



JOSEPH MCCRYSTAL

Shot on 12th November 1972, died 13th November 1972

REPORT COMPILED FOR THE MCCRYSTAL FAMILY BY RELATIVES FOR JUSTICE



The untold stories of Relatives, Victims and Survivors



THE DEATH OF JOSEPH MCCRYSTAL

SHOT ON 12TH NOVEMBER 1972, DIED 13TH NOVEMBER 1972

Joseph McCrystal was shot while walking home along Arthur Road, Newtownabbey, around 11pm on Sunday November 12th, 1972. Joseph Snr was just 25 years old when he was murdered and married to Maureen, who still lives in Belfast. Maureen was left with two very young children. Joe¹ was 4 when his father was murdered; Donna was only one year old.

In this publication, we examine the circumstances of the shooting, the available information from official sources, the wider context in greater North Belfast and south east Antrim along with the personal circumstances of the McCrystal family to try and give a picture of why Joseph was targeted in 1972.

The Purpose of this report

From **Relatives for Justice** (RFJ) origins, rooted in the work of the **Association for Legal Justice**² (ALJ), the mantra of founding stalwarts Monsignor Raymond Murray and Clara Reilly in response to human rights violations was to document, document, & document.

In more recent times families have first faced denial about deliberate state killings and collusion, then once that dam bursts they face continuous delay and then with the passage of time many of the bereaved have simply died decades after waiting on truth, justice and accountability. It is quite common to hear families say in reference to the state 'they're doing nothing other than just waiting on us all to die'.

In the absence of an effective, independent and human rights compliant investigative mechanism to address the legacy of the past RFJ are working alongside families to compile their own bespoke family reports into the deaths of their loved ones.

We are acknowledging the impact of the failure to put in place legacy mechanisms is having on families and thus heeding the advices of Raymond and Clara to once again document the facts.

Family reports form part of our overall holistic approach to supporting and empowering families and crucially providing a voice. Family reports seek to remember, capture and convey the unique human essence and individuality of the loved one killed, the special place they held in family, with close friends and community, the distinct and very much loved person they were and remain so for those left behind and the aching gap their absence continues to cause in addition to the grave injustice of their killings.

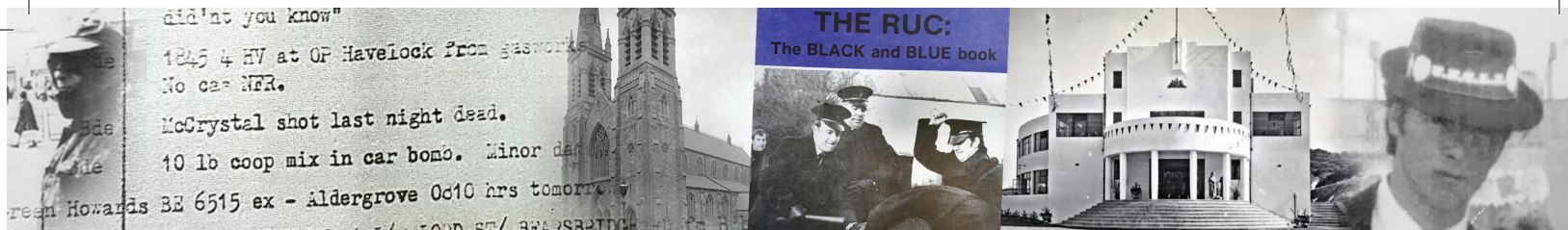
Reports aim to document in so far as possible the circumstances of killings examining and providing an analysis of the available forensic, ballistic and eyewitness evidence including linked cases and thematic patterns. Reports also examine what the official response was, or in many instances was not, by applying and measuring these against legal obligations and human rights standards. For families, reports provide a narrative account presenting their concerns and posing their questions, which require official response. They also raise wider public interest concerns.

For RFJ and families this work is about historical clarification and the recovery of historical memory. It is about challenging the oftentimes self-serving official version by the state when clearly irrefutable evidence that was deliberately ignored contests such accounts. It is hoped that this work and these reports will indeed stand the test of time enhancing the local and wider community understanding of what actually took place.

It is also hoped that once legacy mechanisms are finally implemented and operational that the reports will assist families in preparing for effective engagement. Family reports also provide a necessary confidence to articulate the circumstances of bereavement, and injury, and of each bereaved relatives' own particular needs from a process.

Family reports are probably most important in the

- 1 For the purposes of clarity, in this report the father will be called "Joseph" and the son will be called "Joe".
- 2 The Association of Legal Justice (ALJ) was a human rights organization formed in 1970 to catalogue abuses inflicted on residents by British forces and RUC during the armed conflict. ALJ took over 4,000 statements from victims of abuse or witnesses. Many of these are now held in Monsignor Raymond Murrays Collection in the Tomas O'Fiaich Library at Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh. RFJ also holds these statements.



sense of satisfaction achievement they provide - not least to aging relatives and families - who for the first time are able to hold in one place - a family report - all the questions, concerns, thoughts, feelings, fears and views concerning the most unimaginable traumatic experiences of violent bereavement of a loved one.

Breaking a silence and giving voice to what were once unspeakable truths has in its own way also been cathartic within families and this has been an equally important journey.

Too many relatives have passed away waiting on a process and so this area of our work is so crucially important not least for an ageing population of bereaved parents, spouses and siblings.

Most of all it is about providing a form of justice - doing justice to those killed - seeking to right wrong, correcting the historical narrative and remembering.

The shooting

The circumstances of the murder are heartbreakingly straightforward. In a moment, the McCrystal family was broken up and destroyed, irrevocably.

Joseph McCrystal was shot while walking home along Arthur Road, Newtownabbey, around 11pm on Sunday November 12th, 1972. He had just been left off by work colleagues who shared the car-ride home after a late shift in Courtaulds Factory, Carnmoney. As he began to walk to his home in Longlands Park, a single gunman shot him twice with two weapons of different calibre, once in the back of the head and once through the jaw. The second shot, according to an eye-witness, was fired when Joseph was lying on the ground.



Joe at the spot where his father was murdered



The getaway car drove up the Whitewell Road

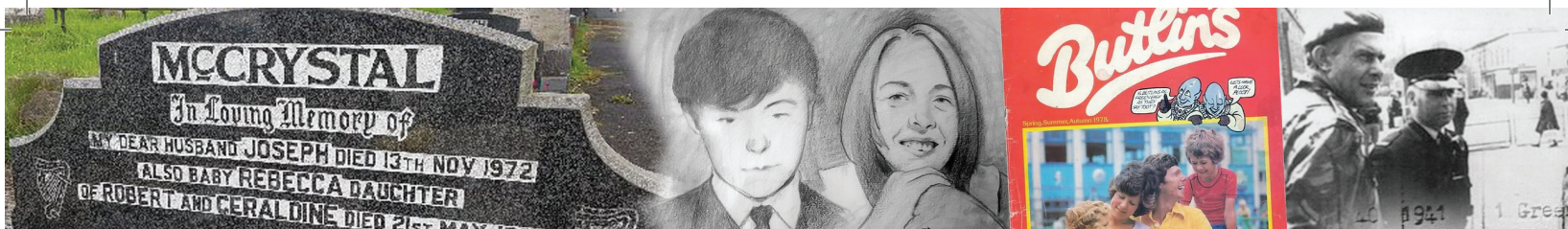


Taken to hospital, Joseph was given emergency surgery but never regained consciousness. His death was certified in the Royal Victoria Hospital at 6pm the next day, 13th November 1972. The autopsy found that death was caused by

the bullet which entered his brain from the back of his head before fracturing. This caused extensive laceration of the brain leading to swelling and haemorrhage.

No organisation claimed responsibility for the shooting though there seems little doubt that this was a sectarian murder by the Ulster Defence Association³ (UDA), the most prominent loyalist organisation in the area. No one has ever been charged with - much less convicted of - the murder. Maureen has told her children and RFJ that, apart from the night of the murder, no Royal Ulster Constabulary⁴ (RUC) officer involved in the investigation has ever spoken to her. No-one in authority has ever given her an update of the case.

- 3 The Ulster Defence Association was a very young organisation when Joseph was murdered. It had first emerged in loyalist areas on 1st July 1972, four months before Joseph was shot. The cover name of Ulster Freedom Fighters under which most acts of violence was claimed was not used until 16th June, the following year. See *Crimes of Loyalty: A History of the UDA*, by Ian S Wood, Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- 4 The name of the deeply sectarian police force which existed in the north of Ireland from the foundation of the statelet. The force was consigned to its shameful history by the Patten Commission, set up under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. This recommended that a new policing organisation be established in a way which addressed the negative legacy of the past.



Joseph McCrystal - his life and the impact of his death

Joseph and his wife Maureen had known each other for five years before they were married in 1968 in St Peter's Chapel (now St Peter's Cathedral) in the Lower Falls area of Belfast. Joseph was 21 years old and Maureen was 18. This was the year many commentators identify as the beginning of the conflict that was to have such an impact on the McCrystal family.



St. Peter's Cathedral, Belfast

Joseph was from North Belfast and worked in construction and driving. Maureen worked for McKenna & McGinley's (more popularly known as The Divis Lemonade Factory) when they first met. Joseph was to go on to work at Courtaulds in the Newtownabbey plant on Church Road opposite the Rathcoole estate. The estate was built in the 1950s and was part of a co-ordinated housing strategy seeking to address severe housing need in the north of Ireland. Like Craigavon and Ballymurphy, these new estates were conceived of as religiously mixed. But they could not withstand the tensions exposed by the struggle for civil rights and the heavy-handed response by the RUC and the Unionist authorities. By the early 1970s, the estate became overwhelmingly Protestant as Catholics were intimidated out of it.

This is set out in more detail below.

After they married, Joseph and Maureen moved to Dandy Street (situated between the Shore Road and the Bawnmore estate) and then Queen's Park before settling in Longlands off the Shore Road in North Belfast. They were among the first Catholics in this self-contained little estate under the shadow of Napoleon's Nose and Cavehill. Not surprisingly, they experienced sectarianism; but Joseph was not a man to be intimidated, and often confronted those he felt were trying to belittle him and his family.

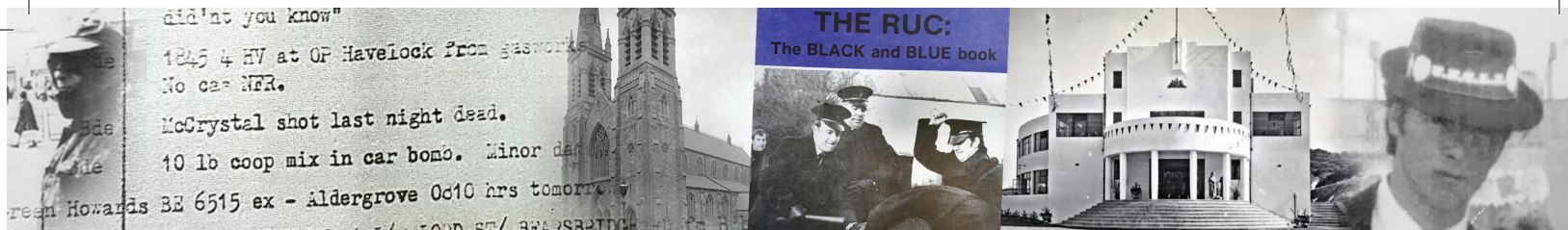
Before the couple had children, they used to go to dances - mostly featuring showbands - in the Floral Hall (now part of Belfast Zoo and rumoured at the time of writing to be reinstated as a dance venue) and Plaza Ballroom in the city centre. Joseph also used to play for a local soccer team.



Floral Hall, Belfast

Joseph's other great love was pigeon racing and there was a pigeon loft in the back garden which he maintained along with his friend Martin O'Rawe. Every Saturday during the pigeon racing season the pigeons were collected by lorry and later released to fly home. Birds were traded, and Maureen recalls Joseph swapping birds with pigeon owners in Rathcoole without any sectarian issues arising. Thus, despite the intimidation which they had to deal with, Joseph never held any prejudice against Protestants with whom he interacted.

Another activity enjoyed by both Joseph and Maureen was going to darts matches in places such as Carrickfergus and Ligoneil. Again, like pigeon racing, this was an activity that seemed to transcend political/religious differences. People were bussed to



different pubs and clubs in Protestant and Catholic areas and, even as the conflict became increasingly ferocious in the early seventies, the darts scene provided calm in the midst of chaos.

Maureen recalls Joseph being good with their children Joe and Donna. He played with them in the garden and in the house. At the time of their father's murder, Joe was four and Donna was only one year old.⁵

Joe has very little memory of his father given his age at the time. There are no photos available that have the children with their parents. The children have tried to piece together as much as they can from other members of the family; one of the strange coincidences was the fact that one of Joseph's brothers-in-law, who was a serving soldier in the British army and on operational tour in the North, was posted guard outside Joseph's hospital bedroom. He (the soldier) had no idea that it was his brother-in-law he was guarding.

A memory that Joe does have is of a member of the RUC calling to the house and telling his mother that her, "Provo husband had been shot and was in hospital". He also recalls being told that, "Daddy had died and had gone to heaven".

Joe has previously spoken⁶ of the impact that his father's death had on him directly and other members of the family. Young Joe lost his father whom he adored, his mother remarried, and he didn't get on with his stepfather. Subsequently Joe got into the construction business in London; thereafter, he came back to Belfast, setting up his own construction company. Specialising in civil engineering projects (Joe was involved in the building of the Westlink road project amongst others) he says he would have been more interested in big projects as opposed to domestic jobs. He puts it this way, "I could build you a bridge, but I couldn't hang you a door".⁷

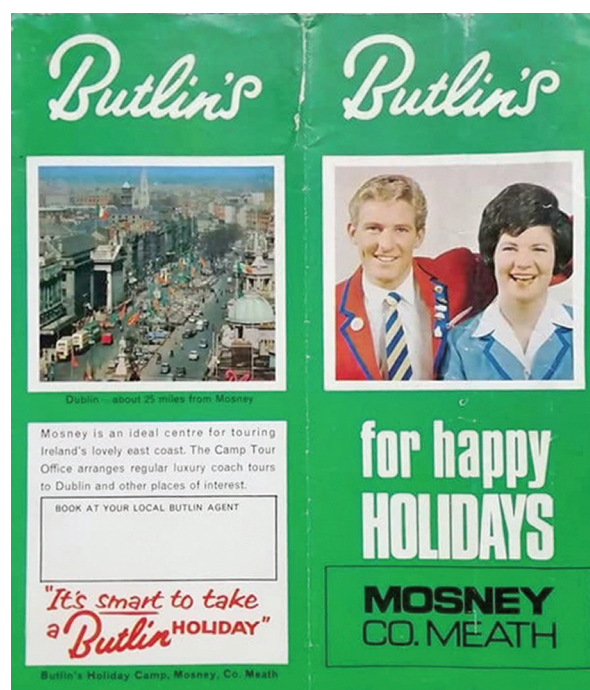
Donna was one year old when her father was killed. She was seven years old when her mother remarried. The over-arching feeling she had when she was growing up was of the loss of her father which has stayed with her to the present day. It



was from the age of five that she came really to understand what it meant that her natural father was dead; but the circumstances of his death were not talked about much within the family. Photos of

their real father were destroyed - they only have one striking image of their father, in Blackpool - and there was no "permission" to talk about Joseph.

Her earliest memories include accompanying her mother and Joseph up the "Snakey Path", which wound up from the White City area of North Belfast past Hazelwood Primary School and onto the Antrim Road just below Bellevue Zoo, as it was then known. Donna recalls going on holly-picking expeditions all year round. Her happiest memories are of going to Butlins in Mosney, Co. Meath for summer holidays.



Donna and her brother both went to St Mary's Star of the Sea Primary School. Donna enjoyed school up to Primary 3, after which she had a new teacher with whom she did not get on. The same thing happened in secondary school, at Stella Maris which they both attended. Donna once again enjoyed the first three years and then experienced a teacher who did not

5 Interview with Maureen Begley, Joseph's widow.

6 The 'Troubles' and other losses. *Lives lost indirectly through the 'Troubles'*, Wave Trauma Centre 2017.

7 Interview with RFJ.



get on with her. Donna recalls enjoying woodwork and metalwork; but in the 1980s, the school was not prepared to allow her - a girl - to build on these interests. So she left school at the age of 16. She also remembers being pursued by the "Beakey Man", as the truancy officer was called - and trying to persuade her mother to let her stay off school.

Donna, when growing up, resented her father for "leaving" her and also felt she had been deserted when Joe made his way to England. It is only now she realizes that it wasn't their fault and it wasn't her fault.



Drawing of Donna and her father. Donna's husband got a street artist to compose this picture as a present for her.

After leaving school without any qualifications, Donna got a job in the Belmont photo development factory in Mallusk. Donna has three children, - Stephen (28), Demi (25) and Reeanna (20).

Although Joe has fleeting memories of his father, the injustice of what happened to him and how his name was sullied afterwards by the state and others has left Joe with the burning sense of injustice at a wrong that needs to be put right. "One of the things that hurt our family most was this accusation that my daddy was in the IRA. This was put about by British Intelligence in an attempt to justify the killing, but it was complete rubbish. They even went as far as putting a death notice in the paper that claimed he was 'a member of K Battalion PIRA'. No such battalion ever existed."⁸

⁸ WAVE, op cit, p 102.

The aftermath of Joseph's murder

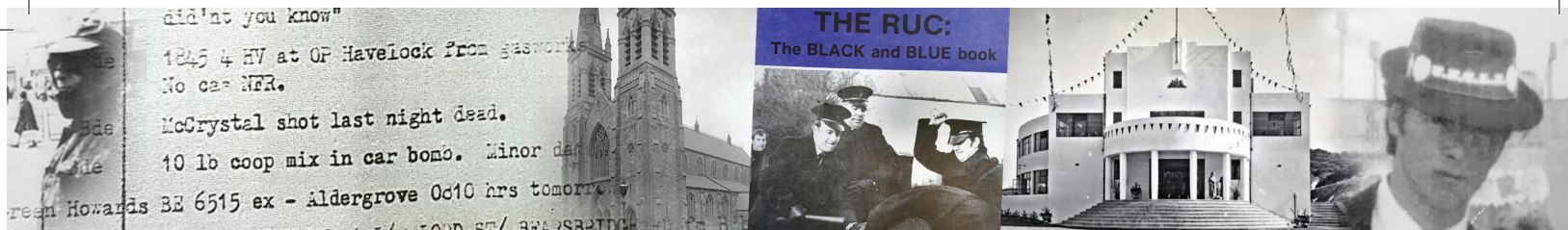
In the immediate aftermath of Joseph's death, newspapers reported that he was a member of the Republican Movement. A death notice in the *Irish News*⁹ purported to have been placed on behalf of: 'The Staff and Volunteers of "K" Company, 3rd Battalion (Auxiliaries) Irish Republican Army (Prov.)'. As Joe pointed out above, there was no "K" Company within the IRA and it is obvious that those who authored the death notice had little idea of IRA organisational structures. The notice went on to: 'regret the death of their comrade, Vol. Joseph McCrystal.' Newspapers also reported that Joseph was "a brother of one of three men who died in an explosion at a garage in Bawnmore estate, Newtownabbey" seven months earlier. By these manifestations and relationships, Joseph was categorised in the first instance as a legitimate target for what some papers called 'assassination'.

The following day the *Irish News* reported that: 'A Provisional I.R.A. spokesman and relatives denied last night that Mr. Joseph McCrystal... was ever at any time an I.R.A. man or in any way connected with the movement'. The spokesman continued: 'Following reports, including a death notice - which we are regarding as a hoax - we have made exhaustive inquiries and can state categorically that Mr. McCrystal was not connected, even remotely, to the Republican Movement.'¹⁰

Despite this clarification, Joseph's children believe that this nexus between their father, his imputed membership of the IRA by those (who were most probably loyalists and are likely to have been associates of the killers) who placed the hoax death notice and the death of Joseph's brother, Charles, in an IRA bomb placed Joseph's murder in a category which would not receive priority in terms of the RUC investigative response. Indeed, as is indicated later, the family believe the RUC and/or the British army may have been involved in targeting him.

⁹ *Irish News*, Tuesday 14th November 1972.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 15th November 1972.



The geographical context, Newtownabbey¹¹ RUC barracks and collusion with Loyalists

The area of south-east Antrim where Joseph and his family lived and in which he was murdered was, even by 1972, overwhelmingly Protestant. While there had been some attempts in the 1960s to create more mixed housing estates such as Rathcoole, once civil strife broke out in the late 1960s, intimidation of Catholics became the order of the day. The process has been vividly described in the autobiography of former RUC officer, Johnston Brown, entitled *Into the Dark: 30 Years in the RUC*¹². In the period 1972 to 1976, he details the emergence of gangs of vigilantes, many wearing masks and basic uniform, who patrolled the estates of Newtownabbey (where the RUC barracks¹³ from which he worked was sited) and the surrounding area intimidating Catholics and forcing them out of areas the vigilantes wished to control.

Brown also describes how, when he wished to confront these loyalists, he was prevented from doing so by his superior officers. The prevailing canteen culture in relation to loyalists is well captured by an Instruction Notice which appeared on the board in Newtownabbey RUC station. This made clear that the local UDA were 'working with the RUC and in support of us'. Officers were told that 'assurances had been given to the vigilantes that ... harassment would stop'¹⁴. This mirrors official decision-making at Stormont Castle by the NIO and senior security officials. At a meeting in July 1972, among matters discussed included liaison and negotiation with the UDA by the police and the army.¹⁵

- 11 There is some confusion about RUC nomenclature as between Newtownabbey and Whiteabbey. The relevant sub-division of D Division (North Belfast) appears to have been Newtownabbey, which comprised Newtownabbey, Glengormley and Ballyclare. Many documents, however, seem to interchange Newtownabbey with Whiteabbey, perhaps a further indication of the transitional nature of the area in terms of urban development, demographics and community identity.
- 12 Jonty Brown, *Into the Dark: 30 Years in the RUC* (Gill & McMillan, 2005).
- 13 In keeping with their paramilitary roots and the sweeping powers they had under the terms of the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland) 1922, police stations were known as "barracks".
- 14 Jonty Brown, *op cit*, p. 50.
- 15 See: <https://www.relativesforjustice.com/state-impunity-was-official-policy/>

Of more relevance to Joseph's murder and the failure properly to investigate it, Brown writes: 'there were bigoted coppers ... In fact, some of our very senior officers were suspected of such [i.e. bigoted] attitudes and conduct themselves ... [I]t was easy enough for them to ruin a Police operation by tipping off Loyalists...'¹⁶. He goes on to conclude: 'The theory was that the RUC did not tolerate bigots. The practice was very different ... in those early days, I seriously underestimated just how far some of my colleagues would go to frustrate my efforts'¹⁷. Even more alarmingly, Brown gives an account of being seriously intimidated in Newtownabbey station by a Special Branch officer named Kenny¹⁸ after he had taken weapons (including two .38 standard RUC issue Webley revolvers) off a loyalist gang. He also received a phone call in the aftermath of this incident from an RUC sergeant complaining that he would lose his job as he had been covering up the absence of the two revolvers from the armoury in his barracks¹⁹.

Intimidation in North Belfast/East Antrim

The Stella Maris secondary school was built in the early 1960s to service the growing Catholic community in the outer North Belfast area. Both Joe and Donna attended the school. On the website dedicated to the school²⁰, some of the difficulties faced by the families of the children educated there in the early years of the conflict are documented. Remarkably, in the very early years of conflict, there was a determined effort to maintain an integrated community. However, this changed when the Rathcoole Defence Association was set up as a specifically Protestant vigilante organisation in mid-1971. According to the account on the Stella Maris website, determined approaches by members of the Catholic community to work together on keeping the area safe were spurned. Instead, the RDA, assisted by "tartan Gangs" of teenage youths erected barriers at the entrances to the estate.

Tragically, 27 past pupils of the school - twenty-four

16 Jonty Brown, *op cit*, p. 47.

17 *Ibid*, p. 53.

18 *Ibid*, pp. 69-70.

19 *Ibid*, p. 71

20 <http://stellamarissecondary.com/index.html>



Rathcoole viewed from Cavehill

boys and three girls - were to lose their lives during the conflict. This is a remarkable level of attrition and an indication of the way in which that part of North Belfast/south east Antrim can be seen as emblematic of the sectarian conflict.²¹

By the time of internment without trial in August 1971, "intimidation of Catholic families in Rathcoole became an everyday occurrence". This was when many families began to be forced out of the area by loyalist intimidation. When this happened, the family concerned was obliged to obtain a verification from the local police if they wished to be placed on the emergency public housing list elsewhere in the city. The website states that: 'In many instances the police, despite considerable evidence to the contrary, refused to state that this was the case.'²² Figures are consequently hard to find. However, the website refers to a survey conducted by the parish priests of Greencastle, Whiteabbey, Whitehouse and Greenisland parishes in the late 1970s. This survey 'found that approximately one thousand four hundred families had fled the area.'²³ Some estimates have suggested that as many as one third of the residents of Rathcoole were Catholic. However, by

21 <http://www.stellamarissecondary.com/pupilsdeceased.html>

22 <http://stellamarissecondary.com/intimidation.html>

23 Ibid.

the late 70s, it was virtually 100% Protestant.²⁴ The school population also suffered, with enrolment dropping from 996 to 228 between June 1971 and June 1974 in Stella Maris Primary. Many of these families ended up in Twinbrook in West Belfast; the family of future leader of the hunger strikers, Bobby Sands MP was simply one of the best known.

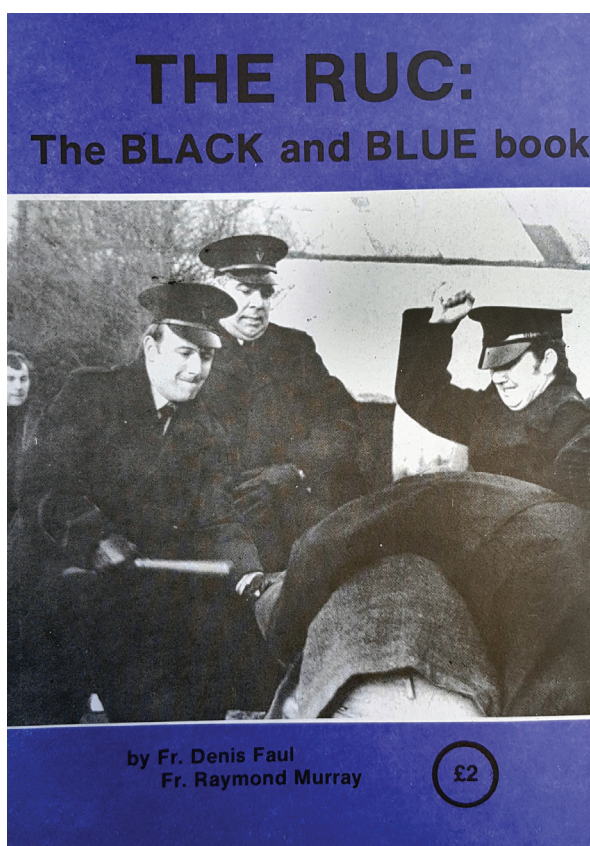
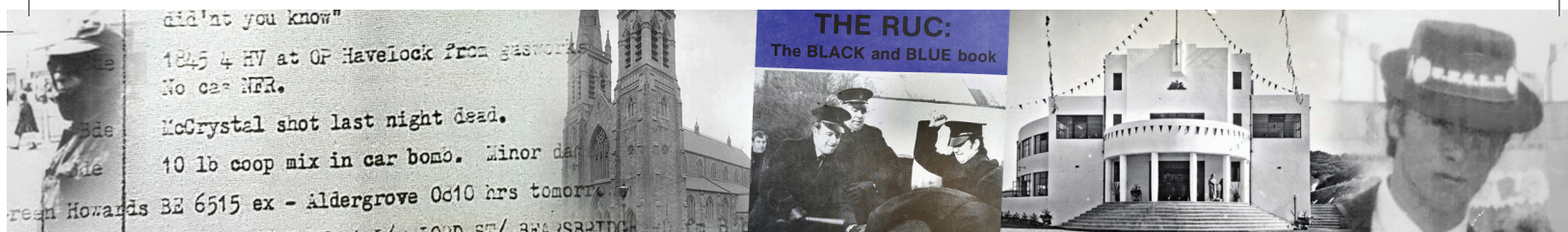
Of particular relevance to this account, however, is the report on sectarian intimidation in Belfast published in 1974 by the Community Relations Commission (CRC)²⁵. This heavily criticised both the British army and the RUC who, it said, had: 'consistently failed to take action when intimidation was reported and have shown little sympathy for the plight of distressed families by their unwillingness to confirm intimidation'²⁶. It was widely claimed that the report's authors, John Darby and Geoffrey Morris, and the Commission itself, had come under pressure to tone down their criticism. Some of the deleted material, however, was leaked to Gerry Fitt, MP, then leader of the SDLP who published it the day after the report was launched. One of the deleted paragraphs stated: 'Definite sympathies with the UDA have come to light in our investigations. The Loyalist outlook of certain members of the RUC at Whiteabbey and York Road [stations] colours their perception, judgment and response in dealing with intimidation and all its attendant problems.'²⁷ At the press conference, Mr Fitt went so far as to call on the then Chief Constable of the RUC, James Flanagan, to investigate Whiteabbey RUC station. Fr Denis Faul and Fr Raymond Murray published all the deleted material from the CRC report in their book documenting the Catholic experience of the RUC in the early years of the conflict, *The RUC: The Black and*

24 "Masked men smash windows and ransack home in sectarian attack", Connla Young, *Irish News*, 12.04.2019, p. 1.

25 The Community Relations Commission was established by the British government in response to the outbreak of violence in 1969. It was charged with promoting policies to improve community relations and was modelled on the British Race Relations Board. It was in operation from December 1969, until abolished, ironically, by Ivan Cooper, the Minister for Community Relations in the power-sharing government that emerged from the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973 (see *Improving Community Relations*, A paper prepared for the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, Hugh Frazer & Mari Fitzduff, 1986).

26 David McKittrick, *The Irish Times*, 23rd February 1974.

27 Fr Raymond Murray and Fr Denis Faul, *The RUC: The Black and Blue Book*, 1975, p. 87.



Blue Book. At the conclusion of their section on 'The plight of Catholics in Newtownabbey'²⁸, they carry a quote from a *Newsletter* reporter explaining why so many sectarian attacks and assassinations were being carried out in Newtownabbey: 'One theory is that the random attacks on Catholics within the 60,000 population are aimed at driving them out of the area.'²⁹

These various accounts paint a disturbing picture of both the level of hostility faced by Catholics in the area as the wider conflict developed and complicity between elements in the RUC - including Special Branch (who Brown describes as being top dogs within the RUC) - and loyalists. Given such interactions, it is hard to imagine a situation where the investigators did not have, at least, intelligence on Joseph's murder. They would also have had their eyes on a confident and successful member of the Catholic community, such as Joseph McCrystal, a man who, far from leaving, was determined to stay in his home and make a living in the area.

²⁸ *Ibid*, p.87

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 90. The quote was printed in the *Newsletter* on 15th February 1974.

The Bawnmore Bomb

The deaths of three very young IRA volunteers in an explosion in the small and embattled Catholic estate of Bawnmore should be seen in the context of this wider picture of ethnic division, intimidation and mistrust of the RUC. One of the casualties in the premature explosion was Joseph McCrystal's brother, Charles. As Joe puts it: "The deaths of the three volunteers provides a backdrop for my father's murder in so much that family members of all three volunteers were also murdered within a couple of years. Am I to believe that this was just a coincidence? Or was something more sinister at play? That is what I want to find out".³⁰

On Friday 7th April 1972, seven months before Joseph McCrystal was murdered, his brother Charles was killed when a bomb - estimated to contain 20 to 30 lb of explosives - exploded in a rented lock-up garage in Bawnmore Grove, Newtownabbey. Charles was 18. Two of his friends - John McErlean and Samuel Hughes - were in the garage with him and also died in the explosion. They were both 17 years

BELFAST GRAVES

Samuel Hughes

SAMUEL JOHN HUGHES was born on February 26th 1955 and lived at 52 Bawnmore Park, Mill Road, Newtownabbey.

Samuel was educated at Stella Maris Secondary School and then worked as an apprentice butcher. He was fond of dancing and football and took the occasional drink.

He was killed in an explosion in Bawnmore Park on April 7th 1972.



Charles McCrystal

CHARLES McCRYSTAL was a milk roundsman whose hobbies included football.

He died as a result of a premature explosion at Bawnmore Park on April 7th 1972; he was 17 years old.



John McErlean

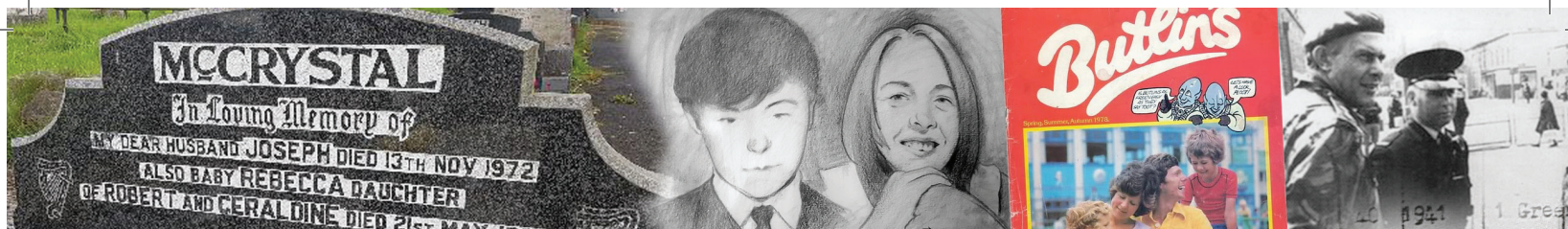
JOHN McERLEAN was born on August 21st 1954 and lived at 83 Bawnmore Park, Whitehouse, Newtownabbey. He attended the Star of the Sea Primary School, Greencastle, and Stella Maris Secondary School.

He worked as a mechanical engineer and died on April 7th 1972 as a result of a premature explosion.

His sister, Margaret, died on February 18th 1974 of gunshot wounds inflicted by loyalist terrorists.



³⁰ WAVE op cit, p. 103



old. A police report dated 10th April 1972 states: 'Indications at present show that the bomb had either been placed on the floor of the garage or was being lifted into the car when it exploded.'³¹ Death was instantaneous. Although not claimed by the IRA in the immediate aftermath of the incident, the three young men were, in time, listed on the republican roll of honour.

26 years later, John McErlean's father, Jack, was interviewed by David McKittrick of *The Independent* newspaper. In that story, the conclusion is drawn that: 'the explosion branded the little estate (Bawnmore) as a centre of IRA activity, and loyalists went for it'³². It is the McCrystal family's view that the RUC and the British army went for it as well, with devastating and appalling consequences. Figures compiled by RFJ and local residents suggest that 19 Bawnmore residents died during the conflict and 20 were injured.

The small Bawnmore community suffered disproportionately from the violence of the times. Joseph's children have long felt that the explosion and loyalist reaction to it lies behind their father's targeting and murder. However, not only was Joseph killed seven months later; in 1974 John McErlean's sister Margaret was killed when loyalists opened fire on the car she was in. The car was a two door Ford Anglia and Margaret was in the back seat with two others. One of them was Alice Hughes, sister of Samuel, another of the young men killed in the Bawnmore explosion; she miraculously survived even though she had been hit by 12 bullets. The third back seat passenger was Thomas Donaghy, a teenager from Bawnmore estate; he also died in the attack. The two young people in the front of the car managed to get out of the two-door vehicle and run for safety. The five young people were driving to work in the nearby Abbey Meats Factory at 8am on Monday 11th February 1974. All of them lived in the Bawnmore estate.³³

It follows that, like Joseph, these young people paid the price for a double sin in the eyes of loyalists: firstly, they were associated with the three IRA victims of the Bawnmore explosion; secondly, they were working Catholics in a predominantly Protestant neighbourhood. This made them easy targets with many work colleagues able to indicate when they would be travelling to or from work. Given the thematic parallels, Joseph's children would like to know whether the RUC questioned Joseph's work colleagues and neighbours in relation to rumours of targeting.

As an employed Catholic with a close family link to a dead young IRA volunteer, Joseph fits the profile as a target for the sectarian assassination campaign against Catholics in south east Antrim. The HET report³⁴, referenced in more detail later, strongly suggests that his neighbours may have had some connection to or knowledge of his murder. For example, the fact that Joseph's killers were waiting at his drop-off point late at night after a shift clearly points to inside knowledge of his movements.

The official response to Joseph's murder

Though there was an RUC investigation, Joseph's family were not informed of its progress. They received no updates, were not informed of any arrests, forensics or ballistics information. The only contact, according to Maureen, was when two RUC officers contemptuously threw a bag containing Joseph's possessions - including his bloodstained clothing - into the house. The only indications of a contemporaneous RUC "investigation" came at the inquest into Joseph's death and then when the Historical Enquiries Team carried out a review (see below) which was completed in 2010.

However, RFJ has become aware of official references to Joseph's murder and his funeral in British Army radio log sheets from the period found in the British National Archives in Kew, London.³⁵ They are suggestive of how Joseph was viewed by the British security authorities. These were found in

made on warnings given to R.U.C. Whiteabbey Killings Controversy', *The Irish Times*, 1st March 1974.

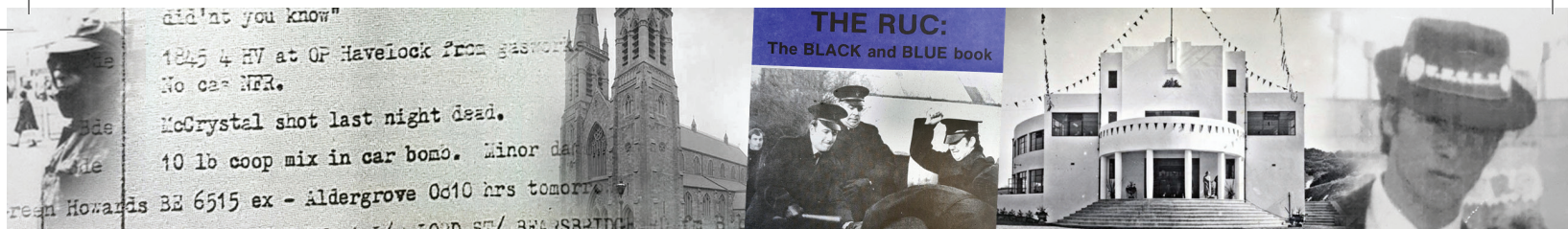
34 The Historical Enquiries Team (HET) was established in 2005 by the then Chief Constable of the PSNI Hugh Orde to review all conflict related deaths from 1969 to 1998.

35 These were furnished to RFJ by Ciarán MacAirt of Paper Trail.

31 HET, Review Summary Report into the death of John McErlean.

32 McKittrick et al, *Lost Lives*, Mainstream Publishing, 2008, p.174.

33 It was widely reported at the time that the RUC in Whiteabbey were phoned about a suspicious car and a man carrying a weapon outside the factory at 7.46am just before the attack. There was no RUC response until after the attack took place. See, for example, 'Plot against RC workers - allegation', *East Antrim Times*, 15th February 1974 and 'Conflicting claims



SECURITY CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED (REPEAT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) (Pads of 30)							
LOG SHEET							
Formation/Unit		HQ 39 Inf Bde		Date		16 Nov 72	
				Log Keeper(s)		G Branch	
						Sheet No. 02	
Serial	DTG	To	From	Event	Action	Sign	
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	
				1 QUPH's cont'd			
				2 men seen running off by SF towards veh in pursuit, was fired at in ambush (at appx GR 329808) 12 rounds at SF. 12 x 7.62 ret. [redacted] hit in a further follow up 3 more 7.62 ret. Search of caravans in the area was NTR. Search called off 0230.	HQ NI.		
10	0900		2 Ang	RUC inform notified by Bangor spectator N.I. carriers, contains a bomb should have exploded 15 Nov.	ATO.		
11	0928		7 RMA	Telephone house, Bomb warning 0900 - cleared 0903 hrs - SCARE.			
12	0945			Call to Guardroom RVH [redacted] RUC inform [redacted]	Redacted under FOI Exemption Sec 40		
13	0945		G3 Pol	STANISSTAN CARBERRY. FUNERAL TODAY - to be buried Milltown after 1000 hrs mass at St Pauls Cavendish st. - McChristle is in Star of Sea chapel in Greencastle After 1000 mass to be buried in Our Ladys acre - Longlands Rd MCHISTLES route. Shore rd - Whitehall rd, arthur rd - Longlands Rd, does go through Prot area (1 Qs).	3 RGJ. 1 RGJ.		
14	0950		2 Ang	Call sign 87 will be conducting operation into [redacted] to lift [redacted] if successful may be recation contact 87 to ensure nothing is done to jeopardise.			
15	0950		3 RGJ	From Comd. cleared to enter [redacted] Officer had patrol. Quick & if not go - apologise.	2 Ang are briefed.		
16	1015		1 Qs	In drying room (Communist) [redacted] - bomb making instrs. [redacted] request permission to search [redacted] premises.			

searches related to another man who died on the same day as Joseph This man was shot by British soldiers on the Falls Road in west Belfast just after mid-day, as Joseph was lying desperately-wounded in the Royal Victoria Hospital, not so very far away. Stanislaus Carberry and Joseph McCrystal would be buried on the same day, three days later. The logs in question relate to the day Joseph was shot (12th November 1972) through to the day of the funerals (16th November).

The purpose of the logs was to note in sequence any significant security related events and operations reported to base by British army units and to the HQ of the British forces overall in the north of Ireland. Listed at 9.45 am on the sheet for the 16th November, the following entry appears:

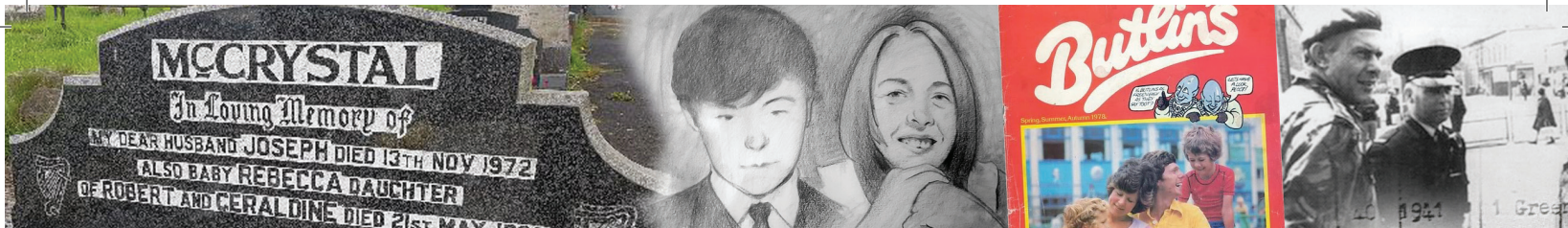
"STANISSTAN CARBERRY. FUNERAL TODAY - to be buried Milltown after 1000 hrs mass at St Pauls Cavendish st. -

"McChristle is in Star of Sea chapel in Greencastle After 1000 mass to be buried in Our Ladys acre - Longlands Rd

"MCHRISTLES route.

"Shore rd - Whitehall rd, arthur rd - Longlands Rd, does go through Prot area."

The next entry relates to a planned arrest at one of the funerals should a person of interest be seen at it. It is not made explicit which funeral is targeted, though later entries seem to confirm it was that of Stan Carberry. What is important, however, is that Joseph McCrystal's funeral was being monitored in the same way as the funeral of an acknowledged IRA volunteer who was being given full military honours by that organisation. Moreover, this attention is despite the fact that the two funerals were being held in completely different parts of the city and would not overlap. The name recognition (despite the faulty spelling) is also a telling detail. This was not just another random casualty. He was someone known - and presumably of interest - to the British army. The reference to the fact that the funeral would go through a "Prot area" shows an awareness of the sectarian geography of North Belfast, but also seems to signify that Joseph's death was more noteworthy



SECURITY CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED (REPEAT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) Army F (Pads)

LOG SHEET

Formation/Unit HQ 39 Inf Bde Date 16 Nov 72 Log Keeper(s) G Branch Sheet No. 03

Serial	DTG	To	From	Event	Action
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
17	1017		45	Brig now at City Centre.	
18	1024		3 RGJ	3 Cars in area Cavendish/Falls ready to start funeral.	
19	1025		1 RGJ	Coffin now at St Parks church about 100 people present, donning black & green berets, girls in green yellow.	
20	1025		3 RGJ	[REDACTED]	
21	1030		48	BRIG at City hall.	
22	1035		FELIX	RMP requested FELIX in attendance at Officers Mess Thiepval for duration of visit on 14/11 until visit finished. Stanley FELIX will be available.	
23	1040		87	[REDACTED] may be in funeral procession intention to lift him if recognised whatever aggro.	
24	1100		HQ NI	Ref lift of [REDACTED] GOC. Public enemy will not be allowed to get away but recognition must be 100%.	
25	1030		3 RGJ	Now 3 groups of 20 yths in uniform about 300 other people Hearse is placed first coffin carried by six males in black berets flanked by females. Also wearing berets.	
26	1110		3 RGJ	Trying to get up to date details of funeral, however, VHF consistently being jammed.	
27	1125		1 Para	RUC informs robbery of Rent man in falls rd, Following up.	

Redacted under FOI Exemption Sec 40

CCMD contacted to Make decision Wait out.

1 RGJ info.

than simply another sectarian murder.

RFJ has also seen radio log sheets from the British army's HQ in the north of Ireland covering the night that Joseph was shot and the following day. Reports to HQ would tend to be the more

significant matters of interest at a strategic level.

These confirm the sense that the name "McCrystal" was well-known. Thus, at 19.14pm on the 13th, the call came in from 39th Brigade:

"McCrystal shot last night dead."

However, when the sheet for the previous evening is examined, there is a redaction meaning that something has been hidden. A note - in standard form - indicates that the redaction has been made on grounds of health and safety and/or because the information relates to a third person. The entry reads:

"[Redaction] - 1 Queens - shot in head Arthur/Whitewell at 2305. SFNI. RVH is VSI. RC."

This probably means "(redaction) - call relates to a unit from the first battalion of the Queens Regiment - someone shot in the head in the Arthur Road/Whitewell Road area at 11.05pm. Security Forces NI involved or at the scene. The victim has been taken to Royal Victoria Hospital and is very

LOG SHEET

Formation/Unit HQ NI Date 13 Nov 72 Log Keeper(s)

Serial	DTG	To	From	Event
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
34	1815		8 Bde	Warning to RUC of car bomb Para 45 mins wng given. RUC warned exploded 1724. 10 lb No cas.
35	1840		8 Bde	Own tps at 296943 and 274737, were manning VCRs.
36	1850		8 Bde	Warning to 25 Lt Regt from RUC car - did not say that there was checking at 1715 by 25 Lt Regt didn't you know"
37	1906		39 Bde	1845 4 HV at OF Havelock from 39 Bde No car NFR.
38	1914		39 Bde	McCrystal shot last night dead.
39	1919		8 Bde	10 lb coop mix in car bomb. 10 lb
40	1941		1 Green Howards	BE 6515 ex - Aldergrove 0610 hr
41	1956		39 Bde	1940 LG 2 X LV at L/A LORD ST/ NFR. Local UDA leaders info.

didn't you know"

1845 4 HV at OP Havelock from gasworks
No car NFR.

McCrystal shot last night dead.

10 lb coop mix in car bomb. Minor damage

Green Howards BE 6515 ex - Aldergrove 0610 hrs tomorrow

Green Howards BE 6515 ex - Aldergrove 0610 hrs tomorrow

THE RUC:
The BLACK and BLUE book



LOG SHEET
HQ 39 INF DOB
Date 15 NOV 72
Log Keeper(s) G BRANCH
Sheet No. 04

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION RESTRICTED (REPEAT AT BOTTOM OF PAGE) Army Form 358 (Pads of 50)

Serial	DTG	To	From	Event	Action	Sign
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
28	1115		1 RGJ	Just entering cemetery Max 300 - pipe band FIANNA Girls, boys 13-15 about 50-60 men under 60yrs.		
29	1120		1 GH	[REDACTED] - hot pursuit.		
30	1125		1 RGJ	1 GH have seen [REDACTED] on list request search of [REDACTED]	Redacted under FOI Exemption Sec 40	
31	1128			Funeral just entering cemetery, max 300 persons, Pipe band of FIANNA Girls in black berets, 50-60 men under 60 yrs, 30 boys.		
32	1129		46	Visitor in City Hall not left yet.		
3			45	Prime Minister just leaving City Hall laying wreath, hasn't left yet.		
34	1130		1 RGJ	Request for Arrest Team.		
35	1130		1 RGJ	[REDACTED] lifted 1010hrs Sec 11(21) (RC) in conjunction with [REDACTED] find 15 Nov, gave himself up voluntarily on request by SF.	N/T HQMI, RMP	
36	1140		1 PARA	Small peaceful demo against presence of PARAs, at VERE FOSTER SCH.		
37	1140		Brig	Procession going Southwards down Gt PATRICK ST.		
38	1145		46	Bomb scare, CORSHAM ST/SMITHFIELD North. Parcel thrown into shop, owner put in road, warning area.	ATO	
39	1150		7 Para	Bomb scare ANN ST clear.		
40	1159		1 Q	Search [REDACTED] negative.		

(18043) Dtd 000992 26m 5/71 G.W.N.Ltd.

seriously injured. The victim is Roman Catholic."

18 hours later, the denouement is tersely recorded: "McCrystal shot last night dead."

All this raises a number of questions. What are the redactions on the log sheet? If Joseph's name is not redacted elsewhere, is the redaction to the sheet on the night of the shooting related to someone else? Why is Joseph's name of such interest at the British army's HQ and what was of interest about him? Why were they monitoring his funeral?

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that the British army had undercover units operating in the area in 1972. On 31st August 1972, the *Irish News* carried a story headlines: "Is S.A.S. in north? - N.I.C.R.A."

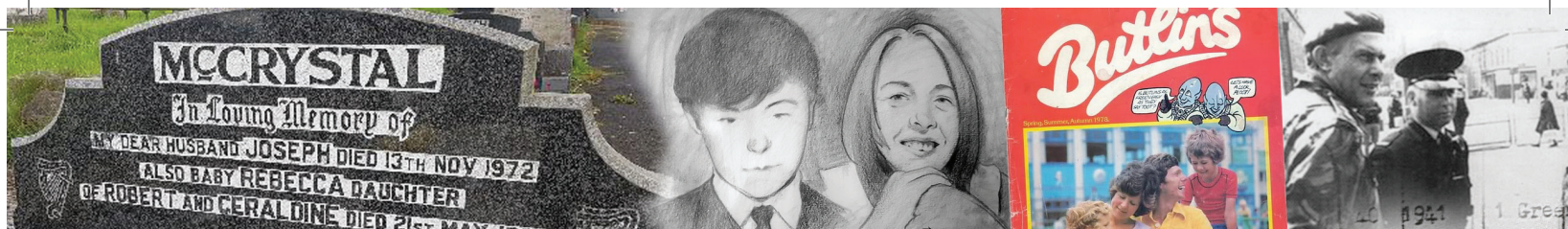
This related to claims by the Civil Rights Association that members of the British Army's elite unit had been challenged and exposed by local residents in Dandy Street in the Bawnmore estate two nights previously. The residents noticed a car behaving suspiciously and blocked the road. Men in civilian clothing and without identification

claimed to be SAS soldiers and were carrying Browning pistols.

We know also now that the British army had established deniable units known as the Military Reaction Force using a combination of British and local personnel. As has been outlined in a BBC *Panorama* programme³⁶ entitled "Britain's Secret Terror Force", the purpose of the unit was to identify and "hunt down" IRA suspects. The programme was broadcast in November 2013 and led the then Director of Public Prosecutions to refer the matter to the Chief Constable for investigation.

The incident in which Bawnmore residents confronted a suspicious vehicle with armed undercover soldiers should be examined in the light of British army interest in relatives of known IRA personnel (such as the victims of the bomb in April 1972). It should also be remembered that Joseph and his wife lived in Dandy Street immediately after they were married.

36 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24987465>



The Inquest

An inquest into Joseph McCrystal's death was held on Thursday 27th September 1973 before Mr J. Elliot and a jury of eight. This considered the findings of the *post-mortem* examination and several eye-witness statements. It confirmed the time and cause of death and recorded an open verdict as was the usual practice where no evidence of individual responsibility could be adduced. At the inquest, Joseph's brother, Robert, told the coroner that when he had been detained in Long Kesh for 13 weeks, reports of court hearings in the media incorrectly noted his address as Longlands Park. He wondered therefore whether Joseph had been targeted in error, and the killers' intention was to target him (i.e. Robert).

In this regard it is worth referring to the book *Killing For Britain* authored pseudonymously by John Black. This author claims to have been from a loyalist background, recruited into the aforementioned MRF. He mentions Joseph's murder and, after referring to the Bawnmore bomb, he continues:

"A close relative had been detained in Long Kesh for three months, so it was assumed that the entire family had republican sympathies. It is possible the MRF did get the target wrong, but knowing the way they worked, it wouldn't have mattered. An OOB [An "out of bounds order" kept police and army personnel out of a designated area for a certain period of time – usually to allow an undercover operation to take place without hindrance] was in place at the time."³⁷

This account, therefore, claims that the MRF were responsible and that a special notice designating that the area where the attack was to take place was to be avoided by police and British army units. This was to ensure that the killers could carry out the attack and get away without hindrance.

Historical Enquiries Team (HET) Report

The HET was established in 2005 by then PSNI Chief Constable Hugh Orde. Its purpose, as a unit of the PSNI, was to review the case files of every death

that occurred during the course of the conflict about Britain's role in the north of Ireland between 1968 and 1998. This was not an initiative which the Chief Constable had consulted about: he simply went ahead, appointed his personnel, and let them get on with it.

Their approach was deeply troubling and, even when families did engage with the HET's process, it became clear that they were unlikely to receive a satisfactory outcome. While some of the HET staff appeared well-intentioned, the political bias of the unit in general and their unwillingness to follow lines of inquiry that may have been unsettling for the RUC and the British army prevented them from winning the trust of victims from the nationalist and republican community in particular.

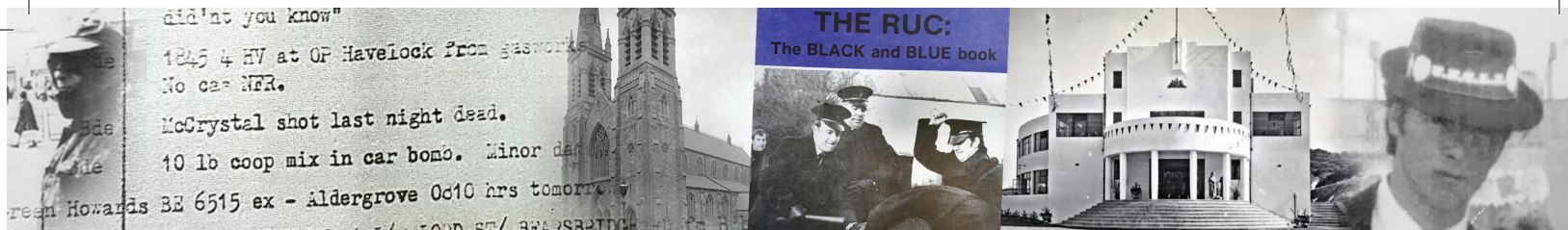
However, because there had been little previous contact with the RUC, the HET process often provided information not previously known to victims' families. In this case, Donna engaged with the HET when that unit approached the family. However, the process was deeply unsatisfactory and neither Donna nor Joe are satisfied with the report the HET eventually produced.

Assessing overall the RUC investigation, there were several potential lines of enquiry not addressed. But even in relation to the HET, beyond the tired phrase in the HET report that '[I]t is probable that Joseph was murdered because he was a [C]atholic...'³⁸, there is no evidence that the HET were aware of the concerted campaign of assassination against Catholics in the Newtownabbey area in the early years of the conflict. It was a clear transition zone in terms of demographics with Catholics coming into the area. New awareness of the need to employ more Catholics in local employment would have heightened loyalist aggravation. When to this is added the family link to an IRA volunteer, little more is needed to explain why Joseph became a target. It is this context which is the more likely route to a resolution of Joseph's murder.

It is the failure of the RUC and the HET to pursue such lines of investigation which explains the failure to apprehend, charge and prosecute those responsible. Moreover, the McCrystal family -

³⁷ John Black, *Killing for Britain*, Frontline Noir Publishing, 2008, p. 220.

³⁸ *Op cit.*, p. 20.



supported by RFJ - believe that the RUC would not have viewed attacks on perceived republicans as problematic in any case. After all, suspected republicans were targets for RUC officers in the normal routine of bigotry at the time. This is why the family want to see the question of collusion between loyalists and the RUC given more focus in any proper independent investigation into Joseph's murder.

The HET reviewed the case file and Joseph's children received the HET report in August 2010. In their view, this report failed to engage sufficiently with the reasons and context which led to their father's murder. While it revealed that three individuals had been questioned about the murder, the report did not address all the questions that Joseph's children feel still require answers.

Lack of case papers

According to the HET review, there were very few papers that they could look at in relation to the RUC investigation of the time. This seems highly unusual and there is no explanation given as to why so few papers exist. Joseph's family believe further searches should be undertaken.

The section in the HET report on intelligence continues this remarkable absence of information. Only two pieces of intelligence are listed and – extraordinarily – both relate to republican traces. One even suggests that Joseph was murdered by the Provisional IRA. (The HET acknowledge that the intelligence is false.) However, it seems scarcely credible that only IRA-related intelligence has been found. Considering the area of south-east Antrim and the numbers of loyalist organisations and members in that geographical area, it seems inconceivable that the RUC would not have had access to some information from loyalist sources about Joseph's murder, not least given their relationships with loyalists.

The absence of any intelligence traces on loyalist involvement suggests that either no effort was made to secure information about Joseph's murder or that it has been removed. Until a search of records by a credible organisation such as the Police Ombudsman is carried out, the family and RFJ cannot believe that all intelligence has been

examined.

The absence of detail on forensics is also disappointing. As well as the car which seems to have been used by the killers (a stolen Vauxhall Viva), two other cars (a Ford Escort and an Austin 1100) were forensically examined. Yet no information exists to explain why these other two cars were of interest, or their relevance to the investigation.³⁹

On November 16th, 1972, the HET report says that DS Jenkins received information that three men from the Longlands Park area were involved in Joseph's murder. This is the street on which Joseph lived along with his family. It is also very close to where Joseph was murdered. In the first instance, only one of the three men was interviewed, and this interview did not take place until three days later. The other two were not questioned until much later. The HET report goes on to say that an anonymous caller named these same two men on the 17th November. Yet this information was not passed on to the investigation team until the 24th November, some seven days later. The two other men were then interviewed on 25th and 26th November. Both provided alibis "and were eliminated from the enquiry".⁴⁰

In the view of RFJ and the McCrystal family, this does not add up. The seven-day delay in passing information to the investigation team (which is not explained), the sequencing in the interviews of first one and then much later the other two, allied to the atmosphere in Newtownabbey RUC barracks outlined earlier in extracts from the book by Johnston Brown; all this strongly suggests that information was being managed and suspects may have been protected - if not warned about pending arrests - in order to ensure alibis were in place or to protect sources or collusion. To further add to suspicions, the man interviewed on 19th November was again named in another anonymous call on 9th December. There is no suggestion that he was spoken to again.

It is also unclear from the papers whether the three individuals were arrested, attended

39 HET, Review Summary Report concerning the murder of Joseph McCrystal, p.12.

40 *Ibid*, p.13.



voluntarily or were questioned under caution.

The HET report says that nothing in their file indicates whether house-to-house searches were carried out or an extended scene of crime search was undertaken. It is worth noting that Fathers Faul and Murray report their findings that the RUC in Newtownabbey seldom followed up sectarian attacks with proper police inquiries. Thus, there were: 'no intensive police or army activity observed on the ground following the petrol-bombings on 4 December and 8 January'; 'No inquiries or searches in the Rathfern area into which the Rush Park assassins escaped on 31 January'; 'no reports from the Rushpark area, where the assassins' car was found, of house to house inquiries, searches or arrests for screening and interrogation'; and 'Residents ... have noticed no follow-up activities by the security forces since the wounding of John Graham and the attack on the Poland home.'⁴¹

The McCrystal family has no confidence in the HET review of papers and the conclusions that they draw from them. Until a proper analysis of all available material, including that in Special Branch files, is carried out by a credible body, their suspicions will not be allayed.

Ballistics

The HET report says that the two bullet heads recovered from Joseph's body were forensically examined. There is no information in the file to indicate whether a third bullet recovered (in rather slipshod fashion) from the scene of the shooting was ever examined. The examination confirmed that two weapons were used: a .38 calibre handgun and a .455 calibre Smith and Wesson revolver⁴².

There is no information given in the report as to why the make of the larger calibre gun is given but not that of the smaller. It is surely worthy of note, however, that .38 is the calibre of the standard RUC issue handgun, the Webley, two of which were recovered from loyalists by Jonty Brown during his time at Newtownabbey police station.⁴³ Neither of the weapons used has been recovered and no previous or subsequent history of their use is available.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 89 - 90.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 15.

⁴³ *Supra*, 9.

Continuing intimidation of Joe by RUC officers

All their lives, Joe and Donna have felt that the RUC were not really interested in solving their father's murder. They can remember some RUC officers expressing sectarian remarks and feel that their uncle's death in the Bawnmore explosion poisoned RUC officers against them. The continuing bigotry against them is evidenced from the fact that their house was riddled with bullets in a sectarian attack⁴⁴. The RUC were not that interested at the time and no further investigations were carried out.

Down the years, RUC officers have made certain remarks to Joe that indicate their continuing bias against the family. When he was 18, a police officer said to him: 'Your Da was lying on the ground; he cried like a baby before he was 'tapped out'. He was shot in the back and finished off on the ground.'⁴⁵

Another time police officers said to him: 'We'll do the same to you as we did to your da.'

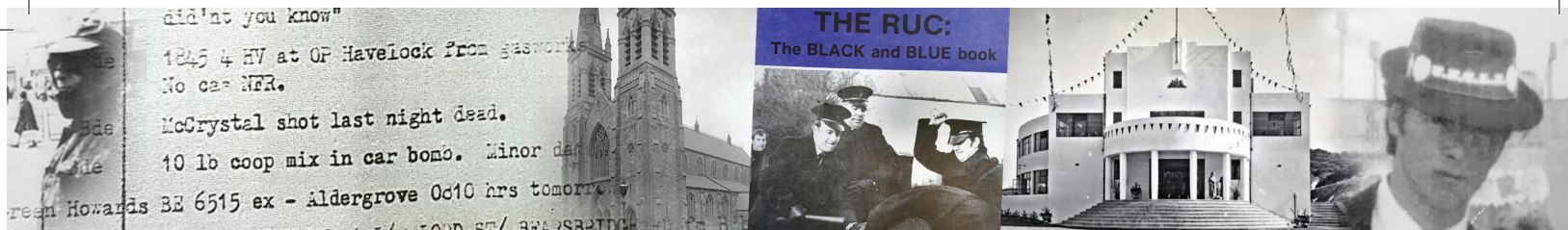
As a result of these experiences, Joe and Donna are convinced that local RUC officers were involved in their father's murder, and that knowledge was part of local RUC culture. Their mother has told them that their home was raided two weeks before the murder. 'During that raid, one peeler told my mother [about another police officer]: 'Watch out for him, he's a dangerous one''.⁴⁶ Maureen remembers that this raid took place on a Friday 13th.

In family discussions during preparation for a complaint to the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland, Maureen recalled that this same 'dangerous' officer was involved in another raid shortly after Joseph's murder. He made the point of saying to one of his colleagues' words to the effect that he could do whatever he wanted, 'up to and including murder'. Maureen felt that this was being directed towards her and that a point was being made to her about the murder of her husband,

⁴⁴ Joseph's children cannot remember exactly when this took place as they were still young children at the time. Joe remembers a bullet being dug out of the plaster on the living room wall with a knife. A window was smashed by the bullet which travelled through an area where Maureen would normally have been sitting. This attack occurred at night-time.

⁴⁵ Statement by Joe McCrystal to Relatives for Justice, 4th March 2016.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.



a shocking thing for a recently-widowed woman to be subjected to.

The pretext of the raid was that the RUC had received word that there were weapons concealed in the garden. Needless to say, none were

found. However, it is further confirmation that the McCrystal family were seen as deeply suspect by the RUC.

Notably, Maureen remembers that this RUC man and believes he ended up as 'one of Ronnie Flanagan's right-hand men'. She recognised him from the TV in later years. She remembers he was based at the time she met him in either Greencastle or Whiteabbey barracks. Her children would be particularly keen that this man be identified, and his record examined. RFJ support their wish in this regard.

Joe says that the RUC seemed to believe that he, himself, was in the IRA or connected to republicans. They often tried to recruit him as an informer. A well-known CID officer, made his life hell and he was beaten up by RUC officers on several occasions. The same CID officer also spoke to him about his father's murder in derogatory terms.

These beatings occurred largely between the age of eleven to fourteen, ostensibly because Joe was missing school. The school authorities reported his absences to the RUC who in turn would pick him up and forcibly bring him to school, usually in a police land-rover. Joe recalls being beaten on many occasions, being slapped, kicked and punched. He remembers being hit by RUC officers using truncheons. He also recalls having a police-issue flak jacket thrown over him and being punched and kicked after he had been thrown into the footwell of the land-rover. The reason why this happened was to hide bruises from beatings that were administered.

The ripple effect from events in the early 1970's was to continue for years as the RUC personnel knew and constantly referenced Joe's father's death as part of their abuse.

Complaint to the Police Ombudsman

Because of actions and inactions of the RUC, Joe and Donna made a formal complaint to the Police Ombudsman of Northern Ireland in 2016 which is supported by RFJ. Their complaint, specific and detailed, may be summarised as follows:-

- the RUC may have been involved in targeting their father given raids on the family home before and after the shooting;
- the RUC failed to investigate their father's death adequately;
- the RUC did little to try and apprehend the killers;
- the RUC failed to keep the family informed of developments in the investigation but rather taunted members of the family about Joseph's murder;
- the RUC colluded with the killers through their failure to carry out a thorough and impartial investigation;
- the RUC colluded with the killers - either through wilful inaction or "turning a blind eye" - inasmuch as they knew who carried out the murder but failed to pursue them with vigour and intent; and
- the RUC were biased against the McCrystal family, because they were Catholics living in a predominantly Protestant area and because the RUC suspected them of republican sympathies because of their connection to one of the Bawnmore bomb victims.

However, in addition to these complaints about the RUC, Donna and Joe also have questions about the British army:

- Were they involved in surveillance on Joseph?
- What was their interest in him?
- Was he on a list of individuals being targeted by undercover military units?



Conclusion

Given what their mother has told them and the experiences that Joseph and Donna have had down the years, it is unsurprising that they see the RUC and the British army as being somehow involved in their father's murder. RUC officers did not seem to be interested in finding the culprits, they boasted about Joseph's death to his children, their mother was implicitly threatened, and Joseph was physically beaten by members of the RUC and loyalists on several occasions. Donna and Joseph see their father's murder as part of the ongoing loyalist campaign to keep Catholics/nationalists/republicans out of Glengormley and Newtownabbey and frighten them away from employment in the area. They see the RUC as part and parcel - either by active support or direction, or through the turning of blind eyes - of the loyalist campaign of intimidation and assassination that resulted in continuing attacks down the years.

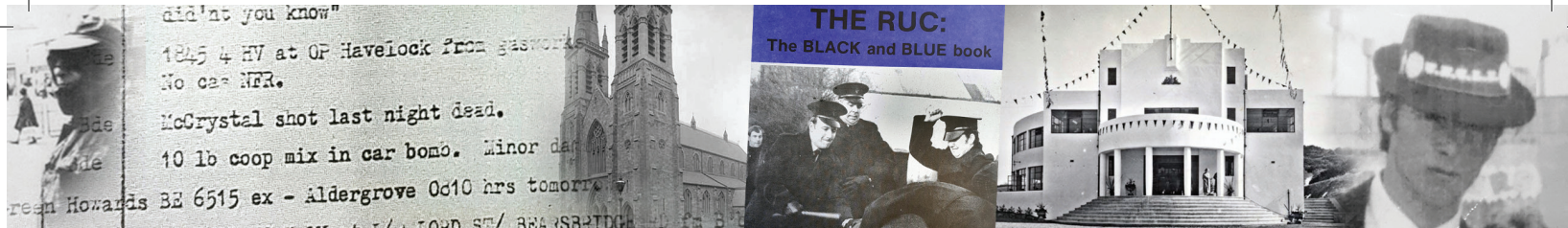
In their view - a view supported by Relatives for Justice - a concerted effort against loyalist activity in the area after their father was killed might have disrupted those loyalist elements from their plans. Instead, the RUC themselves saw family connections to the young people killed in the Bawnmore explosion as suspect and did not give loyalist targeting of them any real investigative priority.

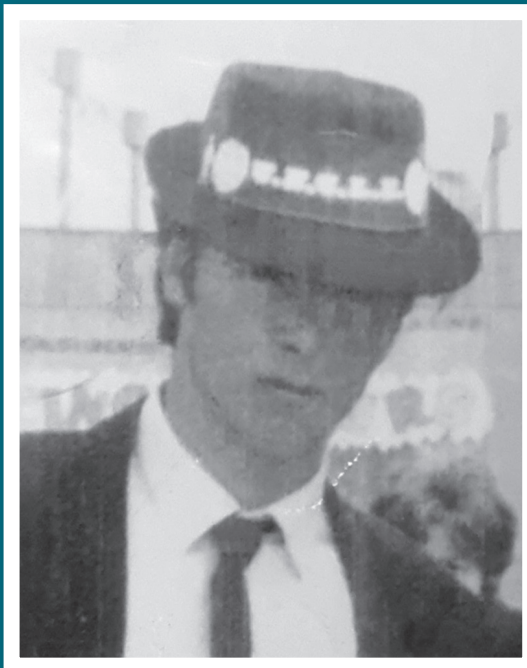
This aggravates state failures to address injustices that existed and criminal actions that were perpetrated. This hurt requires redress and the continued delay and avoidance in answering the questions posed in this report is simply unacceptable. The family have a right to know the truth and an expectation that the state is key to providing the truth.

The family's search for justice will continue until the truth is revealed.



Joseph's children, Donna and Joe continue to search for the truth. October 2019





JOSEPH MCCRYSTAL

“No one in authority cares. Our father is just a number to them but his death is a lifetime of pain to me and my sister. We will fight for truth until the grave. We will never give up.”

Joe McCrystal



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