



**YEARS OF  
STRUGGLE**  
Victory to the Irish People

**BELFAST BRIGADE**  
**1st Battalion**  
**Óglaigh**  
**na**  
**hÉireann**



*The fools, the fools, the fools  
they have left us our Fenian  
dead and while Ireland holds  
these graves Ireland unfree  
shall never be at peace.*

P. H. PEARSE

## FOREWARD

WE, ALL OF US, have our own special memories and thoughts of individual comrades from the 1st Battalion who have died in the struggle for National and Social liberation.

They were after all, our neighbours, sisters, brothers, daughters, sons and loved ones. Not super-humans or fools but indeed very human with the same characteristics, emotions, and frailities as ourselves.

Our cherished memories of them are more often than not of their humanity rather than their heroic exploits. That which marked them apart was the love and unselfishness they displayed by giving their all for the "People". Our comrades were neither coerced nor fooled into the Republican struggle by fear or hopes of personal betterment. Instead, as they witnessed the oppression of Nationhood and the suffering of our people, they were moved by love and patriotism and resolved to do what they could to end the long nightmare.

In many ways the 1st Battalion has epitomised Ireland's long struggle for freedom and independence. The Battalion provided a great many tireless activists to the Republican war machine which has continued to strike at the heart of British occupation in Ireland and abroad. Any one of them could quite easily have turned their back on the suffering around them for which they would not have been condemned. Yet this was not to be.

The 1st Battalion has lost its share of comrades on active service, both at home and on foreign soil. The Battalion has reflected the peoples' participation:

men and women, young and old, Volunteers of Oglai na hEireann and Cumann na mban, political activists in Sinn Fein, and young militants of Na Fianna Eireann.

We have lost friends to Loyalist assassins and other renegade "Irish" who have carried on Britain's dirty work. In prison struggles they too have played their full part, whether in the many daring escapes from prisons or the tremendous courage and self-sacrifice of the hunger-strike. Since the death of young Tony Henderson in 1971 there has been a thousand stories of the sacrifice and suffering of our comrades who, in giving their lives, gave that which they cherished most. Yes, for surely they loved life and freedom.

We must write books, paint portraits, and erect memorials to our fallen friends and comrades, but the most fitting memorial to their bravery and sacrifice is the creation of the socialist republic for which they gave their lives.

It is the onerous task and duty of all of us to strive to make this republic a reality. To their families we owe an unqualified debt of gratitude. We can only say we know your loss and share in your grief. Your loved ones have inspired us, freedom fighters of many liberation movements, and lovers of justice throughout the world — they will never be forgotten.

If we were to fail or falter in this final phase of National Liberation then we shall, in the immortal words of our own the late Maura Drumm, be haunted by the ghosts of our patriot dead. To their comrades we simply say "fight on, we are with you".

## Tony Henderson

TONY HENDERSON was born on April 4th 1950 and educated at St Teresa's Primary School and the Christian Brothers Secondary School, Glen Road. On leaving school, in 1966, Tony worked as an apprentice bricklayer.

He joined the Republican Movement in 1969 and, as a dedicated, active republican freedom fighter, waged relentless war against the occupying British forces. He died as a result of an accidental shooting at a training camp near Portlaoise on April 4th 1971.



## Terence McDermott

TERRY McDERMOTT was born on November 10th 1952 and lived at Tullymore Gardens, Andersonstown. He was educated at the Holy Child Primary School, St Peter's Secondary School and later at Lisburn Technical School, where he studied electrical engineering for his City and Guilds Certificate.

He went to work as an electrician for Hendron Brothers in Eliza Street, and was continuing his studies on day-release from Lisburn.

Terry first became interested in Irish heritage and culture through reading books. When he discovered how his country and people were being treated by the British, the liberation of Ireland be-



came the most important thing on his mind.

He joined Fianna Eireann at 16 and progressed to become a Volunteer of the Irish Republican Army.

Along with another IRA Volunteer, Terry undertook a commercial bombing mission at Harmony Heights, Lisburn, at an electricity sub-station, on October 2nd 1971.

They had placed the anti-handler device and were about to leave the area when a cat suddenly ran out and triggered the bomb. The other Volunteer was injured but Terry, who was still close to the device, was killed.



## Martin Forsythe

MARTIN FORSYTHE was born on December 20th 1951. He was educated at St Paul's Primary School and later at St Thomas's Secondary School.

On leaving school, Marty worked for

Ross's Mill and for Ulster Foundaries, where he was still employed when he was killed on active service on October 24th 1971.

Marty joined the IRA in 1970. On October 24th 1971 he took part in an operation to bomb the Celebrity Club in Belfast city centre. Having planted the device, the active service unit was leaving the premises when RUC Special Branch men who, unknown to the Volunteers, were in the building, opened fire. Cumann na mBan Volunteer Pat Murray was shot in the back and Marty was also shot and wounded. As he lay bleeding, the Branch men moved in and shot him dead.



## Tony Jordan

TONY JORDAN, from Carrigart Avenue, Lenadoon, was born on June 2nd 1953 and was educated at St Joseph's Primary School, Slate Street, and at St Thomas's Secondary School on the Whiterock

Road.

After leaving school, Tony had several short periods of employment in various occupations, including one with Eason's stationery company in Belfast's city centre. He joined the Republican Movement in 1970.

As a very energetic young man, Tony's hobbies included swimming, camping and cycling. He was also fond of acting.

Tony was killed in a car-crash, with his comrade Vol John Finucane, while on active service on June 28th 1972, just hours after a bilateral truce had been declared between the IRA and the British government.



## John Finucane

JOHN FINUCANE was born on January 1st 1951 and educated at St Finian's Primary School, Falls Road, and St Peter's Secondary School, Whiterock Road. He worked at Andrews Flour Mill, Percy Street, and married his wife Sue in 1972. They had one son, named Patrick Pearse.

John joined the Republican Movement in early 1970. After internment without trial was introduced, he was arrested and held on the *Maidstone* and in Magilligan and Long Kesh. In the mid-Seventies, his brother Seamus was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment and another brother,

Dermot, was sentenced to 18 years but became one of the 19 POWs who successfully escaped from H7-Block in September 1983. He was later arrested in the Free State but was released when the Appeal Court refused to extradite him to the North. Another brother Pat, a solicitor, was assassinated by loyalist gunmen.

John died in a car crash while on active service duty with his comrade Vol Tony Jordan on June 28th 1972, only hours after a bilateral truce had been declared between the IRA and the British government.



## Francis Hall

FRANCIS 'FREDDIE' HALL was born on February 17th 1944 on Belfast's Shore Road, and was educated at St Patrick's, Bearnageeha.

On leaving school, he joined the Merchant Navy at the age of 16. When he was 21, Freddie got married and, two years later, in 1967, he left the Merchant Navy and found employment as a steel erector. Freddie and his wife had one

child.

Freddie joined the Republican Movement in late 1970 and remained on active service until his death on August 30th 1973, one week after being fatally injured in an accidental explosion in Elaine Street, off Stranmillis Road.

Vol Anne Marie Pettigrew, also injured in the explosion, died two days later, on September 1st.



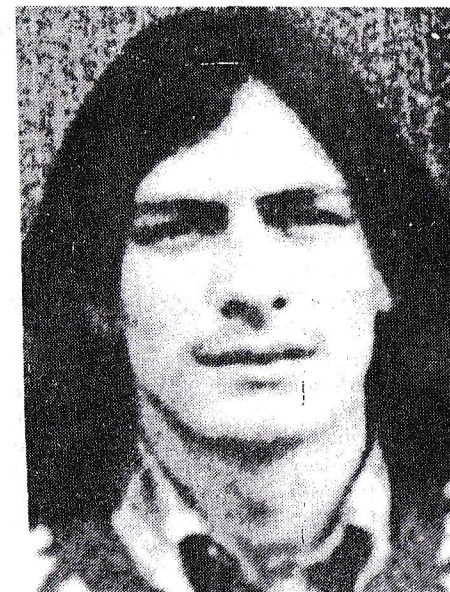
## Gerard Fennell

GERRY FENNELL was born in Belfast on August 10th 1946 and was educated at Millfield Primary School, St John's and St Thomas's Secondary Schools. He enjoyed boxing and was a member of the Immaculata Boxing Club, but he gave up what could have been a very promising career as a boxer following the death of his trainer, Jack McCusker.

Shortly after his marriage, in 1966, Gerry and his wife moved to London but when they returned to Belfast for a short holiday in 1972, they decided to stay. He

found employment as an apprentice engineer at Whiterock Industrial Estate, where he was working up until the time of his death. The Fennells had two children, Sharon and Geraldine, the latter being born five months after her father's death.

Gerry was shot dead by British occupation forces while on active service in his home area of Twinbrook on November 8th 1974.



## John Rooney

JOHN ROONEY was born on June 5th 1955, the third child in a family of eleven. When he was three years old, his family moved to live in the predominantly loyalist Cregagh estate.

John attended the nearby St Anthony's Primary School, where his family say he was well-liked by his teachers — but always day-dreaming! His best subjects

were English and Technical Drawing, and Speech & Mime, for which he won certificates. After St Anthony's, John went to St Augustine's Secondary School, Ravenhill Road.

A lover of the outdoor life, John's hobbies were camping, fishing or just roaming the Castlereagh Hills with his father or one of his eight brothers. A member of the Carolyn Road Youth Club, John attended regularly but was constantly harassed by the loyalist sectarian 'Tartan' gangs.

Sectarianism was now rearing its ugly head and the Rooney family, after 16 years spent among friends of various religions, were forced by loyalist thugs to leave their Cregagh home and to squat in the newly-opened Twinbrook estate on the other side of Belfast.

Two of John's personal friends from the Ormeau area, near Cregagh, were shot by loyalists: one because he was a Protestant who was friendly with Catholics, the other simply because he was a Catholic.

Living now in an almost exclusively nationalist area, John started attending St Theresa's CBS in the Glen Road. Nothing had really changed except that now John was being harassed by British thugs in khaki instead of loyalist thugs wearing tartan. His home was constantly raided — once even on Christmas Eve, when the Brit raiding party vindictively opened the children's presents.

Having left school, John threw himself enthusiastically into the republican struggle, becoming an active member of the local IRA unit along with Vol Bobby Sands, a close friend. Another comrade at the time was 'Jiffy' Kerr, who was assassinated by loyalist gunmen while he worked in a garage on the Lisburn Road.

Finding difficulty in holding down a steady job because of the long hours he devoted to the Republican Movement,

and because of his frequent arrests by the crown forces (six times in one three-week period), John's republicanism was becoming a contentious issue at home. Following an ultimatum from his mother to leave either his home or the Movement, John moved out of the family home. Things were put right within a few weeks, however, when his family, whose main concern had always been John's welfare, resigned themselves to the fact that John's commitment was uncompromising.

John died tragically after being knocked down by a car in Twinbrook on November 15th 1974. He was 19 years old.



## Brian Fox

BRIAN FOX was born on October 25th 1947 in Belfast. He began school at the age of five at St Theresa's Primary School and progressed to the Harding Street CBS at the age of 11. After sitting his O-Level exams at the age of 16, he went to Bearnageha.

After passing his 'A' Levels, he left school and went to work in Eastwoods. A fluent speaker of Irish by the time he was 18, he had always had a keen interest in Irish history and culture. He was an active republican from his early teens and took part in all forms of resistance to oppression with a fervent dedication born of the firm belief that Ireland's destiny lay in the hands of its people.

From the out-break of 'the Troubles', he took a leading part in the struggle, as an organiser and trainer. Involved in every facet of the struggle, he engaged the enemy at every opportunity.

Shortly after his marriage, he and his wife emigrated to Canada and Brian immediately set to work, organising the Irish-Canadian community to rally to the cause and help the struggle in the homeland. But on a holiday home, Brian found the situation deteriorating gravely and decided to return home permanently.

Back in Belfast, Brian threw himself wholeheartedly into the fight once again, with a zeal and fervour that was admired and emulated by his comrades.

Brian died as a result of an accidental shooting, whilst on active service in England, on December 21st 1974.

## Kevin McCauley

KEVIN McCAULEY was born on April 25th 1962 and lived with his parents Leo and Winifred, his younger brother Patrick and sister Jackie on Belfast's Grosvenor Road until 1969, when the family moved to live in the Ladybrook estate. He attended St Mary's Primary School, Divis Street, and then La Salle Secondary School, Andersonstown, where



friends remember him as a good student, quiet-natured and as having a great love for playing soccer.

Even at such an early age, Kevin was aware of the history of the republican resistance struggle. His grandfather James McCauley from Swanlinbar, County Cavan, was a member of the IRA during the Tan War and was interned for a period in the Curragh Camp, County Kildare.

More recently, Kevin's aunt Marie McCauley served a four-year sentence in Armagh Jail during the early Seventies. With this strong republican background, it was not surprising that Kevin joined Fianna Eireann.

Kevin's death occurred on the evening of November 6th 1975. He had just left St Michael's Youth Club with some friends and they were messing around with an unattended dumper on the building site of the Ballyowen old people's home on the Andersonstown Road. Somehow the dumper ran out of control, careering down the road and crushing Kevin against another piece of machinery. He was just 13½ years old.

## Laura Crawford

LAURA CRAWFORD was born on November 20th 1950 in the Lower Falls area of the city. She came from a large family and had seven sisters and two brothers. She was educated at St Peter's Primary School and St Louise's College. She left school at the age of 17 and went to work in a solicitor's office, Nurse & Jones, as a shorthand typist. She was full of life, and was a keen folk fan and loved dancing.

Laura joined Cumann na mBan in the later part of 1973.

She was a very active Volunteer, participating in a number of successful attacks on the crown forces, and despite her confessed fear of explosives she put this to one side when called upon.

On one occasion when she and another Volunteer were transporting explosives into the Lower Falls for an operation the following day, the car was stopped by a British army patrol. Calmly rolling down the window, she began chatting to the Brit who, so overwhelmed that someone from such a staunch republican area was willing to speak to him, gave the vehicle interior a cursory inspection and waved it through the checkpoint. The following day's operation, which



could have been jeopardised, was successful.

At all times, security was predominant in Laura's thoughts and actions, keeping a distinct line between her role as a soldier of Cumann na mBan and her personal life.

On the night of December 1st 1975, Laura and an IRA Volunteer, Paul Fox, drove into the car park in Castle Street. Just as they were parking the car, the bomb they were carrying exploded prematurely.



● Vol Laura Crawford's Tricolour-draped coffin is borne into Milltown Cemetery, escorted by a Cumann na mBan guard of honour

## Paul Best

PAUL BEST was born in Belfast on June 11th 1956 and lived at Divis Drive, adjacent to Turf Lodge, an area he loved and to which he dedicated himself. He was educated at the Holy Child Primary School and at St Teresa's Christian Brothers School and at St Gabriel's.

He trained as a chef at the Rupert Stanley College and later went to work in the Bay Hotel, Cushendun, and at the Royal Hotel, Ballycastle. He did bar work in Galway and Sligo, and came back to Belfast where he got a job at Cortex in Derriaghy, from where he was transferred to their branch in Cork. Returning to Belfast, he did some more bar work and then worked for a while in the Civil Service.

Paul joined the Martin Forsythe Sinn Fein cumann in 1973, having decided that the Republican Movement was the best way forward to a socialist republic after collecting and reading every article relevant to the struggle that he could lay his hands on.

He was an active force within the cumann, organising local people to support anti-internment parades and rallies. Paul was editor of the cumann's newspaper, *An Troid*, informing readers of all topical activities and up-to-date political information. He became cumann PRO and developed an oratorical ability which he used on as many platforms as possible. He was soon promoted to be organiser of Sinn Fein for the Andersonstown area.

When the cumann set up an incident centre in Norglen Road in 1975, Paul moved out of his home to ensure that the centre was always open to the local people.



Fierce fighting had broken out between the Republican Movement and the Sticks. Paul was often attacked by Sticks in the incident centre and his motorcycle was burned by them.

An explosion had occurred in Monagh Crescent and a pensioner's windows had been broken as a result. Paul, without regard for his personal safety, went to help the pensioner to arrange covering for the windows. He was abducted by the Sticks and shot four times in the back.

He was admitted to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he underwent emergency surgery. Two bullets were removed but two were imbedded so deeply that the doctors decided to leave them for another day.

Paul convalesced, confined to a wheelchair. His father brought him back to the people he loved in the Turf Lodge area, just prior to his going back for the second operation.

On February 18th 1976, Paul died from his injuries while undergoing surgery for the removal of the bullets.

## Sean McDermott

SEAN McDERMOTT was born in Derry city on April 20th 1955. He died on April 5th 1976, a few weeks before his 21st birthday.

Shortly after his birth, the family moved to Liverpool but returned to live in Belfast in 1961. Sean started school at St Theresa's Primary, Glen Road, and on passing his 11-Plus examination he went to St Mary's Christian Brothers Grammar School, also on the Glen Road in Andersonstown.

Always a good student, Sean took a keen interest in Gaelic football and the Irish language, getting a Fainne at the age of 13.

In May 1972, Sean was shot in the groin by British soldiers in Andersonstown and was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital. When he recovered from his injury, he was arrested and interned in Long Kesh. At just 17 years old, he was one of the youngest internees.

A very vocal and articulate republican, Sean was a great favourite with his fellow inmates because of his effervescent wit and constant good humour. Sean refused to let imprisonment break his spirit of resistance, and he is remembered especially for his interventions in debates and lectures, many of which he helped to organise.

Released from Long Kesh in March 1975, Sean reported back to the IRA for active service duty, but was still able to devote some time to studying 'O' Level Sociology and 'A' Level English Language with the Open University. His high grades earned the offer of places in both St Joseph's Training College (Trench House) and the College of Business Studies to take a course in journalism.

For Sean, however, there was no question of choice. His commitment to



the Republican Movement was total. When he could no longer combine the life of a student with that of an activist, because of the increasingly responsible positions he held, his duty to the Movement came first.

He died on April 5th 1976, when, after a commercial bomb attack on the Conway Hotel, Sean and his comrades (one of whom was H-Block hunger-strike martyr Vol Kieran Doherty, another Mairead Farrell, one of the three women hunger-strikers on the 1980 hunger-strike, who was executed in March 1988 in Gibraltar by an SAS murder squad) were prevented from using their pre-planned route of escape. Sean entered a house in the vicinity, intending to commandeer the occupant's car and use it to escape from the area.

However, unknown to Sean, the owner of the house was an RUC Reservist and, under the pretext of getting the car keys, he lured Sean upstairs on his own, and shot him at point-blank range in the stomach.

If medical attention had been summ-

oned immediately, Sean might have lived. But he was not taken to hospital until the Brits and the RUC had been called to the house.

Sean McDermott's death, because of his intelligence, political perception and commitment, was a severe loss to the Republican Movement.

To Sean's family, friends and comrades, his killing also meant the loss of a loved and loving friend, who brought the same enthusiasm and joy to their lives as to his political ideals.

During his period in Long Kesh, Sean had written:

*"This is a sincere socialist message from the Cages of Long Kesh, calling on the workers of the North to unite and smash the machine of British imperialist repression. It is only when we are free from the Westminster overlords and their armed minions that we can set about ordering our lives in a sensible and worthwhile manner. While Merlyn Rees [then British direct-ruler] stumbles around in what is for him the strange forest of Irish politics, we must remain political hostages and the working-class must continue as the prey of British imperialism and of the many political opportunists that the system spawns and supports."*

## Thomas Kane

THOMAS 'TUCKER' KANE from the Lower Falls area, was born on August 7th 1947, the second eldest in a family of six children. He attended St Finian's School, Falls Road, and left when he was 15 to work in the NSPCA in May Street. Later, he worked for Cohens scrap merchants and Eastwoods, also a scrap merchants.

'Tucker' married Kathleen Dowling on December 5th 1966 and moved to Riverdale. They had two children, David



and Maria. His main pastime was hunting with dogs and ferrets. He loved dogs and always had one about the house.

He joined the IRA in mid-1971 but previously had been helping the local Volunteers in the Riverdale area. A fearless fighter, never foolhardy or careless on operations, Tucker insisted that everyone carried out their orders according to plan.

A quiet, almost shy, person, friends describe Tucker as the kind of person who once he had become your friend, he became a friend in the truest sense of the word.

He had a fine sense of humour which often surfaced at the most unexpected times and places.

Tucker was eventually arrested and interned. He was incarcerated in the Maidstone but soon got fed up with the off-shore life. Along with six other republicans, he escaped from the ship in January 1972 by climbing out a porthole and swimming across to the shore, commandeering a bus as far as the Markets area and then being spirited across the border to the Free State.

Tucker was soon back in action. On one occasion he and another couple of Volunteers were ambushed by crown



● Four of the Magnificent Seven pictured outside the Four Courts, Dublin. (Left to right) Tommy Gorman, Jim Bryson, 'Tucker' Kane and 'Todler' Tolan

forces. In the gunfight which followed, Tucker was grazed by a couple of bullets. A friendly doctor who tended to him removed a splinter of copper from his temple and gave it to him. Tucker kept this for a long time afterwards.

Tucker was driving along the Glen Road when he became involved in a traffic accident in July 1976. He survived for a few days on a life support machine but he died of his injuries on July 6th 1976.

## Danny Lennon

DANNY LENNON, from Andersonstown, was born on November 21st 1952. With his mother, Eileen, having been a member of Belfast Battalion, Cumann na mBan, during the '40s and '50s, it was no surprise when Danny became involved in the struggle for self-determination.



Joining the IRA in 1970, he quickly became one of the most active and dedicated members of 'B' Company, 1st Battalion, for a while being regarded by British Intelligence in Thiepval Barracks as Andersonstown's 'most wanted man'.

In 1971, his brother, Sean 'Ginty', was interned in Long Kesh. Danny had been living a life on the run, rarely staying in the same billet for two nights in a row. Then, in October 1972, while returning after an IRA operation in Carryduff, just outside Belfast, he was captured along with three comrades and sentenced by the Orange judiciary to six years' imprisonment. While in the Cages of Long Kesh, Danny was a constant source of inspiration to his fellow POWs, actively helping in any escape attempts that were being planned. It was also while in the cages that he earned the nickname 'Dossier', an affectionate jibe at his difficulty at getting out of bed in the morning.

On his release from jail, in early 1976, Danny went straight back on to active service with the now re-organised 'B' Company. During this time, his entire family was subjected to a hate campaign by the British army, his mother's home being regularly raided and wrecked and herself taunted and abused by foul-mouthed Brits. Danny's mother died in 1982, having endured years of mistreatment because of her own and her children's republican activities, her spirit proud and strong to the very end.

While on an active service mission on August 10th 1976, Danny and a comrade were travelling along the Shaws Road/Andersonstown Road when they were spotted and pursued by a mobile Brit patrol. Over sixty shots were fired by the enemy forces, causing men, women and children to dive for cover.

At Finaghy Road North, one bullet hit Danny, who was at the wheel, killing him instantly and causing the car to

career wildly out of control. It smashed into a young family passing by, killing three young children. Danny's comrade was seriously injured. A gun was found in the car but it was dismantled and in an unusable state.

The British propaganda machine, aided and abetted by a viciously anti-republican media, went straight into action, misrepresenting the facts of the tragic accident. With the help of some self-seeking individuals, and many misguided people, they created the ill-fated and so-called 'Peace People.'

But while the treacherous pro-Brit antics of this organisation were soon exposed and discredited, the self-sacrifice and heroism of young IRA Volunteers like Danny Lennon shall be written into the history books and looked upon as a source of strength by the new generations of Irish men and women in a free republic.



## Maire Drumm

MAIRE DRUMM was born Maire McAteer in the townland of Killeen in South Armagh on October 22nd 1919. Within

a year; the area was abruptly partitioned from her mother's native place of Edentubber, County Louth, when the border was imposed. Maire grew up in the tradition of militant republicanism so strong in the area.

After completing school in Armagh, Maire moved to Belfast and found a job in a grocery shop at the Crumlin Road. Every weekend she would carry food parcels to Crumlin Road Jail and visit the republican prisoners from her own area. It was in the jail in 1945 that she met Jimmy Drumm, a Belfast IRA Volunteer.

They married in 1946 after Jimmy was released, having completed a nine-year sentence. They had five children: Seamus, twins Margaret and Sean, Catherine and Maire Og, and the family lived in Andersonstown.

It was from the fiery pogroms of August 1969 that Maire emerged as a gifted leader and organiser, working tirelessly to rehouse refugees from the beleaguered Ardoyne area. Maire was among the first to warn that the British troops sent in as 'peace-keepers' were an occupation force. The Brits showed their true colours during the Lower Falls curfew of July 3rd-5th 1970 and it was Maire who led the 'pram invasion' of women pushing prams laden with food and medicine into the besieged area, in defiance of the Brits.

After the reorganisation of Sinn Fein after the split, Maire's leadership qualities were recognised and she was elected as vice-president of the party at the Ard-Fheis. Maire was a dynamic and inspirational speaker and she refused to be silenced despite constant harassment by Brits, RUC and Free State gardai.

She served two successive six-month terms in Belfast's Crumlin Road Jail and another harsh period of solitary detention there as well as two periods in Dublin's Mountjoy Jail — all for 'seditious' speeches.

Maire had trouble with her eyes but was refused a US visa to go there for treatment for cataracts. She underwent a successful eye operation in the Mater Hospital, Belfast, in October 1976.

It was while she was recovering from this operation on October 28th 1976 that loyalist gunmen, dressed as doctors, burst into her convalescent room and assassinated her in her bed.

One of Sinn Fein's most brilliant speakers, Maire was always remembered for one of her inspirational pieces:

*"We must take no steps backward, our steps must be onward; for if we don't, the martyrs who died for you, for me, for this country, will haunt us for eternity."*



## Brendan O'Callaghan

BRENDAN O'CALLAGHAN, from Carrigart Avenue, Lenadoon, was born on July 5th 1955 and educated at St Peter's Sec-

ondary School, Whiterock Road.

On leaving school, he worked as a lorry-driver with his father. He was married on February 19th 1972 and he and his young wife, Amelia, had two children.

Brendan spent several months on remand in Crumlin Road Jail, between 1975 and 1976, before the charges against him were dropped. On his release, he joined Oglagh na hEireann.

He was shot dead by a British undercover agent in the Hunting Lodge Lounge Bar, Lenadoon, while on active service on April 23rd 1977.

## Bobby Sands

BOBBY SANDS was born in 1954 in Rathcoole, a predominantly loyalist district of North Belfast. His twenty-seventh birthday fell on the ninth day of his 66-day hunger-strike. His sisters Marcella, one year younger, and Bernadette, were born in April 1955 and November 1958,

respectively. All three lived their early years at Abbots Cross in the Newtown-



abbey area of North Belfast. A second son, John, was born to their parents John and Rosaleen in June 1962.

The sectarian realities of ghetto life materialised early in Bobby's life when, at the age of seven, his family were forced to move home owing to loyalist intimidation even as early as 1962.

When Bobby was 16 years old, he started work as an apprentice coach builder and joined the National Union of Vehicle Builders and the ATGWU.

Bobby's background, experiences and ambitions did not differ greatly from that of the average ghetto youth. Then came 1968 and the events which were to change his life. Bobby had served two years of his apprenticeship when he was intimidated out of his job.

In June 1972, the family were intimidated out of their home in Doonbeg Drive, Rathcoole, and moved into the newly-built Twinbrook estate on the fringe of nationalist West Belfast.

At 18, Bobby joined the Republican Movement. Bobby himself wrote:

*"My life now centered around sleepless nights and stand-bys, dodging the Brits and calming nerves to go out on operations. But the people stood by us. The people not only opened the doors of their homes to lend us a hand but they opened their hearts to us. I learned that without the people we could not survive and I knew that I owed them everything."*

In October 1972, he was arrested. Four hand-guns were found in a house he was staying in and he was charged with possession. He spent the next three years in the Cages of Long Kesh where he had political prisoner status. During this time Bobby read widely and taught himself Irish, which he was later to teach the other blanket-men in the H-Blocks.

Released in 1976, Bobby returned to his family in Twinbrook. He reported

back to his local unit and set himself to work tackling the social issues which affected the Twinbrook area.

Within six months, Bobby was arrested again. There had been a bomb attack on the Balmoral Furniture Company at Dunmurry, followed by a gun-battle in which two men were wounded. Bobby was in a car near the scene with three other young men. The RUC captured them and found a revolver in the car.

The six men were taken to Castle-reagh and were subjected to brutal interrogations for six days. Bobby refused to answer any questions during his interrogation, except his name, age and address.

He was held on remand for 11 months, until his trial in September 1977. As at his previous trial, he refused to recognise the court.

The judge admitted there was no evidence to link Bobby, or the other three young men with him, to the bombing. So the four of them were sentenced to 14 years each for the possession of the one revolver.

Bobby spent the first 22 days of his sentence in solitary confinement, 'on the boards' in Crumlin Road Jail. For 15 of those days he was completely naked. He was moved to the H-Blocks and joined the blanket protest. He began to write for *Republican News* and then, after February 1979, for the newly-merged *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, under the pen-name, 'Marcella', his sister's name. His articles and letters, in minute handwriting, like all communications from the H-Blocks, were smuggled out on tiny pieces of toilet paper.

Bobby became PRO for the blanket-men and was in constant confrontation with the prison authorities which resulted in several spells of solitary confinement. In the H-Blocks, beatings, long periods in the punishment cells, starvation diets and torture were commonplace, as the

prison authorities, with the full knowledge and consent of the British administration, imposed a harsh and brutal regime on the prisoners in the attempts to break the prisoners' resistance to criminalisation.

The H-Blocks became the battlefield in which the republican spirit of resistance met head-on all the inhumanities that the British could perpetrate. The republican spirit prevailed and in April 1978, in protest against systematic ill-treatment when they went to the toilets or got showered, the H-Block prisoners refused to wash or slop-out. They were joined in this no-wash protest by the women in Armagh Jail in February 1980, when they were subjected to similar harassment.

On October 27th 1980, following the breakdown of talks between the British direct-ruler in the North, Humphrey Atkins and the late Cardinal O Fiaich, the Irish Catholic primate, seven prisoners in the H-Blocks began a hunger-strike. Bobby volunteered for the fast but instead he succeeded Brendan Hughes, who went on hunger-strike, as O/C.

During the hunger-strike he was given political recognition by the prison authorities. The day after a senior British official visited the hunger-strikers, Bobby was brought half a mile in a prison van from H3 to the prison hospital to visit them. Subsequently, he was allowed several meetings with Brendan Hughes. He was not involved in the decision to end the hunger-strike, which was taken by the seven men alone, but later that night he was taken to meet them and was allowed to visit republican prison leaders in H-Blocks 4, 5 and 6.

On December 19th 1980, Bobby issued a statement that the prisoners would not wear prison-issue clothing nor do prison work. He then began negotiations with the prison governor, Stanley Hilditch, for a step-by-step de-escalation of the protest.

But the prisoners' efforts were rebuffed by the authorities:

*"We discovered that our good-will and flexibility were in vain,"* wrote Bobby, *"It was made abundantly clear during one of my 'co-operation' meetings with prison officials that strict conformity was required, which in essence meant acceptance of criminal status."*

In the H-Blocks, the British saw the opportunity to defeat the IRA by criminalising Irish freedom fighters, but the blanket-men, perhaps more than those on the outside, appreciated the grave repercussions, and so they fought.

Bobby volunteered to lead the new hunger-strike. He saw it is a microcosm of the way the Brits were treating Ireland historically and presently. Bobby realised that someone would have to die to win political status.

He insisted on starting two weeks in front of the others so that perhaps his death could secure the five demands and save their lives. For the first 17 days of the hunger-strike Bobby kept a secret diary in which he wrote his thoughts and views, mostly in English but occasionally breaking into Gaelic. He had no fear of death and saw the hunger-strike as something much larger than the five demands and as having major repercussions for British rule in Ireland. The diary was written on toilet paper in biro pen and had to be hidden, mostly carried inside Bobby's own body. During those first 17 days Bobby lost a total of 16 pounds weight and on Monday, March 23rd, he was moved to the prison hospital.

On March 30th, he was nominated as candidate for the Fermanagh/South Tyrone by-election caused by the sudden death of Frank Maguire, an independent MP who supported the prisoners' cause.

The following month, the nationalist electorate of Fermanagh/South Tyrone elected him their MP with over 30,000

votes. But Bobby had no illusions with regard to his election victory. His reaction was not one of over-optimism. After the result was announced, Owen Carron, Bobby's election agent visited him in the prison hospital:

*"He had already heard the result on the radio. He was in good form alright, but he always used to keep saying, 'In my position you can't afford to be optimistic'. In other words, he didn't take it that because he'd won an election his life would be saved.*

*"He thought that the Brits would need their pound of flesh. I think he was always working on the premise that he would have to die."*

At 1.17am on Tuesday, May 5th, having completed 65 days on hunger-strike, Bobby Sands MP died in the H-Block prison hospital at Long Kesh.

Bobby was a truly unique person whose loss is great and immeasurable. He never gave himself a moment to spare. He lived his life energetically, dedicated to his people and to the republican cause, eventually offering up his life in a conscious effort to further that cause and the cause of those with whom he had shared almost eight years of his adult life.



individual, with a gentle, happy-go-lucky personality, who had, nevertheless, a great sense of humour, was always laughing and playing practical jokes, and who, although withdrawn at times, had the ability to make friends easily.

As an active republican before his capture in October 1976, Joe was regarded by his comrades as a cool and efficient Volunteer who did what he had to do and never talked about it afterwards.

Joe McDonnell was born on September 14th 1951, the fifth of eight children, into the family home in Slate Street in Belfast's Lower Falls.

His father, Robert, a steel erector, and his mother, Eileen (whose maiden name was Straney), both came from the Lower Falls themselves.

A ninth child, Bernadette, was a particular favourite of Joe's, before her death from a kidney illness at the early age of three.

*"Joseph practically reared Bernadette,"* recalls his mother. *"He was always with*

## Joe McDonnell

JOE McDONNELL was the fourth IRA Volunteer to join the hunger-strike for political status in 1981 after his three IRA comrades Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh and INLA Volunteer Patsy O'Hara. A 30-year-old married man with two children, from the Lenadoon housing estate in West Belfast, Joe was a well-known and very popular man in the Greater Andersonstown area where he grew up, married, and fought for the republican cause. Joe had a reputation as a quiet and deep-thinking



● A volley of shots is fired over the coffin of Vol Joe McDonnell

*the child, carrying her around. He was about ten at the time. He even used to play marleys with her on his shoulders."*

Bernadette's death, a sad blow to the family, was deeply felt by her young brother Joe.

One of his friends at that time was Michael Healey, his future brother-in-law, whose sister Goretti he began dating around the time he was seventeen.

Joe and Goretti, who also comes from Andersonstown, married in St Agnes's Chapel in 1970, and moved in to live with Goretti's sister and her family in Horn Drive in Lower Lenadoon.

At that time, however, they were one of only two nationalist households in what was then a predominantly loyalist

street, and, after repeated instances of verbal intimidation, in the middle of the night, a loyalist mob — in full view of a nearby Brit post, and with the blessing of the raving Reverend Robert Bradford, who stood by — broke down the doors and wrecked the houses, forcing the two families to leave.

The McDonnells went to live with Goretti's mother for a while, but eventually got the chance to squat in a house being vacated in Lenadoon Avenue.

Internment had been introduced shortly before, and in 1972 the British army struck with a raid.

Joe was dragged from the house, hit in the eye with a rifle butt and bundled

into a jeep. Their house was searched and wrecked. Joe was taken to the prison ship *Maidstone* and later on to Long Kesh internment camp where he was held for several months.

Goretti recalls that early morning as an "horrific" experience which altered both their lives. One minute they had everything, the next minute nothing.

On his release, Joe joined the IRA's Belfast Brigade, operating at first in 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, which covered the Rosnareen end of Andersonstown, and later being absorbed into the 'cell' structure increasingly adopted by the IRA.

Both during his first period of internment and his second, longer, internment in 1973, as well as the periods when he was free, the McDonnell home in Lenadoon was a constant target for British army raids.

During these raids the house would often be torn apart, photos torn up and confiscated, letters from Joe (previously read by the prison censor) re-read by infantile British soldiers, and Goretti herself arrested.

In between periods of internment, and before his capture, Joe resumed his trade as an upholsterer which he had followed since leaving school at the age of fifteen. He loved the job, never missing a day through illness, and he made furniture for his own home as well as for many of the bars and clubs in the surrounding area. His job enabled him to take the family for regular holidays but Joe was a real 'homer' and always longed to be back in his native Belfast.

Part of that attraction stemmed obviously from his responsibility to his republican involvement. An active Volunteer throughout the Greater Andersonstown area, Joe was considered a first-class operator who didn't show much fear. Generally quiet and serious while on an operation, whether an ambush or a bombing mission, Joe's humour occas-

ionally shone through.

Driving one time to an intended target in the Lenadoon area with a carload of Volunteers, smoke began to appear in the car. Not realising that it was simply escaping exhaust fumes, and thinking it came from the bags containing a number of bombs, a degree of alarm began to break out in the car, but Joe only advised his comrades, drily, not to bother about it: "They'll go off soon enough".

Outside of active service, Joe mixed mostly with people he knew from work, never flaunting his republican beliefs or his involvement, to such an extent that it led some republicans to believe he had not reported back to the IRA on his second release from internment.

The Brits, however, persecuted him and his family continually, with frequent house raids and street arrests. He could rarely leave the house without being stopped for P-checking, or held up for an hour at a roadblock if he had somewhere to go. A few months before his capture, irate Brits at a roadblock warned him that they would 'get' him.

Outside of his republican activities, Joe took a strong interest in his children - Bernadette and Joseph - teaching them both to swim, and forever playing football with young Joseph on the small green outside their home.

His capture took place in October 1976 following a fire-bomb attack on the Balmoral Furnishing Company in Upper Dunmurry Lane, near Twinbrook estate in West Belfast.

Rough treatment during their interrogation in Castlereagh failed to make any of the four sign a statement, and the RUC were thus unable to charge the men with involvement in the attack on the furnishing company despite their proximity to it at the time of their arrest.

From the day he was sentenced, Joe refused to put on the prison uniform

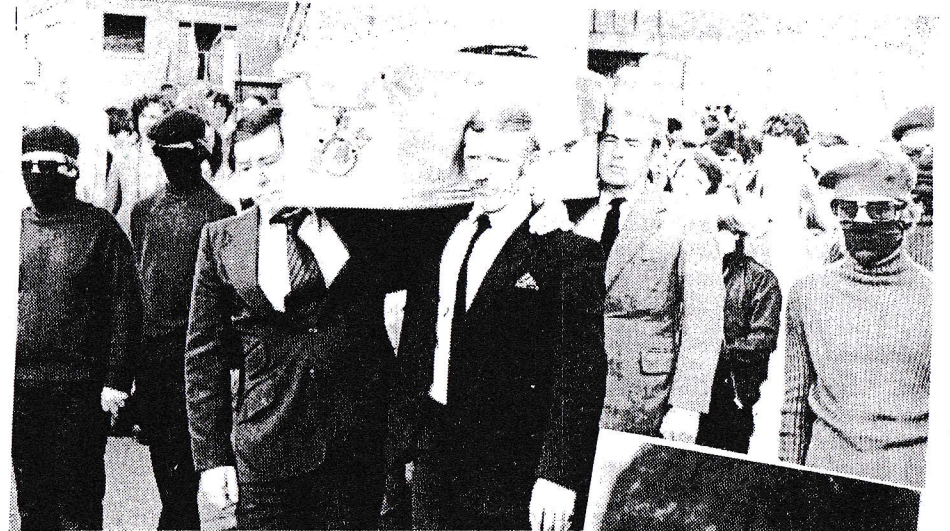
to take a visit, so adamant was he that he would not be criminalised. He kept in touch with his wife and family by means of daily smuggled 'communications', written with smuggled-in biro refills on prison issue toilet paper and smuggled out via other blanket men who were taking visits.

It illustrates well the feeling of bitter determination prevailing in the H-Blocks that Joe McDonnell who did not volunteer for the hunger-strike in 1980 because,

he said, "I have too much to live for", should have become so frustrated and angered by British perfidy as to embark on hunger-strike on Sunday, May 9th 1981.

In June, Joe was a candidate during the Free State general election, in the Sligo/Leitrim constituency, in which he narrowly missed election by 315 votes.

At 5.15am on July 8th 1981, Joe McDonnell died after 61 days of agonising hunger-strike, rather than be criminalised.



● The coffin of Fian John Dempsey is flanked by a Fianna Eireann guard of honour

## John Dempsey

WITHIN three hours of the death on hunger-strike of Belfast Brigade IRA Vol Joe McDonnell, on July 8th 1981, the British occupation forces claimed another patriot's life, that of Fian John Dempsey from Turf Lodge.



As angry crowds of nationalists gathered on Belfast's streets with the news of Joe McDonnell's death, reports soon began to filter through of a series of Brit/RUC plastic-bullet attacks.

The fatal shooting, with a live round, of 16-year-old John Dempsey, from Turf Lodge in West Belfast, occurred shortly after 7.30am when a group of youths in a commandeered Ford Transit van loaded with petrol bombs attempted to enter the Falls Road Bus Depot by the side entrance in Divis Drive.

Before entering the yard, one of the youths spotted three Brits who had taken up an observation post inside the Depot and shouted a warning.

As the youths made off on foot a single shot was fired, wounding John Dempsey. He was dead on arrival at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Contrary to Brit claims that they had come under attack from petrol bombs, none of the bombs had in fact been lighted or thrown.

## Kieran Doherty

Kieran was born on October 16th 1955, in Andersonstown, the third son in a family of six children. His two elder brothers, Michael and Terence, were interned between 1972 and 1974.

Kieran had two younger sisters, Roisin and Mairead, and a younger brother, Brendan.

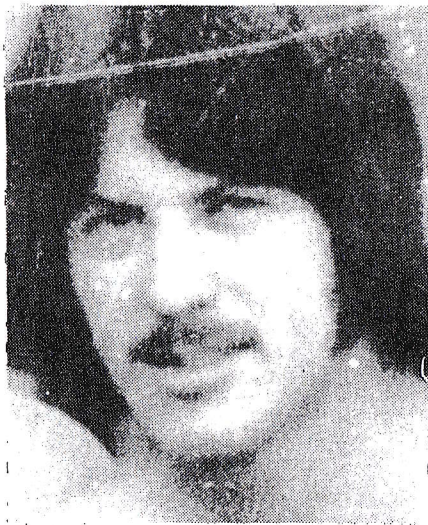
Kieran's mother, Margaret, is a Catholic convert from a Protestant background. His father, Alfie Doherty, who is a floor-tiler by trade, is a well-known figure in Andersonstown.

Kieran's paternal grandfather comes from Limavady, County Derry, and after his people moved to a house in North Belfast in the '20s, they were threatened that the house was going to be burnt.

This was during the loyalist-initiated pogroms which followed partition.

They had to flee to West Belfast, enacting a tragedy which was to repeat itself in front of Kieran's eyes in the early seventies, and stir him to take action.

Alfie's uncle, Ned Maguire, took part in the famous IRA roof-top escape from



Belfast's Crumlin Road Jail on January 15th 1943.

Ned Maguire's son, also called Ned, and a second cousin of Kieran, was an internee in Cage 5 of Long Kesh in 1974, when he took part in the mass escape from the camp during which Hugh Conroy was shot dead by the British army.

Young Ned Maguire was one of the three who managed to reach Twinbrook before being recaptured.

Ned's sisters (and Kieran's second cousins), Dorothy Maguire, aged 19, and Maura Meehan, aged 30, were shot dead by the British army on October 23rd 1971, in a car in the Lower Falls area of Belfast. Both were members of Cumann na mBan.

Another relative of Kieran's, his uncle, Gerry Fox, was part of the famous Crumlin Road Jail 'football team', who escaped from the jail by climbing over the wall in 1972.

However, Kieran's childhood was relatively ordinary. He loved sport more than anything else, and was always out playing Gaelic football, hurling or soccer.

Kieran went to St Theresa's Primary School, then moved to the Christian Brothers Secondary School on the Glen Road, where he studied until the age of 16.

A keen Gaelic footballer, he won an Antrim Minor medal in 1971 for St Theresa's GAC.

Kieran took up cycling for a while, following his brother, Michael, in St Thomas's Cycling Club.

In the summer of 1971, Kieran got a job as an apprentice in heating engineering but was laid-off when the firm closed down a few months later. He worked for a while at floor-tiling with his father.

In the meantime, however, internment had burst open the lives of many Andersonstown families. Kieran had never been interested in politics until then; nor had his family ever discussed the political situation in front of him.

Like hundreds of other boys and girls of his age, he was moved by the sight of uprooted families leaving a home in cinders behind them. As all of the evacuees were being catered for in local schools,

Kieran and his brothers begged their parents to allow them to go and help. Kieran saw the British army on the streets, his friends and their families harassed. He joined Fianna Eireann in the autumn of 1971.

Kieran proved himself to be an outstanding member of the Fianna. Reliable, quick on the job, he was obviously giving the best of himself to every task assigned him with the aim of being noticed and recruited for the IRA as quickly as possible.

Even at this early stage of his involvement, he is remembered for his initiative and his discreet ways. Unlike some boys of his age, he never boasted about his activities.

But the British army soon noticed him too and Kieran, his family, and his home, became a target for frequent British army harassment.

On October 6th 1972, the British army came to arrest Kieran, despite his father's objection that Kieran was under 17. The Brits had checked up, they said, and after a heavy house raid they took Kieran away in the middle of the night. His father got him released eventually after waking up the sexton of St Agnes's Chapel and obtaining Kieran's birth certificate.

The Brits were ten days too early.

True to form, on October 16th, the British army were back in force and swamped Kieran's district, waiting for his return from work. But relatives managed to warn him and he was driven over the border to an uncle in Limerick.

He did not much enjoy his enforced exile and, bursting to get back into action, he made his way back to Belfast at the beginning of 1973.

A week or so later, he was arrested, taken to Castlereagh, and then interned in Long Kesh, where he spent over two years, from February 1973 to November

1975. He was among the last internees to be released.

Many friends who met Kieran after his internment period found him extremely mature for a lad of 20, not boisterous like most people of his age. He obviously, by then, had thought things out, made a definite choice, and assessed the dangers.

Families with whom he billeted remember how security conscious he was, staying away for days, using billets in no regular pattern.

Kieran's comrades-in-arms recall one particular operation, of the many he was involved in, when one Andersonstown Volunteer — Sean McDermott — was shot dead.

Kieran got away and was told to lie low for a few days, but nevertheless he appeared at his comrade's funeral.

Sean's death, and the arrest of other comrades involved, hit Kieran very hard.

In August '76, as Kieran and his unit were on a bombing mission, the van in which they were travelling was chased by the RUC near Balmoral Avenue in Belfast.

Kieran got out of the van and commandeered a car, which he left some streets away and walked off.

The RUC picked Kieran up 1½ miles away from the scene, unarmed.

He was later charged with possession of firearms and explosives and commandeering the car.

In Crumlin Road, Kieran was often 'on the boards' as punishment for his refusal to acknowledge the warders in any way. He carried this attitude into the H-Blocks after he was sentenced, in January 1978, to 18 years imprisonment for possession and four years for commandeering a car.

Kieran joined the blanket protest imm-

ediately, as did his comrades sentenced with him. He spent all but two weeks of his three years and almost eight months in the H-Blocks, in H4-Block (the temporary spell was in H6), before being moved to the prison hospital during his hunger-strike.

Recollections of Kieran's experiences in the H-Blocks give an impression of relentless conflict between him and the warders, who made him a target both because of his height and because of his stubborn defiance of the prison regime.

On 'appeal' visits he always had to be dragged away, ignoring all calls to end the visit. He never looked a warder in the face when one addressed him and never replied to their orders. He always refused to submit to the anal searches over the mirror before and after visits and was beaten for this.

The worst incident occurred in July '78 when Kieran refused a mirror-search before a legal visit. Eight warders jumped on him, one squeezing his testicles until he became unconscious. He received blows to every part of his body and was taken to the prison hospital.

Although people who visited him recall how often he arrived pale or with grazes on his arms or bloodshot eyes, he never complained, brushing their questions off with a shrug:

*"I'm OK. What's the sceal?"*

In June 1981, in the Free State general election, Kieran was elected a member of the Leinster House parliament for the Cavan/Monaghan constituency with 9,121 first preference votes — only 303 votes behind the then sitting Free State Minister for Education.

To a friend who visited him after the first hunger-strike, which ended in December 1980, Kieran said:

*"They (the warders) are really rubbing*



*our noses in it. By God, they will not rub mine!"*

Asked whether he would not settle down — after all, with five years done and remission, another six years would soon be over. He replied:

*"Remission has nothing to do with it. There is much more than that involved."*

So he went on hunger-strike on Friday, May 22nd 1981, having put his name forward for it long ago, as undaunted and full of fighting spirit as when he roamed

free on the streets of Andersonstown.

A child, like hundreds of others a product of British brutality and stupidity in the North, who revealed himself to be an outstanding soldier of the republic.

Kieran was a shy, reserved, easily embarrassed young man who was single-minded and determined enough to have become, in himself, a condensed history of the liberation of a people. He died on August 2nd 1981, after 73 days on hunger-strike.



## Dan Turley

THE FUNERAL of vetal Belfast republican Dan Turley took place on Saturday, June 11th 1983, from St Agnes's Church in Andersonstown to Milltown Cemetery.

Dan was a member of the Republican Movement from early boyhood right up to the time of his death. Like many of his generation he was no stranger to prison life, his last term being served as an internee in Long Kesh in the early '70s.

On his release he returned once again to offer his services to the Republican Movement, a service which only ended with his death on Thursday, June 9th 1979. When he was alive Dan always maintained that the only reward a republican was entitled to was a Tricolour draped over their coffin.

## Jim McKernan

Jim attended St. John's Primary School and later St. Thomas Secondary School on the Whiterock Road.



Always cheerful and active, Jim or 'The Dog' as he was affectionately known was always in the 'thick of things' whether it was in school activities or later in the ranks of the Republican Movement. He loved dogs and was an avid pigeon fancier regularly seen walking his dog at his heels looking a swap for his pigeons.

When the present phase of the liberation struggle broke out Jim joined the Gerard McAuley Sluas Na Fianna Eireann and was often seen selling An Phoblacht or Republican News. He also played a major role backing up the Volunteers of Oglaiigh na hEireann on operations against the British and worked tirelessly monitoring all movements within the area in guard against attacks by loyalist assassination squads.

Young though he was Jim had developed into a totally committed and dedicated activist in the Republican Struggle.

He joined A Company, 2nd Battalion, Oglaiigh na hEireann at the age of 17. A very punctual and efficient Volunteer, always professional in his approach despite the many dangers, Jim also managed to retain his eternal sense of humour and joy of life.

He married his childhood sweetheart

## Sean Savage

VOLUNTEER SEAN SAVAGE was a fine young man who had so much to live for. He was a devoted and loving son, a loving and loved brother. He was full of life, intelligence and a caring consideration. He was so different from the paid killers who gunned him down that neither they, nor the ruthless political masters who sent them out, could ever hope to comprehend who he was or why he was prepared to give his young life for a vision and a hope of a better life, where he and his people could live in freedom and peace.

Sean was only 23 years of age. He was the second eldest in a family of two boys and two girls. His parents John and Lily Savage, a quiet and deeply religious couple, for most of their married life lived on Belfast's Kashmir Road. It was here that Sean grew up in the narrow streets which nestle together today in the shadow of the 'peaceline'. He was born on January 26th 1965, and was only four years old when Paisleyite inspired mobs launched the 1969 pogroms which left the small streets around his neighbourhood in a smouldering pile of rubble.

Sean's schooling began in St Gall's Primary School in Waterville Street. He was a gifted Gaelic footballer, winning trophies in his sport. He was an avid reader, who would spend hours of his spare time poring over books, chief among these were books on Irish history.

He attended St Paul's Secondary School on the Falls Road and here his early promises as a student was confirmed. He took eight 'O' level passes and was studying 'A' levels when his studies were cut short by arrest. Sean was a quiet and single-minded individual who neither drank nor smoked and rarely socialised. He was solitary by nature but by no means shy or withdrawn. He was extremely articulate with deep political convict-



ions which he would readily debate with vigour.

At 17 years of age, Sean joined Oglaiha na hEireann. He showed early leadership qualities which he was to bring to bear throughout his short but full years of active service. He had an extremely high sense of personal security and it came as a total surprise to his family and school friends when they learned of his involvement. He spent one short period on remand in July 1982 on the word of an RUC informer who was later to retract.

Sean was a Gaelic language enthusiast and was fondly remembered by friends with whom he had attended Colaiste Antoine Mhic Giolla Bhrighde, the Irish summer school, in August 1986. He had also begun to study French at night classes shortly before he died. In his early teens he showed a keen interest in photography and he pursued this hobby with a passion adding to and experimenting with the equipment he had received from his parents on his 13th birthday. He was also an enthusiastic cyclist and toured Europe several times.

Immediately on his release from Crumlin Road Prison, Sean reported back



for active service. His dedication to the struggle was total and unswerving. To his fellow Volunteers, he was a strong, steadfast comrade, whose sharp and incisive judgement was relied on in tricky situations.

At home Sean was a hardworking and conscientious son. He had a flair for cooking and loved nothing better than experimenting at the stove. He was a familiar sight around his local area, either

on his cycle or in the company of his younger brother Robert, a Downes Syndrome boy from whom Sean was inseparable.

His untimely death is a severe and devastating loss to his family and, while we share their grief, we can only imagine the depth of their pain. He will be sorely missed too by his wider family in the Republican Movement, where his closest comrades had grown to respect and rely on his quiet strength.

## Kevin McCracken

WHEN THE BRITISH FORCES shot IRA Volunteer Kevin McCracken in the back on Monday, 14th March, 1988, in West Belfast, they killed a highly-committed soldier of Oglai na hEireann who had dedicated 16 years of his short life to the struggle for Irish freedom.

Kevin McCracken, 31, was a loving, caring man who put the well-being of his family and his community top of his priorities.

Kevin's father and mother, Stephen and Rita, originally came from Carrickhill, moving to the nationalist Turf Lodge in 1962 when Kevin was only five. He was the eldest of five children, and had two brothers and two sisters, one of whom, Deirdre, was imprisoned in Armagh Jail between 1975/76.

He grew up in one of the most economically and socially deprived estates in Western Europe and witnessed his schoolfriends and neighbours being harassed on the streets, arrested from their homes and put through the conveyor belt system of torture in the interrogation centres, Diplock courts and heavy sentences.

Kevin was deeply affected by the suffering of his people and, as a direct response, he joined Fianna Eireann in 1972 when he was 15 years old.

Three years later, in 1975, Kevin joined Oglai na hEireann and was soon at the forefront of IRA attacks in West Belfast for the following two years until his arrest while on active service in April 1977. He received a 13-year sentence for IRA membership and incendiaries.

He was imprisoned in the H-Blocks of Long Kesh during the protest by republican prisoners against the British government's attempt to criminalise them and the struggle. He was on the no-wash

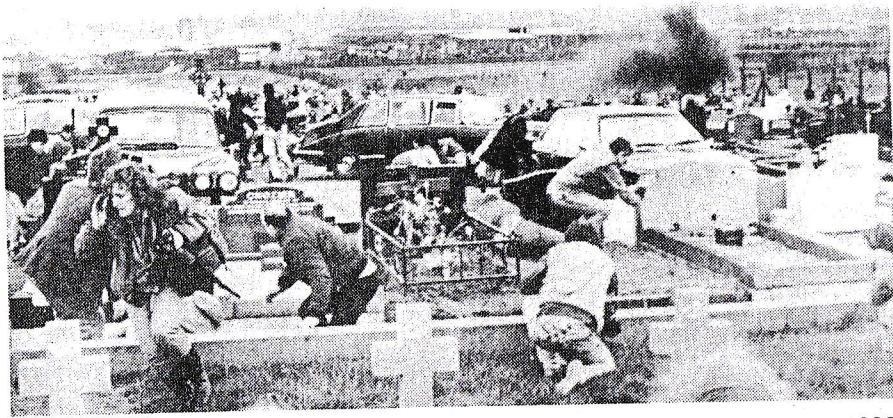


protest which began on March 20th 1978. Kevin was also on the blanket protest.

He suffered the barbarity of the H-Block regime but, like his comrades, Kevin possessed a defiant spirit which could not be broken. Imprisonment brought out many of Kevin's finer qualities, his sense of humour, his loyalty, and his sharp intelligence. He became a fluent Irish speaker while in the H-Blocks.

When he was released, in November 1985 after serving eight years and seven months of his 13-year sentence, he immediately reported back to Oglai na hEireann and was actively involved in operations and in broadening the republican base in Turf Lodge.

Volunteer Kevin McCracken was shot dead by a British soldier on Monday night, March 14th. He was preparing to launch an attack on the crown forces who had saturated the area in an attempt to intimidate the family of Volunteer Sean Savage, killed one week previously in Gibraltar, whose body lay in the family home a few streets away. He lay mortally wounded in the pathway at Norglen Crescent for a full fifteen minutes after an ambulance had been called by local people and died before reaching hospital.



Scene of the attack in Milltown Cemetery, March 1988

## Caoimhín Mac Bradaigh

VOLUNTEER CAOIMHIN MAC BRAD-AIGH, who so heroically gave his life along with two other nationalist youths in an attempt to prevent certain slaughter for countless people in Milltown Cemetery on Wednesday, March 16th, 1988, was a quiet, versatile and dedicated revolutionary soldier who had so much to offer his country and was never found wanting in that regard.

Caoimhin was the youngest in a family of four boys and three girls. His mother and father, Brid and Liam, were fluent Gaelgeoiri and raised their family in their native tongue.

Caoimhin was an adaptable revolutionary activist who could and did fulfil a variety of roles within the Movement. He was as effective in public political work as he was on active service, where his closest comrades have described him as an unflinching soldier who could be counted upon in the most dangerous of situations and who often had to prove that capability.



In 1975 at the age of 17 Caoimhin joined Oglaiġ na hEireann. He was seriously injured in a car accident in 1976 and was inactive for a period but, as soon as his health returned, he was back on active service.

Caoimhin was a regular visitor to prisons in the Six and 26 Counties and he wrote frequently to his imprisoned comrades. He built up deep and lasting friendships and commitments. His death itself was like his life — one of selfless concern for others.