

Large print guide

Northern Ireland: Living with the Troubles



The Troubles is the name given to a near 30-year conflict that engulfed Northern Ireland. At its heart was a complex series of issues including equality, in whose interests was the country run, and ethnic and national identity.

This was, and remains, a contentious period. The Troubles' origins can be traced back centuries. In 1998 the Good Friday Agreement was signed, bringing a fragile peace. Yet many aspects of the conflict remain unresolved to this day.

People have different perspectives on what took place. There is no single story that everyone involved can agree on.

You may find some of the opinions expressed in this exhibition challenging. However, encouraging people to express their version of events has allowed peace to endure.

Please enter and consider one of the more difficult periods of our shared history.

A note from the Curator

The latter half of the 20th century saw the outbreak of many civil conflicts around the world. The causes were many and varied: inequality, internal repression, sectarian tension, territorial disputes, the wish for independence from a colonial power.

The Troubles were no exception, sharing many of the same underlying causes and tensions. However, the conflict's potency and uniqueness lie in it taking place in a part of the United Kingdom. Yet to many in the UK it seemed, and still does seem, remote and distant.

In this exhibition I wanted to explore the fact that so much of what took place during the Troubles is contested, or just remembered differently.

I have left much of the storytelling to the people who experienced the conflict to address these narratives in their own way. It is *their* version of events.

Craig Murray, Lead Curator

IWM does not endorse or align with any of the views or opinions expressed in the first-hand testimonies featured in this exhibition.

The night of 27-28 June 1970

Violence erupted on this night in Belfast, near St Matthew's church at the junction of the republican Short Strand and the loyalist Newtownards Road. Three people died, two loyalists and one republican. These are the facts everyone agrees on. Everything else remains contested.

The loyalist version is that shots were fired by the Provisional IRA (PIRA) into a crowd during a riot. The riot had begun that afternoon after attacks on a flute band returning from an Orange Order parade.

The republican version is that loyalists attacked St Matthew's church to invade the Short Strand and the PIRA defended their community with the few guns they had.

This event, and its contradictions, epitomises the divisions that underpin this entire conflict. It also foreshadowed the descent into violence.

A note from the Curator

I first encountered this incident on a walking tour of East Belfast a few years ago. Our guide, from a loyalist perspective, told us his version of events and then cordially handed over to another guide from the republican community to tell his.

It brought home the importance of people being able to express themselves in a constructive way and how it has helped Northern Ireland maintain peace, of a sort.

(Lightbox caption)

The Ballymacarrett district of East Belfast, with St Matthew's church in the background, 20th March 1975.

Alex Bowie via Getty Images

(Map caption)

This map shows the area around St Matthew's during the early 1970's. The Catholic community in green and the Protestant community in orange.

Inspired by a British military map from the IWM collection, different areas of Belfast were colour coded to reflect the majority religious community at the time.

Belfast has since undergone major urban redevelopment, changing the geography significantly.

(Transcripts)

Jim Gibney on the night of the 27 June 1970, from a republican point of view

'There was this kind of, strange light about the street and into that strange light came these figures, who were armed, at least one was armed with a rifle and some of them had short arms but certainly the man with the rifle that I recall walking past me was walking past me to the end of the street...within a short period of time I think maybe about nine o'clock, or half nine, a gun battle started and it was a pretty shocking experience, to say the least, as a 16-year-old, you were watching what effectively looked like a war movie in front of your eyes in the street... so, from that point onwards, until I think the early hours of the morning to my memory now a raging gun battle involving the guy I had just saw at the corner, walking past me at the corner of the street... and I think he may well have been replaced in the course of that period of time by others. But there was certainly from that location, where I was watching it there was a constant exchange of fire between that person and others from the loyalist part of Belfast... East Belfast... later on it became clear that the local IRA and the local defence forces had combined together to protect the district from attack... I think about three o'clock, maybe, maybe later, that the

British Army had begun to re-emerge after what was then a four to five hour gun battle during which they were nowhere to be seen and the community was basically left on its own to defend itself while the state implicitly stood back and allowed the attack to happen.'

Robert Niblock on the night of the 27 June 1970, from a loyalist point of view

'My memories of it is that a local band, an East Belfast band, Gertrude Star, were coming back from the Whiterock parade, and were walking down Newtownards Road and were attacked at the bottom of Short Strand, Seaforde Street by nationalists and there was a bit of a riot and that escalated later that night into shootings. The streets facing the chapel would have been Josephine Street, Fraser Street, Central Street and basically my recollection of it is that at one stage the Protestants tried to attack the chapel and couldn't get in through the gates and the Catholics, which later transpired was the IRA, had got hold of a couple of guns and were firing on the Protestant crowd. That Protestants didn't really have and the narrative became, from a nationalist point of view, the Battle of St Matthews, but it really wasn't because the Protestants didn't have any guns, there

was no battle, it was Catholics in the Short Strand shooting and I think the figures were two Protestants shot dead... and I think that there was 27 injured and on the nationalist side there was one guy shot dead but it turned out he was shot by an IRA gunman... I was only a 15-year-old, I lived at the far end of the Short Strand where there was some shooting, but basically most of the shooting was down this end and went on most of the night, Saturday night, Sunday morning... you know, there was no battle. It was Catholics firing on unarmed Protestants as and the two Protestants who were shot dead were both unarmed and that's my recollection of it, as a 15-year-old.'

The descent into violence

In 1969, British troops were deployed throughout Northern Ireland after the rioting in Derry/Londonderry's Bogside area. The rapid descent into violence made the 1970s the darkest period of the conflict for all: paramilitaries, the Army, the police, and civilians who made up more than half of all those killed during the Troubles.

The intensity of the conflict changed throughout the decades. This saw the Army and the police's role adapt accordingly.

Nevertheless, the violence of the 1970s and the 1980s defined the conflict in the media and in the minds of the public.

Hear from republican and loyalist combatants, British soldiers, and police on how they viewed each other and from civilians who lived through these frightening years.

A note from the Curator

Talking about the roles of the British Army, the police and paramilitaries in Northern Ireland is difficult. Members, or supporters, of each of these groups often feel the 'other side' does not deserve a voice.

However, we need to understand the experiences of those who fought and lived through this conflict, to truly comprehend why people joined paramilitary groups, the British Army, or the police.

It is for you to decide whether you agree or disagree with the voices you will hear.

(Lightbox caption)

Joe McCann, commander of the 3rd Battalion, Official IRA in the Markets area of Belfast during the siege of the Inglis Bakery in Eliza Street, 11 August 1971.

Terence Spencer/Popperfoto via Getty Images

(Transcripts)

Danny Morrison, ex-Provisional IRA (PIRA) member on the situation in Belfast in the early 1970s and why he joined the PIRA

‘Friends were getting arrested, friends were getting tortured, friends were being interned, and I came to the conclusion that I couldn’t stand by as if nothing was happening, getting on with my long-haired student life, drinking after classes and having a good time, when this was happening to my neighbours and my friends. So there came a point when I decided that I couldn’t carry on and I took a decision was going to join the Republican movement.’

William Mitchell, ex-Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) member on why he joined the loyalist paramilitary group

‘I think I got to the position in my early years in early 1974 at 15 of there has to be some way of responding back to the indiscriminate nature of the IRA atrocities, because conventional warfare isn’t successful and paramilitaries were on the rise and I sought then to join one of them which was the UVF.’

Ex-UUVF member on his reasons for joining the Ulster Volunteer Force

'The motivation was a reaction to the violence of the Provisional IRA... having lived in the city centre I was very aware of the violence coming from that quarter...however, as time went on there were certain people that I knew who were killed by the Provisional IRA, so there was no one major incident... however, I suppose, the tipping point for me and many others was the 21 July 1972 which has become known as Bloody Friday.'

E.S. Haggan, ex-Royal Ulster Constabulary and Police Service Northern Ireland officer on encounters with Provisional IRA members.

'I wanted to find out their motivation, their ideology, their political thinking and even their religious sort of background how it tied in with what they believed and what they thought, because at the end of the day these were people who were planning to kill myself, my colleagues, members of the Army and even civilians.'

Action for Community Transformation women's group, on how they viewed paramilitaries in their community

'I seen paramilitaries in my community as protectors in the 70s, 80s up till the early 90s and republicans and nationalists as the enemy. They were the ones who were always trying to cause the hurt, the harm, the death.'

Liam McAnoy, ex-Official IRA member on the IRA split and views on the Provisional IRA

'One section of the republican movement, if you like, who believed that the IRA existed to promote the interest of the Irish working class and the other side who were the Provisionals who believed that the interest of the IRA was to protect the Catholic nationalist community, and in a sense their motivation was totally sectarian and that too was my belief which is why I was in the Officials.'

Jake Jackson, ex-Provisional IRA member on joining the IRA and the subsequent split in the organisation

'One day we were told we were B Company, 2nd Battalion IRA and then a neighbour of mine, who was in the senior republican movement, he came into a meeting we were at and he said we are now A Company, 1st Battalion, Provisional IRA. So it wasn't until much later that I learned about the split and the reasons for the split.'

(Object caption)

Rubber bullet

First used by the British Army in Belfast in 1970 in crowd control and riot situations. When fired to ricochet off the ground, they were usually non-lethal. 56,000 were fired up to 1976.

However, rubber and plastic bullets caused the deaths of 17 people during the Troubles - eight were children. Others sustained life changing injuries. 16 of those killed were Catholics. Nationalist communities believed these bullets were used disproportionately against them.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Vehicle number plate

The Provisional IRA (PIRA) began using the devastating and indiscriminate car bomb in 1972. This plate was removed by Private Steve Kirvan, a member of an Army explosive ordnance disposal team, after defusing one in Portadown in 1973.

The PIRA saw this weapon as extremely effective. Cars were efficient containers and delivery systems for the bomb as they could be driven to the site. They caused massive damage and required few PIRA volunteers to place the device.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Provisional IRA (PIRA) badges

The Provisional IRA became the most widely known republican paramilitary group. These badges were sold in areas such as West Belfast to show support and raise funds.

Those who opposed paramilitaries saw them as murderers who targeted civilians and the security forces. Many felt badges like these presented a false idea of the group as 'freedom fighters'.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) handkerchief

This screen-printed handkerchief was made by UVF paramilitaries in the Long Kesh internment camp. Crafts like these were sold in loyalist areas to raise money for the prisoners.

‘Special Category Status’ was introduced in 1972 by the British government. This gave paramilitaries recognition as prisoners of war rather than criminals. The government ended the policy in 1976. The debate over prisoner status was a powerfully emotive issue – were these people criminals or soldiers? Terrorists or freedom fighters?

IWM collection

(Object caption)

The flag of the 3rd Battalion Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR)

The Ulster Defence Regiment, the largest regiment in the British Army, was formed in 1970 and served only in Northern Ireland. All its soldiers came from Northern Ireland and carried out a difficult and dangerous job. Many lost their lives.

Republicans saw the UDR as a tool of British state oppression and a sectarian military force. They also accused the Regiment of colluding with loyalist paramilitaries in the killing of Catholics.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Release letter

This is a copy of a release letter issued to a loyalist paramilitary member. The individual was jailed for life in the 1970s for the murder of several people in a bomb attack. Due to good behaviour, he was deemed reformed and released after completing a pre-release programme in prison.

The Good Friday Agreement saw the mass release of paramilitary prisoners. Although most people voted for the agreement, some objected forcefully to the release of individuals who had killed or wounded others.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Bloody Friday poster

In revenge for Bloody Sunday earlier that year, when 13 unarmed protesters were shot dead by the Army, the Provisional IRA (PIRA) planted 22 bombs around Belfast city centre on 21 July 1972.

Although the PIRA claimed they gave warnings these were inadequate to prevent the loss of life.

The timing and number of explosive devices used completely overwhelmed the security forces. Nine people died and 130 were injured on the day.

IWM collection

(Photo caption)

Members of the 1st Battalion, The Parachute Regiment arrest people in the Bogside in Derry/Londonderry on Bloody Sunday. Soldiers opened fire on unarmed protesters killing 13 with a 14th dying some months later. The Saville Enquiry, set up in 1998 to find out what really happened on that day found that the killings were '*not a justifiable response to a lethal attack by republican paramilitaries but instead soldiers opening fire unjustifiably*'. It remains one of the most notorious incidents of the Troubles.

© Crown copyright: IWM (MH 30539)

(Photo caption)

A sign outside of a British Army vehicle check point in Newry, County Down. Army and police checkpoints were an everyday sight and could pop up anywhere, often to the annoyance of people going about their daily lives. It can be clearly seen that this sign has been shot at.

© Crown copyright: IWM (CT 628)

(Photo caption)

The Provisional IRA developed increasingly sophisticated bomb-making techniques throughout the Troubles. They also developed improvised weapons such as these mortars which were abandoned after an unsuccessful attack on an Army base. Similar weapons were used to attack Downing Street in London in February 1991.

© Crown copyright: IWM (CT 629)

(Photo caption)

Top: The aftermath of two IRA car bombs detonated without warning at Thiepval Barracks in Lisburn, in October 1996. One soldier was killed, and 30 other personnel were injured. The bombing came at a time when peace talks had been underway for several years. The IRA had agreed a ceasefire in 1994 but British government stipulations that they disarm before talks could take place caused it to be abandoned in February 1996.

© Crown copyright: IWM (HU 98371)

Bottom: Devastation caused by a car bomb in Omagh on 15 August 1998. This was the single worst atrocity carried out in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. 29 people were killed and over 300 injured. The attack was carried out by the Real IRA, a group who had split with the Provisional IRA over their opposition to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.

© Crown copyright: IWM (HU 98382)

(Photo caption)

The 1981 hunger strike was a major turning point in the Troubles. Support for the strikers in the nationalist and republican community was strong. The British government was accused of allowing these men to die. Riots such as this one in Derry/Londonderry's Bogside were protests against the British position.

© A W Martin (IWM HU 41951)

(Photo caption)

The British Army was deployed in August 1969 after violence in the Bogside in Derry/Londonderry and Belfast. This photo shows British troops on the loyalist Shankill Road in West Belfast after a night of street disturbances on 11 October 1969. Two local men were shot dead by the Army, and an RUC officer was shot by loyalists – the first member of Northern Ireland's police force to die in the Troubles.

© IWM (HU 55869)

(Infographic caption)

The 1970s was the most violent period during the conflict. The intensity changed throughout the decades. This saw the Army and the police's role adapt accordingly.

The conflict was not fought on a distant battlefield. It was fought on and over streets, in towns and cities, and civilians were often caught in the crossfire, making up over half of the casualties across the entire conflict.

Estimates such as these are for reference only given questions of state collusion and denials by groups regarding certain violent acts. Yet, it is evident that the majority of victims were civilians and more members of the state/security forces died compared to members of paramilitary groups.

Statistics taken from the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) database, part of Ulster University.

(Transcripts)

Jake Jackson, ex-Provisional IRA member on targeting police and soldiers

‘To be able to engage in armed actions against human beings you have to depersonalise them. So to me, I viewed the RUC, the British Army and all other operators within the state as nothing more than targets... anyone can shoot a target but it’s much more difficult to shoot ‘Brian’ who has three children, and likes golf and does a bit of charity work, a keen hill runner and probably reads the same books as you. So, you don’t think of ‘Brian’, you simply think of a defender of a rotten, corrupt and unjust system... the actors in a conflict have to distance themselves from the humanity of their enemy but in doing that you diminish your own humanity.’

E.S. Haggan, ex Royal Ulster Constabulary and Police Service Northern Ireland officer on how soldiers interacted with people and the RUC

‘Sometimes it did depend on the regiment that was in at the time, how they interacted with the civilians on the street and interacted even with us... these young fellas are coming in, maybe, for six months at

a time, spending time out on their patrols but they're coming from a military background, so when they're speaking with civilians it's kind of... it's down to the individual, funnily enough, the individual soldier as it were, in how they got themselves across.'

Adrian Kerr, grew up during the Troubles, on the Ulster Defence Regiment

'Any interaction with the UDR was at best abusive and on regular occasions physically violent... in my sort of earliest teenage years, not as an adult or anything like that, being pushed around, hit by rifle butts, stuff like that, you know, it was sort of the norm.'

Anthony McIntyre, ex-Provisional IRA member on his attitude to the British Army and security forces

'The British Army were the people who we were in constant conflict with that's who the fighting was with. The cops were looked upon as water carriers for the British Army that was the general IRA attitude, not just my attitude. We had that attitude towards the Army and the RUC. It was one of unremitting hostility.'

Action for Community Transformation women's group, community group on their attitudes to the British Army

'I personally didn't see them as my enemy, I personally didn't, because we seen them as, as you say they're British Army, we seen them as being our Army, part of our side. So, at the beginning you did say, 'why are they being aggressive towards us, when we are the British people within this society?' But at the end of the day, they were doing a job and they were being neutral.'

Ex-UDR officer, ex-Ulster Defence Regiment officer on why he joined the UDR

'The amount of slaughter on the streets by terrorists encouraged you in. Don't ask me, you know? The average person probably would have went, 'I'm not going near that' but you just did and it was a wee bit like the Pals battalions. You wanted to... you seen what had been going on and you wanted to make the streets better, you wanted a better life for everyone around you.'

Ex-UDR soldier and Ex-UDR officer, ex-Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers on how they worked with the rest of the British Army

‘You had that feeling of people reinventing the wheel, sometimes, on a fairly regular basis, ‘We can sort this issue out!’ different battalions coming and thinking we can sort this issue out, but they were just really stirring things up, but they were just aggravating more, but you know what?

I had the greatest respect for soldiers coming in because I think without that there would definitely been civil war.’

Malachi O’Doherty, journalist and author who grew up during the Troubles on an encounter with the British Army

‘More than anything my feeling was a sense of disappointment and I suppose, realism, a sense of, ‘I get it now’... this isn’t about a mannered, careful, disciplined, body of conscientious soldiers coming into the city to restore order; these are people who are going to be a problem as well.’

Hell in a wee place

The towns and cities of Northern Ireland were like those in the rest of the UK. The same shops, road signs and people going about their business – except there were differences.

People's lives could be disrupted by moments of violence. Shootings and bombings became commonplace events. They saw soldiers in their gardens when they went to work in the morning. They passed British Army checkpoints on some roads and paramilitary ones on others. Belfast shoppers entered the city centre through turnstiles and were checked by security forces.

As peace seemed more likely, restrictions relaxed. However, the killings continued. Armed police and soldiers on the streets were still part of everyday life.

Listen to the voices of people who lived in Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Hear how they experienced events and viewed each other.

A note from the Curator

The title is a reworking of a quote by a French officer at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam in 1954. He described the siege as '*Hell in a very small place*'. To my mind it works. Also 'wee' is often used to describe things in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland may have looked the same as the rest of the UK during the Troubles, but it was not. This is important to understand.

I want visitors to appreciate that their 'normal' was something unrecognisable to someone in say, Manchester, Leeds, or Leicester – even at the height of the IRA's bombing campaign against British cities.

(Lightbox caption)

Residents and visitors walking past a wire security cage surrounding shops and businesses in the centre of Belfast in 1972. The recently installed wire fence and cage has been put in place to protect the building from possible bomb damage.

Rolls Press/Popperfoto via Getty Images

(Transcripts)

Ex-UVF member on how the government changed its approach towards paramilitary violence

‘But, at some point someone said, ‘right, we’ve had enough. We’ve been trying to do things the right way, we are now going to be open to... we’ll use the courts and we’ll put these men away. We’re going to start using our special forces to execute these people, if we find them in the right place’. So there was that shoot to kill and I believe my friend was shot dead to balance up the idea that there was only nationalists shot dead.’

Jayne Olorunda, grew up during the Troubles, on watching the IRA hide weapons near her house

‘And I remember seeing them putting guns up and down the manhole behind the house: I always remember seeing that, and we never reported it... so there was almost that... my mum did, I think she did report it actually, but there was always that Second World War thing, being an enabler, you know? And I kind of felt, I can see this going on, looking back on my childhood, you might not be helping and you might not be a perpetrator, but you’re certainly

enabling this by not. And I think there's been a few times where I actually resented my mum for reporting things. She had no fear.'

Maeve McLaughlin, grew up during the Troubles in a republican community, on marking the death of hunger strikers at school

'I remember me and a few of my friends going into school; into this Catholic, convent led grammar school, with black arm bands on and being... the authorities in the school demanding we take them off and lining us up outside the principal's office. And of course, we refused to take them off.'

Malachi O'Doherty, grew up during the Troubles, on comparing police in Northern Ireland with forces throughout the rest of the United Kingdom

'Starting from childhood again and becoming aware of it, every policeman you saw had a side arm; a pistol at his side. So you just took that for granted as the normal part of a police uniform. I mean I remember when I first went to England in about 1972 and seeing policemen who didn't have a side

arm and thinking that's quite unusual.'

Brian Allaway, ex-firefighter, on the dangers of carrying out his duties in Belfast

'The fire service was stoned almost on a daily basis when we were going in fire engines to incidents, people would throw stones at us; we were petrol bombed from time to time and from time to time there were incidents where there were shootings and firefighters were often injured. One firefighter, a friend of mine, I was stationed with him for a couple of years at Belfast Central station, was actually shot dead at an incident while fighting a fire.'

Malachi O'Doherty, grew up during the Troubles, on the pressure he received to join the Provisional IRA

'A neighbour I had known since I was five years' old stopped me in the street and said to me, 'some people aren't pulling their weight around here'... social pressure to join the IRA would have come from the man who stopped me in the street. It would have come to some extent from my father, you know? He never actually said... but I mean I started talking

at home and saying, 'Look I can't take this anymore and I'm thinking of going away' and he just basically accused me of being a coward.'

Jayne Olorunda on what she would see most days and everyday life in Northern Ireland as someone growing up during the Troubles

'It was commonplace to walk out of your house in the morning and have an armed British soldier at your gate post, I remember not questioning that and that was every day. Going shopping, opening your handbag up, going through checkpoints which just popped up anywhere. If you wanted to go somewhere, you kind of knew somewhere along that journey you're going to see a checkpoint. Bomb scares were commonplace and again none of that... it was just normal. It was my normal... I didn't... it's only after I've left, and all this has stopped that I think, 'how do people live like that?'

Jim Gibney, Sinn Fein member, on the end of Armed Struggle and hopes for peace

'Armed struggle is not some sort of immutable principle. I mean it's employed whenever its required and not employed when it's not required... In the absence of armed struggle the political momentum

you generate around a party like Sinn Fein, and whatever, working with others, the SDLP, the Irish government, the US... that you create a consensus, you create a momentum where peace has taken root and on the back of that change becomes possible.'

(Object caption)

Razor wire

This razor wire is from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) station at Donegal Pass in South Belfast.

For the RUC, it was a vital defence against acts of aggression. The RUC needed a safe base to protect the local area.

Republicans saw the RUC as being on the side of the Protestant community. To them, these were military style barracks reinforced with walls and razor wire and there to assert the RUC's dominance over the local area.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Hunger strike poster

In 1980 the British government removed Special Category Status for any newly convicted paramilitaries. The first hunger strike by republican prisoners was a protest against the loss of this status, which since 1976 had been denied to many prisoners based on the date of their offence.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher rejected the concept of Special Category Status. She argued that the prisoners were criminals who made their own choice, a choice they had not given their victims.

During the next hunger strike in 1981 ten men starved themselves to death.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Good Friday Agreement booklet

This booklet was issued to all people of voting age outlining the peace deal that became known as the Good Friday Agreement.

Some republicans believed the agreement was a betrayal of their ideals. Some within unionism disagreed with the release of prisoners who had carried out atrocities. They voted against it.

However, 71.1% of the voters voted in favour of it. A clear majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Postal label

This label is from a parcel sent from Westminster to Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness.

McGuinness was an influential Provisional IRA commander firstly in Derry/Londonderry, then as chief of Northern Command, which coordinated operations from around 1976.

McGuinness was the party's chief negotiator in the peace talks in 1998. He eventually became Deputy First Minister in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Some believed those they saw as terrorists and murderers should not be in positions of political power.

IWM collection

(Object caption)

Public information poster

Public information films were a common sight on British television in the 1970s and 1980s.

Tufty was a squirrel who taught children about road safety and was recognisable to children all over the UK.

Here Tufty takes on the darker role of warning children in Northern Ireland about the danger of picking up potentially dangerous devices in the street.

IWM collection

(Photo caption)

Top: Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards patrol a republican housing estate in Strabane in the late 1970s. Patrolling soldiers were so commonplace the small boys in the background continue to play football, seemingly unconcerned.

© IWM (AE8562.1)

Bottom: A soldier on patrol watches a woman walking down the street in a republican area of Strabane in the late 1970s. The graffiti on the wall echoes that in the Bogside in Derry/Londonderry, although someone has attempted to eradicate the word 'Free'.

© IWM (AE8562.2)

(Photo caption)

Left: Shirley Pilkington, a member of the Women's Royal Army Corps searches the bag of a woman entering Belfast city centre. The town centre was sealed off by the security forces with entry gained through turnstiles after searches. The purpose was to ensure the safety of shoppers and prevent bombings.

© Crown copyright: IWM (MH 30544)

(Photo caption)

British troops patrolled the streets in the late 1980s and 1990s as violence increased prior to the first IRA cease fire in 1994. Here, a soldier looks down the sights of his rifle in a pedestrianised part of Newry town centre, County Down.

© Crown copyright: IWM (CT 621)

(Photo caption)

The car bomb was an effective and deadly weapon which the Provisional IRA began using in the early 1970s. The Army often used bomb disposal robots to carry out controlled explosions on suspected car bombs. But many devices required ATOs (Ammunition Technical Officers) to defuse devices by hand.

© A W Martin (IWM HU 47328)

(Murals caption)

On screen: Murals like these, photographed in Belfast during the 1980s, were a common feature within Northern Irish society during the Troubles. Many people lived next to and walked past murals depicting loyalist and republican propaganda every day.

Murals are still seen in Northern Ireland today.

(Transcripts)

Jim Gibney, member of Sinn Fein during the Troubles on common ground between both loyalist and republican communities

‘Yes, there is a class issue around working-class unionists and working-class loyalists and working-class nationalists, and so there’s a common interest around economic matters and matters of that nature, of course there is. But on the fundamental constitutional question, there’s still a dividing line and that’s the way it was and that’s the way it’s been for centuries in Ireland.’

Liam McAnoy, ex-Official IRA member on common ground between both loyalist and republican communities

‘But the reality was that discrimination wasn’t solely against Catholics. For example, women were discriminated against in all those industries... and in actual fact, working class Protestants were discriminated against because it worked on the basis of nepotism; in other words if your father worked in those industries you were more likely to get a job. So quite a lot of working class Protestants who had no

relationship to engineering, to the shipyards were also discriminated against.'

Jayne Olorunda, grew up during the Troubles on moving to different areas in Belfast as a mixed-race family

'You would move in and the first thing obviously, the immediate thing they saw was this family's mixed. And then when they actually started speaking to you it was, if you were in a Catholic area, 'Oh, but you don't support the IRA.' If you were in a Protestant area it was, 'yeah you might hate the IRA but you're Catholic.' So, no matter where you went there was no fit.'

Jeff Dudgeon, gay rights campaigner during the Troubles on life in Belfast during the Troubles as part of the gay community

'The Troubles were gathering pace around us, but we were essentially living a separate life aside from the Troubles. Partly because we were a mixed community, people kept their mouths shut; they didn't argue the case. The early Troubles right through to the end of

the Troubles, in a sense, people didn't argue or fight or discuss the matter. They knew to keep quiet. It could be a matter of life and death.'

Beano Niblock, ex-Red Hand Commando member on seeing similarities between loyalist and republican prisoners

'It was only when I went into prison... these guys, although they are born the other side of the road, although they're a different religion, there's where the commonality is you know? Because we're working class and if you look at the statistics the vast majority of people who went through the prison system would have been working class; the vast majority of people who were killed in the Troubles were working class; and it's not a coincidence, you know? So there has to be that connection between the two communities here, although I didn't see that growing up, probably because I was tutored not to see it.'

Action for Community Transformation women's group, community group on their views of the nationalist and republican communities

'And also they seen themselves as the victims, they never considered themselves the perpetrators. We were wrong, we were the murderers, we were never the victims. But we were, we just never played victims, you know?'

Today and the future

Northern Ireland faces an uncertain future. Brexit has led to trade and border concerns.

The Good Friday Agreement was largely welcomed – mainly because it stopped the killing. But it left many issues unresolved. There were few official mechanisms to promote healing or understanding between victims and perpetrators. Many who were jailed for terrorist offences were released as part of the agreement and now hold positions of political influence and power.

Unionist and loyalists are concerned for their future as part of the UK. Inquests into the actions of some British soldiers have been carried out. The British government is seeking to introduce a statute of limitations that would end prosecution of ex-paramilitaries and members of the security forces.

Republicans are still pushing for a united Ireland. It is likely to be some years before this happens, if at all. However, it is unlikely to disappear from republican and nationalist agendas.

Listen to what people think the future holds for Northern Ireland.

A note from the Curator

Those I spoke to for this exhibition have lived with the Troubles and continue to live with its legacy.

Hope, certainty, scepticism, and despondency sum up what the Good Friday Agreement promised and what it has delivered. Post-Brexit, these feelings are still there but exacerbated by the uncertainty around Northern Ireland's place in the UK.

Predicting the future is a largely fruitless endeavour, but few would wish to return the dark days of the Troubles. If peace endures it will be because people continue to talk and listen to each other, whether they agree with what they hear or not.

(Film caption)

This film features audio testimony and recently filmed footage from Northern Ireland. It asks people to consider life in Northern Ireland today, the legacy of the Troubles, and their hopes and anxieties for the future.

The voices featured in this film were collected in 2022:

Action for Community Transformation

Carol Graham

Eileen Mill

Isobel Quinn

Jean Kinner

Joanie Orr

Julie Beckett

Julie Davidson

Julie Stockman

Patsy Laverty

Anthony McIntyre

Ex-UDR officer

Ex-UDR soldier

Gareth Mulvenna

Joel Keys

Liam McAnoy

Malachi O'Doherty

Maeve McLaughlin

Robert Niblock

Duration: 5 minutes 18 seconds

(Transcript)

I'm very worried about the future because of what is in government. Very worried about it. They want to eradicate anything British, including us. They don't want us here, they want Ireland to be an Ireland of nationalists.

But it still feels to me at times that we're still kind of at war. We're just doing it with words, rather than words with bullets. We don't trust each other. We are not at peace with each other. This doesn't feel like a peaceful country.

It will remain beyond my lifetime. No one who ever fought in the Provisional IRA will live to see what they fought for, a united Ireland.

If we get a united Ireland it doesn't solve the problem of sectarian division. Sectarian division precedes the partition of Ireland as it precedes the Act of Union and goes back to the plantation.

I don't like to make predictions, I really try not to but demographic changes, constitutional changes, everything points towards a reunified Ireland. Now my main concern is there's always going to be loyalists here who will justify the use of violence and see that republicans have used violence to get to the

stage that they are at and will see it as a legitimate way of fighting back. And that's my fear.

Certainly anywhere where there are areas that it would be a problem to take down the walls, those are exactly the areas we should be targeting and working with to bring the local community to a place where the walls can be removed safely though.

How long, how long are we going to be fighting to be who we are? Who our identity is? How long are we going to have to fight just to be who you are?

I mean the Good Friday Agreement was 24 years ago. You take a 24-year-old who was born after the agreement, what have they seen? Nothing different. There's divide. And much as it dismays me, I can't see it changing in the near future.

What I think has stirred the loyalists up a bit because of this fear of being pushed out of the United Kingdom. The border to me is just a stupid place to put a border. Really? Really, in the middle of a sea?

I think it has succeeded (The Good Friday Agreement) because we aren't, even with me talking about the extremism, we aren't seeing what we seen 30 years ago.

I think sectarianism was becoming less of an issue and there's more cooperation in the mid to late 90s; whereas I think sectarianism is being embedded and normalised now, in that we have, instead of having a shared future, it's a shared out future.

There's been no reconciliation. There's still division. There's still probably more ingrained, institutionalised sectarianism now than there ever was.

They don't see it as a country, we do. They will never see it as a country. To me, they are sitting up in Stormont to bring our country down, to get rid of Northern Ireland.

Well unfortunately for me, and people like me, I think the future is still bleak in terms of sectarianism.

But I think importantly that sense of reaching out to those, of, if you like, unionist / loyalist persuasion to say to them: 'you have nothing to fear from this new structure... this is not about imposing on any section of society what had been imposed on a nationalist / republican community or society for so long.'

But we're putting on this act of that we are a normal country. We've got the democracy, we've got

Stormont, we've got the parliament building, we hold the votes every five years. Here's the Good Friday Agreement, here's the document that says we're at peace. But we're not normal. And anyone who thinks we're normal needs to look again.

Exhibition credits

Curatorial:	IWM
Exhibition design:	Anna Montgomery
Graphic design:	IWM
Construction:	Central ECMS, Red Tree Building Contractors IWM
Graphic production:	Format Graphics Ltd Image Group Impress
Audio visual:	Coda to Coda Liminal IWM
Lighting design:	Luminance Lighting Design
Mount making:	IWM
Acoustic consultancy	Sandy Brown
Acoustic fit-out	Resonics

Paint generously supplied by Little Greene

IWM would like to thank our Advisory Panel members for their time during the development of this exhibition.

IWM would further like to thank the following for their contribution to the exhibition:

The women of Action for Community Transformation:

Carol Graham

Eileen Mill

Isobel Quinn

Jean Kinner

Joanie Orr

Julie Beckett

Julie Davidson

Julie Stockman

Patsy Laverty

Adrian Kerr

Alan Murray

Brian Allaway

Danny Morrison

Dr Anthony McIntyre

Dr Gareth Mulvenna

Dr William Mitchell

E.S. Haggan

Gearoid Mac Siacais

Jayne Olorunda

Jeff Dudgeon
Jim Gibney
Joel Keys
Liam McAnoy
Maeve McLaughlin
Malachi O'Doherty
Robert Niblock
Shirley Pilkington
Tom Hartley

This exhibition has been made possible by the provision of insurance through the Government Indemnity Scheme. IWM would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.

IWM have made every effort to research, verify and credit information presented in this exhibition. Any queries relating to copyright should be directed to the Assistant Director of Exhibitions, Interpretation and Design.

Imperial War Museums considers the use of third-party copyright material presented in quotes in this exhibition to be fair and reasonable in accordance with the 2014 exception under UK copyright law.

Sources of content can be supplied on request.
Any queries should be directed to the Exhibitions
Department.

Wallpaper image:

© Rolls Press/Popperfoto via Getty Images