



Belfast Diaries: A Gunner In Northern Ireland 1971-74

Steve Corbett

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"It's a very weird sensation to be shot at... Very often you see the gunman when it's too late or you don't see him at all. You might as well just be targets on a rifle range. I often wondered if I would get through this tour ok, and even now I still do... "

In the four-month period during 1971 that Gunner Stephen Corbett was stationed in Andersontown, Northern Ireland, 33 servicemen were killed by terrorist action in the province. His unit, 9 (Plassey) Bty, Royal Artillery, was attacked by a bomb, bullet or rioters on more than 400 occasions.

In 1972 alone, the toll of service personnel killed was more than 100. Yet their action was never classed as a war. When the servicemen returned home there were no marches through the streets to cheering crowds. They just quietly slipped in unnoticed and carried on with their other duties.

The young Gunner's notebooks detailing his two tours of duty - Andersontown, November 1971 - March 1972, and New Lodge June 1974 - October 1974 - were put in a drawer where they were to lay, untouched, for more than 30 years.

Here, for the first time, this account of his service is vividly brought to life and validated through newspaper articles, intelligence reports, and surviving examples of IRA propaganda.

Share in the day-to-day life of a Gunner and his 'band of brothers' as they patrol the streets of this unforgiving suburban battleground. Relive the sights and sounds of the rioting and gun battles, and the devastating losses of fallen comrades Bernie Fearn and Kim Maccunn.

Especially rare are the large collection of photographs taken by the author at that time, illustrating the life of a serviceman both on and off duty.

'Belfast Diaries' offers a unique opportunity to see this conflicted city through the eyes of an serviceman charged with peace-keeping duties at the height of 'The Troubles'; a real 'must-read' for any Northern Ireland or British Army enthusiast.

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