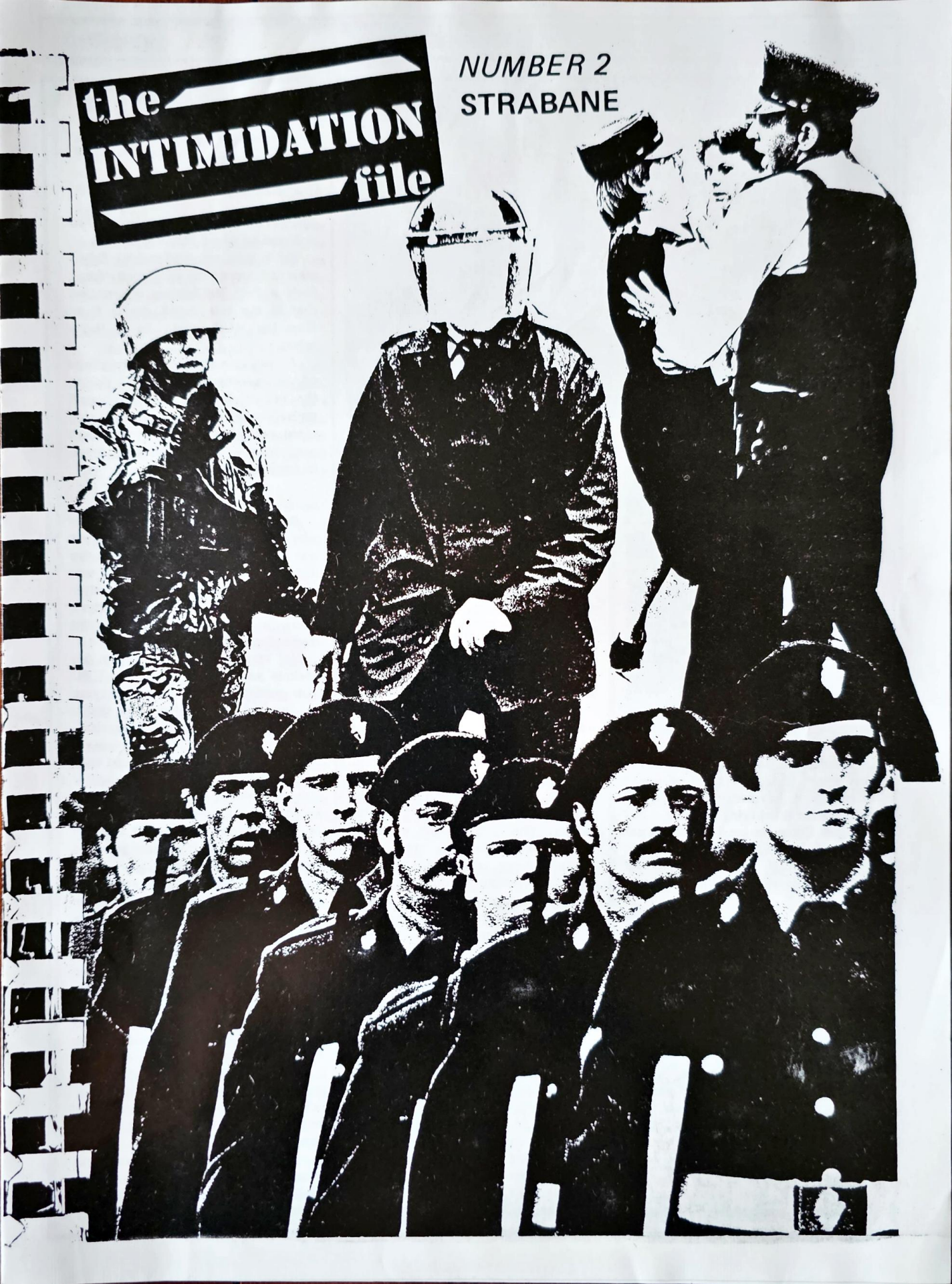


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**INTIMIDATION**  
file

NUMBER 2  
STRABANE



## DEATH THREATS, RAIDS, HARASSMENT, TORTURE, ASSAULTS AND ARRESTS BY BRITISH CROWN FORCES IN THE COUNTY TYRONE TOWN OF STRABANE

THE NATIONALIST TOWN OF STRABANE in County Tyrone has never rated highly in the considerations of the British government or its colonial regime at Stormont. Today, as in the past, the lives of the people of Strabane are dominated by chronic unemployment, emigration and oppression.

A staggering 4,000 of its 12,000 population is unemployed. And, with an upsurge in the forced emigration of its young people, Strabane also faces the additional hardship of military repression at the hands of the British army and RUC.

Indeed repression reached such a pitch in the aftermath of the Hillsborough Agreement that less than a year later, in October 1986, a massive public campaign on the issue persuaded Bishop Edward Daly to release a statement criticising the tactics of the RUC and British army.

There were hopes that the Bishop's appeal for an end to harassment would be heeded but it quickly became clear that, despite a public relations exercise in which they used the priests of Mellmount Parish Centre as intermediaries, the RUC and British army had no intention of abandoning the mailed-fist strategy.

Throughout 1987 and again in the first weeks of this year the catalogue of repression has continued. And the criterion for identifying targets has not changed either, as local youth Martin Duffy said in a recent interview:

*"Basically if you're around 20 and unemployed, the RUC consider you a Provo."*

This point was developed in the same interview by 22-year-old Colman McCrossan who said:

*"Anyone who is thought to be politically aware is harassed to make them get out. The boot is put into you before you become politically developed to force you to quit the town."*

Much of the systematic harassment of young people — P-checks, body searches, death threats and beatings — happens at night. After 8pm a virtual curfew is put on the town centre into which young people venture at their peril.

There have been many cases of documented harassment in Strabane

over the past 12 months ranging from being stopped, searched and abused in the public streets, to raids on houses and incidents of arrest, torture and death threats. While there are many more cases of harassment every day which go unreported, we believe that the following instances which have been documented over the past 12 months are broadly representative of the terror tactics which Strabane nationalists are forced to endure.

### CASE 1

The home of Bridie McNulty at Fountain Terrace was raided on Thursday, January 29th 1987 by members of the RUC backed up by British troops. Locals who gathered at the house saw the RUC officer-in-charge lose control over his men.

Abusive language and threats were used as the McNulty family, including an 86-year-old semi-invalid woman, were placed under house arrest. Five RUC men assaulted Bridie McNulty's son, Jarleth, and had to be pulled away by their commanding officer. This assault was witnessed by onlookers who then saw Jarleth McNulty being arrested for obstruction. On reaching Strabane Barracks, however, he was charged with assault, even though it was he who had been attacked. A doctor who examined him found 20 marks on his body.

After the arrest of Jarleth McNulty the RUC had abandoned their search leaving household items scattered on floors.

### CASE 2

Joan Kelly and her two-year-old son were alone in their home at Drumrallagh Estate when it was raided by the RUC at 8.45am on March 27th 1987. The raid lasted more than two hours, during which floorboards were removed from the bedrooms and a dressing table was broken. During the raid the RUC made death threats

against Joan Kelly's husband, Patrick and his friend Paddy Gilloway.

Both men are well-known fishermen and one of the RUC men, identified as Paul McClatchey commented that if the tide didn't drown them then the RUC would do it themselves.

At no time was Joan Kelly allowed to accompany the RUC during the search. Instead, she was placed under house arrest in her own living room while her father — who lives next door — was turned away when he tried to enter the house.

### CASE 3

Possession of a flute was the reason why Sean Carlin of Waterside Street was singled out for harassment on the night of April 22nd, 1987. Sean was returning home from a practice session of the Strabane Martyr's Memorial Flute Band when he was stopped at an RUC checkpoint.

He was ordered to empty his pockets and did so. When the RUC man spotted the flute he was carrying he laughed and threw the youth against a Land Rover to be searched. Pointing out that he intended making an official complaint Sean Carlin asked the RUC man for his number but he refused to give it. Instead he got more aggressive and continued to shove Carlin about until a group of older men and women gathered to see what was happening.

At this he was let go and continued on his way to the town centre where he met two friends. But the same RUC patrol had followed him and the same RUC man threw him against a wall and again asked him his name and to empty his pockets. Carlin complained, but the RUC man became more aggressive, knocked the flute and money from his hands and told him he was being arrested.

A scuffle broke out before Carlin was thrown into the Land Rover where he was battered repeatedly on the head until they reached Strabane Barracks. There he was refused a request to see a doctor and was charged with assault on the RUC, disorderly behaviour and obstruction before being released.

## CASE 4

13-year-old Michelle Farrell, a 2nd year pupil at Mount Carmel Grammer School was wearing her school uniform when stopped by an RUC patrol on the night of Friday, June 5th, 1987.

She had been stopped by the same patrol a few minutes earlier when in the company of a friend but she was now heading home on her own. Four RUC men got out of their Land Rover and approached her, one of them commenting: "We have got you now."

One RUC man pushed up her arms to conduct a search. She objected, pointing out that such a body-search should only be conducted by a woman. She tried to put down her arms but the RUC became insistent and threatening, one standing close behind her, the other in front, hemming her in.

After the search Michelle was told to go. She walked away refusing to cry in front of those who had violated her body.

## CASE 5

John Blee was walking along Ballycolman Lane on September 11th 1987 when he was approached by an RUC man wearing white training shoes.

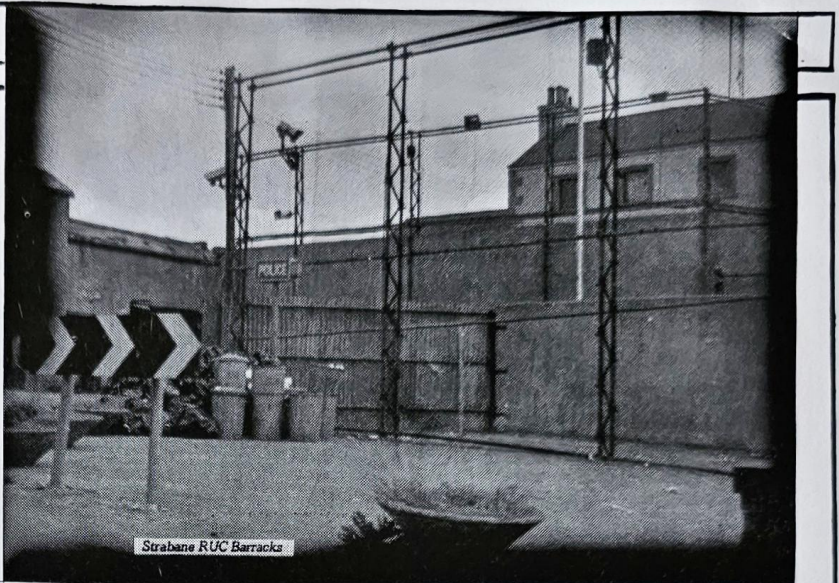
"I don't like the look of you", the RUC man said, grabbing Blee around the neck and sticking a gun to his throat. Still stunned, Blee was dragged into the doorway of a house where the RUC man head-butted and kicked him before telling him to move on.

## CASE 6

In the early hours of Friday, September 12th, 1987, Michael McGarrigle was making his way home when he met a British army foot patrol. He stopped when ordered to do so and was asked standard questions such as his name, address, date of birth and where he was coming from and going to.

His answers were checked on the radio and he was then asked to remove his jacket to be searched. He did so and, after about ten minutes, he was thanked for his co-operation and told he could go on home.

McGarrigle had only walked a few feet, however, when another soldier ran towards him and struck him on the mouth with the butt of his rifle. As he fell back against a fence McGarrigle, who had four teeth



Strabane RUC Barracks

broken in the assault, saw the British army patrol running off.

There was a sequel to this story the following night when the RUC arrested McGarrigle and accused him of assaulting a British soldier. On the way to Strabane Barracks, the RUC threatened to throw him out of the Land Rover in a loyalist area.

In the barracks he was questioned about the previous night's incident and was told his claims would be investigated. But before being released he was informed by the RUC that sooner or later he would get a bullet in the head.

## CASE 7

There was a British army check-point on Strabane's main street shortly after 8pm on September 16th, 1987. One soldier, crouched in a shop doorway, blocked the footpath with the barrel of his rifle.

Walking past the soldier, Colm Gallagher brushed against the weapon and was immediately hauled back by the soldier who had grabbed his trouser leg. The soldier shouted at Gallagher and slapped his neck until an RUC patrol approached and he resumed his position in the shop doorway.

The RUC questioned Gallagher about what had happened and asked if he wanted to accompany them to Strabane Barracks to make a complaint. When Gallagher said that he would not accompany them voluntarily but would make the complaint through his solicitor, he was ordered by the RUC to "fuck off out of the way" or face arrest.

As he moved away, Gallagher was stopped again, this time by RUC man Paul McClatchey who began to quest-

ion, abuse and search him in an aggressive and provocative manner. When Gallagher resisted, McClatchey appeared to go berserk and ran at him with his rifle raised shouting:

"I am going to fucking do you fat bastard."

As he appeared to calm down again McClatchey was egged on by an RUC colleague, Kieran Francis O'Malley to "tell Gallagher the facts of life". At this McClatchey informed Gallagher that he would be 'going for his tea' i.e. be shot dead. Later that night on his way home Gallagher met two other RUC men who laughed and shouted:

"Are you going for your tea fat boy?"

They told him he would not know when or where it would happen but he was definitely "going for it."

## CASE 8

On October 7th, 1987, a large force of RUC and British army personnel raided the Community House in Drumrallagh Estate. Local woman Eileen Hoynes who was alone in the house at the time preparing for a cookery class, was placed under house arrest in the living room and refused permission to accompany the search party.

A short time later a second woman, Annie Monaghan arrived for the class and she was placed in the room with Eileen Hoynes. An RUC woman remained with them and all blinds and curtains were drawn.

When Elayne McNicholl arrived at the house and was admitted by Annie Monaghan an RUC sergeant demanded that she leave or, if she decided to stay, that she be searched. She was taken to a bedroom to be searched by

an RUC woman while the sergeant stood at the room door. Elayne refused to remove her coat for the search and the RUC woman then attempted to pull it off her and to hoist her skirt up above her waist.

When Elayne objected to the manner in which the search was being conducted the sergeant was called in. They searched her bag and read out a personal letter, before allowing her to go back downstairs. Outside the bedroom the RUC woman pushed Elayne, almost making her fall down the stairs.

Downstairs three British soldiers using a metal detector removed part of a panel at the side of a fireplace and ripped wallpaper. When the raid ended further damage was discovered upstairs where a hole had been knocked through the plasterboard of the attic. A set of keys had also been stolen from the house.

At no time throughout the raid were the women allowed to accompany the search party.

#### CASE 9

Packie Kelly was lifted by the RUC at 10.30am on November 10th, 1987. After being thrown into the back of a Land Rover he was taken to Strabane Barracks. He wasn't given any explanation for his arrest but was kicked and punched throughout the journey.

In Strabane Barracks he was pushed onto the floor and was head-butted by RUC Constable Cameron. Blood poured from his face and nose which the RUC thought very funny.

Kelly was taken by car to Castle-reagh Interrogation Centre. On the way there he was assaulted repeatedly by the arresting RUC officer Paul McClatchey. A doctor at Castle-reagh examined Kelly shortly after his arrival and informed him that his nose was broken. Later on Kelly was brought to Dundonald Hospital where both his nose and his back were x-rayed, before he was taken back to Castlereagh.

His first interrogation began at 9am the next day. He was again assaulted and told by detectives that he would be shot dead on his release. A second interview in the afternoon followed a similar pattern.

That night, instead of being taken to the interrogation room, Kelly was led to a portacabin by two male detectives who dragged him by the hair

around the floor and across a desk and then began to kick him. They were careful not to kick him on his right side and told him that they knew he had only one kidney.

Just before 11pm another RUC man entered the portacabin. He said he was an inspector and told Kelly he was going to be set up and that he would be dead inside a year.

Similar tactics were used during the following day's interrogation. Kelly was released without charge.

#### CASE 10

As if to underline the point that their terror tactics would continue this year the RUC lifted Raymond Forbes on January 14th and took him to Strand Road RUC Barracks in Derry for interrogation. Forbes wasn't surprised at his arrest since the previous day an RUC raiding party had dug holes in the garden of his home and kicked in the front door only to find that he wasn't in.

Nothing unusual occurred during the first interrogation sessions but after two hours of the third session his two interrogators suddenly rose and left the room. They were gone only five minutes before the door swung open and they re-entered the room. They said nothing but immediately began punching Forbes, knocking him to the ground and trying to choke him.

During an interrogation session next morning there were no beatings but the RUC told Forbes they intended to press charges against him, and advised him to start talking. He said nothing but, when his interrogators left him in the room alone for a while, he wrote on a sheet they had left behind that he would be exercising his right to remain silent at all times.

When his interrogators saw what he had done they began to beat him again. Forbes lay on the ground while they kicked him on the back and punched him about.

During a later interrogation session Forbes was offered up to £40,000 if he would "supply ten names" of people who could be sent to jail. They called it a trade. He was also offered £500 to name the individual responsible for a recent IRA attack on the RUC in Strabane. Before releasing him, the RUC offered Raymond Forbes £30 if he remembered anything and phoned them in Derry. He was told to ask for John or Dave.

#### CASE 11

Arthur Forbes was also arrested on January 14th and brought to Strand Road Barracks. His early interrogation sessions weren't too bad although he did receive some slaps to his face, was poked in the chest and threatened that worse was to come.

Later that night he was again taken from his cell and brought to the interrogation room. Five RUC detectives were in the room and they all began hitting him at the same time. He was thrown onto the floor and was punched and kicked repeatedly. They seemed to go crazy. Arthur was squeezed up against a radiator while they screamed abuse and obscenities at him. Almost five hours after he entered the room he was carried back to his cell.

Next day Arthur Forbes was taken to Altnagelvin Hospital. He was detained there for five days and had to go on an oxygen tank and receive other medication each day. He is still on medication and is due to return to hospital for further check-ups.

● RUC CONSTABLE PAUL McCLATCHEY, is one of a group of RUC men known as 'the dirty six'. This group, which also includes RUC Constables David Moffat, Kieran Francis O'Malley, Stephen Kincaid, David Buchanan and Paul Deacon, has gained particular notoriety in Strabane. McClatchey was fined £100 at a sitting of Strabane District Court in January this year, for gratuitously assaulting another Strabane youth Dominic Carlin on July 7th last.

● The members of Strabane Martyrs Memorial Flute Band have been singled out for particular attention by the RUC and British army in recent years. The band was formed after the deaths of three IRA Volunteers, Michael and David Devine and Charlie Breslin, assassinated in a British army/RUC undercover operation on February 23rd 1985.

The Harassment File is collated and published by The Community for Justice. For further information about the work of this group contact: Fr. Joseph McVeigh, Community for Justice, 4 John Street, Omagh, County Tyrone.