would go walking or he would go to his sister's house, he just wanted to be on his own. He had his own trauma and he just couldn't deal with my mum's so as the oldest I felt I had to be strong for the



kids and I didn't want to be one more person for my dad to worry about. We were looking at all these images on the television of the bomb and it was terrible. At that time, scenes like that were on the television quite often but this was personal, this was our family, it was horrible.

They brought Steven's body back on December 13 but before that, Army officials came to our house to discuss what would happen. - My dad had asked to travel with the undertakers to the airport and they said he could but at the last minute they changed their minds and said that for security reason, it wouldn't be possible. That was another knockback for my dad. He lost his son, then he wasn't able to bring him home.

My dad was so proud of Steven, he was proud of all four of us. I loved my dad and used to go



everywhere with him but I think my dad saw himself in Steven. He was an outdoor lad and from a very early age, Steven would be on a local

farm with the gamekeeper and they would go out on the moors. When he wasn't on the farm, he was out fishing on the river. When Steven joined the army at 16, my dad was delighted for him.



A year after Steven died my dad was feeling unwell and he went to the doctors which wasn't like him. He never went to the doctor but he was diagnosed with cancer. He passed away six months after that but the reality is, the man he had been died along with Steven. He had been a



fit and healthy man of 54 to a broken man. Full stop. His whole personality changed. My dad was always full of fun, always chatty, just a good bloke but that killed him. My dad died that day too."

# MARY CANNON

On October 16, 1976 an IRA bomb exploded in a derelict farmhouse in Garryhinch, County Laois, which left Jim Cannon a member of An Garda Síochána and two of his colleagues with life changing injuries. The blast claimed the life of another colleague, Michael Clerkin. They all had been part of the same patrol sent to search the building. The operation was the result of a tip off they had received that members of the IRA were hiding out there. In fact, it was a sinister, murderous ploy to lure members of the Garda to the remote spot. The impact of the attack on his father traumatised Jim Cannon's teenage



son Gerard to such an extent, that he took his own life on August 3, 1982 aged 21. Gerard's mother Mary is in no doubt it is the IRA who are ultimately responsible for the death of her son.

"Jim was out on duty and I was at home with our four children when the word came to the house around 2am that there had been a bomb. Gerard was the oldest of our four children. He was around 16, his brother Pdraig was four years younger and the two girls, Marie and Carmel were six and four. Gerard was well aware of what was going on. Jim was badly injured, all the rubble fell on to him and his legs to this day, still cause him a lot



of pain but despite his own injuries, Jim pulled himself out from under the rubble and made his way across the fields to raise the alarm and get help.

This was the first time, members of An Garda Síochána came under attack from the IRA so there was quite a lot of commotion.

People were

calling to the house; Jim's relatives came up from Galway which is where he was originally from.

Journalists from all over the place were calling to the house and it was on the television so

there was a lot going on, which affected Gerard too. Initially he was very angry and said "when I grow up, I will make those people pay for what they did to my father". He became quieter and quieter and out of the blue he started to get these obsessions about things. He felt insecure and frightened by lots of things that shouldn't be frightening to a young boy. It reached the point that he had to come out of college for a year. In the meantime, he got a job in Clonmel that he was going to take but that never happened. We tried to help him, cure him but we couldn't. Nowadays there would be help but there was nothing at that time. Gerard was such a good boy, bright and intelligent and to see him going downhill like that was heart-breaking. I certainly blame the IRA for all of that. He was wakened up in the morning and told his father was in that bomb and could have been killed. He knew the man who was killed - Michael Clerkin

Eventually it all became too much for him and one day he took his own life. He left a note and said he was so sorry but he couldn't live with all those obsessions and trauma. He had become nervous and fearful for what might happen to the rest of our family. Before the attack, there had been absolutely nothing wrong with Gerard. He never missed a day from school and had no problems whatsoever either in school or at home. He was an average teenage boy who



loved going out to discos, being with his friends but he stopped wanting to go out at all.

After Gerard died, for years I would look at other young men who I thought looked like Gerard and I would wonder what Gerard would be like if he was still here but I had to make myself stop thinking like that or I would have become ill myself. For a long, long time I couldn't even talk about what had happened to Gerard but you learn to live with it, even though it is horrendous and you never forget."



## MARY FEGAN

Less than a year after David Fegan was diagnosed with cancer, he passed at just 50 years of age on February 12, 2006. Oncologists told David's family there was a high probability that his cancer could be directly linked to the trauma he suffered as a result of horrific injuries he sustained in a pipe bomb attack by the Continuity IRA six years previously. David's widow, Mary recalls the night her life changed in

an instant as she continues to mourn the loss of her husband.

"My husband, David had been serving as a Reserve Constable in the RUC for 25 years when on November 1, 2000, stationed in Castlewellan he sustained horrific injuries after a booby trap pipe bomb exploded in his hand.

It was around 3am and he and his colleague had

just returned to the station after responding to a hoax call. There were two No Waiting cones at the front gates of the station. David lifted the first one out of the way but when he lifted the second cone, it exploded in his hand. He later told me that whilst he lay on the ground, he noticed his boot up around his stomach and wondered why it was there, it was his severed limb. He also began to feel the blood running down his neck.

Despite him suffering critical injuries he had the presence of mind to remove his gun belt and strap it round his leg to create a tourniquet and told his partner to keep pressure on it if he passed out. Surgeons later told me that it was this quick thinking that saved his life – although it didn't save his limb.

That night I was at home with our three young children when an officer came with the news that David had been in an explosion. I remember how, on the way to the hospital, I hoped and prayed that he would be okay, but nothing could have prepared me for the news that was to come.

David was moved to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he underwent extensive surgery, amputation of his left leg, two fingers and a thumb on his right hand. Doctors took a vein from his amputated left leg and used it to improve the circulation in his damaged right limb.

David was later moved to the Ulster hospital and Musgrave Park Hospital where he underwent a series of skin grafts, further surgeries and intensive treatments.

David also suffered from severe phantom pain in the region of where his leg had been amputated. The injuries sustained to his right leg were so extensive that he only had a 20 degree bend on the limb.





Initially surgeons told him he wouldn't walk again which was a devastating blow for a man who liked nothing more than a walk in the Mournes – but his determination proved them wrong. He learnt to walk again with the aid of a prosthetic limb. Despite also losing his thumb and two fingers, he picked his paintbrush up again and began painting, which he loved. Eventually he even built up enough mobility that he was also able to get behind the wheel but he experienced horrific flashbacks of the incident.

This was the second time David had experienced a brush with death whilst he was a serving police officer. In 1994, he was one of five officers in a car hit by a 500lb landmine on the Newcastle Road. They had been coming off night duty at the time and all managed to get out of the vehicle, bar a few minor scrapes.

However, when he was diagnosed with cancer in the summer of 2005, David knew himself this was a health battle that even he couldn't win, despite how hard he tried.

David was just 49 at the time of his cancer diagnosis. Oncologists informed us that there was a high possibility that this could be directly linked to the trauma and stress he had suffered due to the explosion. He had radiotherapy sessions, but the chemotherapy was too much for his ailing body and he lost his mobility and



motivation through the illness. David sadly passed away on February 12 2006 in Marie Curie Cancer Centre. He had just turned 50 and our close-knit family was robbed of a loving father and husband.

I believe if David hadn't been so seriously injured as result of the explosion in 2000, he would still be with us to this day, enjoying time as a grandfather and we would be growing old together."





# NICHOLA MULLAN

Alice Collins was, as her daughter described her “the ultimate Derry girl”. Alice grew up in the city, went to school there and met and married the love of her life, Ron Collins there. Alice also worked in the city and, tragically it was on the streets of Derry – outside the court house on Bishop Street that an IRA sniper shot and left Alice fighting for her life. While Alice did recover from the bullet that pierced her body, the trauma triggered an aggressive cancer that would claim her life just 13 months later on May 8, 1998. Alice’s daughter,

Nichola Mullan, believes it was the gun attack that ultimately led to their mother’s premature death at 47 years of age.

“Mum was the ultimate Derry girl. She was there from her childhood, met and married my dad who was a Derry man and they lived there at the beginning of their marriage and then moved to Limavady in 1980. Mum worked in the canteen of the Strand Road Police Station and it was while she was there, she decided to join the RUC. After

graduating in 1995, Mum worked in Coleraine for a short time. After a near miss with a town centre explosion, she was moved to the Court House in Bishop's Street. It was while she was on duty at the Gate House on April 10, 1997 she was shot. She had almost finished her duty, and at precisely 15.50 a sniper shot her in the back. The bullet went straight through her body. The IRA, who were on 'ceasefire', later claimed responsibility for the attack on Mum. At that time I was 27, working as a policewoman in London and was heavily pregnant. My sister Julie was 17 and at school and my brother Gavin was 23, working and living in Liverpool. I came straight home and immediately went to Altnagelvin Hospital. Mum was in hospital a few weeks before coming home. For a while, we thought she was recovering well. I never returned to London and that July my son Oliver, who was the only one of mum's grandchildren she lived to see, was born.

Mum was always a very sociable person and every trip the police offered, she said "Yes". She wasn't very sporty but she even said yes to a skiing trip. Ten months after she was shot, in February we noticed she had lost a lot of weight, her energy level dropped and by April she had become so weak she couldn't stand up to shower. The anniversary of the shooting had just passed, and the doctor put her deteriorating health down to depression brought on by the trauma, but Mum



kept saying she wasn't depressed. A week later dad took her back to the clinic and said they weren't leaving until she was seen. That was a Tuesday. The doctor sent her to Altnagelvin Hospital for tests that day. On the Thursday she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. We had to take her to the City Hospital in Belfast. Dad loved driving but this time, he asked me to drive while he nursed Mum in the back of the car. My brother Gavin arrived back home the following day. He got to see her once. After that she was in intensive care and died the following Friday at 11.25 on May 8, 1998.



That was almost 25 years ago. I am convinced the cells in her body that caused her cancer were triggered by the trauma she went through being shot. She was only 47 when she died and my son Oliver was only a baby so he has no memories of her. There are six other grandchildren in the family now but they all have missed out on having her in their lives. What happened to Mum had a big effect on my sister Julie, too. She was studying for her A Levels when Mum was shot and was about to sit her exams when Mum died.

Julie never went away to university like Gavin and I did and I that was because she wanted to stay with Dad. Dad misses Mum. He is still lonely without her. He went back to work for a while after Mum died but he took early retirement because his heart just wasn't in it. Nothing was going to be the same without Mum as far as he was concerned."





# PAM MORRISON

Hilary Graham was just 27 years old, serving as a part time UDR member when a car failed to stop at the checkpoint she and her colleagues were manning. The car collided with the patrol injuring Hilary. While initially it was thought her injuries were not life threatening, ultimately these injuries caused her death on November 15, 1979. Her death was one of four linked to the Troubles to hit the Graham family. Hilary's sister Pam Morrison feels it is right and proper that the deaths of her three brothers are on the official Roll of Honour, she is aggrieved that the death of

her sister is not. Paying tribute to her sister, Pam said having Hilary's name recorded as part of this project goes some way to addressing that.

"Hilary was the baby of our house. There were eight of us in our family – five boys and three girls and sadly I am the only one left.

Hilary died in 1979 but I also lost three brothers who were all part time members serving in the UDR during the Troubles as well. Ronnie (39) was murdered in June 1981 and Cecil (32) also died in 1981. He was wounded on November 9



and died two days later on Remembrance Day, November 11. Another brother James (Jimmy) (39) was murdered in February 1985 so life has been cruel.

My brothers' deaths are all as a direct result of terrorism, they were serving members of the UDR, who were shot whilst each off duty. Their deaths are recorded in the book of Lost Lives

but because Hilary's didn't die at the hands of terrorists, her death isn't but I feel so strongly that it should be.

I feel it is so important that she isn't forgotten because if she hadn't been in the UDR and hadn't been at that checkpoint, she wouldn't have been knocked down. Who knows, she could very well still be alive today.

She could have gotten married and had a family of her own, who knows what might have happened. She might still be here and I could have had someone to share all the sorrow and pain with but instead I am the last one left.

I want people to know about Hilary and I want her to be remembered too as someone who also lost their life because of the Troubles. It is so important to me that she is included in this book and I am grateful to Kenny Donaldson from SEFF for encouraging me to open up and talk publicly about Hilary and my brothers. It is only in these past couple of years that I have been able to do that.

We grew up in Lisnaskea, a very close-knit family raised to treat everyone with respect no matter what. I will always remember Hilary as such a happy go-lucky wee girl. She would do anything for anybody and always looking out for her wee nieces and nephews. She had a smile for everybody. She really enjoyed her life. She

didn't have a day's sickness in her life, she didn't take a day off her work in the factory but the injuries she had after she was knocked down finished her.

That particular night, they were doing patrol on the road, a car came speeding and the driver didn't see the red light signalling him to stop. He drove right through the patrol and she was pushed out of the way but her back was damaged. They took her to hospital, X-Rayed her, and sent her home but she was constantly attending the doctors after that. She tried to get back to work and tried to get back out on duty and she did for a short time but she really wasn't able for either. She was never the same and about six weeks before she died, she took this really, really bad pain. She went to the doctors but they couldn't find anything wrong. The week before she died, she was complaining about not being able to pass urine properly. Within days she was admitted to hospital. Her kidneys had stopped working completely and peritonitis had set in and poisoned her whole system. She died six days later. A terrible loss of such a beautiful young girl with her whole life in front of her but it just wasn't to be."







# PHYLLIS BRETT

Michael Brett worked on the front line of Northern Ireland's Troubles as a paramedic and attended some of its worst atrocities including the Shankill and Omagh bombing but the guilt he felt when he couldn't save the life of his own son Gavin (18) who had been shot by loyalist

terrorists left a deep scar that ran to the core of his being. On July 29, 2001 Gavin a victim of a drive by shooting by gunmen who assumed he was a Catholic. Michael was called to the scene but Gavin's injuries were too severe and he couldn't be saved. Six years later Michael, aged just 51 was diagnosed with cancer and passed after ten weeks on June 27, 2007. Michael's wife Phyllis is under no illusion that the same organisation that took Gavin's were responsible for his father's early demise as well.

"Gavin had walked down to the Hightown Road in Glengormley from our home in with his friend Michael to wait on Michael's taxi home at around 10.30pm. Phillip, our youngest son was nine at the time and he was in bed. Within a short time, the telephone rang and the voice asked if this was the Bretts' house and when I said it was, they said "I think you should come around to the front of the estate, Gavin has been shot. Michael took the phone off me and then left the house while I stayed with Phillip. Time passed with no sign of them so I phoned my friend who came around to sit with Phillip while I went to see what was happening with Gavin. When I reached the scene, it was all cordoned off and there were hundreds of people milling about. The police came over and told me he was dead. Then it was all a blur but I remember Michael was then beside me and we were being taken





back to our house. The police told us what they knew which was that the two of them had been standing waiting on the taxi. Gavin had his back to the road and Michael was sitting on a fence when a car drove up, stopped and gun men drew out their guns and shot the two of them, thinking they were two Catholics. Because Michael could see what was about to happen, he tried to jump over the fence into the field. He was shot in the leg and ankle but Gavin was fatally wounded. The police asked if I wanted to see Gavin which I did, so we went back around. He was still lying there, covered with a blanket

but his foot was sticking out and his shoe had come off. That always stuck with me. I kissed him goodbye and then went back home.

Michael had worked through some of the worst atrocities but it played on his mind so much that he couldn't save his own son. I don't think he ever really came to terms with. Michael would go to Gavin's grave maybe six or seven times a day. He changed as a person then which is what you would expect. It is life changing so of course it changed him. If we hadn't had the strong marriage we had, I don't think Michael





would have got through it at all but we talked often and we helped each other. We had two other children so we had to go on for them, you can't just shut down no matter how much you might want to. Michael went from being this happy-go-lucky, fun loving man to someone who was introverted.

Michael was diagnosed with cancer in March 2001 and right from the start we knew his time was limited and there was nothing they could do for him. I am quite convinced Michael's illness was brought on by Gavin's death, no one will

ever tell me different.

We had a holiday booked for the start of May to America followed by a cruise. We decided then that we would all go, the whole family. We were away for three and a half weeks but the last week and a half Michael was struggling. He really was ill. On the Sunday before he died, Michael said to me "I think it is time". Even in those last weeks no matter when we spoke of Gavin he continued to blame himself but he did say "at least I will be in good company, I'll have Gavin."



# RAJAA BEREZAG

Rajaa Berezag was just nine years old when her father Zaoui was left with life changing injuries he sustained on February 9, 1996 when the IRA detonated a bomb in London's Docklands area. Two people died in the explosion, which as Rajaa explains would eventually claim the lives of both her mother Gemma and her father.

"I was born in Morocco but moved to England when I was five. My father worked lots of jobs and was working as a cleaner at the time of the bombing. He was waiting in a car next to the van that was packed with explosives when it went off. He was left with terrible injuries but the most severe were his head injuries that caused brain damage. He was in hospital a long, long time and had to learn how to walk, talk, everything. Then they sent him home to us and we were

left to look after him without any kind of help. That was when the hard part really started. Most of the caring fell on my mother's shoulders but although I was only nine, I did everything I could to pull my weight. I grew up looking after him 24 hours a day. His brain injuries meant he forgot he had eaten, he forgot to eat, he forgot where the bathroom was and at times he would sneak out of the house and go missing for days. It was a very stressful childhood for me. It was a life of constant worrying. I didn't go to school very much but as I grew into an adult I understood how my mother felt.

The day the Docklands bomb exploded I basically lost both my parents because not only did my dad change completely from the person he was, so did my mum. She lost the husband she had



had, her partner in life, her support, her best friend and she couldn't cope with it. From that day, there was no mother, there was just a person hovering around the house on auto-pilot. On March 2016 she reached the point where she couldn't do it any more, she

was only 58. I only found out at around this time, my mother had attempted suicide many times during the previous ten years. I never knew that. If I did, I would have done what ever I had to do to get her the help she needed but it was hidden from me.

My father died two years after my mother, in 2018 and for those two years I was his main carer which, was my mother's wish. A couple of years before she died, she made me his executor and I remember being shocked and asking "why?" and she told me it was because she trusted me to look after him and do the best for him. Obviously, she was planning ahead but I only saw that looking back. It was so natural for me to do what she had asked and I fought for my

dad right up to the day he died, in 2018. When I told people what my life was like, they would be shocked and say it was a lot but while I was living it and I was in it, I couldn't see what they saw. To me it was normal. I just woke up every day and got my father into the bath, fed him, looked after him and got him into different groups for people with brain injuries. It is only now, looking back that I can see how hard it was, I see the struggle I had and that my mother had. The memories that I have with my mum and my dad and how I did everything I could right up to the very end are never going to be taken from me. My mother knew I would do it for my dad and she knew I was the one strong enough to do it and she was right. It was hard but it is good to have the peace of mind that comes with knowing she left me a job to do and knew that I would have done it forever. There's a great comfort in being able to say, I have no regrets.



# SAM MALCOLMSON



The shock of seeing her 22 year old son Sam, lying on an Intensive Care bed fighting for his life after being caught in an IRA ambush in Crossmaglen was too much for Margaret (Minnie) Malcolmson. She died of a heart attack at the side of his bed, at Daisy Hill Hospital, in Newry, on September 23, 1972 plunging the family into unimaginable grief. As the 50th anniversary of his mother's death approaches - 50 years later, Sam Malcolmson recalls this painfully tragic time for his family.

We grew up on a farm near Banbridge in County Down where I was my parents only son. I have two sisters, one older and one younger. I joined the RUC and was in Londonderry in 1969 when, during a riot I was injured with a brick and taken to Altnagelvin hospital. Despite the distance, my mother came to visit me. This would become a key factor in my realisation that something terrible had happened to her in 1972.

In September 1972 I was working in Crossmaglen and whilst attending the scene of a shooting that claimed the life of an army officer, the patrol car I was in came under gun attack. A bullet went





in my left side and out my right and damaged my spine, my colleague who was driving the car was also hit. Somehow, between the two of us we managed to get the car back to the station at Crossmaglen. We were both in a bad way but we were taken to Daisy Hill hospital where, in the words of one of the doctors, they “patched us up as best they could”. We were moved to the

Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, my colleague that same evening and me two days later by helicopter on September 24.

My parents and my two sisters were called to Daisy Hill Hospital where I was in Intensive Care but I wasn’t conscious so I didn’t know any of this until much later. My mother and father came into the room first while my two sisters waited in the corridor but as she approached my bedside, my mother dropped dead. She was only 48. My father was then left to go out to the corridor to my sisters. He approached them and said “God has not been good to us tonight.” They thought that it was me he was talking about and that I had died, so you can imagine the terrible shock they had when they realised it was our mother.

As time passed and I became more aware of my surroundings and visitors, it dawned on me that my mother wasn’t coming to see me which immediately struck me as strange considering how quickly she had been at my bedside when I was in Altnagelvin hospital in 1969. I asked where she was and that’s when my father and our Minister broke the news of my mother’s death to me. I cannot describe the anger and rage I felt. If I could have killed, I would have killed. The terrorists who carried out the ambush where known.

Slowly I recovered from my injuries and

eventually I was allowed to return home after 9 months but it was so difficult because in my mind, my mother was going to be there. That first day was one of the worst days of my life, it was horrendous. As a family, we didn't talk too much about mum's passing because it was so emotional for all of us but I did carry feelings of guilt and wondered if my sisters thought that because of my job, I caused mum's death. There are questions I wished I had asked my father, but didn't, and now it's too late because he too has passed away.

My recollection of my mother was how very selfless a woman she was. She always put us ahead of herself and I don't remember her ever spending money unnecessarily on herself. The last time I spoke to her, I had given her a few pounds from my wages and told her she had to treat herself for once. While I was still in hospital, one of the nurses was chatting to me about the day mum died and mentioned how she remembered thinking how beautiful mum's hair was as she was walking up the hospital corridor. That gives me great comfort because I like to think that she did treat herself to a new hairdo with the money I had given her, and for once thought about herself. However a treat she wouldn't live to enjoy.



# SAMMY Heenan



An attempted murder attack in 1983 by the IRA on Henry Priestly, a part time member of the Ulster Defence Regiment had a profound effect on his life and mental health. The impact of this and other suspect incidents left Henry fearful and paranoid. The anxiety he suffered became increasing evident to those who knew and respected this quiet unassuming man and for the last seven years of his life, it was clear Henry's personality had changed significantly. Sammy Heenan pays tribute to his neighbour for the sacrifices he made.

"Henry's only family were his half-sister and cousins but as his neighbour I knew him my

entire life. He worked in the Roads Service and was a part-time member of the UDR. My father and Henry were very good friends, often chatting about the perilous situation our country was facing through those dark and difficult years.

Henry was a very quiet, inoffensive, and unassuming man, someone of the highest integrity who was the epitome of civility and a good friend to all who knew him. Henry lived in a small house in Legananny, County Down which didn't have the modern day comforts or basic amenities like electricity or even running water but he was very comfortable and happy in his modest surroundings

He enjoyed nothing more than socialising with his neighbours who he held in high regard as they did of him.

Henry particularly enjoyed his membership of Legananny Accordion Band, of which he was a foundation member and was so proud when the band held a presentation evening to commemorate his 40 years of membership of the band.

In the 1970s, after his mother Nan died, Henry joined the UDR and I remember him telling me he wanted to remain elusive and anonymous for as long as possible as the threat against part time UDR soldiers was immense, in particular those residing in rural Nationalist areas.

Unbelievably in his very first patrol outside Rathfriland UDR base and only several hundred yards from the base entrance, he encountered a Nationalist who recognised Henry in his uniform and exchanged pleasantries as he passed by. I remember vividly Henry telling me his words were "I didn't know you were in this Henry".

One evening in November 1983 Henry left out his metal bread bin for the breadman to leave supplies which was normal practice. He arrived home late that evening and was initially suspicious as he carried the bin through the door. The lid on the bin hadn't been placed on correctly and it was heavier than normal. As Henry lifted out the bread, he discovered a bomb in the bread bin.

In shock, Henry then removed the bread bin which still contained the bomb outside the home and went to a neighbour's house where he phoned the emergency services and bomb disposal team who made the device safe and explained to Henry just how close he had come to death.

After that, Henry was offered alternative accommodation and was encouraged to move by the security forces for his own future safety but he refused to do so.

Another time Henry was walking on the road at the edge of dark not far from his home, when a car with suspicious looking individuals, wearing boiler suits passed by and stared out at Henry.

Henry intuitively identified the immediate risk and fled across fields for safety as the car returned to where he was.

All this and other suspicious incidents preyed heavily on Henry's mind and it was evident he suffered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result. We can only guess at what went on inside Henry's mind at home in that wee house without even a television to distract his thought. I remembered one particular time I called to visit him and I could hear five bars being opened on the door, yet it was in bad repair and the bars would have been no barrier to forced entry. Undoubtedly years of fear and isolation caused him to think in this way but like so many, Henry didn't avail of any kind of help with his anxiety. Sadly Henry passed away on the 17th October 2001, aged 76.

Knowing Henry, he probably wouldn't appreciate this tribute such was his modesty about the role he played. However, I felt it appropriate that his story is told."





# Tracey Kernaghan

Gary Kernaghan was eight when his father Herbie, a part time member of the UDR was shot dead in an IRA ambush on October 15th 1979. Herbie Kernaghan was gunned down as he delivered fruit and vegetables to a school close to their family home in Lisnaskea, County Fermanagh. The impact of this great loss to this small boy would reach into the core of Gary's being making him introspective, reserved and guarded. In 2011, married to Tracey and with three young children of his own, years of keeping his childhood trauma buried deep inside himself would manifest in a Primary non-malignant brain tumour and later his second Primary Malignant cancer diagnosis in his Kidneys. Tracey's

background in psychology and trauma work has led her to the conclusion Gary's illnesses were intrinsically linked to the devastation of losing his father in such a brutal way at such a young age. Gary passed away on April 21, 2015 aged 44. Tracey pays tribute to Gary and the wonderful legacy he along with Tracey instilled in their children.

"I met Gary in 1995 when we were both 25 and as soon as I met him, I knew we would be together, we got married in 1999. We were polar opposites in a lot of ways, but we shared the same core values and morals and we wanted the same things from life, and for our own children.

Gary was quiet, a real gentleman, reserved until he got to know you, but I would say that had a lot to do with trust. Gary did talk to me about his childhood, it probably wasn't a very natural thing for Gary, however he talked to me about how difficult it was for him that he didn't get to go to his dad's funeral, and how he didn't see his mum during that whole time, this really influenced how we raised our children. Gary wanted them to be included in all our decision making. When Gary got sick, we involved the children in every decision, and information was shared with them about their daddy's illness, especially when we knew Gary wasn't going to recover from his cancer, (because Gary knew what was ahead for his children when he died).

Our son George had just turned nine when Gary died, Gary had just turned nine just after his own father's death. Due to my background in psychology and trauma and Gary's lived experience we knew that it was important that our children had access to all the support mechanisms around them so that they didn't hold onto traumas related to their dad's illness and death.

Gary had been a full-time member of the UDR/RIR until it was disbanded, then he was a lorry driver before re-training as a classroom assistant, (after his brain tumour diagnosis). This diagnosis didn't surprise me because Gary was a deep thinker, the doctors told us they believed



his tumour had been growing inside his brain from his teenage years.

The brain, is the thinking processing area of the head, but the kidney which is where Gary had another primary cancer tumour is where the body holds stress, and is also related to relationships. I do think we all get ill for a reason 'and our body holds the score'.

In the last days of his life Gary had his family and friends gathered around him. On the morning, before he died in the afternoon his sister said to me, 'that she didn't think Gary would die until it was me and him on our own, as it was always me he wanted', and that is what happened. My mum, his sister Debbie and I were in the room,



they said 'goodbye' and I got into bed with him, held him, kissed him, and told him 'I would kiss him from this world, and his mum would meet him in the next world to kiss him', and he then died in my arms.

My children have gone through the trauma of losing their father, which is something they share with their dad, but it is something I haven't because my dad is still alive. Perhaps Gary's legacy is how passionate he was that our children would feel they were central to everything right up to the very end, and I certainly feel he achieved that."

# TREVOR LOUGHLIN

Adrian Loughlin, like his father and three brothers served as a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment after joining as a young man of 18, in 1985. Eight years later in August 1993, Adrian was driving along the road close to the family home in Castlederg when an under-car bomb fell off his vehicle. Although the device failed to explode, this brush with death changed Adrian immeasurably and after 11 torturous years, Adrian, died after an accidental overdose of medication mixed with alcohol. Adrian's bother Trevor remembers his baby brother and the stress that car bomb brought to the whole



family.

Adrian joined the UDR when he was 18 which was the same as me and my other two brothers had done. My father was also a member and we all served in our local community of Castlederg. Our family home was in Meeting House Lane where the first three houses were all owned by our family. Our cars would all have been outside our homes so while the IRA left the device under Adrian's car – the reality was the target could have been any of us. The sad irony is that Adrian had left the UDR, three years before the attack. Adrian was working in a garage as





a panel beater and had driven his car in the morning, and had come home for lunch. He was on his way back to work, this time with his girlfriend in the car and had stopped off for fuel when he heard something fall from his car. He stopped and went back to see what it was and realised immediately what it was. Right away he tried to keep other drivers away from the device until the Army Technical Officers arrived but two elderly gentlemen that didn't understand what Adrian was trying to do actually drove over the

device. Thankfully nothing untoward happened and as it turned out the device had been badly assembled which was why it didn't explode.

Even so, coming so close to being murdered had a terrible impact on Adrian and he went into a deep depression which changed him completely from the kind of young man he had been. My mother realised how unwell Adrian really was and she watched over him all the time. She would ask us to keep an eye on him if she wasn't at home. Adrian essentially became like a recluse. He stopped working and going into town. The only time he left our home was to go to either my brother's house or my grandfather's house which were on either side of our house. There was no help for anyone suffering from that kind of trauma so Adrian was left to struggle on. Adrian had gone from being a happy young man who had a wide circle of friends and a girlfriend to the very opposite. He stepped away from his friends, ended the relationship with his girlfriend.

Adrian died on June 17, 2004 when he was 36 and for those 11 years since the IRA planted that device under his car, he never really came back to being the person he had been. He had been attending a psychiatrist and we could actually see him picking up slightly. He would leave the house to walk my father's dog but in the early hours of the morning when he knew no one would be about but that to us was a sign that



maybe he was getting better. One morning he told my mother he had been to Castlederg before the shops had opened and had seen a watch he liked in the jewellers. She told him he should buy it and he actually went back to the shop and bought it for himself. He was delighted showing it to me and this small thing filled us with hope for the first time. Adrian was drinking quite a lot and he was on medication for depression and we believe that he took more medication than he realised.

My mother gave Adrian's watch to me and it is one of my most treasured possessions. I wear it on Remembrance Sunday. Although Adrian didn't die on the day that device was left under his car, I lost the brother he had been that day, he was never the same. None of us were.



*Sadly, Trevor passed away suddenly on Tuesday 20th December 2022 with his wife Catherine by his side. All at SEFF were devastated at hearing of his untimely death, Trevor was a big character and will be sorely missed by many people, but none more so than his own family.*



# Valerie Hetherington

Valerie Hetherington, nee Woods was just ten years old when her mother Mary died leaving her and her five siblings orphans. Valerie's father Alfie Woods, a part time member of the RUC was murdered by the IRA almost exactly a year to the day her mother passed away from a broken heart on August 1982. Here Valerie speaks about the loss of childhood she could have had the Troubles

not robbed her of both parents.

"The police car daddy was in went over a landmine at Loughmacrory. It was August 2 1981 – the day he had planned to celebrate his 50th birthday with mummy and us.

At that time there were five of us still at home Ann, Jean, Trevor and me and Mervyn and William who



is the oldest was didn't live at home then. I was nine and Mervyn who was eight.

When daddy was killed, there was total and utter devastation. Mummy had lost the love of her life. They got married when they were around 24 and devoted to each other. Because I was so young, I don't remember a lot about that time but in the

year between daddy's murder and mummy dying I grew up in a sense.

When mummy died, there had been nothing physically wrong with her. It was simply the strain on her heart. Even the doctor said it was a broken heart that killed her. She died while we were on holiday in Portrush, where we were staying in the police caravan for two weeks. I don't know how long into the two weeks we were but I do remember we had been at the Giant's Causeway, we had been at Barry's amusements and walking around the rocks and cliffs. My aunt Tina very recently showed me a postcard mummy had sent from Portrush saying she didn't know how she was going to get us all home again because we were having a ball. Little did she know that it was her that wouldn't come home. My last words to her before I went off to stay the night in the caravan of my friend's family was "night, night, love you". I woke around 4am and my sister was there crying and mummy had died of heart attack.

I totally blame the Troubles for killing both daddy and mummy. They were denied so much that they could have expected. They never got to grow old together, to see any grandchildren and there are 17 in total now. For me, growing up was very, very hard. All those key moments in life where you need your mother especially were extremely hard. When I was getting married, I didn't have her and having my first child was difficult. When



it's your first, you don't know what to expect and it's your mother you turn to. She is your rock but I was robbed of that.

I have had to rely on other people telling me wee stories about mummy and daddy so I have a picture of what they were like. I have had to come to terms with the fact that I am not the person I would have been had I grown up with my parents

still alive. This was brought home to me in a very simple way in that one evening I was bringing my own girls home from youth club where they had made rice-crispy buns. They were chatting about wishes and what you would wish for. I said I wished I could have my mummy and daddy back and my daughter who was around eight said "I wish I could eat that rice-crispy bun". It was a good example of what a child of eight or nine should be wishing for, not wishing for your parents which is what I would wish for at the same age. It was the innocence of my daughter's wish that brought home again to me how different my life was.

Growing up shaped me into the person I am today. It has also shaped me in the way I brought up my own family. I was so protective of them because I knew how quickly the life you have can be taken from you and how precious it is."

# WILSON SISTERS

8 December 1971 – “Murder of a U.D.R. Man at Curlough”, that was the headline of the local newspaper. So matter of fact! But, completely not so for his family, especially his mother and father.

It was on a cold and dark night on 7th December 1971, when life for the Wilson family at Curlough, Caledon changed forever. Evil men entered the Wilson home at Curlough, Caledon and not only changed the lives of Denis’s mum and dad, Hester and WJ Wilson, but it also changed the lives of his three sisters, Iris, Madlyn and Maureen.

Denis’s death was earth shattering, there



were so many mixed feelings – shock, anger, depression and more, that swirled around our thoughts all at once, all of which created deeply rooted emotions, and still remain to-day.

These feelings of grieve were so different because Denis’s death was unexpected, not like the grief that one has when a family member has been ill and dies.

Murder was and is not a normal occurrence. Each of us had to learn to cope with Denis’s death. Our parents were the most affected, which was natural as Denis was an only son and was expected to carry on the family farm.

But the intensity and abruptness of his murder



was so hard to comprehend, especially the reasons why?

Denis had taken over the responsibilities of farming the family farm from our father, who had just started to enjoy his retirement. Dad had started to take it “easy”, and was enjoying his time by relaxing and going places with Mum. He had started to play bowls at our local church – but this all changed with Denis’s death.

It was unreal for the first months, I suppose our father tried to put on “a brave face” as the shock and denial faded away. We know that he and Mum did not sleep very well. When we were visiting, both of them tried to bottle up their feelings, but we could see that the grief was overwhelming.

Dad had to return to farming, and coped with getting up early to do the milking, feed the animals, out on the tractor and all that goes with life on a family farm. He had to take on all of the responsibilities again, ones that he had given up in order to enjoy his retirement, believing that the family farm was in safe hands and would be continued on for generations to come.

He and mum found it hard to go about their daily routines, because of anxiety. Now the house was locked all the times, when in the past, it was an open house to every neighbour or friend. Both of them were wary of being away from home and they had a sense of being very insecure and vulnerable.

At the time, we know that they thought of why did this happen, especially Dad, because we knew that he kept thinking – “if I had been there, they would not have got through the front door, I would have stopped them” – we know that Dad blamed himself for being away that evening.

As we were not there all the time, coming home

was strange, it was just not the same, something was missing, in fact it was that Denis was missing, his smile and laughter, his jokes – were never heard again. His death had broken the family unit.

Three and half years our Dad struggled with the endless work and then realised that he was just not fit to continue – he questioned himself as to why he was continuing, who was his continuing for and so he decided that he should just retire, once again. He did not have a son to hand over to. He sold the animals, the farming implements and machines and retired again. At one stage, he built himself a greenhouse and it was shortly after this that one evening, having a cup of tea, he became unwell and Mum realised that he was seriously ill.

Dad went into hospital and never came home again, he had given up, because he just did not want to continue on. Dad died of a broken heart.

Mum, in the months after Denis's death became more reserved, not the outgoing person that she had been, but she did not show that she was hurting. She was a woman of strength and courage, with a stubborn streak that showed up when she set her mind to something. She said nothing but she had a determination that the men who had carried out the murder, would one day meet the Lord and be made to pay for their



wrong doing.

We knew that she thought of Denis all the time, but she only spoke about him occasionally. It just hurt too much to say his name! However we have heard from a friend about a year before she died, suddenly she spoke about him and told a friend, "I ONCE HAD A SON!" Hearing this, we then realised that she had continued to grieve for Denis every day since he was cruelly taken away from her.

Over the year, we could see what an effect Denis's death was having on our parents but there was nothing that we could do, to stop the hurt and the pain. These evil men took away the joy that we would have had seeing Denis marrying, having a family and also having a home that we could come back to visit. Denis, we still miss you.





## YVONNE BLACK

Edmund Black had been a fit and healthy man whose energy level did not belie his advanced years. However, on November 1, 2012 when dissident Republican terrorists fired a gun at the car David, a prison officer, was driving along the motorway on his way to work, killing him instantly. The shock of his son's death affected Edmund deeply and less than two years after David was

murdered, Edmund was diagnosed with cancer. Edmund lost his life to the disease just eight weeks later on October 2014. His daughter in law, and David's widow, Yvonne Black is a nurse specialising in cancer services. She is convinced, Edmund's cancer was triggered by the trauma he underwent over David's death. Here she pays tribute to her much loved father in law.

“My father-in-law Edmund was a very fit man, always out and about in Cookstown where he lived. He was the main career for his wife Helen, was completely independent but after David was killed, he lost all his zest for life.

David was murdered in 2012 – a time when society thought the violence was more or less over but there were issues within the prisons and prison staff were very much under threat but that didn’t lessen the utter shock felt by society when David was murdered so you can imagine how it affected all of us.

David was Edmund and Helen’s only son, they had one son and one daughter so when David was murdered, it was totally traumatic for him as it was for us all but Edmund’s whole outlook on life changed completely. He worried about his own safety and all of our safety as well. Edmund had been in the RUC in a part-time capacity but left completely in the mid 1990s – around the time of the Drumcree stand off so he was aware of the dangers.

Edmund and Helen were such a devoted couple, they shared everything and I thought it was so sad that because of Helen’s dementia, Edmund wasn’t able to talk to Helen about what had happened to David. Helen wasn’t aware that David had died and she would ask him, “where’s David” all the time, which must have been so



painful for him.

From the minute David died, his father changed from being this wee man, who was physically well and full of energy who loved life. He would put a younger person to shame, he did all the cooking at home, cared for his wife, did the shopping and looked after his own garden. In fact, he did everybody’s garden in the wee park where they lived. He was so lively, a trim wee man who took pride in how fit and healthy he was. Whenever we would mention his age, he would lift his leg and clap his hands under it and say “I am young yet, look how I can do this.” He was amazing, his whole attitude to life was youthful, he would have inspired anyone. He was a great inspiration to us, certainly.

While I have no way of proving Edmund’s death

was related to David's murder, in my heart I believe it was connected. David was murdered in November 2012 and it was August 2014, Edmund was diagnosed. He died eight weeks later in October 2014.

I work in cancer services and we do know that stress and trauma is one of the risk factors of cancer. There is nothing more stressful or traumatic than dealing with the violent and sudden death of your only son. David's death was totally out of the blue, we were all supposed to be living in peace, people were lulled into a sense that the violence was over, more or less and that added even more to the trauma.

The shock of David's death affected all of us, we all lost motivation and it was the worst possible time but maybe when you are older like Edmund, you give up and I think when they killed David, they killed his father too. “



This Publication represents an initial study of the domino impact caused by the terrorist campaign and wider Northern Ireland Troubles where many additional lives were prematurely cut short, reflected by primary testimony from those left behind.

The lives of those remembered matter; whether younger or older or which ended before they began outside of the womb. We acknowledge the courage of those who contributed to this project who are determined that their loved one(s) are never forgotten.



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