

dc Diversity Challenges

Registered with The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland NIC 101081

Itinerary

Tour South Armagh Impact of Conflict

Background

This map (over) is from the web page of Border Roads Memories <http://www.borderroadmemories.com/> a Peace III funded project that mapped the border crossings and recorded the memories of those living along the border. Other references are from Lost Lives The Stories of the men women and children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland Troubles ISBN 978401185041.

Other information can be found from the following sources: including <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/index.html>

CAIN Web Service - Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland.

The CAIN (Conflict Archive on the INternet) Web site contains information and source material on **'the Troubles'** and **politics** in Northern Ireland from 1968 to the present. There is also some material on **society** in the region. CAIN is located in the **University of Ulster** and is part of **INCORE** and **ARK**.

CAIN and INCORE launched the new **Accounts of the Conflict** Web site.

Diversity Challenges has worked on a number of storytelling projects:

AFTERMATH www.aftermath-ireland.com

Green and Blue www.green-and-blue.org

Diversity Challenges www.diversity-challenges.com

Healing Through Remembering (HTR) is an umbrella project examining ways to deal with the past conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

www.healingthroughremembering.org

HTR and Diversity Challenges are members of the International Coalition of the Sites of Conscience <http://www.sitesofconscience.org/>

Setting the Scene

The recent Irish conflict can be seen as having a number of stages

1. Discontent leading to demands for rights, a history of division and repeated violence – pre 1969
2. Violence 1969-1990s
3. Dialogue leading to ceasefires and start of an open peace process
Peace Making Good Friday Agreement/Belfast and political accommodation.
1990-2001

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4. Peace building work at community statutory political levels to develop relationships and learn how we can deal with our troubled past. This work has been supported by the EU Peace Programmes I, II, & III.

The conflict resulted in 3720 fatalities. The highest levels of casualties were in the 1970s with 496 in 1972.

Of those fatalities;

2087 were civilians

1012 were members of the police/army

395 were Republican Paramilitaries (IRA, INLA and others)

167 were Loyalist Paramilitaries (UDA UVF and others)

59 were others.¹

In addition to the fatalities there were many more casualties and bomb damage to property. Some 47,000 people sustained injuries in 16,200 bombing and 37,000 shooting incidents. There were 22,500-armed robberies, 2,200 arson attacks and some 19,600 people were imprisoned.²

While the main impact of the conflict was felt in Northern Ireland, it also affected the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain. Within Northern Ireland the conflict was not evenly spread, with Belfast, Derry and rural South Armagh seeing the highest levels of violence.

The Cost of the Troubles Study showed that;

'Over a third of those who died lived in five postal districts, all of which were located in North and West Belfast'

'The wards with highest scores on deaths had equally high deprivation scores'
The border area of South Armagh North Louth was another area where there was a high level of violence deaths and destruction. South Armagh was nicknamed "Bandit Country" and Dundalk was called "El Paso."

¹ McKittrick Kelters Feeney, Thorton and McVea Lost Lives The Stories of the men women and children who died as a result of the NI Troubles. London & Edinburgh Mainstream Publishing 2007 ISBN 978401185041.

² Report of Consultative Group on the Past 2009 page 60 www.cgpni.org

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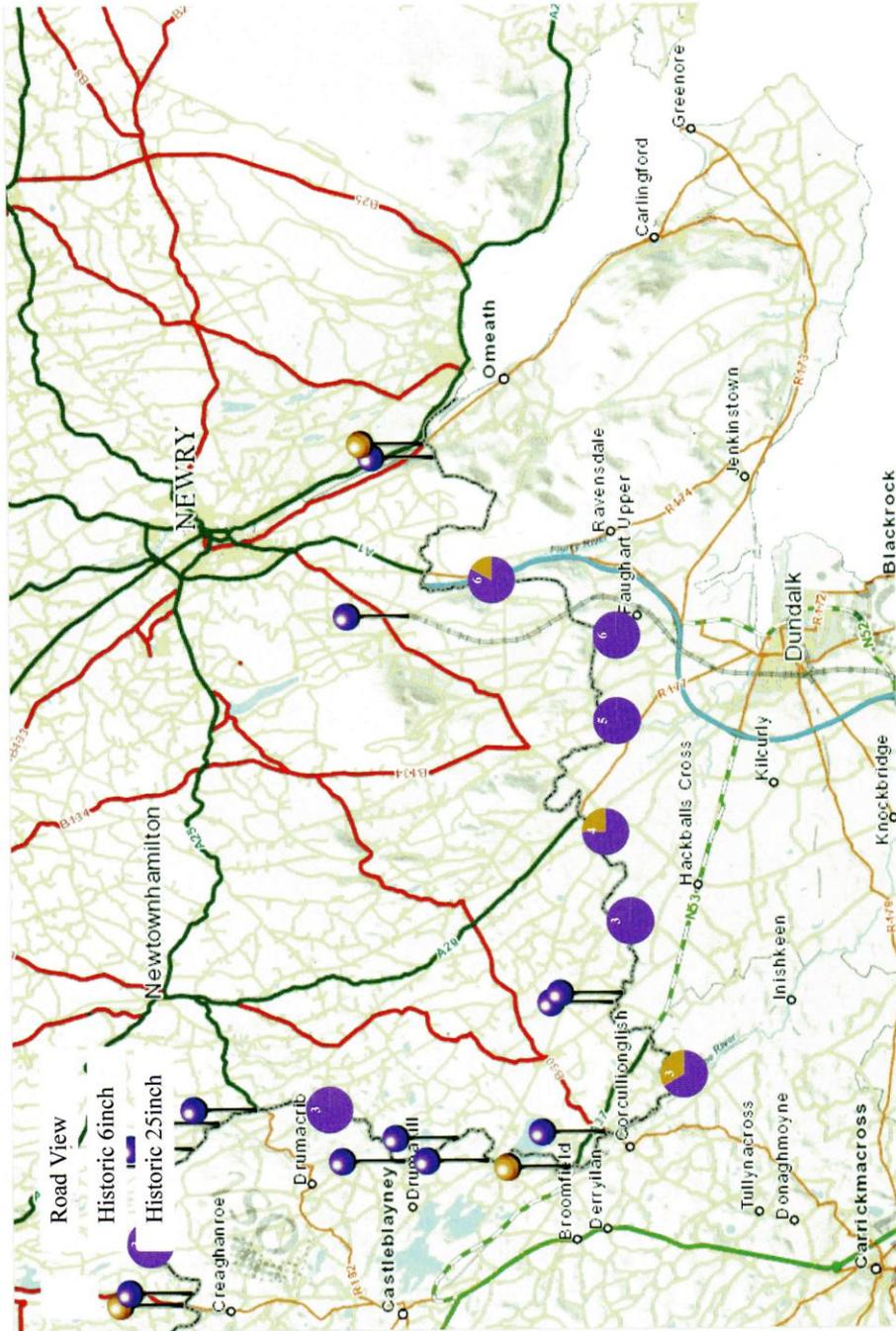
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<http://www.borderroadmemories.com/>

Border Roads Memories



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Kilnasaggart

This bridge which carries the main Belfast to Dublin Railway was blown up by the IRA on a number of occasions. The original arched bridge was replaced by this reinforce concrete bridge designed to withstand bombs. A number of the bridges on this section of track were similarly reinforced. Trains were hijacked and bombs placed on them. The disruption of the cross border rail link was a regular occurrence.



Railway line blown up British Army patrol.

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Harry Breen and Bob Buchanan

Harry Breen was an RUC Chief Superintendent Bob Buchanan a Superintendent, they were shot by the IRA near Jonesborough they were returning to Newry after a meeting in Dundalk with senior Garda



The car after the killing

The killing caused controversy with claims of collusion between Garda and the IRA. This was investigated in the Smithwick Tribunal published its final report in December 2013. In the report Judge Peter Smithwick stated that he was satisfied there was collusion in the killings and that somebody inside the Dundalk Garda station had passed on information to the IRA regarding the presence of officers Breen and Buchanan.

Robert Niarac

On the evening of 14 May 1977, Niarac drove alone to The Three Steps pub in Dromintee, South Armagh. He is said to have told regulars of the pub that he was Danny McErlaine, a motor mechanic and member of the [Official IRA](#) from the republican [Ardoyne](#) area in North Belfast. The real McErlaine, on the run since 1974, was killed by the Provisional IRA in June 1978 after stealing arms from the organisation.^[17] Witnesses say that Niarac got up and sang a [republican folk song](#), *The Broad Black Brimmer*, with the band who were playing that night. At around 11.45 p.m., he was abducted following a struggle in the pub's car park and taken across the border into the Republic of Ireland to a field in the [Ravensdale Woods](#) in [County Louth](#). Following a violent interrogation during which Niarac was allegedly punched, kicked, [pistol-whipped](#) and hit with a wooden post, he was shot dead.^[18] He did not admit to his true identity. Terry McCormick, one of Niarac's abductors, posed as a priest in order to try to elicit information by way of Niarac's [confession](#). Niarac's last words according to McCormick were: "Bless me Father, for I have sinned".^[19]

His disappearance sparked a huge search effort throughout [Ireland](#). The hunt in Northern Ireland was led by Major [H. Jones](#), who as a colonel in the [Parachute Regiment](#) was to be awarded a posthumous [Victoria Cross](#) in the [Falklands War](#). Jones was Brigade Major at HQ [3rd Infantry Brigade](#). Niarac and Jones had become friends and Niarac would sometimes eat supper at the Jones household. After a four-day search, the [Garda Síochána](#) confirmed to the [Royal Ulster Constabulary](#) that they had reliable evidence of Niarac's killing.^[20]

An edition of [Spotlight](#) broadcast on 19 June 2007 claimed that his body was not destroyed in a meat grinder, as alleged by an unnamed IRA source.^[21] McCormick, who has been on the run in the United States for thirty years because of his involvement in the killing (including being the first to attack Niarac in the car park), was told by a senior IRA commander that it was buried on farmland, unearthed by animals, and reburied elsewhere. The location of the body's resting place remains a mystery.^[22]

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Nairac is one of nine IRA victims whose graves have never been revealed and who are collectively known as '[The Disappeared](#)'. The cases are under review by the [Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains](#). (Lost Lives 1932)

Peter Cleary

Peter Joseph Cleary (18 September 1950 – 15 April 1976) was an [Irish republican](#) and a leading member of the 1st Battalion of the [Provisional Irish Republican Army](#) (IRA)'s [South Armagh Brigade](#). He held the rank of Staff Officer and served as the unit's treasurer. He was implicated by journalist and author Joe Tiernan in the killing of [Ulster Defence Regiment](#) (UDR) corporal and alleged [Ulster Volunteer Force](#) (UVF) member [Robert McConnell](#).^[1] Ten days after McConnell's killing, Cleary was shot dead by the [Special Air Service](#) (SAS) after being arrested at the home of his girlfriend outside [Forkhill](#). He was widely believed^[citation needed] to have been the mastermind behind the [Kingsmill massacre](#), when ten [Ulster Protestant](#) workers were taken from their work van and shot dead by the roadside. He was the first person in [Northern Ireland](#) to be killed by the SAS, following the admission of their deployment there in January 1976.^[2] According to the SAS, he was shot after attempting to take the rifle from the officer who was guarding him in a bid to escape.^[3]

Life and career

Cleary was born on 18 September 1950 in Northern Ireland, the second eldest of the 13 children of Hugh and Mary Cleary.^[4] He was brought up in the [Roman Catholic](#) religion, and according to author Tony Geraghty he was originally from [Newry](#);^[3] although [David McKittrick](#)'s book *Lost Lives* states he had lived in Magee Terrace, [Belleeks](#), [County Armagh](#).^[5] At some stage after [the Troubles](#) broke out in 1968, Cleary joined the 1st Battalion of the [South Armagh Brigade](#) of the [Provisional IRA](#). He served as the unit's treasurer and held the rank of Staff Officer. He made his living as a scrap metal dealer.^[3] Author and journalist Joe Tiernan claims that Cleary was part of the three-man IRA unit that ambushed and killed part-time [Ulster Defence Regiment](#) (UDR) corporal Robert McConnell in the garden of his home at Tullyvallen, near Newtownhamilton. Cleary and his team hid in the bushes and when McConnell appeared, Cleary shot him twice in the head, killing him. McConnell had allegedly been a member of both the [UVF Mid-Ulster Brigade](#) and the [Glenanne gang](#), both of which carried out sectarian killings.^[6] In 1993 Yorkshire Television aired a programme, *The Hidden Hand: The Forgotten Massacre*, which implicated McConnell in the 1974 [Dublin car bombings](#). The narrator also claimed McConnell was an [Intelligence Corps](#) agent with links to Captain [Robert Nairac](#).^[7] [RUC Special Patrol Group](#) officer [John Weir](#) affirmed this in an affidavit and named McConnell as the perpetrator of a series of sectarian attacks. He also alleged that McConnell had been set up by the Intelligence Corps who passed on confidential information about McConnell to the IRA, through Nairac, in an attempt to infiltrate the organisation. Upon receiving this information, the IRA ordered the execution of McConnell.^[6]

Killing

Cleary was on the run, living in the Republic of Ireland; however on 15 April 1976 (ten days after the McConnell shooting), he returned secretly to Northern Ireland where he was promptly arrested at the home of his pregnant girlfriend outside Forkhill.^[8] He was seized by an SAS team who had been watching the house from observation positions as part of a week-long surveillance job and taken to a field to await transport by a military helicopter, as travelling by road was deemed too risky for British military personnel.^[9] On the previous 31 March at 9h30am a group of Scots soldiers and SAS men had raided the Cleary family home in Magee Terrace, Belleeks.^[10] In their account of Cleary's killing, the SAS claimed that while four of the men were holding lanterns guiding the aircraft to a landing in the dark, the young officer (who was allegedly on his maiden SAS operation) left to guard Cleary was forced to shoot him twice after the latter made an attempt to wrest the officer's rifle from him in a bid to escape. Cleary, although gravely wounded, was still alive, and an [NCO](#) then took the rifle from the officer who had shot him, and killed him with a final, third shot to "end his misery". Before returning the weapon to its owner, he wiped away his fingerprints. An inquest into the killing was held nine months later. A witness who had been inside the house from where Cleary was arrested testified that

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immediately after the soldiers had taken Cleary away he heard somebody crying over the ditch, then a single shot.^[3] Three of the SAS team attended the inquest, a statement was read on behalf of the officer (using the *nom de Guerre* "Soldier A") who first shot Cleary. The statement defended his actions by describing Cleary as "heavier and stronger" than him, as well as a "notorious killer"; "Soldier A" went on to say

as he lurched at me my instincts as an SAS soldier took over. I released the safety catch on my weapon and started shooting. There was no chance to warn Cleary. I went on firing until the danger to me was over.^[1]

An open verdict was returned by the inquest.

Author Mike Ryan claimed in his book *Secret Operations of the SAS* that Cleary had actually managed to escape and was shot by the pursuing soldiers who had ordered him to stop as he tried to make his way to the Republic of Ireland border.^[2] Cleary received three shots to the chest.^[3]

Peter Cleary was the first person killed by the SAS since they were deployed to Northern Ireland in full force in January 1976 by order of British Prime Minister [Harold Wilson](#) in the wake of the [Kingsmill massacre](#); although there had been an SAS presence in the province prior to then, having had a proxy intelligence role through the [14th Intelligence Company](#), and their sub-unit 4 Field Survey Troop.^[4]



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Closing border roads



During the conflict many border roads were closed bridges blown up by the Army or concrete barriers placed across the road. Locals ran campaigns to remove these barriers. We will cross at Carrickinaffrin where there was a regular Irish Army Garda check point in the late 1980s.

On 29th January 1972 there was a gun battle here and the British Army said they had fired over 5,000 rounds from machine guns on armoured cars in response to an IRA attack.

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Other roads had British Army or Garda checkpoints



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Watch Towers erected by the Army in South Armagh



Soldiers at Vehicle Checkpoint at entrance to Newtownhamilton village
Many towns and villages had their centres cordoned off and there was only one entrance with a checkpoint to try to prevent car bombs. You were not allowed to leave a car unattended in the town centres

Crossmaglen.

The town in South Armagh came to international attention during the conflict. During the Troubles, at least 58 police officers and 124 soldiers were killed by the [Provisional IRA](#) in South Armagh, many in Crossmaglen itself. It was here that a team of snipers killed 12 members of the security forces in the 1990s.

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Silverbridge Bar

December 19th 1975 Friday night before Christmas the Red Hand Commandos carried out an attack on the bar at Silverbridge. Three people were killed

Micheal Francis Donnelly son of bar owner, Patrick Donnelly and Trevor Bracknell. Trevor's wife had just given birth to their child. Their son Alan was a contributor to the AFTERMATH project where he talks about the incident www.aftermath-ireland.com
(lost lives 1552-1554)

On the same night

Red Hand Commando (Loyalist) placed a bomb in Kay's Tavern Dundalk which exploded 6.15 pm without warning. Garda estimate the bomb contained 100lb of explosives. Jack Rooney and Hugh Waters were killed and at least 20 injured. (Jack Rooney's wife tells her story in AFTERMAH www.aftermath-ireland.com)

Ballymoyer

At Ballymoyer there are Catholic and Church of Ireland churches. In the graveyards there are graves of those killed during the conflict.

Majella O'Hare

Majella aged 12 was killed by a soldier in disputed circumstances on 14th August 1976. She was on her way to confession at the church with other children when she was hit in the back by a high velocity bullet. The soldier insisted that he had shouted a warning and open fire on a gunman. He was acquitted in court of manslaughter. The army version was widely disputed by local people (Lost Lives 1781)

Reaveys

4th January 1976 the Reavey Brothers John, Brian died that night and Anthony died in hospital on 30th January.

The family home was attacked by the UVF where they broke in and opened fire on the boys. This attack, the Dundalk bomb and Silverbridge have been connected to a UVF gang based at a farm in Glenanne known as the Glennane Gang. This happened the same night as a killing of the O'Dowds in North Armagh also by the UVF

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(Lost Lives 1560, 1561, 1562, 1563, 1564 and 1604)

Robert Frazer John Bell and Sydney Watt

In the C of I grave yard are the graves of Robert Frazer (Lost Lives 1450) a UDR man (part time soldier) was killed off duty by the IRA so was John Bell on 6th November 1975 (1514)

Sydney Watt part-time member of the UDR was killed by IRA as he got out of his car returning home of duty on 20th July 1973 (901)

Glenanne UDR Centre

Built in 1972, the barracks housed two companies of the 2nd County Armagh battalion of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). Seen as an outpost, it sat on the dividing line between a Protestant area and a Catholic area. Although the military barracks itself had not been attacked by the IRA before, seven UDR soldiers from the base had already been killed during "The Troubles".



Aftermath of the bomb in 1991

The **Glenanne barracks bombing** was a large truck bomb attack carried out by the Provisional IRA against a British Army (Ulster Defence Regiment) base at Glenanne, near Mountnorris, County Armagh. The driverless lorry was rolled down a hill at the rear of the barracks and crashed through the

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perimeter fence. The bombing took place on 31 May 1991 and left three soldiers killed and 14 people wounded, four of them civilians.

Robert Crozier Paul Blakely and Sydney Hamilton were on the guard at the base and killed that night (3203, 3204, 3205)

Glenanne Factory and Kingsmills Massacre.

In Glenanne there was a linen mill. Linen was a key industry in Ulster from the 19th century and there were many mills originally powered by water for the various stages in the manufacture of linen cloth. The factory at Glenanne was still working during the 1970s. Workers were taken by minibus to work every day from Whitecross and Bessbrook. On Monday 5th January 1976 just after the Reavey and O'Dowd killings the bus was stopped on its way to Bessbrook after work. The one catholic on board was made to get off and lie on the road. The protestant workers were shot. One survived ten were killed.



Workers Bus after the killing of 10 Protestant workmen Kingsmills Armagh 5th January 1976

(1566-1575)

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The IRA never claimed the killing but the weapon used has been shown to have used by the IRA in other killings.

Markethill

The town was blown up nine times the last bomb was in 1997 which was outside the police station. The town was closed off with security barriers which were manned by members of security forces police or army. Two RUC officers were killed at the barrier in 1982. The Orange Order constructed a memorial to the members of the security from the district forces killed.



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