

# UNFINISHED BUSINESS

State Killings  
and the  
Quest for Truth



Bill Rolston

One in ten of those killed during the last thirty years of conflict over the North of Ireland was killed by the state. Yet very few British army, RUC or Intelligence personnel were ever charged with murder, punished or disciplined for what they did. The killings were carried out with impunity and quickly forgotten.

But the relatives of the dead did not forget. How could they? In the hours and days after the killings, their loved ones and the circumstances of their deaths were transformed beyond recognition as state misinformation sources swung into action, often willingly aided by compliant media. Deliberate attacks by state forces became 'self-defence'; a child collecting milk became a 'rioter' and people offering themselves for arrest were 'triggering bombs', or 'making sudden movements as if to shoot'. Adding insult to injury, the relatives themselves have been insulted, harassed and attacked by the police and army. The victims and their relatives became the guilty ones while the perpetrators were exonerated.

Getting rid of the lies and establishing the truth has been an uphill struggle. Against the odds, determined individuals and groups have campaigned for justice at every opportunity. There have been many setbacks but some spectacular successes. In recent years, with the peace process, the families of the dead have demanded recognition by victims' commissions and organisations. Thanks to persistence and determination, their concerns are now part of the agenda.

In this book, people tell their stories of battling with the authorities to establish the truth about state killings. They describe how they took up the fight, often unwillingly and in circumstances of great pain and sadness. Here are the testimonies of ordinary people who became extraordinary champions of human rights, challenging the might of the state and sometimes succeeding.

For the majority, however, the fight goes on.

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Beyond the Pale  
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