



9th February 1971

George Beck (43)  
John Eakins (52)  
Harry Edgar (27)

BBC Engineers  
Malcolm David Henson (23)  
William Alan Thomas (35)

Five innocents killed as a result of a  
Provisional IRA bomb.



# SEFF Remembers The Brougher Mountain Atrocity 9th February 1971



George Beck



John Eakins



Harry Edgar



Malcom David Henson



William Alan Thomas

# The Brougher Mountain Atrocity

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The Brougher Mountain transmitter is located in a beautiful remote rural area near the village of Trillick, in Co Tyrone. On the 9th February 1971 at approximately 9am, 3 workers from J McMullen & Son, Kilkeel; George Beck, John Eakins and Harry Edgar and 2 BBC engineers; Malcolm Henson and Bill Thomas travelled to Brougher Mountain to repair buildings within the transmitter compound that had been damaged the previous month by an explosive device. They had met at a farm complex at the bottom of



the lane and travelled up the rough track in a landrover, on route up to the aerial compound their landrover activated a large explosive device when it hit a trip wire. All 5 of the occupants were tragically killed in the explosion, the landrover was virtually unrecognisable. A third BBC engineer that was

travelling alone some distance behind was first to come across the scene. The RUC telephoned to J McMullen & Son, back in Kilkeel at 11am; first reports were that there had been a terrible accident; representatives of the firm went straight to the scene. The scene was one of total devastation; anyone attending either security forces or media could not help but be affected by the horrific aftermath of the attack. The families describe later how they came to be informed of the tragic death of their loved ones. The target of the attack is thought to have been army vehicles who routinely patrolled the area around the transmitter and surrounding areas. The next day employees from J McMullen & Son in a one of the firm's vans had the



unenviable task of collecting the remains of the 3 Kilkeel based workmen from Enniskillen and returning them to their respective family homes. In Kilkeel town and in the streets close to the homes were lined with onlookers paying their respects; the tragedy had a deep impact on the town. George Beck is described as a brilliant carpenter, he and John Eakins had worked for the building firm for McMullen & Son for 26 years, he and George had

been the firm's first employees when it started out in 1945. Harry Edgar had joined in 1967, he was a popular within the firm, a hard worker and in much demand by any of the foremen. The funerals of the 3 Kilkeel men all took place on the 11th February; John Eakins in the Christchurch Church of Ireland and a joint funeral for George Beck and Harry Edgar in the Mourne Presbyterian Church. Once again, nearly all the population of Kilkeel lined the streets to pay their respects. Malcolm Henson was buried at Olivet Baptist Church and William Thomas was cremated before his ashes were placed at St Peter's, Carmarthen in Wales, both taking place 2 weeks after the atrocity. There was condemnation of the attack from both protestants and Catholics alike, both coming together to grieve the loss of all 5 innocent men. Politicians from both the Unionist and Nationalist sides also condemned the atrocity. To date no one has been ever prosecuted or convicted in relation to the horrific attack.



## **George Beck** by *Gillian Stevenson*



George Beck was the youngest of a family of eight- Alicia, Fay, Anne, Esther, Nellie, Hugh and Alex.

He was a devoted husband to Isobel and loving father to Nigel and Gillian. He was a talented Joiner and some of his intricate work is still in use in public buildings and homes in the Mourne area. He was a Foreman in McMullan's Joinery works. He loved Music and played the Flute in Derryogue Flute Band and sang in the church and Male voice choir. He was a very active member of Mourne Presbyterian Church where he served on the church committee.

He was involved in many organisations including the Orange and Black order and the Masons. He enjoyed sport and played Badminton for a local club. George was a quiet, reserved and highly respected man who lived for his family, church and community.

## **John Eakins** – *“Our Dad”* by the *Eakins Family*.



John Eakins - a 52-year-old labourer murdered on Brougher Mountain by a PIRA bomb on Tuesday February 9th, 1971. John was born on 4th April 1918 in Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan to parents William and Esther Eakins. The family then moved to Kilkeel, John had three brothers and two sisters.

He married Lottie Shields and they went on to have seven children - Billy, Tom, Alex, Jennifer, Linda, Lesley and Rodney. The eldest Billy, was born on John's 21st birthday in 1939 while John was serving on the Royal Navy ship HMS Ramillies. After the war in 1945 John joined the



construction firm of J McMullen and sons, he was a man who enjoyed work during the week and was also a keen Churchgoer, being sexton of Carginagh Church. He also cut grass in some local graveyards and was caretaker of Kilkeel Orange Hall. He never owned a car and travelled everywhere on his black bicycle. John was also a member of Derryogue LOL 424 and the local RBP 208. At the time of his death John had several grandchildren.

On Tuesday 9th February 1971 John left for work very early as usual and travelled to McMullen's yard where he was joined by work colleagues George Beck and James Henry Edgar. The three men travelled onward to Brougher Mountain near Trillick, Co. Tyrone - a journey which took over two hours. They were joined by 2 BBC engineers (who had travelled from Mahon's hotel in Irvine's town) - all 5 travelled up the privately owned mountain track in the green BBC 4-wheel drive land rover.

Approximately one mile up the track their vehicle was blown up by a PIRA bomb involving a tripwire device and explosives creating a large crater in the track. The vehicle was destroyed, and all 5 men died instantly. The investigators believed the device contained 15 - 20lbs of explosives and was initially intended for one of the army patrols which would have been patrolling the area fairly regularly.

Nothing more was known about the movements of the 5 men and their land rover until a telephone call was received at Tempo RUC stationary around 9.30am that day. The call from a farmer at nearby Golan Bridge, not far from Trillick reported the sound of a heavy explosion from the direction of the BBC installation on the mountain. Police attended the scene and were met by military units who were able to confirm that the land rover and it's 5 occupants had been blown up in an explosion on the track leading up to the BBC transmitter.

The bodies were later removed to the Erne hospital mortuary in Enniskillen where post-mortems were carried out and the conclusion drawn that all 5 men had died from severe blast injuries.

John's wife Lottie had been listening to the radio around ten am when she heard of an incident on a mountain in Fermanagh, she immediately began to worry although dad had always said that he worked in Co. Tyrone. However, at eleven o'clock that morning the correct location was given and mentioned an

in incident involving 5 workmen. She knew our dad was involved. There was uncertainty and confusion for the next few hrs and relatives and neighbours began to arrive. Finally, confirmation came when our local C of I minister arrived with a policeman and her initial fears were confirmed. From that Tuesday afternoon until Thursday evening hundreds of people arrived to pay their respects.

The town of Kilkeel came to a standstill on that Thursday 11th February for the funerals of the three workmen - even the local fishing fleet stayed in the harbour to allow everyone to pay their respects to the highly regarded men and their families.

Mother was in total shock and we as a family were bewildered, where do we go from here?

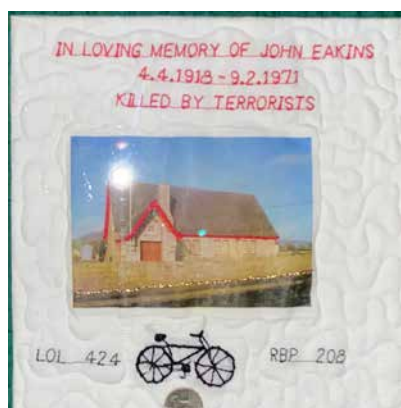
Life goes on - mother found herself a widow and the main bread winner was gone. Financially destitute - yes, some compensation came eventually but it couldn't compensate for the loss of our dad.

At the inquest afterwards mother was given dad's personal effects - amongst these were 2 silver sixpenny pieces which Mum had put on silver chains for Jennifer and Linda as mementos.

At the time this happened there was no help or support - mother had to step up and be both parents to us who were still at home, both Linda and Rodney (the youngest) still at school. No counselling or advice were either available or offered.

We girls never got the opportunity to have our dad walk us down the aisle and some grandchildren never got to meet their granddad. We as a family will never forget our dad or that terrible day.

Jennifer and Linda had the opportunity to place a square on a memorial quilt made in SDAHW group (now SEFF south Down gateway service). The square



depicts Carginagh church, dad's black bicycle and a silver Irish sixpenny piece, also mentioning the loyal orders.

No one has ever been charged or made amenable for these murders, but investigators revealed that the explosives were of the type used in nearby Co. Leitrim in the mining of low-grade coal. Also, a price label found on the Ever-Ready battery used as the power source for the device was purchased in a local shop in Ballinamore also in Co. Leitrim. It is greatly appreciated that the

leadership of SEFF have played a lead role in proposing and planning this commemorative event and the erecting of the fine memorial stone on Brougher Mountain.

The tragic events of 9th February 1971 have been forgotten by many and ignored by those who now repeatedly clamour for justice and equality in Northern Ireland.

The family of John Eakins will NEVER forget him, and his workmates and we hope and pray that future generations will never have to live through such harrowing experiences ever again.

### **Harry Edgar** *by Joy McCullough*



Edgar, James Henry (known as Harry) was born on 22nd January 1944 to Robert and Thelma (nee Stafford). Harry was a loving brother to his sister Phyllis. Harry spent a very happy childhood living at Ballyardle crossroads before moving to Finlieve Place in 1958. Harry was a devoted family man, a son, brother, brother-in-law, and uncle. Harry loved spending time with his family talking about their day or listening to the radio. Harry was a quiet, unassuming young man who loved meeting up with his friends putting the world to rights. Harry was

always on hand to help out with any jobs that needed done and would never see anyone in need of help. The family was devastated when their mother Thelma died in 1970. Harry rallied around his father and sister trying to help the family come to terms with their loss.

Harry as a young boy had a love of horses which began whilst visiting his grandparents and then his uncle's farm. Harry also loved cars which probably began when helping his father who ran a taxi business for many years. Robert taught Phyllis and Harry to drive as he did many other young people in the Mourne area. Harry could often be found washing and polishing his father's car ensuring it was always immaculate. However, Harry's real passion was football. Harry was a keen supporter of Manchester United FC. Harry loved nothing more as a boy than playing football with his neighbours in Ballyardle where they spent many a summer night kicking a football up and down the

road, no fancy pitches then. Harry began his education at Cranfield Primary School before moving to Kilkeel High School. After leaving Kilkeel High School Harry began his apprenticeship as a builder with Major Hanna. Harry then moved to work for J McMullen and Sons where he worked for four years. Harry was a diligent employee and loved going to his work every day. Harry was a quiet, reserved young man but he loved the banter on site with his colleagues. When Harry left his family on 9th February 1971



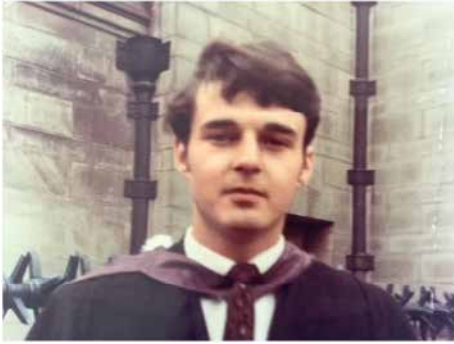
as normal to go to work with his colleagues George Beck and John Eakins, his father and sister never dreamt what would befall them later that day. Robert was at a funeral in Kilkeel when Phyllis heard the news over the radio that there had been an explosion on Brougher Mountain near Trillick, Co. Tyrone. It was only later that the police arrived to confirm for the family that Harry, George, John and two BBC engineers had all perished in the explosion, a needless loss of five totally innocent lives. Harry had just celebrated his 27th birthday less than 3 weeks before his death. There was no support available for bereaved families in the 1970's and they had to struggle on alone. Robert never recovered from the loss of his beloved son and died suddenly in 1983. Life has moved on since that

horrible day, but Harry has lived on in the heart and memory of his family and many friends who knew and loved him.





## Malcolm David Henson *by Anthea Ward*



Malcolm David Henson was 23 and the youngest member of the BBC team to be killed on Brougher Mountain on that fateful day in 1971. He was the only son of Leonard and Edna Henson of Morcombe Lancashire, brother of Anthea and brother in law of Tom Ward, with nieces Karen and Gail. They were a close family and were delighted when Malcom announced his engagement to Wendy Corless, a

primary school teacher and they had just started to make plans for their wedding at St Peter's Church in Heysham. He was educated at Lancaster Royal Grammar School and Sheffield University where he graduated with an honour's degree in electrical engineering. A keen sportsman he played rudy for both school and university as well as being an accomplished musician, he played bass guitar in his local pop group, the Weevils at many venues in the Lancaster area. Following on in his Father's footsteps he was also a talented bagpipe player and member of the Lunesdale Pipe Band. Though their lives were inexplicably changed his parents



did not let any hatred or malice consume the intervening years with their charity and church works to occupy them. Every year Leonard travelled to Northern Ireland to make a pilgrimage on the 9th February to play a Lament on his bagpipes and lay a wreath on the mountain. However, in 1978 on his way to Stranraer his car skidded on black ice and hit a tree head

on. He sustained horrendous head injuries and lost his left eye. With his dominatable courage (he was a Dunkirk Veteran), he continued with his piping known always as "The piper with the patch"; and he continued to play up until his 93rd year. Wendy fortunately married happily and has a lovely family

though she continued to keep in touch and visit Malcolm's parents throughout their life. She fondly remembers Malcolm's other love.... His prized silver Austin Healey sports car to which he devoted many precious hours tuning and refining its engine and



mechanical parts, the ultimate hobby for any engineer. His ashes are interred with a plaque in the remembrance garden of St Peters Church, a quiet peaceful place overlooking the Irish Sea and Northern Ireland.

## **William Alan Thomas** *by Karen Pennington and Lynne Phipps*



Bill Thomas was born 7th June 1935 and grew up in Carmarthen, South Wales, where he met our mother, Sheila, who was a child evacuee from London during the war. They were married on August 11th, 1959. He had done his national service with the RAF, became a radio technician, then retrained at the BBC College in Evesham to become a BBC engineer. His career with the BBC took them to England, Scotland, back to Wales and eventually to Northern Ireland where his dream of owning a bungalow became a reality.

He was tall, dark, and handsome and Sheila was beautiful, elegant and stylish. I was born in February 1961; Lynne was born in June 1963 and until February 1971 we had as near an idyllic life as any child could have.

Dad worked away from home Monday to Thursday when the excitement of his imminent arrival would be intense. Lynne and I remember the millionaire's shortbread that Mum would make ready for his return and the 'Vesta' Chow Mein he loved, from which if we were lucky, he would allow us to pinch a crispy noodle each. He occasionally had to travel to London and would always bring us back the latest toys from Hamley's. One year he took us all with him- a

wonderful family trip we both remember well.

When he was at home at the weekends, he spent much of his time playing with us along with most of the children in the neighbourhood who loved 'Uncle Bill' and would regularly pile into our house and garden to join in the fun. He put up swings in the garden for us, sprayed us with the hose in the summer, repeatedly pulled our sledges back up our steep driveway in the snow. He built a beautiful dolls house with working lights for me (which I still have) and a much-envied go-kart for Lynne. He allowed us to sit on his lap and 'drive' the Land Rover and let our many neighbourhood friends clamber all over it too. He would 'fly' each of us in turn down our long



hallway to our bedrooms and make up fantastical bedtime stories complete with sound effects, voices, and actions.



Described by the BBC as "a brilliant engineer" he was multi-talented, he was skilled at drawing cartoons, even teaching himself to play the guitar and was very practical too. He

wallpapered and decorated the bungalow, built a rockery for Mum, a crazy paving patio and made a pond full of newts and frogs. He grew vegetables and brewed beer in a big plastic bin in the airing cupboard. When each batch of beer was ready, they would get together with friends and neighbours and have a party, often fancy dress! Lynne and I remember being allowed to come and say hello to guests before we went to bed. He loved dancing and pop music and we still have a few vinyl '45's' of his including The Beatles.





He died a few days before my 10th birthday and Lynne was only 7 1/2. Our childhood was shattered. We left our home, our school, our friends, our pets, and the only life we had known, moving countries twice after this.

Reading newspaper cuttings from the time, it's clear he was a very popular, well liked, and respected man as well as a much-loved father and husband. A friend and neighbour Alex Toner wrote a very touching piece in the Daily Mail on 10th February 1971 describing a truly decent and kind man – excerpts include-

“He loved the Irish way of life” .....

“He didn't give a toss about politics or religion” ....

“I never heard him say a harsh word in the five years I knew him” ....

“He loved his wife, adored his kids Karen 10 and Lynne 7 and looked forward to a pint in the local pub” ....

“He was such a regular guy that he spent three hours only last Sunday helping a neighbour to adjust a television aerial”. Another friend described him as “a jolly and humorous man”.

He would have absolutely adored his thirteen grandchildren (including five adopted) and his recently arrived two great-granddaughters. He has missed so much, and we miss him still.

## **SEFF - 'Supporting Victims and Survivors, Strengthening Communities'**

South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF) based originally in Lisnaskea and with outreach offices in Rathfriland, Bessbrook, Newtown Stewart, Lisburn and London and Manchester (serving GB-based victims & survivors) offers support services to all innocent victims & survivors of terrorism or other troubles related incident regardless of ethnicity or religious background. The group also supports victims/survivors living in Republic of Ireland and further afield.

Our ethos is clear, that in the context of 'The Northern Ireland Troubles' there was and never will be justification for terrorism and other Troubles related criminal violence - irrespective of who carried it out. All criminal violence was wrong and unjustified. Our aim is to support the innocent and in recognising that trauma takes many forms. We offer the following support services for victims, survivors and their families.

**Advocacy** - Supporting innocent victims & survivors (in the Northern Ireland context) with advocacy issues relating particularly but not exclusively to justice, truth and accountability.

**Befriending and SEFF calling services** - these invaluable services provide practical and emotional support to those who are isolated and/or vulnerable.

**Border Trails Project** - Remembering, honouring and learning from those who gave their all and whose lives were either extinguished or forever changed by terrorism. We have trails across County Fermanagh, South Armagh and Castlederg. These 'mapped' atrocities provide an invaluable archive of the past and education for the future.

**Counselling** - Confidential, bespoke counselling relating to the specific nature of trauma brought about by 'The Troubles' including CBT, person centred and EMDR. Counselling is currently available as face to face or remote (telephone/zoom) sessions.

**Complementary Therapies** - A package of therapy sessions relating to your specific needs (bereaved/physical/psychological) including but not limited to Physiotherapy, Kinesiology, Reflexology, Indian Head Massage, Aromatherapy and Swedish Massage.

**Individual Needs Programme** - Guided conversation in establishing eligibility to receive support for Disability Aids, help with social isolation, managing persistent pain, education and training and Volunteering opportunities. Supporting victims/survivors apply to the recently re-opened Bereaved Payment Scheme (covering partner, parent or child)

SEFF leads within the innocent victim/survivor sector in campaigning and lobbying upon issues pertinent to our constituency (e.g. legacy proposals, challenging

the historical rewrite campaigns of others, campaigning for additional health and wellbeing and welfare/reparation packages etc)

Social-based programmes - Uniting innocents and providing a common space for socialising through day trips, classes and respite. Online classes available during COVID-19. Please contact main office for timetable of events.

Welfare and Benefits Service including tribunal representation - General benefits check and advice relating to PIP, DLA (under 16's), Carers Allowance, ESA and Attendance Allowance (to name a few). Preparing for the upcoming Troubles Permanent Disablement Scheme (AKA The Victims Pension) Permanent physical and psychological injuries are considered by this scheme and we welcome enquiries in advance to applications opening later in the year)

### **Brougher Mountain Remembrance Project**

South East Fermanagh Foundation has been honoured to work with the five families who were bereaved of a loved one as a result of this terrorist atrocity, which was perpetrated by The Provisional IRA on 9th February 1971.

This was an atrocity which was all but forgotten other than by those most directly impacted. Over the last year we have sought to raise the profile of the case and in February there was due to be a service at the site to mark the 50th Anniversary and which would have been attended by representatives across the five families. Because of their responsible attitudes, the events planned were postponed owing to COVID related risks.

Instead over the weekend of Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd October 2021, families will instead gather at Brougher mountain to witness the dedication of a Memorial stone and on the Sunday be the focus of SEFF's Annual Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving to be held in Finona Presbyterian Church where a tapestry will be dedicated in remembrance of the five innocent men who were murdered.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank SEFF's Advocacy Support Manager Pete Murtagh for his commitment and care throughout the process in support of you, the families, and I also acknowledge any other staff or volunteers who have assisted in any way in making the Project a reality.

This is just the beginning of a relationship with you the Brougher mountain families and we want you to know that the organisation is here for you in the months and years ahead, please engage with our work and allow us to support you and any needs you may have.

With our eternal respect,  
Kenny Donaldson  
(SEFF's Director of Services) and wider SEFF Management



SEFF would like to thanks:  
The families of:

George Beck  
John Eakins  
Harry Edgar  
Malcolm David Henson  
William Alan Thomas

For all their invaluable input to this anniversary event, in their participation, sharing their memories and information with us. Joe Mills and Allan McMullen for being a further source of information; of which a lot more could have been included.

The Piper Gordon McKeown

The Reverend Canon Alan Irwin for conducting the Service



George Beck

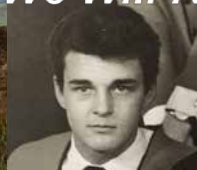


John Eakins



Harry Edgar

*We Will Remember You*

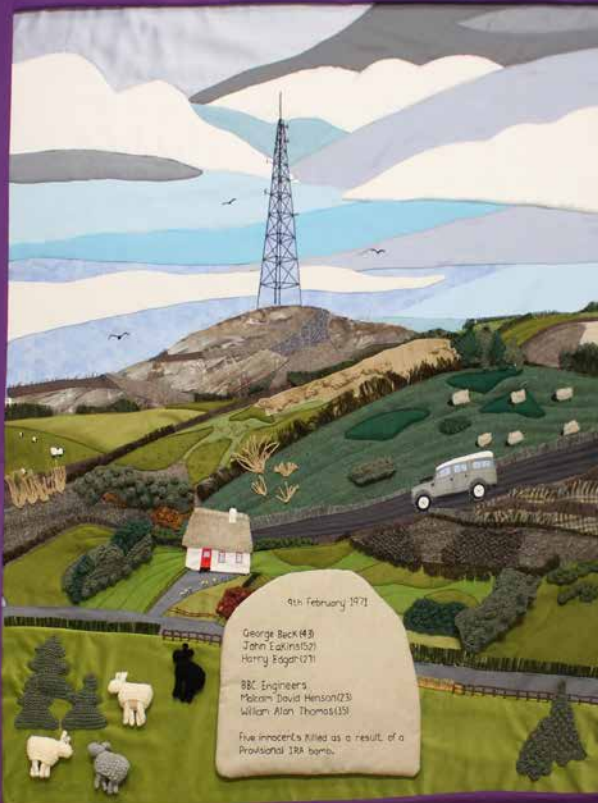


Malcom David Henson



William Alan Thomas

# Brougher Mountain Innocents Remembered



9th February 1971

George Beck (43)  
John Eakins(59)  
Harry Edgar(71)

BBC Engineers  
Malcolm David Henson(23)  
William Alan Thomas(19)

Five innocents killed as a result of a  
Provisional IRA bomb.



SEFF Management wishes to thank the volunteers who worked on this tapestry under the facilitation of Sonia Johnston, the work produced is a poignant and powerful piece which wonderfully depicts the landscape of Brougher mountain with its' diverse colours.

The individual patches to the five innocent men being remembered also successfully capture the personalities and humanity of the individuals concerned. Their legacy will live on ...