

Inquiry hears of Bloody Sunday

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Saville Inquiry

30 May 2000

Dying teenager

A man threw a dying teenager over his shoulder and ran for his life after paratroopers tried to shoot the group carrying the casualty to safety, the Saville Inquiry has been told.

The inquiry, which is being held at the Guildhall in Londonderry, is investigating events when British paratroopers opened fire on a banned civil rights procession in the city's Bogside area, killing 14 people.

On day 25 of the public hearings, two witness accounts described a group of men dropping wounded teenager Michael Kelly in panic when soldiers appeared and opened fire, two of them shooting from the hip.

It was said to have happened as attempts were made to find the victim medical aid.

The tribunal also heard accounts of the last moments of another victim, Michael McDaid, 20, who was shot dead close to Mr Kelly - and who was photographed in the seconds leading up to his death.

A witness said he saw Mr McDaid stop and stare at soldiers shooting towards him - 'mesmerised, like a rabbit caught in car headlights' - just before another burst of gunfire rang out.

Mr Kelly's brother-in-law, George Downey, said he carried the teenager from the spot where he was shot, across open ground at the maisonettes complex in Glenfada Park North.

'I heard more shouts that 'they're coming!', said a statement from Mr Downey, read to the tribunal by counsel to the inquiry Christopher Clarke QC.

'There was panic and people scattered in all directions. I looked over my shoulder and saw a soldier emerge from the alley and aim his rifle in my direction.

'I turned and ran with Michael still in my arms and was shot at three times. The bullets hit the wall in front of me. I cannot understand how I am alive.

'As I was running, I tripped and fell forward and threw Michael in the alley for safety.

'As I lay on the ground I saw a big man, about 6ft 4ins tall, pick Michael up and sling him over his shoulder like a baby. He shouted at me, run!'

'I got up and ran through the alleyway. I heard shots as I ran. I considered myself lucky not to have been hit.'

Liverpool-born ex-Royal Navy serviceman Joseph Donnell gave a similar description of events, but said he saw three Paras come into the complex.

'The crowd carrying Michael Kelly almost dropped him in panic at the sight of the soldiers and he slipped down in between their arms. I took him in my arms and carried him on my own,' he said.

Notice at the foot of the Bloody Sunday memorial calls for justice

He claimed one of the soldiers aimed towards the crowd and opened fire from a kneeling position while his two colleagues opened fire from the hip.

'Bullets were flying past me and hitting the wooden fence. The soldiers seemed absolutely determined to hit someone. I have no doubt that I was running for my life.'

Mr Downey said he and Mr Donnelly made their way to the neighbouring complex of houses, Abbey Park, where they saw a couple inside one, and beckoned for help.

He 'almost flattened' the woman inside when she opened the door, to get Mr Kelly inside, his statement added.

The teenager appeared to be in shock and a first aider who arrived at the house shortly afterwards told Mr Downey he was 'not too good'.

'She told me that you had better start praying. I knelt forward and said an act of contrition in Michael's ear.'

The tribunal, headed by Lord Saville, is expected to sit for two years.

No-one can be prosecuted on the strength of evidence submitted to the inquiry, which was set up by the government solely to find the truth of what happened on Bloody Sunday.

The Widgery Inquiry held shortly after the shootings in 1972, exonerated the soldiers involved, who said they had been fired on by the IRA, before they themselves opened fire.



Many of the victims were shot near these flats.

Inquiry hears of Bloody Sunday

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Saville Inquiry

30 May 2000

DYING MAN 'CRAWLED TOWARDS ME'

A witness to the Bloody Sunday shootings in Londonderry has recalled how a dying man called out and crawled towards him after being shot.

Gerard Greeve was giving evidence to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry which is investigating the events of 30 January 1972 when paratroopers opened fire on civil rights marchers in Derry killing 13 men. Another man died later.

Mr Greeve also told the inquiry on Tuesday that gunfire hit a doorway of the Rossville Flats in the Bogside as he was dragging the man, 17-year-old Kevin McElhinney, through it.

Mr Greeve, who was 16 on Bloody Sunday, earlier described running from the rubble barricade across Rossville Street into Block 1 of the flats during a lull in shooting.

I could hear him calling to me and I knew that he had been shot.

He said he got inside as a soldier in a firing position was aiming his gun at him.

Mr Greeve said he could not see the youth who had been behind him.

But he added: 'I could, however, hear him calling to me and I knew that he had been shot.'

'I was about to go outside to tend to him when I heard a fellow who was on the other side of Rossville Street shout: Get down.'

'I got down on the floor and remained there for a few seconds until the shooting stopped. I then got up and looked round the doorway.'

'I saw the fellow. He was still alive and was crawling towards me. I remember that he was talking to me but I cannot remember what he was saying.'

'I pulled him into the flats. As I did more shots rang out and a bullet hit the doorway.'

Mr Greeve was testifying on day 147 of the public hearing of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry.

Another witness, James Norris, gave a different account of Mr McElhinney's final moments claiming that he 'crashed through the doors as if in full flight' when he was shot.

Mr Norris, who was a Knight of Malta volunteer first aider on Bloody Sunday, said in written evidence: 'I moved forward to catch him and I can see it today as if it happened a minute ago. I lowered him to the ground and he was twitching. He was in shock.'

'I couldn't see any signs of bleeding until I opened his jacket; his left side was covered in blood.'

Asked by junior counsel to the Inquiry Cathryn McGahey if he has any recollection of Mr McElhinney dragging himself to the door, Mr Norris replied: 'No.'

Bloody Sunday soldier killed four

JOHN INNES

Saville Inquiry

The Scotsman, 3 October 2003

A FORMER paratrooper yesterday admitted killing up to four people during the civil rights march massacre which became known as Bloody Sunday - but denied murder.

Soldier F, who spent two days giving evidence at the Saville Inquiry, admitted causing the four deaths in the Bogside area of Londonderry in 1972.

In a dramatic development, Soldier F admitted killing Barney McGuigan, shot dead as he waved a white handkerchief while going to the aid of a dying man, Patrick Doherty.

The former lance corporal also conceded he killed Mr Doherty on the south side of Rossville Flats but said he was shooting at a man armed with a pistol.

He has also admitted killing teenager Michael Kelly at the rubble barricade in Rossville Street and another man he claimed was hurling a nail bomb in Glenfada Park North.

The fourth man was identified as possibly William McKinney, shot as he ran for shelter in the Glenfada Park area.

The inquiry, currently sitting at Central Hall in Westminster, is investigating the events of 30 January, 1972 when 13 civilians were shot dead. Counsel for the inquiry, Christopher Clarke, summarising the evidence, said: 'What is alleged in relation to each of those four people is that you shot them without justification, that is to say that you murdered them: Do you follow?'

Mr Clarke said the facts seemed to indicate that he killed Mr McKinney, but contrary to his evidence given to the Royal Military Police, he was facing away from him at the time.

Soldier F said he did not murder them: 'As I refer to my statements, the people I shot are the petrol bombers or a person who had a weapon.'

Earlier, under questioning by Mike Mansfield, QC, Soldier F admitted for the first time that he had killed 41-year-old Mr McGuigan.

When asked by the barrister if he would admit shooting Mr McGuigan to his wife and six children who were sitting in the public gallery, Soldier F said 'Yes'. At this point the inquiry was halted while Mr McGuigan's sobbing widow was led from the public gallery.

Eillis McDermott, QC, representing the family of Patrick Doherty, who was shot while attempting to crawl to safety, accused Soldier F of using a well-known hunting shot to take him out.

Ms McDermott said Soldier F had used a 'Texas heart shot', firing in through the buttock and through the heart.

'That is the way you shot Mr Doherty was it not, as if you were hunting him down like an animal?'

Soldier F, who said he used to hunt, said he had never heard of this shot.

Soldier F denied he had murdered Mr Doherty, insisting he fired at a man with a pistol south of the Rossville Flats.

'I am very, very sorry for what happened on that day, but I am here to help the inquiry and to assist to tell the truth.'

Asked by Ms McDermott what he was sorry about, Soldier F replied: 'The circumstances that happened on that day, there was obviously innocent people killed, there was also gunmen and bombers killed.'

Forensic tests have already linked Soldier F's rifle to the killing of 17-year-old Michael Kelly at the rubble barricade in Rossville Street.

Questioned by Seamus Treacy, QC, the lawyer representing the Kelly family, Soldier F admitting killing the teenager but denied he had murdered him.

Earlier, Soldier F insisted he was only doing his job on Bloody Sunday.

Insisting he had operated within the Army's yellow card rules of engagement, he claimed he shot a nail-bomber at the barricade, another nailbomber in Glenfada Park and a man firing a pistol at the Rossville Flats.

Asked by Mr Treacy if he felt it was a job well done, Soldier F replied: 'I think it was well done to the fact that no soldiers were killed or injured on that day.'

Soldier F has told the inquiry he cannot recall any of the circumstances in which he fired a total of 13 shots on Bloody Sunday.

He left the Army in 1988 after 22 years' service.