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A loyalist in Bandit Country

(by Suzanne Breen, *Sunday Tribune*)

Willie Frazer points to the old holsters and riot gear in his museum of security force memorabilia in Markethill. "We'd need these with us today, and bullet-proof vests too.

"I hope you're prepared for this, girl. The last time I'd people on my south Armagh tour, the Provos pelted the car with quarry rocks, forced us off the road, then ran at us with pick-axe handles. It would be easy enough to get yourself killed."

Frazer, director of IRA victims' groups FAIR, regularly takes visitors into 'Bandit country' Atrocity scenes, IRA fuel-laundering premises, and the homes of leading Provisionals – including chief-of-staff Thomas 'Slab' Murphy – are on the itinerary.

Before we set off, he rings Crossmaglen police station. "Is that you, Charlie? This is Willie Frazer. I'm heading into your part of the world. We'll be taking a trip to Larkin's Road – you know, where Mr Murphy lives. We might be following the odd oil tanker too."

Charlie, who probably thinks the trip's mad, mumbles something, and off we set. Frazer nods at the soft rolling hillside, majestic in its autumn gold.

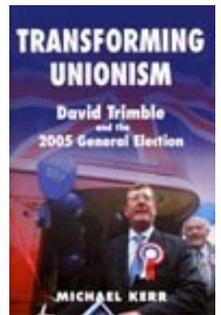
"These were the killing fields where my friends and family were butchered. It might look beautiful but the grass is dripping in blood. I lost my da, two uncles, two cousins and six friends. Republicans murdered 400 people in south Armagh.

"They say it was a war. Well, the war criminals got away. They should be hunted down." In Newtownhamilton, Frazer points to an elderly man: "He's not as innocent as he looks – did a bit of IRA scouting in his day."

Our first stop is at the site of the old Glennane barracks where UDR members – Robert Crozier, Paul Blakely, and Sydney Hamilton – were killed, and 40 people injured in 1991.

A 2,500lb IRA lorry bomb was rolled into the base. The

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explosion was heard in Dundalk. Lance-corporal Crozier's daughter was the Markethill festival queen.

We pass posters of Sinn Féin's Turlough Murphy, who defeated Frazer in a recent council by-election, as we head to Kingsmill where 10 Protestant workers were taken off a mini-bus and shot dead in retaliation for loyalist murders.

"They lined them up there, at the side of the road," says Frazer, pointing to a spot marked by a simple cross. "They asked their religion. The one Catholic was ordered to leave. They fired 200 bullets into the others. Some of the men were on their knees praying when they were executed. The gunmen cheered as they left."

A mile on is Whitecross, the Catholic village where Frazer grew up. "That was our house," he says, pointing to a small terrace. "It was more like a prison than a home, we'd that much barbed wire round it. There were countless attacks. They left a bomb on the kitchen window.

"Once, my father came home to find a sledge-hammer stuck in the door where the IRA had tried to break in. My mother put a rifle out the window. She would have shot them but she didn't know how to get the safety catch off."

Another mile away, Frazer stops. "I got the biggest hiding of my life in that thorn hedge. They ordered me to say 'Up the Provies' and I wouldn't. I'd gone to school with these fellows, played Gaelic with them."

Frazer crosses the road. "That's where the IRA murdered my oul' boy," he says. Robert Frazer, 49, UDR man and a father of nine, was shot dead leaving a friend's farm. 'Peace, perfect peace,' says the roadside memorial.

"Nobody was ever charged," says Frazer. "Over 98% of republican murders in South Armagh remain unsolved. I bring visitors here because it's important not to forget."

Frazer has no sympathy for IRA dead, but we stop where Majella O'Hare, a 12-year-old schoolgirl, was shot dead by the British Army in 1976: "My older brother and her older brother ran about together. Of course, I feel sorry for her family."

Next, is Tullyvallen Orange hall where five Protestants were killed in 1975. "Masked IRA men machine-gunned the hall. I was 15 but, even now, I can remember the awful stench of burning flesh," says Frazer.

On the road to Cullyhanna, we pass where UDR man Joe McCullough had his throat cut and was hung upside down from



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The Wild Geese Today

a tree, his body booby-trapped, in 1976.

We drive through Crossmaglen, passing IRA monuments, and Paddy Short's pub where many republicans drank over the years. "We'll hardly bother going in today," quips Frazer.

Near the Border, we pass several flashy villas, which the Fair director says are owned by IRA smugglers: "It's like Dallas here, and this meant to be one of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland!"

Slab's place is less ostentatious. "He's an evil man," says Frazer. "But I'll say one thing for him – he's as happy in an old van as in a new Merc."

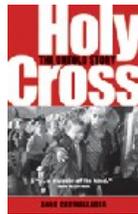
Frazer stops for a photograph chez Murphy. Doesn't he fear for his safety?: "I know the risks, but I'm walking with the Lord . . . and I've learned to drive fast!"

November 5, 2006

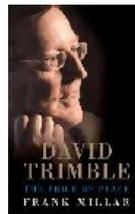
This article appeared in the November 5, 2006 edition of the [Sunday Tribune](#).

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