



# Moira Duffy remained resolved to find out what happened to her husband

Patsy Duffy's wife passed away on 23 March 2004, over a quarter of a century after the killing of her husband.

But, despite raising six children alone, she remained highly proactive in the pursuit of the truth behind his shooting.

Having written to her lawyer in 1980, expressing her concerns about how the inquest was carried out, she continued her campaign by next addressing the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

In June 1981, Mrs Duffy, on the direction of her lawyer, wrote to the NIO requesting the return of her husband's personal effects and legal documents that still hadn't been provided almost three years after the shooting.

The letter said: "I had requested my husband's clothes from the police together with his glasses, contents of his pockets, such as driving licence, torch etc, but still have not received these.

"I would also like a copy of the witness statements. For the record, I would also like a copy of the forensic report.

"I would also like a transcript of all evidence given in the court, the cross-examination of the witnesses, the coroner's questions, the summing-up to



The late Patsy and Moira Duffy.

the jury by Mr Cahill and Mr Piers Grant and the conversations between the coroner and the jury foreman.

"Finally, I would like your advice as to whether or not there is any right of appeal as I do feel there was a lot of confusion between the coroner and the jury foreman as to what the 'verdict' required was."

Mrs Duffy did not receive a

response to her requests to the NIO until 27 August and it came from the Lord Chancellor's Department of the Northern Ireland Court Service.

The response letter, signed by AA Murdoch of the Court Business Branch, opens by informing Mrs Duffy that there was normally a charge of 20p per page for supplying the requested documentation.

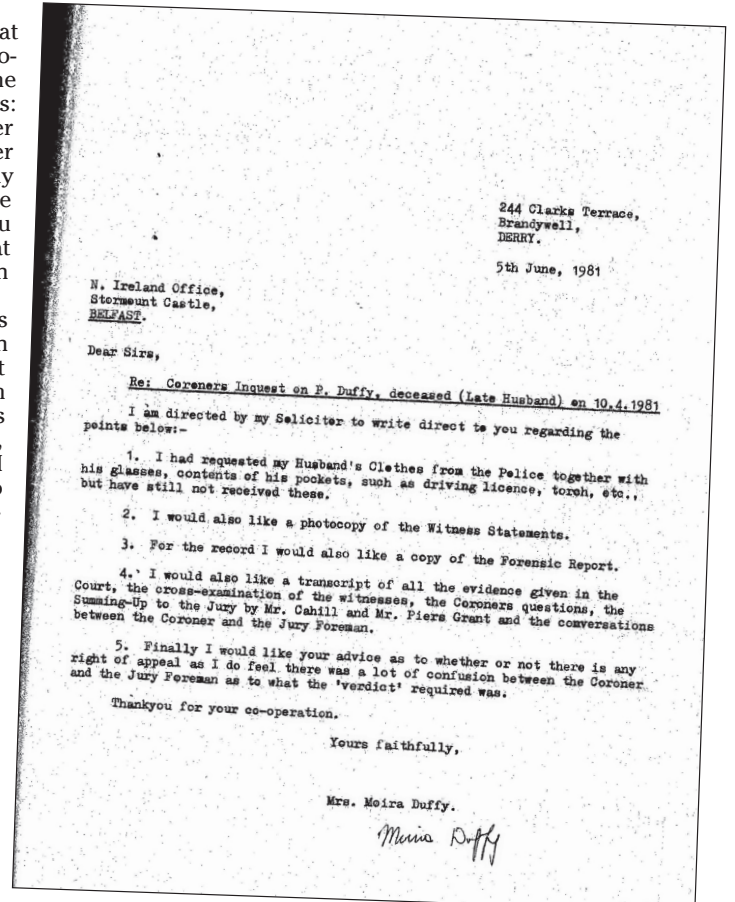
However, the material was

supplied free of charge at the discretion of the coroner. The remainder of the Court Service letter states: "With regard to your letter of 5 June 1981, the coroner has agreed that you may be given possession of the items concerned and you may approach the police at Strand Road RUC Station on the matter."

With regard to Mrs Duffy's appeal that documentation relating to the 1980 inquest were handed over with transcripts of the various courtroom conversations, AA Murdoch replied: "I should explain that no record is taken of the proceedings at a Coroner's Inquest.

"The purpose of the proceedings and evidence at an inquest is directed solely to ascertaining who the deceased was, how, when and where he came by his death and particulars required for the registration of his death."

And, with regard to a right of appeal over the inquest, the response was: "The only course open to you would be to apply to the High Court for a Judicial Review of the findings of the inquest."



A copy of the letter written by Patsy Duffy's wife Moira to the Northern Ireland Office requesting the return of her husband's personal effects.

## The possible involvement of British Army undercover units in the killing



Members of undercover unit the MRF pictured in Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

Soldier E, who commanded the British Army unit that killed Patsy Duffy, admitted in his statement to the original inquest in 1980 that he ordered the two men who carried out the shooting to enter the house at Maureen Avenue in plain clothes before changing into uniform.

To date, there has been no information or evidence revealing what regiment or unit these military personnel belonged to. This has prompted the belief that they belonged to an undercover British Army branch.

In fact, the only reference to an "ordinary" British regiment in the original inquest was a mention of the Royal Welch Fusiliers who were deployed at the scene in Maureen Avenue in the aftermath of the killing.

In the early 1970s in Northern Ireland, the main covert unit of the British Army was the Military Reaction Force (MRF).

It was a covert intelligence gathering and counter-insurgency unit formed in the summer of 1971. Its teams operated in plain clothes and civilian vehicles and were equipped with Browning pistols and Sterling sub-machine guns.

Their primary task was to track down, arrest or kill IRA members. The undercover organisation also ran informants inside paramilitary groups or bogus businesses as a front for their activities.

In October 1972, however, the IRA

attacked two of the MRF's bogus companies in Belfast - a mobile laundry service and a massage parlour - which is thought to have led to the unit's disbandment.

The MRF was based at Palace Barracks on the outskirts of Belfast and was divided into two squads.

Each of the squads was led by a senior non commissioned officer who had served in the Special Air Service (SAS), Special Boat Service (SBS), the Royal Marines or the Parachute Regiment. The unit was made up of about 40 men who were handpicked from across these regiments.

MRF knowingly broke the British Army's rules of engagement and former members have claimed they had a list of targets they were ordered to shoot on sight.

The MRF was replaced by the Special Reconnaissance Unit (SRU), also known as the 14th Intelligence Company. However, this "reincarnation" of the MRF was open to recruitment from all branches of the British services and to both genders.

SRU is the term used when referring to the unit in British state papers from the 1970s.

A briefing to Prime Minister Harold Wilson in April 1974 revealed that its operations until that point had been kept secret. Wilson was told that at that time the organisation operated under the cover name "Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Teams

NITAT (NI), matching the name of genuine military teams in British land forces and the British Army of the Rhine - it's presence in Europe.

Former members of the unit have claimed that SRU had a depot in Great Britain and four operational detachments in Northern Ireland. The headquarters was based at RAF Aldergrove; one unit was at Palace Barracks, another in Fermanagh but a third was based at Shackleton Barracks at Ballykelly in Co Derry.

Given the time period and, if it transpires that undercover units were involved in the killing of Patsy Duffy, it is more than possible that it was SRU/14th Intelligence Company who were responsible.

The Force Research Unit (FRU) was a later invention of the British military for use in Northern Ireland. Understood to have been established in 1982 it was also a covert military intelligence unit of the British Army.

It worked alongside existing intelligence agencies in the RUC Special Branch and MI5. In 1988, the All-Source Intelligence Cell was formed to improve the sharing of intelligence between these agencies.

FRU was renamed the Joint Support Group following the Stevens Inquiry into allegations of collusion between British state forces and loyalist paramilitaries in the murder of members of republican organisations and civilians.