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Loving family man of long service



Constable Stephen Carroll: was two years from retirement

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DAN KEENAN, Northern News Editor in Craigavon

PROFILE OF CONSTABLE CARROLL: CONSTABLE STEPHEN Paul Carroll (48), a father of one and a grandfather, was the first PSNI officer to be murdered in the course of duty.

The last police officers to be murdered by republicans were RUC constables Roland John Graham and David Andrew Johnston. They were shot dead by the Provisional IRA in Lurgan, Co Armagh, in June 1997.

The last RUC officer to die on duty was Constable Frank O'Reilly who was killed by a loyalist blast bomb during disturbances linked to the Drumcree dispute in the summer of 1998.

Constable Carroll had been an officer for 23 years, serving in both RUC and PSNI uniforms.

His widow Kate said her late husband was a "loving family man". She was visited at her home in Banbridge, Co Down, by Chief Constable Sir Hugh Orde and by First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness. Sir Hugh said the murder was "a desperate loss".

Constable Carroll was just two years from retirement. He had lived for a time in Co Kildare and has a brother in the police. In a statement last night his widow said: "My life has been destroyed for a piece of land that my husband will only get six feet of."

The parish priest of Banbridge said the family was "distraught" at the loss of a husband, father and grandfather.

Canon Liam Stevenson, who visited Kate and her son Shane yesterday, said they were "bewildered and upset that a loved one had been taken from them so suddenly". He told the BBC it was "frightful" to imagine how "a man who was protecting a vulnerable adult in the course of his duty was gunned down".

Chief Supt Alan Todd, the officer leading the investigation, told reporters in Craigavon how his colleague had been shot through a window of his unmarked police car. "It is a great loss to the service but we are absolutely determined that the efforts he made and his colleagues made to deliver a neighbourhood policing service in this area will not be put back by the activities of a small number of people."

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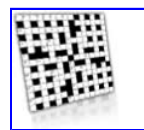
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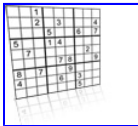
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