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Brigid just an afterthought in Barron report

(Valerie Robinson, [Irish News](#))

Interview

Fr Jimmy Carr, whose sister Brigid Carr was shot in crossfire between the IRA and the British army on November 23 1971

Brigid Carr was planning to travel home to spend the weekend with her mother when she was gunned down by the IRA during a border attack.

The 26-year-old waitress was the youngest of four in the Carr family and had always been considered the pet, called "the wee one" by her mother and siblings alike.

She worked at the Inter-County Hotel in Lifford, Co Donegal on weekdays but spent weekends with her mother Sarah Ann in Fanad.

"I remember her being a quiet girl who was very dedicated to my mother," Brigid's brother, Fr Jimmy Carr, said.

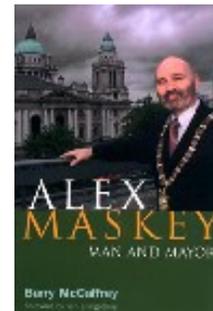
"She liked to travel home at the weekends to be with her. She did that every Friday evening. She always said she would never emigrate because of our mother. And that was at a time when many people were emigrating, including my other sister."

On the day of the attack Brigid had been shopping in Strabane, Co Tyrone, which is linked by a bridge to Lifford. On November 23 1971 she was walking close to the border when IRA gunmen opened fire on British soldiers.

The soldiers had been setting up ramps at the Strabane end of the bridge while the IRA men were hidden just behind the post office in Lifford. The Strabane army post was a regular target for attack, with republican gunmen having an easy escape route into the Republic.

Brigid was struck by an IRA bullet and her family believe that she died on the spot.

However, she was kept alive artificially at Altnagelvin



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by Barry McCaffrey

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Hospital in Derry for three days before staff gave up the battle to save her.

One of Brigid's work colleagues told reporters at the time: "She was so accustomed to troops being in the area that she would have walked across without thinking about it. She was a very quiet girl."

Fr Carr was 35 when his sister died and remembers the aftermath as a lonely time for his family.

"We were without help except for the local people. We came from a very local place, and our neighbours and friends were very helpful but there was nil from anybody else," he said.

"We didn't receive even a word of sympathy from the [Irish] government and there wasn't a single visit from the gardai. I suppose things were just like that at the time and there was an acceptance generally that these kind of things happened.

"After something that like you're focussed on the person you've lost rather than the treatment you receive yourself. It's only afterwards it hits you.

"My mother was more solid than I was. She seemed to accept what happened. In some way she had always been very attached to her faith and must have believed that this was God's will. That seemed to be an awful support to her.

"I couldn't accept that even though I was a clergyman. I found it very difficult."

The Dublin-based cleric is also angry at the treatment his sister's killing received from Mr Justice Henry Barron during his investigation into a series of killings during the Northern Ireland conflict.

"I was a bit disgusted with the Barron report. It put my sister's death as an appendix with other deaths. It treated our case as an afterthought. There were no conclusions.

"I had hoped that Judge Barron would point to why nothing was done at the time but he just presented a few documents and very little commentary that didn't point in any direction. I also feel that the Oireachtas subcommittee that's examining the report is going nowhere."

Fr Carr said he believed that his family were victims of the times they lived in: "You have to remember that this was 1971, the very beginning of the Troubles. The cabinet in Dublin was very divided about what to do with the IRA – to help it or just tolerate it.

"The Garda inquiry [into Brigid's death] seemed to be nil. It was wound up after a few weeks. We later learned that the names of the three perpetrators were known. There had been witnesses but they wouldn't sign anything.

"We know that the killers were known to Garda headquarters. They had been active before and after my sister's death and yet the gardai did nothing."

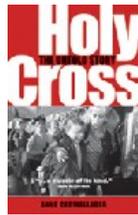
He said he hoped the Northern Ireland-based Historical Enquiries Team (HET) might shed new light on Brigid's killing and the ensuing RUC and Garda investigations.

He said the HET "seems committed and active in a constructive way".

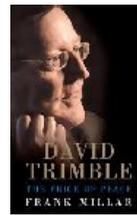
October 3, 2006

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