

# McGURKS PUB BOMBING

## Victims vindicated in PONI report – retraumatized by Chief Constable

The UVF bomb on the night of December 4th 1971 at McGurks Bar in North Belfast was an horrific and lasting tragedy for all of those affected. The 15 killed and 16 injured were innocent victims whose memory was besmirched for many years by the slur that they were bombers.

The families, who have been represented by the Pat Finucane Centre (PFC) and British Irish Rights Watch (BIRW) for many years, held a Press Conference on the 21<sup>st</sup> February on the release of the (PONI) Ombudsman's report.

A family representative said:

*"This journey has been a painful one for all of us but a dark cloud has been lifted.*

*Before going any further, we state that although the bombing took place nearly forty years ago, we all still live every day*

***"This journey has been a painful one for all of us but a dark cloud has been lifted."***

*with the pain and loss inflicted on us. That pain was exacerbated by a deliberate lie, created in the aftermath of their horrific deaths, that our loved ones had been responsible for the explosion. The so-called IRA "own goal" theory added intolerable insult to our unbearable injury and grief.*

*The Police Ombudsman has upheld complaints made against the RUC by the families. We broadly welcome those findings, particularly that there was investigative bias by the RUC, but disagree with his finding that there was no collusion."*

The families made complaints in four main areas. In three of these four areas



*Scene of the devastation.*

their complaints have been upheld.

The Ombudsman recommended that Chief Constable of the PSNI, Matt Baggett, make a statement "to acknowledge the enduring pain caused to the families by the actions of police following the



***... unless the Chief Constable recognises and acknowledges the full implications of this report then relations between his force and the nationalist community of North Belfast ... will have been set back ...***

atrocities". Unfortunately, the statement he made following the report's release rejected the essence of the PONI report and caused great distress to the families and wider community. Family representatives have since met with the Chief Constable for discussions and further discussions are planned. Many people in the community feel that unless the Chief Constable recognises and acknowledges the full implications of this report then relations between his force and the nationalist community of North Belfast and further afield will have been set back for several years. Concerns have been expressed that the old guard at Knock HQ are whispering in his ear. This was his Cameron moment in the wake of the Bloody Sunday report. He failed. It remains to be seen if the damage can be repaired.



*Memorial to the dead.*



# "WEAPONS OF CHOICE"

It was a case of standing room only when the PFC production of "Weapons of Choice" rolled into Mullaghbawn, south Armagh, one dark night in March (an event jointly hosted with "Relatives for Justice").

Telling the story of three specific guns - and their victims - many in the 150-strong audience were also personally related to those whose photographs flashed up onto the screen as the cast of five read out details of the terrible effect the guns had on their own lives.

You could have heard a pin drop throughout the production as the implications sank in on a rapt audience. Only one member of the five-strong cast had NOT been personally affected by collusion in mid-Ulster.

*You could have heard a pin drop throughout the production as the implications sank in on a rapt audience.*

Joe McGleenan, "The Gun", was landlord of The Rock Bar when it was bombed and shot at in 1976 by a gang of RUC men. Dressed in a black polo-neck and wielding an actual Sterling sub-machine gun (safely decommissioned) he instilled a suitably sinister tone into the evening.

PFC case worker, Alan Brecknell, who lost his father in an attack on Donnelly's Bar, Silverbridge, played "The Narrator" while reading the family stories were the two youngest members of the cast (students Caroline Cassidy and Seaneen White) - both grand-daughters of Patrick



*Man in black, Joe McGleenan with a Sterling sub-machine.*

Molloy (who died in a 1974 explosion between Armagh and the Moy).

Only Anne Cadwallader, PFC case-worker and the fifth cast member (speaking the words of various British ministers, civil servants etc) was the exception while Chris McAuley, from Keady, and a volunteer with the PFC, worked the Powerpoint presentation.

"Weapons of Choice" has now shown to audiences in Belfast (twice), Derry and south Armagh with further showings due to take place in Dublin and possibly Dungannon and Lurgan (watch this space). It follows on from our earlier docu-drama based on declassified documents ("Raiders of the Lost Archives").

Amongst those killed by the three

specific guns featured in the production were the three Reavey brothers, the Miami Showband, a teenager from Donegal, two building workers from Belfast and many other victims of state collusion in the so-called "Murder Triangle" of mid-Ulster in the 1970's.

With added authenticity provided by hitherto "Top Secret" documents, the production shows the British government covered up the truth while senior judges made allowances for the proven involvement of RUC officers in murder.

Anyone interested in hosting "Weapons of Choice" should contact the PFC's Armagh Office. All we need to put it on is an audience and a white wall to use as a screen.

## INTERNS CREATE ARCHIVE

The Pat Finucane Centre has visited the National Archives at Kew on several occasions and photocopied many of the documents relating to the conflict in Northern Ireland which were formerly classified. The documents provide a fascinating insight into the official thinking of the time and are very helpful in understanding what was happening behind the information and misinformation that was in the public domain. For the Pat Finucane Centre and others dealing with the past, research is crucial and enlightening. To

make this research easier, an accessible database is currently being set up by Chris McAuley from the Armagh Office and Eleonore Perrin from the Derry Office.

The database will provide an index of all the documents available, their author and date, a list of key words to make searching easier and a summary of the information in each document. A scan of the original document will be directly accessible via the index.

Thanks to Chris and Eleonore for volunteering their time and expertise.





# MERGER OF JUSTICE FOR THE FORGOTTEN WITH PFC

Suffering from the funding crisis, Justice for the Forgotten was forced to close its doors in July 2010.

However, following discussions with the Pat Finucane Centre the opportunity of merging the two organisations was presented to the Board of the Pat Finucane Centre and the membership of Justice for the Forgotten. The merger was agreed and Justice for the Forgotten has now become a project of the Pat Finucane Centre. Justice for the Forgotten retains its own identity, title and website and will continue its important work of support-

ing victims of the conflict in the Republic.

The two organisations had previously worked together in close co-operation for more than a decade on issues of common interest, particularly the Glenanne Gang. They carried out joint research and had liaised with other NGOs in relation to truth recovery.

Emergency funding from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust enabled Justice for the Forgotten to begin work again at its old base at 63, Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin, shortly before Christmas. Two members of the former Board of Directors

of Justice for the Forgotten, Bernie McNally and Pat Fay, have been co-opted onto the Board of the Pat Finucane Centre while Margaret Urwin becomes a staff member.

We are confident that the merger will be mutually beneficial, enabling us to combine our expertise and experience in dealing with victims' needs and concerns on both sides of the Border. It should also help to lessen the isolation felt by victims of the conflict in the Republic. We are looking forward to undertaking a major cross-Border project together over the next couple of years.

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## ESSAY COMPETITION

### Winners announced in the inaugural Henry Cunningham Human Rights Essay Prize

The inaugural Henry Cunningham Human Rights Essay Prize topic for 2010 was: **"How to protect the rights of minorities on the island of Ireland"**

This has a particular relevance as Henry Cunningham came from a minority community in Donegal. 16 year old Henry Cunningham was killed by loyalists. He was travelling home from work in Belfast, They wrongly assumed that all

the Southern registered van's occupants were Catholics.

The Winner, Mairead O'Doherty from Buncrana and Stephanie McCandless from Carndonagh who was Highly Commended, will be presented with their prizes by Jesse Jackson at the event at the Guildhall on the 20<sup>th</sup> March.

The annual prize of €500 is sponsored by the Department of Foreign Affairs

and the competition is organised by the PFC. Transition Year Students at the five local secondary schools in Inishowen are encouraged to take part by writing an essay about human rights on the island of Ireland.

Professor Christine Bell from the Transitional Justice Institute of the University of Ulster judged the competition and was very impressed by the standard of entries.

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## 10 YEARS ON – FAMILIES STILL LOOKING FOR JUSTICE

Nearly ten years ago, the European Court of Human Rights found that no effective, independent investigations had been carried out in a number of killings involving the security forces and/or possible collusion in NI.

In the cases of Gervaise McKerr, Pearse Jordan, Patrick Shanaghan, the nine people killed at Loughgall and Pat Finucane their families are still waiting for satisfactory measures addressing the issues that forced them to go to Europe.

The Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg has to make sure that a final reso-

*... the Government must take both individual measures to ... erase or make up for the consequences of the violations the court found.*

lution striking the judgment off their list of cases is not adopted until satisfactory measures are put in place.

This means the Government must take both individual measures to, as far as its possible, erase or make up for the consequences of the violations the

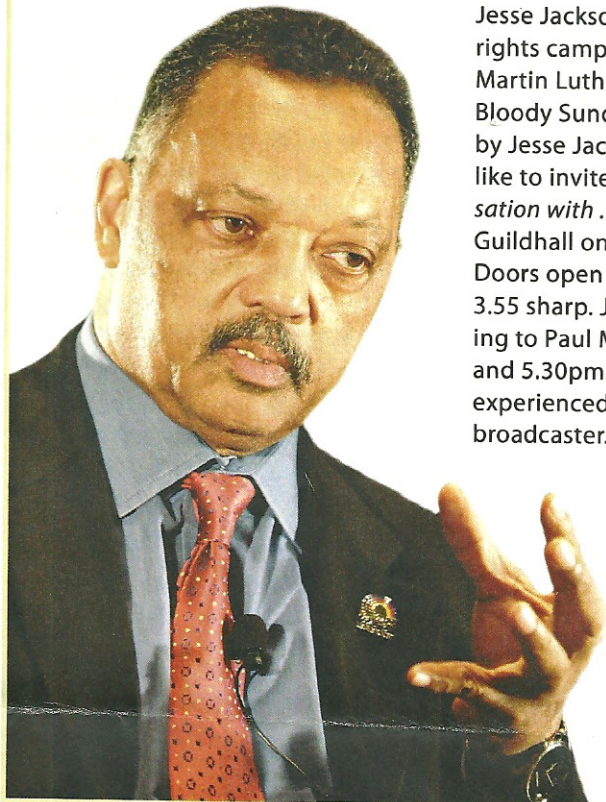
court found. It must also take general measures to prevent new, similar violations.

The Pat Finucane Centre (PFC) and The Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ) made a joint submission to the Committee of Ministers at the end of February. We pointed out how frustrating and distressing it is for the families that after this time they are still waiting for satisfaction and asked the COM to raise the families concerns and to put pressure on the UK Government to bring closure to the families.



# INVITATION

Join us at the Guildhall in Derry for a 'conversation with... Jesse Jackson'



Jesse Jackson is a well known civil rights campaigner who marched with Martin Luther King. The PFC and the Bloody Sunday Trust are hosting a visit by Jesse Jackson to Derry. We would like to invite all to attend "a conversation with... Jesse Jackson" in the Guildhall on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. Doors open at 3.30 and will close at 3.55 sharp. Jesse Jackson will be talking to Paul McFadden between 4pm and 5.30pm. Paul is well known as an experienced journalist and former BBC broadcaster.

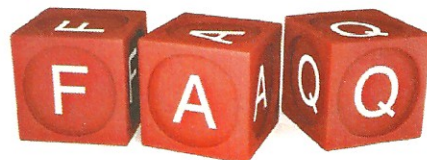


Broadcaster  
Paul McFadden.

## APPLYING TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

The Memorial Fund is open to those who, as a result of the "Troubles" have lost family members, have themselves been injured, or are a registered primary carer of an immediate family member who has an ongoing need for care as a result of a 'Troubles' related physical injury.

The Fund has a number of schemes and while the amounts available are small, many who are entitled to benefit may not be aware of the schemes. If you want more information or help making an application give any of us a shout and we will be glad to help.



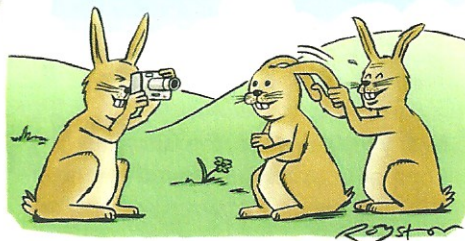
Our "Frequently Asked Questions" document has valuable information on dealing with the past and what to expect if you are looking for information and is especially useful if you are engaging or thinking of engaging with the Historic Inquiries Team, (HET) the Police Ombudsman (PONI) and/or the Inquest process. It has been updated recently and if anyone would like a copy give us a shout and we will send it out to you.

HAVE WE CODED YOU RIGHT?

Could you check the post-code on the envelope you received this in and let us know if it is incorrect or missing? If so, please contact:

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## SPRING



### PFC NEWSLETTER ISSUE 6/SPRING 2011

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