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Documentary looks at IRA kidnapping

By Staff reporter

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AN RTE documentary is to be screened tonight on the 1983 kidnapping of businessman Don Tidey, pictured,

by the IRA.

The kidnapping ended after 23 days with the deaths of a Garda recruit and an army private.

The Quinnsworth chairman had just driven away from his home in the Dublin mountains with his daughter Susan, then aged 13, when he was flagged down by men in stolen Garda uniforms.

The three produced machine guns and ordered the Englishman, then aged 49, and his daughter out of their car on a chilly November morning as three other gunmen wearing balaclavas emerged from the undergrowth.

Mr Tidey's son Alistair, then 21, was in a car behind his father and, while he and his sister were left at the roadside, Mr Tidey was driven off at gunpoint.

The businessman spent the following days "living in a hide or chained to a nearby tree" in Co Leitrim, he later told Dublin's Special Criminal Court.

"I was restrained at the ankles, knees and wrists at all times," he said.

"The whole operation was conducted in almost total silence, with total discipline."

During this time hundreds of gardai and Irish troops searched for him and his IRA captors.

There was widespread speculation that a ransom was being negotiated with the knowledge of gardai.

Events came to a head when a joint Irish army and Garda search team was only metres from the dugout and the gang decided to make a break for it.

Gunfire was exchanged and moments later Mr Tidey was being taken to safety but two men lay dying and his captors had escaped.


Garda recruit Gary Sheehan (23) and army private Patrick Kelly (35) died during the gun battle.

An inquest later concluded that both men had been shot by "persons unknown".

In January 1998 former IRA member Brendan 'Bik' McFarlane was charged with falsely imprisoning Mr Tidey and with possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life.

In June 2008 his trial collapsed after a court ruled that incriminating statements he had allegedly made after his arrest could not be used in evidence.

- Garda ar Lár will be broadcast at 7.30pm on RTE1.

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