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Jimmy McKenna and his killer gang

Andersonstown News

By Ciarán Barnes

20/04/2007

Jimmy McKenna: The Ballymurphy Catholic led the UVF gang which murdered John Crawford in January 1974.

Unlike the rest of the gang members who were in their 20s, he was in his early 50s.

McKenna was part of a shadowy unit of the British Army known as the Military Reconnaissance Force (MRF).

The group trained loyalists in the use of weapons and explosives. The MRF was involved in a series of atrocities including the murders of six New Lodge men in 1973 and the 1971 bombing of McGurk's bar in which 15 people died.

The MRF later evolved into the Force Research Unit (FRU), the British Army group responsible for targeting human rights lawyer Pat Finucane and scores of other nationalists.

McKenna was involved in the murders of at least seven other people throughout Belfast, including Robert Willis, Robert Clarke, Charles Vincent Clarke, James Mitchell, Joe Donnelly, Hugh McKenzie and the attempted murder of John Flannigan.

At the time of these murders the popular myth was that McKenna joined the Springmartin UVF because the IRA killed his brother, Arthur McKenna. However, the Andersonstown News has learned that he was operating as an undercover British Army soldier in West Belfast before this killing occurred.

In the early 1970s McKenna was caught transporting a rifle through West Belfast. However, he was only charged with possession of a weapon without a licence and served less than a year in Crumlin Road jail.

He was again caught with weapons around 1977, but instead of being charged was deported to Australia where he had lived previously.

While living in Australia, McKenna was charged with abducting his partner's child. He was given a five year sentence.

The killer had only been released from prison a short time when he died in 1986.

Prior to his involvement in the murder of John Crawford, McKenna had lived in a caravan in the grounds of the 52-year-old's Milltown furniture shop. He did odd jobs around the shop for his victim.

William Moore: In February 1979, Moore, who is now 58, pleaded guilty to involvement in 11 Shankill Butcher murders.

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He was sentenced to life but released in 1998 under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement.

The first murder Moore admitted involvement in was in 1975 – however the Andersonstown News can confirm he was part of the gang that murdered John Crawford in January 1974.

Moore was an apprentice butcher and stole from his workplace the knives and meat cleavers used by the gang.

In 1975 he started working as a taxi driver. He would ferry the Shankill Butchers around looking for Catholics walking home late at night.

After the gang's leader Lenny Murphy was jailed on a firearms offence, Moore continued to carry out the cut-throat killings. This was in order to avert suspicion away from Murphy.

Moore was eventually arrested in 1977 after a surviving victim identified him.

He was the first member of the Shankill Butchers gang to break during questioning.



Raymond Glover: The 57-year-old drove the car used in the John Crawford murder.

In 1978 he pleaded guilty to involvement in six UVF murders. These included John Crawford, Charles Clarke, Robert Willis and Hugh Harvey. Glover was given 10 life sentences, however he was not ordered to serve a minimum term because he agreed to turn Queen's Evidence.

Despite agreeing a deal to inform on his colleagues the other three men involved in the Crawford murder were not charged.

Glover was released in the early 1990s. He is currently living in Rathcoole.

Mr X: A veteran UVF man from the Ligoniel area of North Belfast, he cannot be named for legal reasons.

It is he who fired the two fatal shots that killed John Crawford. His involvement was known within 24 hours of the killing.

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