

Bloody Sunday: contemporary witness statements

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<http://www.bloodysundaytrust.org/eduevents.htm>

Name: John J. McDevitt. Address: 41, St. Columbs Wells. Age: 50 Occupation: Electrician.

On Sunday 30th January 1972 I was a steward at the Civil Rights march. The following is a true account of events as I saw them happen. When the marchers reached the junction of William Street and Rossville street the march proper turned up Rossville street. A number of people continued to walk on towards the military road block at the Old City Picture house. They commenced to throw stones at the troops who replied with rubber bullets and C.S. gas. As stewards we were trying to get those stoning the troops to go up Rossville street towards Free Derry Corner where a meeting was being held.

I was standing at the taxi office in William Street when I heard a shot, it seem to come from the direction of the Post Office sorting office. I ran in the direction of the sorting office and I saw a whisp of blue smoke ascending from the roof of the sorting office. I could see no-one on top of the roof. Just then I heard a woman say, "Someone had been shot." in the vicinity of Stevensons bakery. Before I had left the area I saw British soldiers in the sorting office yard. There were also soldiers with rifles at a window above a newspaper shop at the city cinema. The number of people throwing stones at the army was now very small as most of them were driven away by C.S. gas. I decided to move in the direction of the meeting at Free Derry corner and had just gone a few yards up Rossville St. when I heard vehicles coming from William St. they were traveling at great speed, I ran towards the new houses on my right and as the vehicles drew slightly pass me they stopped. Doors flow open and a machine gun was fired from the open door. A number of soldiers jumped from the back and were firing rifles from the hip apparently at no one in particular. I saw a man fall and a soldier went to him and turned his body over with his boot, he raised the rifle as if to shoot the man again but whether he did or not I cannot say as I had to run for cover behind a wall when I heard the firing getting worse. There was definitely nothing more than stones being fired at the army, no nail bombs or petrol bombs whatsoever. This is all I actually saw at this time. But when the soldiers had left it was clear to me that the situation was a lot worse than I had ever imagined.

I am willing that this statement may be used for publication or for purpose that the N.I.C.R.A. approve of.

Signed. John McDevitt

Michael Bridge of 10 Tremore Gardens, Creggan, Derry states:-

1. I am aged 25 years and am a labourer and present unemployed. I was a steward of the CRA march on 30 January 1972. I was asked to take an armband coming down Southway. The march was orderly till it reached the William Street barricade. There was there some stoning and rubber bullets were fired. A water cannon sprayed us with purple dye and CS gas was used. All this time with the other stewards I was trying to control the crowd

2. The platform lorry went down Rossville Street announcing a meeting at Free Derry Corner. I was affected by gas. I went down the alley into the waste ground. I was sick there. Then I went back into William Street. At the corner of Chamberlain Street I was hit with a rubber bullet. I went and sat down in Chamberlain Street for perhaps 10 minutes or so. People started shouting that the Saracens were coming. Everybody ran over Chamberlain Street. I went to Eden Place. I went down Eden Place and looked into the open ground. I saw the first soldiers there. They were jumping out of the back of a Saracen. The Saracen was parked at the rear of the houses in Chamberlain Street with the rear facing towards Eden Place. The two soldiers who jumped out began firing in the direction of William Street and Eden Place. Beyond, I remember that soldiers were attacking civilians on the open ground.

3. I turned to get back up Eden Place. A soldier appeared behind me, round the corner of Eden Place. He fired a shot. An old man fell down, but he got up again and I am certain he was shot. I was making my way up Chamberlain Street towards the Rossville Flats when someone came running towards me shouting that someone had been shot in the car park at the Flats. I made my way into the car park and noticed a body lying fairly near the end of the low wall. As I approached the body I cannot remember hearing any shooting. I got within a few yards of the body. I turned and started shouting towards the soldiers. At this point I was aware of shooting very close to me. I was hit in the leg.

4. While I was standing in the car park, just before I was shot, I noticed a Saracen parked in the waste ground between the rear of the houses in Chamberlain Street and the high flats in Rossville Street. I also noticed a soldier in a kneeling position with his rifle aimed into the car park at the corner of the Rossville Street flats. There was another soldier standing a few feet from the rear wall of one of the houses in Chamberlain Street. He had his rifle in his shoulder in an aiming position. I noticed that he did not have a riot visor down over his face. There was no camouflage paint on his face.

5. I was taken to 33 Chamberlain Street and given first aid and subsequently to the Altnagelvin Hospital.

(Signed) M Bridge

At 3.55pm., away from the riot at the bottom of William St., Paratroopers opened fire. 5 shots were fired from a derelict building on William St. 2 men, 59 year old John Johnston and 15 year old Damien Donaghy, were hit.

I, John Johnston aged 59 of 50 Marlborough Street, Londonderry say:-

On the 30 January 1972 I was walking down William Street with the intention of calling on a man in Glenfada Park. Because of CS gas I went through wasteground south of the old bakery. I saw soldiers, in firing position, in a burnt out house almost opposite to this waste ground and north of William Street. As I was crossing this waste ground I turned and looked at the soldiers I heard a crack of a shot. I was hit in the right leg near the hip and then another shot hit me in the left shoulder. At first I thought I was hit by a rubber bullets. Another shot, which I believe was a ricochet, grazed my hand but I have no idea when this happened. Just before I was hit I saw a boy fall near the corner of the waste ground and William Street. I was taken to a house of people named Shiels in Columbcille Court. The boy was already there lying wounded on a couch. I was attended, I believe, by Docter McClean and the Knights of Malta. Also I was attended by Father Carolan who drove me to Altnagelvin Hospital.

I did not have a weapon of any kind nor did anybody else including the wounded boy, as far as I could see. I can not see any reason for the troops to assume that any offensive action was being taken against them by a civilian.

I heard no other shooting and I heard no nail bombs or anything similar.

(Signed) John Johnston

Statement of Damien Donaghy, 144 Rinmore Drive, Creggan Estate, Derry aged 15 years.

I was coming down William Street on Sunday 30 January 1972 at about 4.00 pm. I noticed a cloud of CS gas around the junction of William Street and Rossville Street. As I reached the "Nook Bar" in William Street I looked over to my left and I saw three soldiers lying on a ledge at the rear of the Great James Street Presbyterian Church.

I also noticed two soldiers inside the former premises of Abbey Taxis in William Street. The soldiers on the ledge had their rifles aimed towards the direction of Columbcille Court. I went round the corner of the "Nook Bar" and into the waste ground beside it. I was walking towards Columbcille Court then. I heard the sound of a rubber bullet being fired and I saw it bounce off the wall on my right and I then ran to pick it up. As I was bending down to pick it up I heard a shot ring out and I felt a twinge in my left hip. I fell to the ground and saw the blood coming from a hole in my trousers just above my right knee. I then realised that I was shot. Some of the men came and I shouted to them that I was shot. Just as these men were coming to pick me up I heard two more shots and they were not rubber bullets shots. Some men then picked me up and carried me to a house in Columbcille Court and I was eventually taken to hospital in Father George Carolan's car. At no stage did I have a gun or a nail bomb in my possession.

(Signed) Damien Donaghey

At approximately 4.07pm. the order was given for the 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment to begin an " arrest " operation. 3 minutes later soldiers of the Support Company began firing. By 4.40pm. the firing had ceased.

Tony Doherty 218 Carnhill Derry Occupation: Chemical Operator Age: 25

I was in William St. and C.S. gas was fired at the crowd. I moved up to my aunt's house at Kells Walk and went into the living room. Whilst in the house I heard that a young boy and man had been shot in William St. I was in the house about 10 minutes when four Saracens and 2 lorries came into Rossville St. They were traveling very fast. Behind that came two other Saracens which parked in front of the house. Two soldiers came down Rossville St. with a man in a black suit - half walking and half dragged receiving blows from the muzzle of the soldiers gun and from the butt of the other soldier's gun. When they got behind one of the Saracens, I saw him struck on the body and fall. Whilst on the ground, I saw him kicked by two other soldiers. They lifted him and threw him bodily into the Saracen. One of the same soldiers struck him on the face with the fist and with the edge of the soldiers helmet.

I saw another young boy arrested on the waste ground facing the house. He was only struck once with the butt of a rifle. They sat him inside the Saracen.

I noticed a fellow with blue denim jacket and jeans standing on the waste ground facing me. He was empty handed and he looked confused as if he did not know where to run. One paratrooper close to the flats gave a signal to another one to arrest him. The paratrooper went towards him but didn't touch him. The young boy seemed to be pleading with him. The paratrooper who had given the signal ran back behind the boy and hit him on the back of the head with the butt of his rifle. The other paratrooper moved towards the boy and grabbed him and as he marched him to the Saracen kept hitting him with the muzzle of the gun. When he was behind the Saracen he was kicked towards William St. where another soldier was waiting. He made a run at the boy and pulled him bodily to the ground with such force that he fell himself. On rising, he hit the young lad a ferocious kick on the backside and he stumbled towards William St.

After that, I heard gunfire and we all hit the floor. When we got off the floor again I glanced out the window and I saw a soldier in a kneeling position, firing straight up Rossville St. towards the barricade. He seemed to have fired a full magazine before he arose and ran back into William St. I stayed away from the window after that.

I did not hear any nail bombs or petrol bombs. I noticed a camera man filming from below the Saracens in Rossville St. (about Aden Place).

This is a true statement of what happened to me on 30.1.72. I grant permission for this statement to be used in any investigation.

Signed: T.A. Doherty

The Killing Zones

Rossville Flats Car Park

As the Paras advanced 2 people, 18 year old Alana Burke and 53 year old Patrick Campbell were hit by military vehicles. Rubber bullets were initially fired and then the unmistakable sound of live rounds was heard. 17 year old Jackie Duddy lay dying and Margaret Deery, Micheal Bridge, Micheal Bradley and Patrick McDaid had been wounded.

William McChrystal 11 North Street Derry Aged 42 Storeman.

I was in Chamberlain Street behind a crowd of youths who were throwing stones. I looked across the waste ground and saw a Saracen tearing across Rossville Street. I was running back towards the flats when I heard a rifle report from William Street direction and a bullet chipped the wall above my head. Someone shouted at reporters who were running with us "That's not a rubber bullet - report that you ----!" As I came into the courtyard of the flats I saw Fr. Daly kneel over the body of a fallen youth. there was another man with him assisting. I ran to their aid - and as I was kneeling with them at the spot, the Army fired over our heads. The bullets hit the back wall of the courtyard. When I arrived at the youth's side there was no evidence of any weapon, gun, nail-bomb, or stone.

We carried the youth up either High Street or Harvey Street to Waterloo Street. We spread out the coats and Mrs. McCloskey spread eiderdown which we laid him on. He was dead at this time. His name was Jackie Duddy.

Wm McChrystal

Mr. Patrick Harkin 15 Elmwood Road Derry Aged 42 Occupation: Machine setter.

I was in parade and had got as far as Macari's when parade was stopped. When they shot the first lot of gas, I cut across a lane into what was previously Pilots Row. I made my way to my mother's house in Garvan Place (high flats). When I got in, I was looking out the window into William St. for a few minutes. There was stone-throwing still going on in William St., but main body of the crowd had moved towards Free Derry Corner.

Three or four Saracens came flying up Rossville St. and one drove into car park at the rear of the flats, into the crowd. They could have mowed down several of the crowd, but luckily only one boy whom I couldn't identify, but he was taken into the first house in Chamberlain St. He was aged about 18 years.

About five or six soldiers came out of this Saracen and started to attack people with their gun butts. Two soldiers caught hold of one man aged about 50 years. I don't know his name but he was a bin man with the corporation. They beat him about the head with their rifles. They took him around by what was Eden Place.

Four or five other soldiers then took up positions along the back wall of Chamberlain St. and started shooting with automatic weapons. They had no rubber bullet guns or any other weapons. They seemed to aim most of their fire in the direction of the opening between the intersection of the flats in line with the telephone kiosk.

They were shooting at a fleeing crowd going in direction of Free Derry Corner. I noticed then there was a young boy bleeding in the car park in the rear of Rossville St. Flats. He didn't appear to have anything in his hands. I then saw a man coming to his aid and Fr. Daly administering the last rites. Each time these four or five soldiers emptied the magazines of their guns, four or five others replaced them and continued firing. This went on for about ten minutes. During this time there was no question of any nail bombs or petrol bombs being thrown.

My brother-in-law, Patrick O'Reilly (22 Garvan Place, Derry), was a witness with me to above statement and will be willing to verify. At the time of this shooting, I noticed a civilian standing alongside the soldiers. He appeared to be carrying a camera. It was obvious at the time that the soldiers were not being fired at as they were standing in upright position and didn't try to find cover.

This is my statement and I grant permission for it to be published or used in any investigation.

Signed: Patrick Harkin

Rossville Flats forecourt

As people fled for safety the shooting continued. Hugh Gilmore was murdered as he sought safety in the Rossville Flats. Paddy Doherty was murdered as he tried to crawl to safety and Barney McGuigan, hearing the dying man's cries, was murdered as he attempted to go to his aid.

Geraldine Frances Christina Richmond, 5 Swilly Gardens, Creggan Estate, Derry

1. I took part in the march on 30 January. When it was halted in William Street I went onto the ground round Rossville Street to get away from the CS gas.

2. I was between Eden Place and Pilot Row, near a man whom I did not know then, but whom I now know was Hugh Gilmore. Someone shouted "They're in, they're in" meaning soldiers had come into the Bogside. I saw some Saracens coming into Rossville Street. We all started running down Rossville Street. Up to this time I had heard no shooting at all, except the rubber bullets and the gas.

3. Hugh Gilmore was running beside me. He was going away from the soldiers and he had no weapon. The soldiers

jumped out of the Saracens and started shooting. Some were standing or kneeling as they shot, they were not lying down or taking cover. There were a lot of people running to get away.

4. Just as Mr. Gilmore and I reached the main section of Rossville Flats, he said "I'm hit, I'm hit". I said "Try and keep running". He started to stumble. I got my two hands under his arm at the shoulder and supported him till we got round the corner of the building. I was looking round as we ran. There was continuous firing all the time. People kept falling. A lot of them were diving for cover but I think at least one of them was shot by the wall of the flats along Rossville Street.

5. We got round the corner and against the end wall of the building near a telephone box. I put Mr. Gilmore down and opened his shirt. I saw a bullet wound in the lower part of the stomach, a small entry wound and a big exit wound. I knew it must be a fatal wound and in fact he died in a few minutes.

6. There were about half a dozen people beside the telephone box taking cover. A man took me from Mr. Gilmore's body along towards the box. At this time we could hear the cries of wounded at the other end of the shops (the centre block of Rossville flats). There was firing down Rossville Street and also between the two buildings from the waste ground in front of Chamberlain Street. This kept us pinned where we were.

7. A man was shouting out that he did not want to die. We wanted to go to him but could not because of the gunfire. Mr. Barney McGuigan said "I'm not going to let him die by himself. If I take my white hankie they'll not shoot me". We tried to dissuade him but he took out his handkerchief and moved out from the wall a few paces waving it on front of him. We shouted to him to come back because the shooting did not stop. Then he was hit, just about 4 paces out from the wall. He fell and he was dead as he hit the ground. He was hit in the back of the head.

8. I could not remember much after this. I was taken to hospital and treated for shock. He was in a blue anorak coat with a white shirt and grey suit. He was in the Peace Committee and on the Tenants' association. He was certainly carrying no weapons.

(Signed) G Richmond

Statement taken and witnessed by J L Heritage 24 February 1972

The Rubble Barricade, Rossville Street.

Kevin McElhinney was shot as he tried to crawl to safety in the Rossville Flats. Micheal Kelly fell at the rubble barricade, as did John Young, William Nash and Micheal McDaid. Three of these young men may have been shot from Derry's walls by British Army snipers and Alexander Nash, the father of William, was wounded as he went to his son's aid.

Helen and Margaret Johnston 69 Creggan Rd. Age: 31 Occupation: Dispatch in Bakery

We were standing at the mouth of Rossville St. when the soldiers started firing C.S. gas. I started to move back along Rossville St. and we saw a young boy who had been badly struck by a gas canister on the face. We crossed over to see if we could help. There was enough people there to look after him. So we crossed back to Glenfada (opposite Rossville St. flats). Then we heard Saracens coming in and we moved back because at the same time we heard gunfire. Then we moved into a small alleyway where there were a number of people already there. From where we were standing we could see the remains of a barricade. Lying at the barricade were three men all on top of the other. Immediately beside them on his back was an elderly man. He appeared to be alive as his arms were moving. I asked some of the men, could they not pull him in. They said it was much too dangerous and the other three were dead. Then the chippings came off the wall where the bullets were striking the wall by where we were standing. So we decided to try and move on. We moved to the next alleyway where there was already some people including Fr. Bradley. The fire continued. On the opposite side of the street at the High Flats two boys were crawling along the road. The first one made it up to the doorway. The second one appeared to get shot. He was jerking and when he got to the door he stopped altogether. We were all screaming to the boy inside the doorway to reach out and pull the other lad in, which he did.

Margaret called to me to get behind the wall and I noticed a small boy sitting against the wall. He had blood all over

him. I asked him if he were all right. He said, "They shot me mate beside me." He seemed to be in a dazed condition. Then when I looked to the other side of me in the courtyard four men were lying face down. They appeared to have been shot while running away from the army. As I said Margaret to look at the four fellows, a tiny flat (?) soldier came round the corner. He said, "Fucking bastards, move," We immediately moved. One of the soldiers reached for Fr. Bradley and Margaret yelled at them that he was a priest. Then the soldiers started kicking us. One made a lunge at me again. Margaret got between him and myself. The soldier immediately beside him struck Margaret on her head with his rifle butt. One then on my left came running at me again. Margaret got between the soldier and myself again, the soldier behind yelled, "This way." I turned round and said which way. He indicated that we move away from the boys who had been arrested. We moved away then. We went to Dr. Swords and told him about the men. He went over to where the men were lying. Then we just tried to help where we could.

Signed: Margaret A. Johnston

Glenfada Park

As people sheltered in Glenfada Park, away from the carnage on Rossville Street, they were unaware that 4 Paras were approaching. When these soldiers came into view the crowd attempted to escape. Joe Friel, Daniel Gillespie, P. O'Donnell and Joe Mahon were wounded.

Jim Wray, wounded and unable to move, lay just yards from his grandparents home. A Para murdered him as he lay wounded and defenceless. Gerard Donaghy, Gerard McKinney and William McKinney were killed as they sought to escape the murderous advance.

Mr. Malachy Coyle 13 Nicholson Sq. Derry City Occupation Pupil of St. Joseph's Derry Age 14 years Dated 1/2/72

This is a statement taken on behalf of Mr. Malachy Coyle by Leonard Friel, 19 Garden Place, Derry City.

I was at the front of the march on Sunday 30th January 1972. The steward went forward and was arguing with the soldiers. The officer in charge paid little attention to his words. He turned his back on the steward and the soldiers moved forwards. The crowd ran when they saw this, and the soldiers started firing gas and spraying dye. People were running everywhere caught by the gas and dye. I went towards Colmcille Court to get some fresh air. When I reached Colmcille Court I heard that a man and a boy had been shot. I stood around for about five minutes, when everyone started running. I ran into Glenfada Park and stood behind a row of garages. I knew at this time that the army had fired live bullets at the crowd. I could hear the gunfire coming closer and I ran for an opening in Glenfada Park. Before I reached the opening I man pulled me into a backyard. We hid behind a dustbin and looked out to see if we could see the army. I could see three unarmed men lying on the ground in Glenfada Park. One of the men had his left eyebrow shot away. He was lying face down on the ground.

I made a move towards this man but the man in the yard with me pulled me back. We then tried to get into this house, but the man said we should not as the door of the back yard was open and the army would be able to see us. We looked towards the wounded men on the ground and the man with the eye wound looked up at us and exchanged a few words with the man in the yard with me. I heard another shot coming from the direction of the soldiers and I then knew that the man had been shot again in the back of the left-hand shoulder. He gave a groan and I could then see that the man was dead. I looked across the court, and saw about eight soldiers running across from my left to right. The first soldier looked around the corner and saw a group of women taking shelter from the army gunfire. He shouted that he was going to shoot them. He also called them bastards. The man in the yard with me said that we show ourselves as the army would shoot us if they had seen us in the yard. I followed the man out with my hands on top of my head. We stood looking at the soldiers who were still threatening the women. I saw a youth wearing a dark blue suit panic, and start running. One of the soldiers shot him in the stomach before he had even made a step. The soldier had shot him from almost point blank range. On seeing this, I panicked and ran towards the opening on my right hand side. I heard more shooting but I kept running until I was well away from the gunfire danger.

This is my statement. Malachy Coyle.

In the immediate aftermath of Bloody Sunday the British Army claimed that they had come under sustained attack from

gunmen and bombers. Not one soldier was treated for injuries received on Bloody Sunday. No weapons or explosives were seized by the military save for 4 nail bombs that were planted on Gerard Donaghy by the authorities.

I, Raymond Manassas Rogan of 10 Abbey, Londonderry say -

On 30 January 1972 I was in my house. During the afternoon I heard firing coming from beyond Glenfada Park. I looked out of my window and I saw two men lying on the ground with people round them on the footwalk which ran at right angles to my house. I opened the door and gestured to the people to bring them in. A young man whose name I later learnt was Gerald Donaghy was brought into my sitting room. He was unconscious and badly wounded in the lower left abdomen. A man who said he was a doctor was present. The doctor told me that he would have a chance of living if he was got to hospital soon. I volunteered to take him in my car and I set off for Altnagelvin Hospital with the wounded man in the back seat. Mr. Leo Young accompanied me. As I drove off my car I was aware of further shooting coming from the same direction as before. I drove down Fahan Street, turned right down Lecky Road, left into St. Columbs Wells, left into Lone Tower Street and then into Barrack Street where I was stopped at an army barricade by the Royal Anglican Regiment. I was immediately pulled out at gunpoint, thrown against a fence. I attempted to protest as I had a wounded man but was told to shut up or I would be shot. After half an hour I was made to sit down and after another half hour we were taken to an army compound on the Craigavon Bridge. My car had been driven away but I didn't see this being done. I had asked an officer to contact the RUC but he told me he was contacting nobody and also told me that if I made a move I was dead as one stiff wasn't enough for them.

At the Army compound I was searched and photographed with a soldier named Poole who was put down as the arresting soldier although this was not correct. I put this to Poole but he just said that he was there. I was then handed over to the RUC and made a statement to Detective Sergeant MacTaggart. The statement related exactly the same facts that I have made above. I was then stripped and searched and tested with a jellysniff and I heard the operator say it was negative. I was then told by MacTaggart that a bomb had been on the wounded man in my car and that they had broken open the boot of my car. I protested about this as they had the keys. There was then an explosion and MacTaggart indicated, but didn't actually say, that it was of the bomb found on the wounded man being detonated.

I was then transferred to Victoria Barracks and was kept there for about 2 1/2 hours. I was there told that I was being detained under the Special Powers Act for questioning by the Special Branch and the reason given was that explosives had been found in my car. I then identified myself as the Chairman of the Abbey Street and Area Tenants Association and as such was known to Inspector McCullough and asked for him to be informed of my arrest. After half an hour the sergeant told me I was released and that I had to go to the compound to get my car. I was there my MacTaggart. He came with me in my car to the police station. He told me my car would have to be checked and he would arrange for this to be done that night. During the time of checking I was told by MacTaggart that the wounded man was dead and I was told to claim for damage to my car.

(Signed) Raymond Rogan

Statement taken and witnessed by C G Leonard 23 February 1972.