

**Family Report**

**The Murder of**  
**William, Doreen and Noeline Herron**  
**in their own home**  
**on 7th April 1976**



**Recognition and Acknowledgment**  
**for Victims and Survivors**  
**of Terrorism**

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## Introduction

For the last 7 years, since 1969, and in the opening months of 1976 until the murders of William, Beth and Noeline in April, many people had lost their lives to the “Troubles”. Bombings and shooting were almost a daily occurrence. One of the most memorable being the Kingsmill Killing of 10 Protestant workmen returning home from work in a mini bus at Kingsmill near Bessbrook, County Armagh on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 1976.

Harold Wilson who was the then British Prime Minister, announced on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March his intention to resign as leader of the Labour Party and thus as Prime Minister.

At this point in time, the British Army held the responsibility of security in Northern Ireland but on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March, Merlyn Rees, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, made a speech in the House of Commons in which he indicated a change in security policy for Northern Ireland. The decision meant that the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) were to take the leading role in security in Northern Ireland.

Two days before the Herron’s murder, James Callaghan succeeded Harold Wilson as the British Prime Minister on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> April 1976.<sup>i</sup>

## The Herron Family



William and his wife Doreen Elizabeth, known as Beth, lived and worked at their Drapery Shop at 37 Market Square, Dromore, County Down. They had five children together, twin boys Alistair and Derrick and three daughters, twins Joy and Carol and youngest daughter Noeline. Noeline was still living at home with her parents at the time of their murder. They were targeted solely because they were a Protestant family.

## The Day of the Murder

On the morning of Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 1976, four IRA terrorists made the journey together from Downpatrick and Portaferry with the mission of planting fire-bombs in Protestant owned businesses.

Three identical incendiary devices were hidden on the premises of three Protestant owned shops. The first on the ground floor of a grocery shop in Dromara almost 7 miles from Dromore, the second, a drapery shop in Ballynahinch around 12 miles from Dromore and lastly, the Herrons' drapery shop in Market Square, Dromore. All three shops were owned and run by Protestant families who lived in accommodations above their shops.<sup>ii</sup>

Derrick and Alistair were both working in the family's drapery shop the day the incendiary devices were planted.

Derrick described that:

*"sometime between 3.30pm and 4.00pm on Tuesday, April 6, 1976, he was working in the store with his brother Alistair when two girls came in and started to browse through the clothing displays.*

*A girl, who he described as the younger of the two, stood next to his counter while the elder girl walked to the back of the shop and disappeared from sight for a minute or two. The younger girl bought two pairs of socks and both women left the shop together.*

*Derrick stated that although he had not seen the two girls before, most of his customers were local and known to him by sight or by name and so he was able to give detectives a description of them."<sup>iii</sup>*

At the time, Derrick was obviously suspicious of the girls. In his Witness Deposition he recalled:

*"I was suspicious of these two persons and after they left the shop I went down to the Gents suits. I did not examine them all. I felt round the suits I did not examine the pockets or the shelf above the suits."<sup>iv</sup>*

Alistair stated that:

*"at some time between 4.00pm and 4.30pm he recalled seeing a girl at the back of the store, close to a display of suits.*

*He saw her walk back to the counter where Derrick was serving and although he took no further notice, he was able to give police a brief description of her."<sup>v</sup>*

It is now known, that these girls had been sent with the mission to hide timed incendiary devices into local, Protestant owned businesses.

Tragically, the Herron family did not discover the incendiary devices in their shop. The others both discovered the fires before they took hold and while both shops were extensively damaged, everyone escaped without injury.

The fire-bombs in the Herron's shop were to cost them their lives.

A local neighbour to the Herron's arrived home at around 1.10am and was stated in the HET Report as saying-

*"there was no sign of any fire at the Herron's shop. Once inside his house he heard what he described as a "crackling noise" but he thought it was the wind blowing on his veranda roof.*

*He went into a bedroom and spoke to his wife before going into his living room to undress. His wife then came in and told him that she could hear shouting and the public fire siren began to sound.*

*He opened the living room window and when he looked out, he saw flames coming from the top of a door on the ground floor of the Herron's shop.*

*He described the door which was on fire as the one at the side of the shop, leading up to the "private part" where the Herron's lived.*

*He put his clothes on and ran out onto The Square just as the fire brigade were arriving, he waved them down to make sure that they knew where to go because there were no outward signs of fire at the front of the shop.*

*As he stood looking up at the shop, he saw William at the first-floor window and immediately went to call for an ambulance."<sup>vi</sup>*

Shortly after 1am, local firemen attended the scene and desperately tried to extinguish the fire.

The local fireman said that:

*"Shortly after 1am he was woken by the sound of the public fire siren, which was his signal to go to work. At 1.20am he was driving along Bridge Street, on his way to the fire station, when he saw flames and thick smoke coming from the ground floor window of Herron's shop in Market Square and the square itself was full of smoke. He did not hear anyone shouting or see anyone in the premises.*

***He described how at 1.23am they arrived at the Herrons' shop and immediately set about extinguishing the blaze. He stated that the Sub-Officer had seen William Herron at a window on the first floor and two colleagues were instructed to attempt a rescue.***

***A ladder was placed against the front of the building but when one of the firemen, who was wearing breathing apparatus, reached the window the heat and smoke were too intense to get inside. The window was still closed and it appeared that William, who one of the firemen believed was already dead, has passed out and cracked the glass pane as he fell against it into the window sill."***

The Sub-Officer stated that:

***"About 1.20am he was at Dromore Fire Station, after responding to the public fire siren, and was instructed by the brigade's control room to attend a blaze on Ballynahinch High Street. However, when members of his crew arrived and told him about the fire at William Herron's shop, they were re-directed there instead.***

***He stated that when they arrived, they were confronted by a wall of heat and smoke which made it impossible to get into the building through the front or side door. He told his officers to begin hosing the building with water in an attempt to cool it down so they could get inside.***

***The Sub-Officer described how he saw William slumped against a window on the first floor and he sent two firemen up a ladder to attempt a rescue. However, they were beaten back by the intense heat and smoke and could not get inside the flat."<sup>vii</sup>***

The HET Review confirmed that:

***"The Station Officer arrived at the scene at 1.33am and was told by the Sub-Officer that there were people trapped inside the building.***

***The Station Officer and other members of the fire crew, wearing breathing apparatus, were eventually able to enter the premises where they found William, Beth and Noeline, who had died in the fire."<sup>viii</sup>***

In his Witness Deposition, the Station Officer said:

***"Mr Herron was found on the first floor under a front window by leading Fireman xxx and Fireman xxx. On further searching I found Noleen Herron lying at the bottom of the stairs first floor beside a telephone which had the receiver off. In my opinion life was extinct. She was dressed in night attire. I left her there for a moment and made a further search. I located Mrs Herron in back room working kitchen first floor level lying on floor below window facing Bridge Street. In my opinion life was extinct. She was dressed in night attire"***

By 2.30am Dr Victor Sterling had arrived and immediately examined William, Beth and Noeline. He pronounced all three dead after finding no signs of life.<sup>ix</sup>

In the Sergeant Witness Deposition, he recounted:

***“At 2.35 am on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1976, two firemen brought a body from the burning building and placed it in the rear of an ambulance. The body was known to me as that of William Herron. Dr V G Sterling, Dromore, who was in attendance at the scene immediately examined the body. At 2.40am, on the same date, two firemen brought another body from the burning building and placed it in the rear of the same ambulance. This body was known to me as that of Noeline Helen Herron. Dr V G Sterling immediately examined the body.***

***The ambulance was driven off to Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn. At 2.42 am on the same date, two firemen brought a third body from the burning building and placed it in the rear of the second ambulance. This body was known to me as that of Mrs Doreen Elizabeth Herron. Dr V G Sterling immediately examined the body. The ambulance was then driven off to Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn”.***<sup>x</sup>

Formal identification took place at Lagan Valley Hospital after which, William, Beth and Noeline were moved to Craigavon Area Hospital in readiness for their post-mortem examination.

It wasn't until 3.13am that the fire was eventually extinguished. The station officer's initial assessment led him to believe that the fire had been started at the back of the shop.<sup>xi</sup>

William, Beth and Noeline died shortly after 1am on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> April 1976, in a fire at their home. The fire had been started deliberately after three incendiary devices had been left in their downstairs Drapery Shop sometime the day before.<sup>xii</sup>

A post-mortem examination was carried out on all three by Dr Carson at Craigavon Area Hospital at 3pm on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> April 1976. He established the cause of death for William, Beth and Noeline to be:

***“inhalation of monoxide and cyanide gases”***<sup>xiii</sup>

In the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) Review Summary Report, it is stated:

***“On the afternoon of Tuesday, April 6, 1976, three identical incendiary devices were concealed by members of the Provisional IRA on the ground floor of a grocery shop in Dromara, a drapery shop in Ballynahinch and the Herron's drapery shop in Dromore.***

*All three shops were owned and run by protestant families who lived in accommodation above the premises.*<sup>xiv</sup>

# Fire bomb attack leaves three dead

By NEWSLETTER REPORTER

Three members of a family died early yesterday in a terrorist attack on their Dromore, Co. Down, draper's shop.

The Herron family — William (58), his wife Elizabeth (55) and their daughter Noleen (28) — died in their home above the shop after an incendiary bomb had set the shop ablaze.

They were overcome by smoke and, in spite of the early arrival on the scene of the fire brigade, nothing could be done to save the family.

A policeman spotted the fire and raised the alarm. He was answering a call to the fire

station in Dromore and noticed smoke coming from windows above the shop in the town square as he passed.

The fire siren had sounded because the Dromore appliance had been requested to go to High Street, Ballynahinch — a town 12 miles away — as the Ballynahinch fire engine had gone to Dromara to deal with a fire in a hardware shop.

The commotion in the Square woke up other shopkeepers and many heard screams for help from the blazing building.

Police are working on the theory that the attack was the work of the Provisional IRA.

Assistant Chief Constable Charles Rodgers said: "The terrorists pick easy targets



Mr and Mrs Herron — victims of the bombers.



Miss Noleen Herron

and we believe this is part of the Provisional IRA's continuing Province-wide campaign of destruction.

"The prime motive was destruction of property with callous disregard for the

people living above the shop."

The remains of three incendiary devices were removed from a fitting room in the Herron shop by forensic experts.

Remains of a similar incendiary device were found in the shop at Dromara where the family had a very lucky escape.

A copy of the report which was published in the News Letter the following day of the murders.

## The Investigation into William, Beth and Noeline's Murder

Due to a breakdown in communication between the staff in the fire brigade's control room at Lisburn and police control, the RUC were not aware of the fire at the Herrons' until a member of the public alerted them.

The first call received by police was to Banbridge Police Station by an anonymous 999 caller at 2am. The Constable made contact with the fire brigades control room in Lisburn to get confirmation of the fire and was told a fire crew was already attending the scene.

The first police officer on the scene arrived at 2.30am. He had been contacted at his home. Once he discovered William, Beth and Noeline had all died in the fire he asked for Chief Inspector Crowe to be informed.

Chief Inspector Crowe took charge of the scene when he arrived at 2.45am. He had initially been on route to the fire in Dromara but was quickly re directed to the Herrons' in Dromore. With him was a Scenes of Crime Officer who was instructed with the task of carrying out a forensic examination of the Herrons' shop. He quickly recovered the remains of an incendiary device and timer in what had been a changing room to the rear of the shop and next to the staircase leading to the family's living accommodation. This had blocked off the only route of escape for William, Beth and Noeline.

In his Witness Deposition, the Constable stated his findings to be as follows:

***"There was a small cubicle in the left rear corner used as fitting rooms. Beside this fitting room was the staircase which gave access to the living accommodation on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors. The interior of the shop was severely burnt especially in the area of the fitting room. The ceiling of this part of the shop had collapsed and debris from above had fallen onto the shop floor. The debris was about 3 feet at this point. It was in this area that I placed the seat of the fire. This I based on the degree of burning and experience. I moved this debris and uncovered the following items, 1 gents wrist watch, Exhibit 1, a gas filament ignitor, Exhibit 2, and a small battery, Exhibit 3. These items I recognised as being the ingredients of an incendiary device. I then uncovered the actual seat of fire. The seat was on the floor of a compartment used to hang suits of clothing. This compartment was approximately 6 feet long and 21 inches deep and about 6 feet high.***

***I have concluded that the incendiary device planter had placed the device on the floor of this compartment beneath the hanging suits. The position of the device on igniting gave***

*the greatest time likely before discovering of the fire, it allowed the flames to spread up to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor as the staircase made an excellent funnel. There was only the remains of one device found in this shop. The first floor of the building consisted of a landing which had two doorways, one giving access to the sitting room and the other to the kitchen area. On the landing floor was a telephone with the handset lying beside its cradle. Beside this was a clean portion of the floor (this is where Noeline was found). In the kitchen in the farthest left corner was a fridge, a chair and a window looking onto Bridge Street. Beside the chair was another clean patch on the floor which was the shape of a body (this is where Beth was found). There was no burning as such in the kitchen. Damage in this area was due to excess heat and smoke. A door from the kitchen gave access to a living room. This room had two windows which looked on to the Market Square. There was severe burning to the floor in the front left corner of this room. This was due to the fire in the shop and the electrics at the meter box, which was below this area. There was a communicating door between the living room and the sitting room. The sitting room had no actual burning but again it had suffered from excess heat and smoke. This room also had two windows looking out on to the Market Square. Below the window to the right of the room was a clean area in the shape of a leg and foot. There was also a clean area on the window sill (this is where William was found). The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor consisted of three bedrooms and a bathroom. The first bedroom was a girl's bedroom. The bed had been used and the clothing had been pulled down. The second bedroom had twin beds, the clothing on one had been disturbed. The third bedroom appeared to be the main bedroom, the bed had the appearance of having been used. The clothing was thrown back towards the bottom of the bed. None of these rooms had actual burning but had excess heat damage as well as sooting. Heat in the main bedroom was so severe that it caused the plastic top of a hair spray to melt. It is my conclusion that the fire was initiated by means of an incendiary device placed underneath the rack of suits. On igniting it had caused an intense fire in the area of the shop adjacent to the staircase. This fire cut off the only means of normal exit from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building".<sup>xv</sup>*

At 3.30am Chief Inspector Crowe and a Constable made their way to Dromara. When the Scenes of Crimes Officer recovered an identical incendiary device to that used in the Herrons' the two cases were quickly linked.

The fire at the another shop in Ballynahinch was not known to the RUC for several hours. However, it was quickly linked to the other two attacks after Scenes of Crimes Officer Sergeant recovered the third incendiary device.

The murder investigation was managed from Dromore Police Station under the guidance of Detective Superintendent Drew the

following morning. He led a team of detectives assisted by uniformed constables.<sup>xvi</sup>

An important line of enquiry was to establish if the same people had carried out all three attacks and if anyone had been seen acting suspiciously in or around the three locations.

A mobile police station was set up in Dromore town centre and used as a base for interviewing local people with a view of obtaining key witnesses. At least 17 members of the public came forward and gave descriptions of several men and women seen acting suspiciously. A press appeal was also made the following day by Assistant Chief Constable Charles Rodgers.<sup>xvii</sup>

# TERROR COMES TO DROMORE

By CHRIS MOORE

When the first incendiary exploded in a Dromore (Co. Down) draper's shop early yesterday between 1.10 a.m. and 1.30 a.m. it was to change the easy-going way of life in this rural town of 3,000 people.

For by mid-day yesterday, the enormity of the town's first hint of trouble in seven years of slaughter elsewhere in the Province had slowly begun to sink in.

Three people had died. A shattering blow to a town of Dromore's size.

The immunity of Dromore had vanished. Suddenly the townspeople knew first hand what the rest of the Province had known at some stage or other during the past seven years.

Shop owners living above their premises feared for the safety of their families. People met on street corners and in whispered tones spoke of the fear of reprisal.

The Herron family had been a part of

business life in the Co. Down town for a lifetime.

Billy Herron, and his wife Elizabeth had four children — two sets of twins, two sons and two daughters.

Three of the children had married, and moved out of the family home. One of the sons worked with his parents and his sister in the shop in Market Square. The other son ran another shop in Church Street.

Mr. Herron was a member of Claskelt Orange Lodge and was well known in Orange circles for making band uniforms, banners and collarettes.

He was also the treasurer of Dromore Festival Week committee which was due to meet tonight but the meeting has been postponed.

Mr. John Murphy, who owns a public house near the Herron's shop, had passed by minutes before the alarm was raised.

"I walked past the shop 10 minutes or so before the siren sounded," he said. "I went into my own house above the bar and spoke to my wife in the bedroom.

"Just then the lights flickered and we heard loud cracking noises. My wife then ran out of the bedroom saying she had heard screaming.

"I ran into the street and arrived to see heavy smoke from the upstairs windows. Then I saw a figure hanging out of one of the windows."

It was Mr. Herron and he was dead when firemen reached him by ladder.

"It is very sad. The people are depressed by this tragedy and everyone believes that this was done by outsiders," he said.

Mrs. Rosemary Harrison who lives with her husband, daughter and parents above her shop on the other side of the square also witnessed the fire.

She hoped the people of Dromore would remain calm and that any act of "reprisal" would be avoided.

Assistant Chief Constable Charles Rodgers believes the bombers came from another area.

Year's

# Police seek help in hunt

**POLICE** in Dromore have set up a mobile information unit and want anyone who was in the town on Tuesday to come forward.

They believe that the fire bomb attack was the work of outsiders and anyone who saw any strangers is asked to talk to RUC personnel at the caravan in the town square.

A Northern Ireland police chief said in Belfast last night that it was of vital importance that owners of premises should examine their shops before closing time.

Mr Charles Rodgers, Assistant Chief Constable, RUC, was referring to the bomb attack on the Dromore shop.

He said he appealed to shopkeepers always to examine their premises for incendiaries, particularly before closing time, which would cover all eventualities.

Mr Rodgers asked members of the public who were in Dromore between 2 p.m. and closing time on Tuesday to come forward if they had information, however meagre.

A particular line of enquiry the police were keen to follow was the identification of the two unknown girls seen by both Derrick and Alistair Herron and an unnamed witness who stated they had seen both girls in a shop owned by a Mrs Herdman.

Two members of the public also stated seeing the girls in Dromara in the afternoon the fire-bombs were planted. The HET report stated:

***“Two members of the public, one of whom had seen two young girls in Dromara at 1.20pm walking away from a dark coloured car and another, who had seen two women and two men in a dark coloured car around 4.00pm”<sup>xviii</sup>***

Photo fits and wanted posters of the two women were prepared and circulated in local newspapers and RUC Stations from 12<sup>th</sup> April onwards. These generated intelligence reports naming four women, all were eventually eliminated as suspects.

In response to a bulletin circulated internally in the Royal Ulster Constabulary Gazette on 26th April 1976, a police sergeant from Armagh and a detective based in Lurgan put forward the names of three girls. The HET report stated that the Army were asked to take secret photos of at least one of the three women. All three were later eliminated.

The HET said:

***“Although records do not show the numbers of people who responded, it is clear that over a period of two weeks there was a considerable response from the public to media coverage of the murders and police appeals for information.”***

Others suspected of being involved were spoken to by the police, but all eliminated from their enquiries.

Over one year later, on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1977, a female walked into Lisburn Road Police Station in Belfast and volunteered the following information:

***“... and voluntarily confessed that she was a member of Cummann-na-bann, an Irish republican women’s paramilitary organisation, involved in acts of terrorism.***

***During interview, she told detectives she had been present at a bomb making factory in Maghera on Tuesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>, when three incendiary devices were prepared. The next day, when she heard the news about the Herron’s murders, she realised that the three devices she had seen had been used in their murders. The woman did not tell detectives the names of the people responsible for the attack and was not considered a suspect herself.”***

This person appeared two weeks later at Belfast City Commission and received a sentence of 9 months for collecting information and being a member of a proscribed organisation.<sup>xix</sup>

It was to be another 2 years before arrests and convictions were made for the murders of William, Beth and Noeline.

## THE ARRESTS AND CONVICTIONS

Michael William Logue, age 19, was arrested for questioning on 14<sup>th</sup> November 1979 in a youth club at Irish Street in Downpatrick. In early November, intelligence had been received, that while Logue was in prison (on other terrorist related offences), he had confessed to another prisoner his involvement in the murders of William, Beth and Noeline. He was arrested by a Detective Sergeant who was accompanied by D/C/Insp Murray, a D/Sgt and a W/D/Con. He was arrested under Section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1976. The D/Sgt told him:

***“I arrest you under Section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976 as I reasonably suspect that you have been concerned in the commission, preparation or investigation of acts of terrorism’ and I cautioned him. Logue made no reply”.***

Logue was taken into custody and transported to Armagh RUC Station for questioning.

At first, Logue denied all involvement in the Dromore murders, but records show that by 17<sup>th</sup> November 1979, he had admitted his part in the murders.

The HET Review Summary Report states:

***“Logue admitted his part in the attack and said he was accompanied by a man who will now be referred to as Suspect Two, and two girls he knew only as Marion and the juvenile.***

***He told officers that on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 1976, he and Suspect Two collected Marion and the juvenile at the Strangford ferry port and drove them to Dromara, Ballynahinch and Dromore so that they could conceal incendiary devices inside shop premises.***

***He stated that he had been driving a dark coloured car belonging to a named man and that Suspect one was responsible for planning the attack”.***<sup>xx</sup>

A person named only as Suspect one, is believed to have been involved in the planning of the attack, no charges were ever made against him. He was also the boyfriend of the juvenile later arrested and charged with the Herron’s murders.

Suspect two was named by all those persons convicted as being closely involved in the attack. Again, no charges were ever brought forward against him.

The juvenile, who was only 16 years old at the time of the murders, later named as Jeanette Griffith was arrested on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1979. She was three months pregnant.

***“On November 18, 1979, the juvenile, who was three months pregnant at the time, was arrested for a second time and admitted that she and Marion Clegg had been with Logue and Suspect Two on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 6, 1976, and that they had placed the three incendiary devices inside the shops.”<sup>xxi</sup>***

Between the time of the murders and her arrest, Jeanette had fallen pregnant.

At first, Jeanette would only admit to being a member of the Provisional IRA and continually denied having any knowledge about the fire bomb attacks.

Eventually, during an interview conducted at 6.35pm in Armagh Police station, Jeanette admitted planting the incendiaries. She confessed:

***“Yes, and I have decided to tell the truth. Look I planted incendiary devices in three or four towns one day but I don’t remember what towns they were.”***

***I can remember Ballynahinch and Dromore but you mentioned Dromara, I don’t remember it.”***

Jeanette went on to talk about their journey from Downpatrick to Ballynahinch and how the incendiary devices were in a duffel bag in the boot of the car. She said:

***“When your man took the bag out of the boot I closed the boot. I remember sitting on the boot swinging my legs. I felt very important and on top of the world, mind you, I know now how foolish I was”<sup>.xxii</sup>***

When questioned about the devices, she said:

***“The only thing I can remember about them is that they were black cassettes and they had a clear top, you know, the lid was clear.”<sup>xxiii</sup>***

Jeanette was then questioned about the planting of the devices. She admitted that with her sister they had the device and said:

***“we got out of the back of the car and went to “Heron’s”, that’s Heron’s the shop, we went into Heron’s, had a look along, come back over this way to the middle to where the jumpers or something were along. We came back again and then I saw the socks.***

***I wanted to buy a present for your man ..... – Idiot- I saw the socks and I got two pair of nylon socks. I remember one pair was blue and the other green. Then I went over to ..... and got money off her and I got the socks and went over to the counter.”<sup>xxiv</sup>***

Jeanette went on to explain how her sister Marion, had planted the device under the carpet where the men's suits were hanging while she casually paid for her socks.

When asked how she felt the following day when she heard of the deaths, she said:

***"I wanted to run away. I wanted to kill myself. I wanted to do anything I could."***<sup>xxv</sup>

It is worth noting, that Jeanette Griffith was arrested and questioned two weeks later about the murders alongside her sister Marion and Suspect 1. She denied all knowledge of the murders. At that time, all three were charged with receiving instruction and training on firearms. For this, Suspect 1 received a 12 month sentence suspended for 2 years. Jeanette and Marion were bound over to the amount of £10.

There is no evidence to show that either Marion Clegg or Suspect 2 were questioned or detained following these confessions.

On 21<sup>st</sup> November 1979, Michael Logue and Jeanette Griffith appeared in court and were charged with the murders of William, Beth and Noeline Herron, membership of a proscribed organisation and other offences relating to the incendiary devices in Dromore. No charges were brought for the attacks in Ballynahinch or Dromara.

Before the sentencing of Logue and Griffith almost 1 year later, Marion Clegg was finally arrested on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1980. HET explained:

***"It wasn't until October 2 1980, almost a year after Logue and the juvenile's arrest, that Marion Clegg was arrested for the murders. The only explanation for the delay comes in an internal police report dated January 1981, which stated that she had been "about to give birth and her arrest was not practicable."***<sup>xxvi</sup>

Clegg admitted to her involvement in the murders. As before with the others, she also named Suspect 2 as being in the car and was responsible for priming the devices.<sup>xxvii</sup>

The following day, October 3<sup>rd</sup> 1980, Suspect 1 was arrested for a second time. He denied any involvement in the murders and was released without charge two days later on 5<sup>th</sup> October.

Suspect 2 was never questioned!

Meanwhile, Marion Clegg appeared before a special court on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October charged with the murders. Unlike Logue and Griffith, she was also charged with placing the devices in Dromara and Ballynahinch.

On 19<sup>th</sup> December 1980, Logue and Griffith appeared before the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lowry, at Belfast Crown Court. For their charge of murder, Griffith entered a guilty plea. Logue pleaded not guilty.

At trial, Logue claimed he had been pressured into giving a confession that he had been with Suspect 2 on the day of the attacks. A foreman from Suspect 2's workplace produced a record showing that Suspect 2 had been present at work on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 1976, and therefore he could not have been with Logue, Griffith and Clegg.

Lord Lowry rejected Logue's claim that his confession was false but ruled that the circumstances of the case did not justify a finding of murder but one of manslaughter. Logue then offered a guilty plea to a charge of manslaughter.

As Logue's charge was changed, as was Griffiths, even though she had pleaded guilty to the charge of murder.

Both were convicted of manslaughter, membership of a proscribed organisation (IRA), possession of an incendiary device and arson.<sup>xxviii</sup>

**Michael Logue was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment.**

**Jeanette Griffith was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment**

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 1981, Marion Clegg appeared at Belfast Crown Court. In view of Lord Lowry's earlier judgement to Logue and Griffith, the Director of Public Prosecutions withdrew the original charge of murder. Clegg pleaded guilty to manslaughter.

**Marion Clegg was sentenced to 8 years imprisonment.**

On 11<sup>th</sup> June 1985, from the authority of the then Northern Ireland Secretary of State, Douglas Hurd, Marion Clegg and Jeanette Griffith were released from prison under the Royal Prerogative of Mercy.

After sentencing to 12 years imprisonment, Jeanette Griffith served 5 years and 6 months.

Marion Clegg served 3 years and 8 months of her 8 years sentence.

Michael Logue was released from prison in March 1990 after serving 10 years.

## The Other Attacks

The Coburns family's Grocers shop was also targeted in the incendiary attack of Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 1976 in the village of Dromara.

Luckily for them, one of the family members was suffering with a toothache and got up from bed shortly before 1am and discovered their shop was on fire.

She woke her husband and son before telephoning the emergency services.

Her 999 call was received by the fire brigade at 12.45am.

The brigade's control room in Lisburn notified Downpatrick Police Station of the fire and a Constable who was on patrol in the area, arrived at their home at 1.12am. He found the family in a state of shock but safe.

The fire brigade arrived at 1.20am from Ballynahinch and were able to extinguish the fire before it reached the family's home upstairs. Extensive damage was caused to the shop.

Meanwhile in Ballynahinch, the other family's drapery shop was targeted also.

At around 1am a family member was woken by her dog barking and heard glass breaking downstairs. She went down to investigate and found the shop to be on fire.

She awoke her family and all were able to escape before contacting the emergency services. Again, fire fighters were able to bring the fire under control, unfortunately, extensive damage was caused to the premises.<sup>xxix</sup>

## The Herron Family Today

Although, unlike many others, the family were given the opportunity to engage with the Historical Enquiries Team. (The HET was a unit of the Police Service of Northern Ireland set up in September 2005 to review all murders committed during “The Troubles”). They were glad of the opportunity to ask questions that had gone unanswered for many years. Unfortunately, the HET Review Summary Report they were left with, rather than answer their questions, brought up many more. These questions remain unanswered today. After waiting for 44 years, the family are still hopeful that they may receive the information they are striving to gain from the Legacy Investigation Branch.

Ulster Human Rights Watch, on behalf of the Herron family, have requested a copy of the Inquest Files for William, Beth and Noeline and Court Files relating to three persons convicted, to be released to the family under the Court Files Privileged Access Rules (Northern Ireland) 2016. This request was made in May 2019. Unfortunately, the Public Record office is not in receipt of the Inquest Files and has informed UHRW that they may have been lost or destroyed. The family is still awaiting the Court files.

Over many years, the Herron family have tried through various channels to be given the reason as to why the Royal Prerogative of Mercy was given to Jeanette Griffith and her sister Marion Clegg for their early release. So far, this question has gone unanswered. The only information the family has been given is the “record is permanently sealed”. The family continue their quest for this information.

After studying the HET Review Summary Report, UHRW, have also engaged with the Legacy Investigation Branch to question why the person named as “Suspect 2” has never been arrested or questioned, even though all three convicted named him as being part of the group of four who went out that fateful day in April 1976 to plant incendiary devices. The family is hopeful that they will receive the information they so rightly deserve.

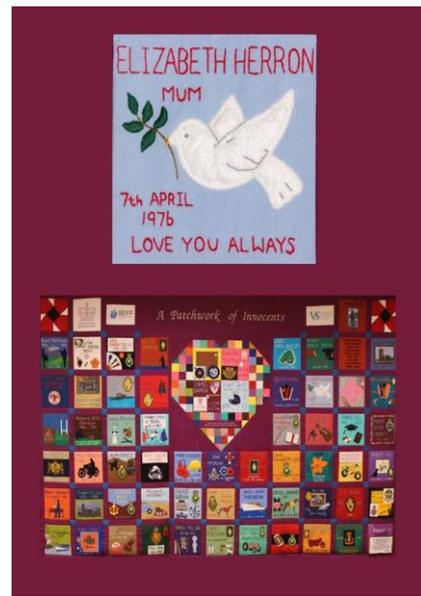
The Herron family continues to be supported by the Ulster Human Rights Watch in their fight for recognition and justice in the murder of their mother, father and sister.

## Writings and Memorials



This memorial plaque and banner were unveiled at Dromore Orange Hall on the occasion of the the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the murders of William, Beth and Noeline Herron.





Sections of a memorial quilt made for the remembrance of the innocent victims of the Northern Ireland Troubles.



Family members at the memorial plaque, Dromore.

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- <sup>i</sup> <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch76.htm>
- <sup>ii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 6
- <sup>iii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 9
- <sup>iv</sup> Statement of Witness; Court file of Jeanette Ann Griffith; p. 30
- <sup>v</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 9
- <sup>vi</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 9
- <sup>vii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 10
- <sup>viii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 10
- <sup>ix</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 11
- <sup>x</sup> Statement of Witness; Court file of Jeanette Ann Griffith; p. 33
- <sup>xi</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 11
- <sup>xii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 6
- <sup>xiii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 11
- <sup>xiv</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 6
- <sup>xv</sup> Statement of Witness; Court file of Jeanette Ann Griffith; p. 35
- <sup>xvi</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 17
- <sup>xvii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 17
- <sup>xviii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 17
- <sup>xix</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 19
- <sup>xx</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 22
- <sup>xxi</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 22
- <sup>xxii</sup> Statement of Witness; Court file of Jeanette Ann Griffith; p. 94.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Statement of Witness; Court file of Jeanette Ann Griffith; p. 95
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Statement of Witness; Court file of Jeanette Ann Griffith; p. 96
- <sup>xxv</sup> Statement of Witness; Court file of Jeanette Ann Griffith; p. 97
- <sup>xxvi</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 22
- <sup>xxvii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 22
- <sup>xxviii</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 23
- <sup>xxix</sup> HET Review Summary Report p. 15