

Jim McClelland



Civilian

1907 - 31st July 1972

Jim McClelland was born in 1907, he was the first child of the then newly married Thomas and Fanny McClelland, and although named Thomas James after his father and his father's father, was always known as Jim. There would be eight more children, three girls and five boys.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He and his father moved to Ervey, where Jim took delight in planting trees all round their new home.

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

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

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

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

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

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