



**Family Report/Narrative**

**of**

**Mark Campbell**



**July 2022**

## **Introduction:**

Mark has been happily married to Marie since 7 August 1982. They have three children and five grandchildren. They are a close-knit family, and their children live near their home.

Mark is an ex-regular soldier. He joined the Royal Artillery (RA) in 1976 and served for five years. During his service in the RA, he attained the rank of Bombardier. In 1981 Mark transferred to the full-time element of the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and during his service in the UDR he attained the rank of Corporal.

During his service with the RA/UDR, Mark was involved in a number of terrorist incidents that eventually impacted on his life. In 1986, Mark was injured on duty at a vehicle checkpoint (VCP) in Newtownhamilton, County Armagh. As a result of witnessing numerous terrorist incidents, he was subsequently diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

## **Ulster Human Rights Watch Involvement:**

Mark's case was referred to UHRW by the Ely Centre, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh to assist Mark in making representations before the Pensions Appeal Tribunal in Belfast in 2016.

Mark's case was about a review of the starting date for an award that had already been granted because of his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) connected with incidents which Mark was involved in during his military service in Northern Ireland. The Tribunal decided not to grant a review of the starting date of Mark's PTSD.

## **The early years<sup>i</sup>:**

Mark Campbell was born on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1959 and was brought up in Finaghy, Belfast. His father worked in Harland and Wolff as a draftsman and later joined the police when the "troubles" started. His mother was a nurse but did not work and looked after her children at home. He was the fourth in a family of five children.

Mark had two elder brothers and an elder sister and a younger sister. He had attentive parents and received a balanced upbringing. They went to church every Sunday, and he attended the Boys Brigade until he was fourteen years of age. The Campbell's were a close family and Mark had a happy childhood.

Mark attended Larkfield School in Belfast. He did not like school, but it was not irksome for him to go to school. Mark preferred subjects were history, geography, and sport. His behaviour at school was good. He obtained a Certificate in Secondary Education (CSE) in Maths, English and Art and an 'O' level in History.

### **The start of the Troubles:**

Mark was ten years of age when the campaign of IRA terrorism called the "Troubles" started. In 1972, on what was known as 'Bloody Friday', he was very close to one of the bombs. He remembers vividly a soldier getting injured as a petrol pump exploded at the garage which had been bombed. This was just one of scores of bombs that exploded in the Finaghy area, when he was going to school. After his father and older brother joined the police, the family house was attacked on several occasions by negative elements within the section of the community that the family were living in.

In 1986, during the tumultuous period of the 'Anglo-Irish Agreement', Mark's parents were driven from their home, as were scores of Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) families who had been living in Loyalist areas.

A relative of Mark, who was a member of the RUC, was injured in two terrorist incidents. At one of them in 1976 Mark was present. His relative had been called to the scene of a shooting in the Finaghy area. Mark had come close to the scene and was chatting to him at the cordon, when his relative was called back to the house where a shooting had happened. At that moment, a booby trap bomb left by the terrorists exploded. Mark witnessed his relative being blown across the drive of the house and thinking he had been killed, ran home to tell his parents.

It turned out that Mark's relative was not badly injured. At the time Mark did not think that these incidents had an adverse effect on him, but years later in 2014 a counsellor from the Ely Centre whom Mark had been meeting told him that it definitely had a detrimental effect on him.

### **His time in the Army:**

Mark's interest in the Army appeared quite early in his childhood and at the age of twelve/thirteen he knew that he wanted to be a soldier. He joined the Army on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1976, when he was sixteen years of age. He was a junior leader until he reached the age of eighteen, when his Boy Service ended on 29<sup>th</sup> November 1977.

Along with the physical training, he completed his education, attending courses with much more motivation than he had ever done when he was at school. Mark passed all the exams. He practised football, rugby, and boxing. He was in the final of the junior leaders in boxing in Bramcote (England).

In football Mark also represented the junior leaders. At the time, Mark would describe himself as physically very fit and mentally strong. He was enthusiastic and keen to take part in all the activities and exercises that he was required to do.

At the age of eighteen, from 30<sup>th</sup> November 1977 until 13<sup>th</sup> April 1981, he was posted to the 25<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment Royal Artillery in Paderborn, Germany. He continued to play football, rugby and to practise boxing. During his time of service in the Regiment, he completed one tour of duty in Northern Ireland. He was happy to serve in the Army back home.

### **Transfer to the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR):**

On 14<sup>th</sup> April 1981 Mark transferred to the UDR. He was committed to serving his country and protecting it against the on-going terrorist activities. Mark had sustained a knee injury during a football match in Germany, which was made worse when he was injured near Newtownhamilton in 1986. Mark received surgery but unfortunately, he has never recovered the mobility he used to have.

As a result of his injury, he was given light duties between 1987 and 1988. When it was found that he was not meeting the UDR medical standards, to his regret he was discharged on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1988.

He had served for twelve years in the Army and achieved the rank of full Corporal, although he was looking forward to moving on with his career as he had been selected to train in order to become a Sergeant.

On his Certificate of Service, dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 1989, the Commanding Officer of 7/10 UDR assessed Mark's military conduct and character as 'Exemplary' and in his testimonial, (completed with a view to civil employment and in relation to the Certificate of Qualifications and the Job Description), stated that "Mark was well-motivated, hard-working and conscientious. He went on to state that had Mark remained in the UDR he may have earned promotion to sergeant and that he would have no hesitation in recommending him to any prospective employer."

### **Mark's experiences at the height of the "Troubles" during his Army service:**

Mark experienced incidents when he was in the Army which were later revealed to have caused the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which he suffered later in life.

On Christmas Eve 1979, when he was on patrol with the 25<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment RA near Belfast City Hall, he found himself close to a 600 lb bomb about to explode and he realised how close he had been to being blown up. The same year another incident stuck in Mark's mind when his patrol was told that staff at Anderson McCauley store had found several VHS (Video Home System) Cassette types of firebombs. Mark's patrol was called to position at the back door, when one of the staff threw out the cassettes onto the street, landing at the soldiers' feet. Thankfully, they did not explode, but Mark realised how serious that could have been.

One of the most frightening experiences which would come back to haunt Mark in his dreams and profoundly disturb him was in the days after Bobby Sands died on hunger strike in May 1981 and the widespread violence that followed. He was in an area of West Belfast where Republicans were very active, rioting was ongoing, and vehicles were being hijacked.

Mark's patrol was assigned to cover the Army/RUC deal with the rioters and to cover them from terrorist gunmen who had been operating daily in that area. Mark saw a figure crawling towards him wearing a balaclava and carrying what he thought was a weapon, but which later proved to be a ten-year-old child with a stick. Mark could have potentially shot the child with his weapon.

### **Mark lost a number of comrades because of the "Troubles":**

During his time in the UDR, Mark lost several of his comrades from his Platoon or Company who committed suicide by shooting themselves. In October 1984 there were two in one week.

Around that same time another soldier from his Company ran amok and started shooting in the main building at the UDR end of Girdwood Camp. At the time there was so much shooting, they all believed that the camp was under attack from the back fence by PIRA as there had been intelligence that an attack could come from that area as the fence was being repaired.

Later that year, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) did open up in 1985/86 on the camp from the window of a house overlooking the camp. They used a M60 machine gun and seriously injured one of the Motor Transport (MT) staff working at a landrover.

In September 1982 another of Mark's comrades shot himself whilst playing Russian Roulette in the Guard room of Girdwood. His brother-in-law at the time was the Guard Commander and tried to stem the bleeding by putting his fist into the hole in the lad's head.

Mark and his wife Marie were living with him at the time, and they witnessed first-hand the awful effect this incident had on him. From having a very promising Army career, he started drinking heavily and ended up being medically discharged. He then left his wife and went to live in Scotland where he eventually drank himself to death.

All this death and family upheaval had a damaging effect on Mark, which subsequent health counsellors have all realised undoubtedly worsened his PTSD when added the childhood and Army terrorist incidents he had to deal with.

### **Support of his wife<sup>ii</sup>:**

Mark's wife attests that her husband has been suffering from PTSD symptoms for the past twenty-eight years because of what he experienced whilst serving in the Army in Northern Ireland. She also confirmed that before his knee injury in 1986, he was a very fit man, doing a lot of sport, including football, swimming and that he was mentally strong.

Following Mark's departure from the Army in 1988, his social life was greatly reduced. Around 1997 his wife noticed that his behaviour started to change in that he was becoming short-tempered and moody. He would shake and shout during the night when he was having dreams and nightmares. He would sweat at night and his bedclothes would be in a mess. Later when Mark was prescribed sleeping tablets, it made things even worse.

The sleeping tablets would make him sleep more deeply, making it more difficult to waken him when he was having nightmares. Instead of reducing or stopping the dreams and nightmares the sleeping tablets increased their duration, deepening the distress that Mark was experiencing, with prolonged strain and restlessness.

Mark's wife accompanied him when he attended the War Pension Medical Examination (WPME). During one of these examinations on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009, she broke down in front of the doctor, pleading with him to help Mark get better.

Mark's wife stated that when he had the opportunity, Mark would tell the doctors that he was having sleep disturbances. Despite all the symptoms that were made known to the doctors, such as dreams and nightmares, it did not appear that they understood that what Mark was experiencing was Post Traumatic Stress symptoms.

As a result, the doctors did not offer to do anything to help Mark until the symptoms were confirmed by the Doctor <sup>iii</sup> in his report, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012. The Doctor who was a Consultant Clinical and Counselling Psychologist found that Mark was suffering from a level of stress disorder.

With hindsight Mark's wife stated that after understanding what the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress symptoms are, such as trembling in his sleep, sweating during the night, and messing up his bedclothes, in her opinion the first signs of the symptoms appeared in 1989, about a year after he left the Army.

His wife confirms that to this day Mark is still having dreams and nightmares three or four times a week, that they usually last for two to ten minutes, and when he remembers them, he would usually tell her about.

A Counsellor from Carecall<sup>iv</sup> on 11 December 2012 and 11 January 2013 concluded that the incidents Mark was involved in had a negative effect on him as this was brought up in sessions including Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprogramming (EMDR) and Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT).

### **Conclusion:**

As result of his military service in Northern Ireland, Mark has been diagnosed with PTSD<sup>v</sup> and along with many others continues to suffer from poor sleep patterns with recurrent nightmares four or five times a week. Mark is also in constant pain because of his knee injury, which is only partially relieved by medication.

Mark's PTSD and knee injury have had an impact on his personal and family life, but he is supported by a very caring wife.



He deserves to receive proper acknowledgement for his contribution to preserving the peace and defending the people of Northern Ireland against IRA and other terrorist organisations during the campaign of terrorism, and for what he has suffered as a result.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Affidavit from Mark Campbell dated 27 November 2013.

<sup>ii</sup> Affidavit from Marie Campbell dated 27 November 2013.

<sup>iii</sup> Dr Clinical Assessment Report dated 22 November 2012.

<sup>iv</sup> Letters to Mark Campbell from Carecall dated 11 December 2012 and 11 January 2013.