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From The Times September 11, 2008

# An IRA bullet in the spine at 19

## Behind the story

John Moore, from Peterborough, was 19 when he went to Northern Ireland as a Rifleman with the Royal Green Jackets in 1981. Ten days before the end of his tour he was in a covert position near the border with the Republic, hiding in a derelict van in a farmyard near Crossmaglen as they watched for IRA units coming over from the south. But the IRA saw them first.

“I was on stag [sentry duty]. It was a nice summer’s evening, the sun was going down. Then suddenly they were firing at us with M16s and Armalites. They were about 150 metres [490ft] away. I could see the holes appearing in the side of the van. I was screaming, angry and upset and fearful. Deano – Lance Corporal Gavin Dean – was shot by two bullets in the initial burst of gunfire. He stumbled out of the van – he was in a bad way. I got out and returned fire but I had no real idea where they were.

“I could see this hedgerow disappearing in front of us. I then ran out of ammunition, and rather than reload I picked up another weapon. I got to round eight when I was shot myself. I was shot in the spinal column, just below the neck. I was instantly paralysed, although I did not know it at the time.”

The rest of the platoon, who were nearby, rushed to help, and within five minutes the firing stopped. The wounded were taken to hospital in

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Belfast, but Lance Corporal Dean died by the time they got there.

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Rifleman Moore, now 46, recovered some use of his legs, although he still uses a wheelchair most of the time. Reflecting on the Troubles, he said: "There has not been a victory for anyone. All there has been is death, injury, pain,



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destruction. But at last people are talking, whereas once they would have been shooting and bombing each other. Over time we just wore each other out.

"The Service draws a line under the whole conflict. That's it, it's over. This is the end. Now it is time to pay tribute to all the people who have died and have suffered. For me the overwhelming thought is the lasting memory of my friend."

Quite right Brian. Maybe would-be recruits for the British Army will read the words of Mr Moore and think again before singing the line. Stay at home and get a proper job.

Thomas, Northampton, England

The motto is "stay at home and leave the inhabitants of other countries alone."

The men of South Armagh were the better soldiers.

Brian P O Cinneide, eThekwini, Afrika Borwa

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