

Thomas Donaghy, Aged 16, Murdered 11th February 1974

Our brother Thomas was born on the 29th March 1957, the sixth born in our family. We lived in the Rathcoole estate. Our mum and dad were one of the first families to be given a house there, and it was a good place to live until the troubles started. Our home was targeted many times, our windows broken, and our brother Jim's car was blown up outside our front door. Councillor Bob Kidd used to come down to our home and stay all night to make sure we were safe.

Thomas went missing and we found him beaten up, lying in the Glen not far from our home, he had been targeted because he was a Catholic. There were many other incidents that happened to our family. Our mum and dad decided it would be better if we all left Rathcoole. We were allocated a house in Bawnmore, were we still live to this day.

We had only been living in Bawnmore for nine months, when Thomas was murdered. He was travelling to work with his friends, and on arriving at Abbeymeat Packers, gunmen jumped out of a car and shot them. Thomas was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital and died at 3.45pm that afternoon.

Thomas was a beautiful, kind and loving brother, sixteen and with all his life ahead of him and those people took it from him. Our family were never the same again.

Our mum and dad never got over the savage way that he was taken from them, and our sister Betty, who was so close to him never recovered from his murder. Betty was getting married and Thomas had bought her a clock for a wedding present. The clock stopped at the time Thomas died and it never worked again.

Our dad could not talk about Thomas, until years later when he said he would never forget having to go to the morgue to identify Thomas, his young son, who was lying on a slab.

We do not believe the RUC ever carried out a proper and effective investigation into the murder of our brother. We never had any confidence in the RUC to ever have carried out an independent or effective investigation into Thomas' murder. At the time of his death the RUC did not even have the decency to call to our home to inform us of his death. It was the British Army who called to our house to tell us that Thomas had been killed.

The Historical Enquiries Team (HET), which comes under the responsibility of the PSNI, has also failed to carry out an independent investigation into our brother's killing. We engaged with the HET in good faith. However, when the family met with the HET that they were not carrying out an investigation into our brother's killing but merely reviewing the RUC's investigation of the case. The HMIC inspection of the HET has vindicated the family's view that the HET is a flawed process to address conflict-related killings.

After nearly forty years our family still have not been told the truth, we feel in limbo, that we cannot fully deal with the death of Thomas and begin to look forward to a future. We hope that through the Haass Panel talks that you will come to the conclusion that we need a new mechanism to deal with the past that is totally independent from both the PSNI and the British state.

All we want now is for the truth to be finally told, and that as we as a family have done everything so the truth can come out.

Our mum and dad both died eight weeks after each other in 2007. They never got justice, but we as a family will continue on until we do.

Yours Sincerely

Marion Donaghy and Jim Donaghy