

The Murder of Martha Campbell, Schoolgirl
Springhill Crescent, Belfast. 14th May 1972

Interim Report by Ciarán MacAirt, Paper Trail



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The Murder of Schoolgirl Martha Campbell (13), 14th May 1972



Martha Campbell was 13 years of age when she was shot dead in Springhill Crescent, Belfast on 14th May 1972. There was no investigation.

Her murder is one of a small number of child killings during the conflict that lies unclaimed by any organisation.

In the family photograph above, taken the Christmas before her murder, Martha is the girl on the bottom left holding her dolly. Her big brother, Tony, is over her right shoulder.

Her family and local witnesses have long believed that the British Army shot Martha, having directed fire at her from a position in the flats of Moyard Park, which overlooked the area.

Another girl with her and a local man were lucky not to be injured or killed in the same bursts of fire.

There had been intense fighting in the area following the Kelly's Bar bomb attack the evening before between the British Army, Loyalists and the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

The shooting had stopped for a while, though, and Martha, her friend and local man were the only people on that stretch of the road beside the waste ground to the back of Divismore Park.

In other words, the sniper targeted the unarmed civilians – two teenage girls and local man – deliberately.

No organisation ever claimed the killing although open sources material alleged that a Loyalist gunman of Ulster Volunteer force (UVF) killed Martha.

There was no police investigation into Martha's murder and she would have become another forgotten victim of the conflict except for the prodigious campaigning and research work of her family.

In its failed report into Martha's murder, the Historical Enquiries Team (HET) alleged it had accessed "the only remaining Army records" relating to the incident. It recorded that it could not :

"From the papers supplied by the [British] Army to the HET review process and examination of the open source material, there is no evidence to place the Army in Moyard Park at the time that Martha was shot." (p. 23)

These are not the only remaining British Army records and those discovered by Paper Trail prove that the family was correct and the British Army targeted people in the same area and at the same time that Martha was murdered.

The British Ministry of Defence lied, and police and the HET failed again.

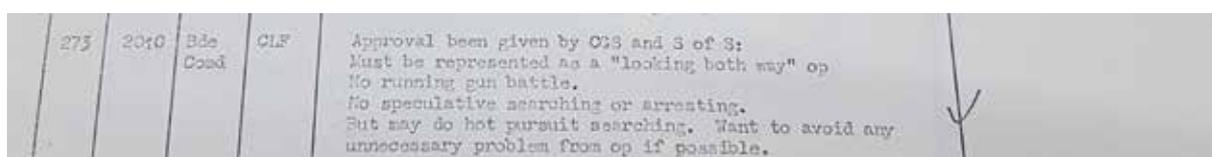
Paper Trail Legacy Archive Research

Over the last number of years and in related investigations for families, Paper Trail has secured unredacted British military Brigade and Headquarters Northern Ireland files.

Buried deep within these secret files is proof that a British military unit was indeed positioned in Moyard and recorded shooting at a target in the area, at the time of Martha's murder.

At 2010 (8:10 pm) the Commander of Land Forces (CLF) informed 39 Brigade Commander (Bde Comd) that the Chief of General Staff (CGS) and Secretary of State had approved an operation which we now know involved 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment enforcing dominance of Ballymurphy area following the violence which erupted after the bombing of Kelly's Bar the day previously.

Orders were that the operation "must be represented as a 'looking both way' op" – allegedly not discriminating between Catholic and Protestant communities.



HONI files later record the sweep of 1 Para through V2, which is a British military unit call sign – first into New Barnsley. From there, 1 Para moved into New Barnsley Parade, New Barnsley Park and the north side of Springfield Road. 1 Para unit B1 then pushed through Divismore Crescent and into Ballymurphy to secure the Bullring.

163	2140	BM 39	B1a	1 Para came through V2 first into New Barnsley. New B Parade New Barnsley Park through to North side Springfield Rd. B2 pushed through Divismore Crescent. B1 pushed through Divismore Crescent. B1 pushed through to secure Bullring. Rescued so far 15 children staying.
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At 2030 (8:30 pm), 1 Kings Regiment reports to Brigade that one of its units, Call Sign V2 was “now firing for some minutes” in the Ballymurphy area.

Martha Campbell was shot dead some time between 8:15 pm and 8:30 pm.

At 2034, 1 Para reported that Call Sign U14 [it was awaiting] was with it and that the planned operation was at V2’s location.

282	2030		SR Ang	1 blast bomb at mobile Divis St. No cas. ✓	HONI
283	2030		Kings	V10 now quiet - Clonard. V2 now firing for some minutes. Ballymurphy. ✓	
284	2032		2Para	Demo at jail. No change, rest of area quiet. ✓	
285	2033		2 Fd	Little patrolling going on. Starting soon. All quiet. X	
286	2034		1Para	U 14 with us now. X	
287	2034		OP	Now at V2 loc. X	

The British military operation then began and 1 Para units B1 – B4 pass through V2’s location and reported the reaction of the local residents as 1 Para moved through and secured New Barnsley, across Springfield Road, through Divismore and into the Bullring.

A retrospective report of at least 17 minutes (2052+ report of incident at 2035) from 1 Kings for 2035 (8:35 pm) alleges 11 high velocity shots at a gunman, Grid Reference (GR) 303748.

Research shows that this is C Company 1 Kings alleging firing from its units at Corry’s timber yard and a hit north of Ballygomartin Road judging by the GR.

296	2050	2Para	Coop York St clear. ✓	
297	2051	1Para	B4 through V2. No reaction. ✓	
298	2052	1Para	B3 following behind. B4 will not be in posn until B4 is in. ✓	
299	2035	Kings	11 x 7.62 at gunman. CR 305748. 1 hit claimed. 3 more gunmen in area will be engaged. ✓	HQNI

A report at 2110 (9:10 pm) reported that V2 fired 2 x High Velocity rounds at a target on the Springmartin Road from Moyard Park.

This tells us that V2 is a 1 Kings unit and call sign and the unit is indeed in the Moyard area. Note that there are no reports that shots were “returned” by the British Army – that is the British Army was not fired upon but shooting at alleged targets.

2110	Kings	V2 fired 2 x HV at tgt. Springmartin Rd from Moyard Pk.	HQNI
2115	2Para	Coop York St clear ✓	

There followed a retrospective report from Kings at 2115 (9:15 pm) alleging that V2 fired 23 rounds between 8:30 – 8:55 pm at a gunman in Divis Park [sic] waste ground from Moyard Parade.

V2 had reported at 8:30pm that it had been firing “for some minutes” before that report.

Divis Park is military shorthand for Divismore Park and on the other side of the waste ground is the area of Springhill Crescent where Martha was killed.

This is damning proof that V2, 1 Kings admitted firing shots from Moyard at an alleged gunman in the exact area and time that Martha was murdered.

The British Ministry of Defence failed to admit this to the original inquest or subsequent investigation by HET.

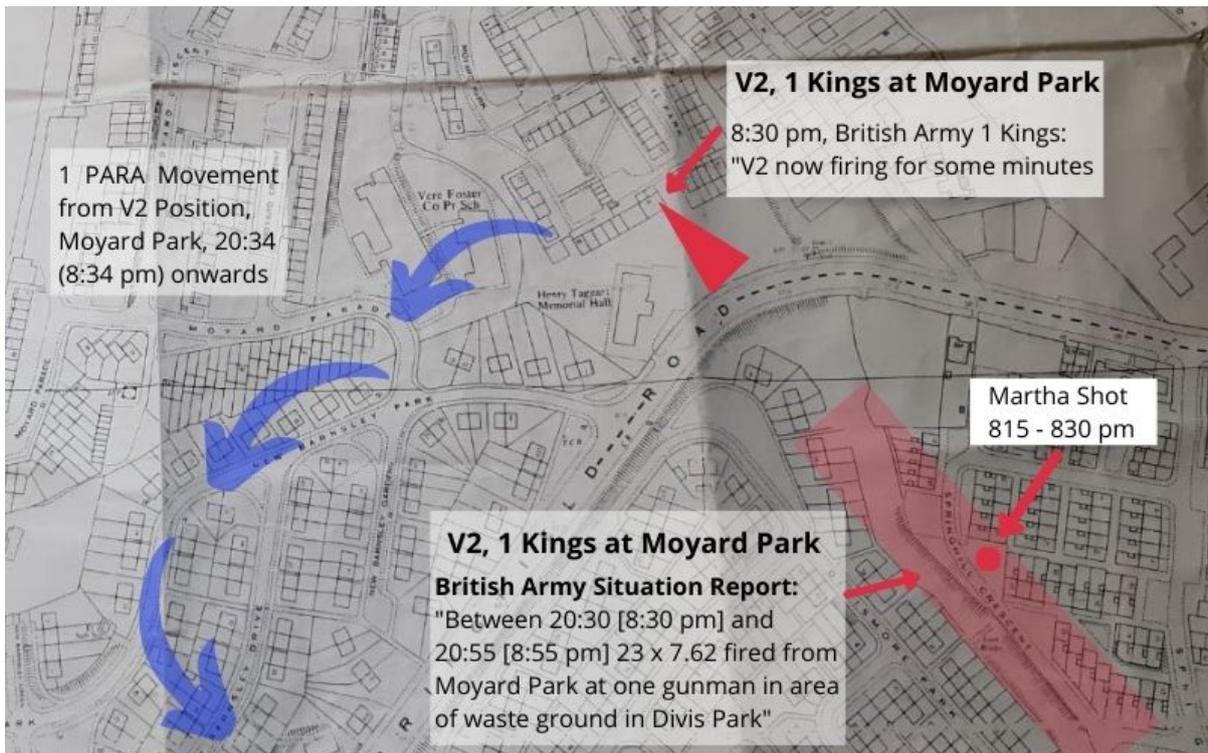
1 Kings then reported to Brigade at 2120 hours (9:20 pm) that the 13-year-old girl who was previously reported as 6 years of age, was called Martha Campbell, that she was shot at 8:30 pm but “circumstances not known”.

(N)	(S)	(C)	(D)	(E)
312	2115	Kings	V2 fired 23 rds between 2030-2055 at gunman, Divis Pk waste ground from Moyard Pde.	HQNI
13	2115	3R Ang	Ref 2038 shot at mobile junc Townsend/Divis. Minor mil cas treated at RAP. Pte Lambert, 3 R Anglian. Returned to duty.	HQNI
4	2115	1Para	B3 going in now.	
5	2120	1Para	B3 no difficulties.	
6	2115	2 Fd	Ref cas Tullymore Gdns. Car Stanley hit on head with rocks. He has been stitched. Will remain in MFN overnight.	HQNI
	2120	2 Fd	4 x HV shots heard in Finaghy area. SR not involved. SR not	
	2120	Kings	Ref RVH. 13 yrs old (previously reported 6 yrs old) Martha Campbell dead, RC, 71 Ballymarphy Rd. 3 x GSW neck. 2030 hrs. Circumstances not known.	HQNI

This information is then transmitted from Brigade to Headquarters Northern Ireland at 9:17 pm.

159	2117	39 Bde	1 Kings 23 rounds fired between 2030 and 2055 at gunmen on Divis Park waste ground from patrol at Moyard Parade.
		39 Bde	Re: Martha Campbell aged 13, dead.

A Situational Report (Sitrep) written the following morning clarifies that the 23 high velocity rounds were fired from Moyard Park but no hits claimed.



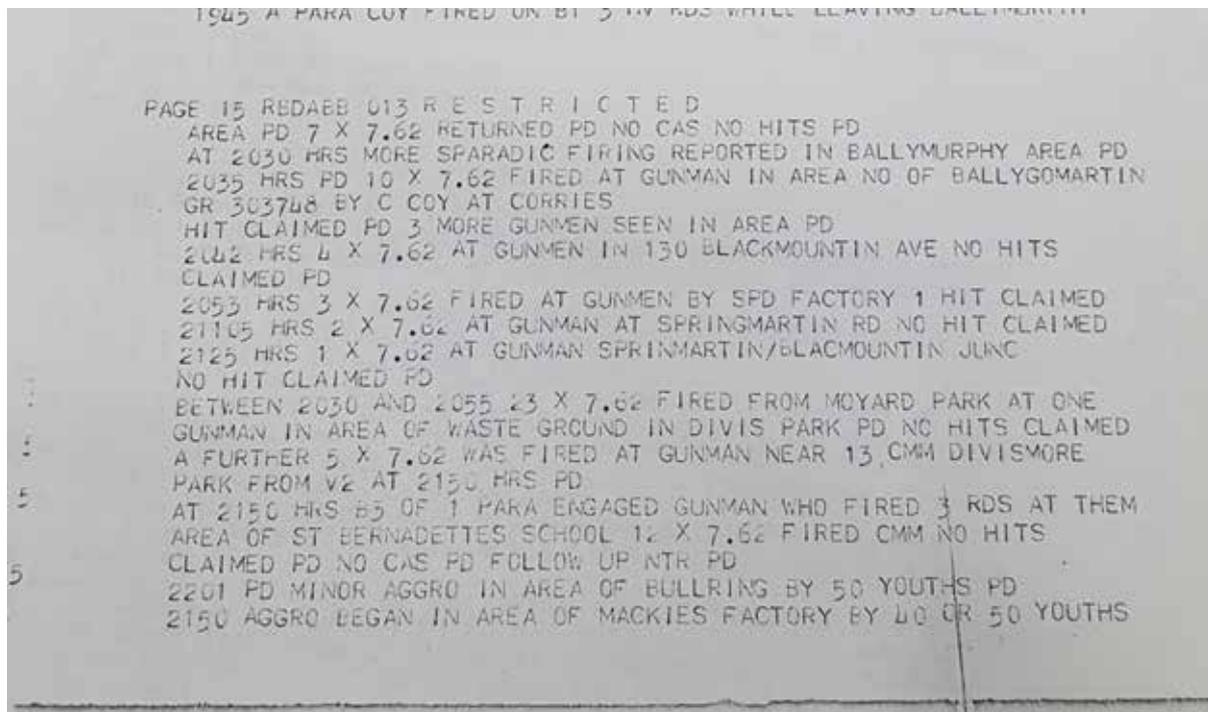
1 Kings does not claim the murder of Martha even though its V2 soldiers were the only military or paramilitary unit reported and recorded firing in the vicinity.

It may stand to reason that V2 was a static Observation Post at Moyard Park overlooking the whole area and protecting the flank of 1 Para as it moved through V2's area, into New Barnsley and into Ballymurphy, rather than an armed patrol firing from Moyard Parade as 1 Para passed through.

Nevertheless, the alleged shooting by V2 from 2030 – 2055 needs further examination as neither 1 Kings nor 1 Para (which is then in the vicinity) report any shooting as we would expect.

Paper Trail knows which files we should interrogate to flush that information and we have requested them from the British Ministry of Defence on behalf of the family.

Again, 1 Kings reported at 8:30pm: "V2 now firing for some minutes" so 1 Kings' contemporaneous reporting is at odds with its retrospective report.



Royal Military Police Investigation

Later a [Lt] Colonel Thomas and Royal Military Police (RMP) reported information regarding the victim, which was then passed to HQNI. The "Col" abbreviation can be Colonel or Lt. Colonel.

A Lt. Colonel JF Thomas (Army No. 346187) served as Assistant Provost Marshall in HQNI from April 1970 to July 1972. This may be him and may therefore be important information due to his rank and parent regiment.

It should be noted that MoD/HET denied any RMP Special Investigation Branch (SIB) investigation, which should be activated in every British Army shooting, but these records at

least prove that RMP files should have information relating to the killing especially if a soldier of such high ranking was tasked personally.

Again, we have targeted these files through a Freedom of Information request with MoD.

172				Col Thomas. Re 13 girl, 4 bullet wounds neck and shoulders 2 small exit one larger one. 4th bullet may Knights of Malta told to go to a house.	
384	2355	✓	CP	Information - Martha Campbell. 3 GSW to right side of neck. 1 exit wound. Taken to RVH by Felix Durragh, (Knights of Malta ambulance driver). Taken from a house in Springhill Ave.	RONI
385	2358	✓	RMP Ops		

Family Comment

Tony Campbell, Martha's brother said:

"The Campbell family fought for nearly half a century to get closure on what happened to our sister, Martha, and who murdered her. No organisation ever claimed responsibility for her murder but the family always believed it was the British Army, based on eyewitness accounts of where the shots came from in Moyard Flats."

"However, the British armed forces failed to recover a bullet as evidence and denied the existence of any British military unit in the vicinity."

"This new evidence from the British Army's own files places a unit of 1 Kings in Moyard Flats, firing 23 High Velocity shots at an alleged target into the area where Martha was walking with her friend and at the time our sister was murdered."

"This critical information was not made available to the family, the original inquest or the Historical Enquiries Team. It was covered up to protect those responsible for our sister's murder."

Paper Trail Conclusions

These files substantiate the witness accounts and the great research by the Campbell family.

Specifically, the British Army was located in Moyard Park and fired high velocity rounds at an alleged target in the area when Martha was murdered. The same British Army units alleged gunmen in the area but, importantly no gunfire from these alleged gunmen. Witnesses record no gunmen in the area, just Martha, her friend and a local family man. All were unarmed.

These British Army files record no gun battle or three-way firefight involving the British Army, Loyalists and Republicans in the area when Martha was murdered.

The British Army files only record V2 1 Kings streaming fire into the area where Martha was murdered prior to the launch of the 1 Para operation.

Retrospective reporting by 1 Kings attempts to amend the time and location of V2's shooting from the minutes leading up to 830pm, to 830pm to 855pm; and from Moyard Park to Moyard Parade. The latter is rectified to Moyard Park the following morning in the Situational Report.

Nevertheless, neither 1 Kings nor 1 Para, which had used the V2 position as a jump-off point for its operation at 8:34pm, reported 25 minutes of firing between 8:30pm to 8:55pm as 1 Para arced from Moyard Park into New Barnsley and down into Divismore Park and Ballymurphy.

1 Para reports its B4 unit through V2 at 8:51pm and "No reaction". A Brigade review of the operation at 9:40pm to the 39 Brigade's Brigade Major reported: "Reaction so far 15 children stoning."

296	2050	2Para	Coop York St clear. ✓
297	2051	1Para	347 through V2. No reaction. ✓
298	2052	1Para	83 following behind. B4 will not be in poan until B4 is in. ✓
299	2055	Kings	11 x 7.62 at gunn. GR 303748. 1 hit claimed. 3 more ✓ H2NI gunn in area will be engaged.

V2's firing was for some minutes up to 8:30pm from Moyard Park into the area of Martha's murder although 1 Kings does not claim it, it amends V2's shooting timings and location retrospectively.

Of course, the subsequent failure to investigate by RUC or RMP – and the MoD's failure to admit its soldiers were in Moyard and firing into the area between Divismore Park and Springhill Crescent – is highly suspect.

Furthermore, the coroner at the original inquest was not given this critical evidence.

As for the failed PSNI/HET failure, either:

- (1) MoD gave PSNI/HET false or incomplete information;
- (2) PSNI/HET failed to interrogate the information correctly; or
- (3) PSNI/HET found this critical evidence and buried it

Paper Trail knows where further information will be located although that information is retained by MoD and not in Public Records repositories – Paper Trail has since initiated targeted FOIs for this material on behalf of the Campbell family.

As highlighted by Paper Trail recently, 1 Kings then killed another 3 unarmed teenagers a few weeks later during its [Springhill-Westrock Massacre](#). Another 13-year-old schoolgirl was among 1 Kings' victims. Her name was Margaret Gargan.

Another two murdered by 1 Kings during the Springhill-Westrock Massacre included a family man and the local parish priest (Footnote 1).

If the British armed forces had investigated Martha's unlawful killing and held the British Army to account, 1 Kings may not have killed civilians in the area in the subsequent weeks, including the unarmed teenagers in Springhill.

Paper Trail is dealing with a number of families from both sides of the community impacted by other 1 Kings murders and subsequent cover-ups around the same time. These followed a pattern of Kings' violence against unarmed civilians and were not isolated incidents.

We will be releasing a report covering these all in the coming months.

Further Information

[In Memory of Martha](#) – the family's website and research.

[Casual Collusion and a Tale of Two City Estates](#)

Irish Times: [New Evidence Emerges in Shooting dead of Teenager in Belfast in 1972](#)

Footnote 1: The victims killed during the Springhill-Westrock Massacre were Margaret Gargan (13), David McCafferty (15); John Dougal (16), Patrick Butler (39) and Father Noel Fitzpatrick (40). Two victims survived: Martin Dudley and Brian Petticrew.