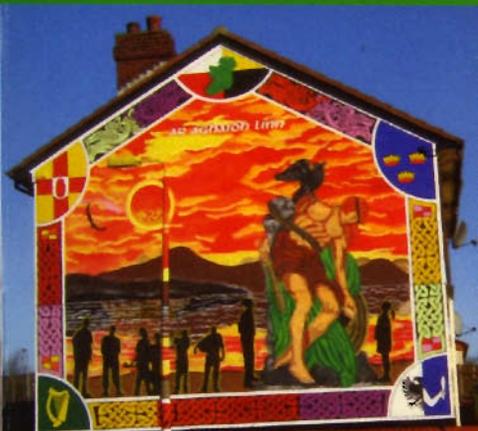


# Republican Belfast

## A Political Tourist's Guide



**Republican Belfast  
A Political Tourist's Guide**

**Robert Kerr**

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## Introduction

Since the ceasefire in 1994 there has been a steady increase in the number of political tourists coming to Belfast and as such, the object of this short book is to provide a guide to the many murals, monuments and sites of political, historical and cultural interest in republican Belfast. These sites of interest are peppered across the city and therefore it is difficult to present them as one continuous walking tour.

Due to its size, there are more examples of republican murals and memorials in West Belfast than anywhere else in the city, so after briefly identifying some sites of interest in central Belfast, this guide traces the most common route along the Falls Road and then throughout West Belfast before branching out and flagging up other sites which may be of interest to visitors.

It should be noted that while some sites, such as monuments are permanent, others, such as murals, are subject to change. Factors such as developing political issues, both local and international, and the effect of weather on older murals, all play their part. However, although the theme of a mural may change, it is often replaced by a new and thought provoking image at the same location.

Furthermore, to illustrate how republicanism has developed, three historical documents which have shaped Irish Republicanism; the Original Declaration of the United Irishmen, the 1916 Proclamation and the 1919 Democratic Programme of the First Dáil have been included at various points in this guide.

# Milltown Cemetery



**Location: 546 Falls Road. Maps 3, 4 & 6 Ref: H1**

The first burials took place in Milltown Cemetery in 1869 when it superseded Friars Bush as the primary Catholic cemetery in the Belfast area. The cemetery is located where the Falls and Glen Roads meet.

Whereas the City Cemetery can trace the history of industrial Belfast, Milltown is the burial site of many Belfast citizens from the Nationalist community. There are a large number of Republican graves and monuments in the cemetery many them dating back to the early 1920's.

154 Belfast men and women are named on the Republican Movement's 'Roll of Honour.' The majority of these have died on Active Service, however, these numbers do not include those Volunteers who died of

natural causes, nor do they include members of smaller republican groups. The vast majority of these combatants are buried in the Republican Plots in Milltown, the remainder are buried in family graves throughout the cemetery and further afield.

It is worth noting that the presence of the Red Hand on some graves indicates that the grave is under the care of the National Graves Association, Belfast.



Please remember, that while the Republican Plots are viewed as National Monuments and sites of political interest, they are also family graves. Please respect them as such.



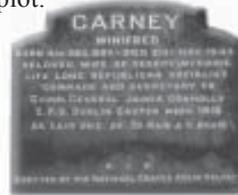
**1.** The ‘New Republican Plot’ contains the graves of 77 Republicans from throughout Belfast, who died on Active Service or died as a result of

imprisonment. It is here that Bobby Sands, Joe McDonnell and Kieran Doherty, three IRA Volunteers who died on Hunger Strike in 1981, are buried. Scattered throughout this cemetery are many more graves of historical, political and cultural interest. Although the cemetery is on the itinerary of many tour guides it is worth contacting the cemetery office for a more detailed guide to the cemetery.

**2.** The County Antrim Memorial was unveiled on the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising in 1966 and lists the names of the county’s republican dead from 1798 to the present day, some of whom are buried in graveyards throughout the country. The memorial is sometimes known as the Tom Williams Plot, as a grave was reserved for him here after his execution in Belfast Prison in 1942. Tom Williams is now



buried in the cemetery but in a family grave. Thirty Four IRA Volunteers who died on Active Service during the late 1960’s and early 1970’s are buried in this plot.



**3.** Winifred Carney, a committed socialist, died on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 1943. She had been a life long Republican, a member of the Irish Citizen Army and a Volunteer in Cumann na mBan. In 1916 Winifred was a comrade and secretary to James Connolly and a combatant inside Dublin’s GPO during the Rising.



4. On the 9th September 1867 the first Belfast martyr of the Fenian period, William Harbinson, died while interned in Belfast Prison. He is buried at Portmore, Ballinderry. Forty-five years later, in 1912, a Celtic cross was erected to his memory in Milltown cemetery. This monument was not only dedicated to William Harbinson but to other Republicans who were imprisoned in County Antrim jails. This plot contains the remains of five IRA Volunteers, Joe McKelvey, Seán McCartney, Terence Perry, Seán Gaffney and Seamus Burns.

5. A grave which is reserved for members of the INLA who have died as a result of the conflict can be found in the lower section of the cemetery. The Celtic cross bears the names of INLA and IRSP members who have been killed during the conflict. Ten members of the INLA are buried in this plot.



6. The IRA's inability to defend Nationalist areas of Belfast in 1969 led to a split in the Republican Movement and to the creation of what became known as the Official and Provisional IRA. In 1972 the Official IRA declared a unilateral ceasefire. This plot contains the remains of those Official IRA members who were killed in Belfast.





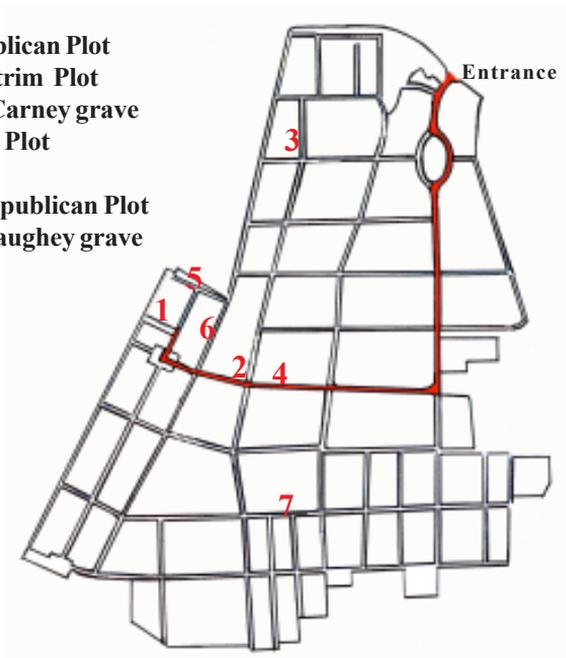
7. Seán McCaughey was sentenced to death by a Free State military court on a charge of assault and wrongful arrest which was later commuted to life imprisonment. He spent 4 ½ years naked except for a blanket, before embarking on a Hunger and Thirst Strike. He died on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1946 in Portlaoise Jail in brutal and inhumane conditions.

The National Graves Association, Belfast, is the body which has the responsibility for the care of Republican Graves in Milltown and is in the ideal position to provide an insight into the many republican graves in Belfast. The NGA can be contacted Tel: 028 90619875.

The Republican ex-prisoner organisation, Coiste na n-Iarchimí, conducts regular walking tours of West Belfast. They too can accommodate tours of Milltown. Tel: 028 90200770.

On a more casual basis Milltown Cemetery staff are willing, time permitting, to provide assistance in locating the many republican graves and monuments in the Cemetery. Tel: 028 90613972.

1. New Republican Plot
2. County Antrim Plot
3. Winifred Carney grave
4. Harbinson Plot
5. INLA Plot
6. Official Republican Plot
7. Sean McCaughey grave



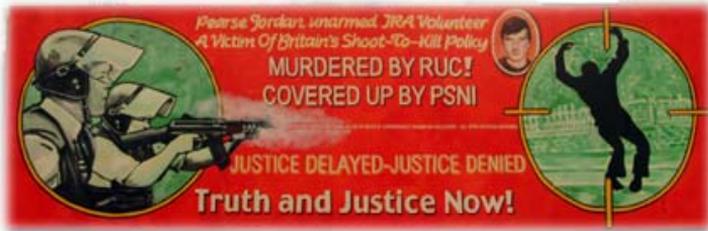
# Andersonstown Barracks



**Location: Andersonstown Road. Maps 3, 4 & 6 Ref: H2**

Andersonstown RUC Barracks, which no longer exists once faced the entrance to Milltown Cemetery and was strategically placed here, where the Falls Road and Glen Road meet. In 2005 the Barracks was finally vacated and demolished. Nothing of the original barracks is left, however controversy as to how this land should be used, still remains. One aspect of the site which is of interest, is a tribute to the Hunger Strikers. This piece of artwork, made from

steel, was originally created as a portable backdrop for the commemorations for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hunger Strike. During the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, it was decided to put it on permanent display at the site of the Barracks.



**Location: Andersonstown Road. Maps 3, 4 & 6. Ref: H2**

The site of the former Andersonstown RUC Barracks, due to its central location, has become a popular place to display murals which are politically relevant. The above mural, unveiled in August 2008, returns to the theme of Britain's 'shoot to kill' policy.' On the

23<sup>rd</sup> November 1992, IRA Volunteer Pearse Jordan was shot dead by the RUC on the Falls Road. The mural condemns his murder by the RUC and accuses their successors, the PSNI of covering it up. The demand is made for truth and justice.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> July 1981, within hours of the death of Joe McDonnell on Hunger Strike, Fian John Dempsey from Turf Lodge, was shot dead by British troops at the bus depot on the Falls Road. Mounted high on the wall of the Falls Bus Depot at Divis Drive, is a plaque which was dedicated to his memory in 2003.



► **Location: Divis Drive**  
**Maps 3 & 4. Ref: H3**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1980, Ronnie Bunting and Noel Lyttle were assassinated by a number of gunmen who smashed their way into the Bunting's Downfine Garden home in the early hours of the morning. Mr. Bunting's wife was also shot and seriously injured in the attack. She later said that she had no doubt her husband was killed by members of the British Army's Special Air Service regiment.



◀ **Location: Downfine Gardens.**  
**Map 6. Ref: H4**

The body of IRSP member and H Block activist, Miriam Daly, bound and shot, was found by her nine year old daughter, at her home on the Andersonstown Road in June 1980. Although the UFF claimed her murder, there is a belief that elements of the British security services were involved in her killing. The second person named on the plaque, Brendan McNamee, was assassinated in June 1975.



► **Location: Andersonstown Road.**  
**Map 4. Ref: H5**

**“...no child shall suffer hunger or cold, for the lack of food, clothing or shelter”**

**Democratic Programme 1919**

# Felons Club



**Location: 537 Falls Road. Maps 3, 4 & 6. Ref: H6**

Cumann na Meirleach, or as it is commonly known, The Felons, was formed in the 1960's by Republican ex-prisoners. Although the membership of the club is primarily ex-prisoners, the club is used by the whole community.



On display in the club's rooms are many artifacts which have been produced in prisons here and abroad. Every year, during the West Belfast Festival the club hosts a Prisoners Day, and stages talks and exhibitions.

A plaque, mounted in the club's foyer is dedicated, as its inscription says in both Irish and English, to 'all those who unselfishly gave their lives in the cause of Irish freedom.'



**Location: Falls Road. Maps 3, 4 & 6. Ref: H6**

This mural, located on the wall of the Felons Club, is based on the painting 'Legacy of the Hunger Strike' by artist Robert Ballagh. The mural is composed of a H-Block which has been broken and shows ten white doves flying free. Portraits of the ten Hunger Strikers can be seen at each side of the mural.



A Comprehensive and illustrated guide, which offers a unique insight into the Conflict in Ireland, through the Republican Murals, Plaques and Memorials of Belfast



- \* Take your own Walking Tour through Republican Belfast
- \* Easy to use maps
- \* Murals
- \* Museums
- \* Memorial Gardens

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