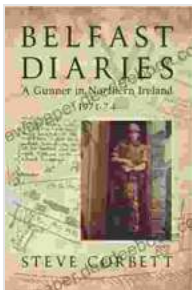


# Belfast Diaries: A Gunner's Perspective of Northern Ireland, 1971-1974

Northern Ireland in the early 1970s was a tumultuous and dangerous place. The Troubles, a conflict between Irish nationalists and unionists, had escalated into a full-blown civil war. British troops were deployed to the province to restore order, but they soon found themselves caught in the crossfire.

One of those soldiers was Gunner John Crawford. He served in Northern Ireland from 1971 to 1974, and his experiences there would stay with him for the rest of his life. In this article, Crawford shares his firsthand account of the Troubles, offering a unique perspective on one of the most turbulent periods in recent British history.



## Belfast Diaries: A Gunner In Northern Ireland 1971-74

by Steve Corbett

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 42267 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 445 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported

FREE

DOWNLOAD E-BOOK



## Arrival in Northern Ireland

Crawford arrived in Northern Ireland in the summer of 1971. He was just 18 years old, and he had never been to the province before. He was immediately struck by the poverty and deprivation that he saw all around him.

"The streets were lined with terraced houses, all identical and gray," he recalled. "The people were poor, and there was a lot of unemployment. I could see why there was so much anger and frustration."



Crawford was assigned to the Royal Artillery, and his unit was based in Belfast. He was quickly thrown into the thick of the fighting. The IRA was

carrying out a campaign of bombings and shootings, and the British Army was responding with heavy-handed tactics.

"We were always on edge," said Crawford. "We never knew when or where the next attack would come. We were constantly patrolling the streets, and we were always expecting to be ambushed."

## **The Troubles**

The Troubles were a complex and multifaceted conflict. It was rooted in centuries of religious and political division between Irish Catholics and Protestants. The partition of Ireland in 1921 had created a Protestant-majority state in Northern Ireland, which was seen by many Catholics as an illegitimate entity.

In the late 1960s, the Catholic civil rights movement began to campaign for equality and justice. This movement was met with resistance from the Protestant establishment, and the violence soon escalated.

The British government attempted to quell the violence by sending troops to Northern Ireland. However, the presence of the troops only served to further inflame the situation. The IRA saw the British Army as an occupying force, and they intensified their campaign of violence.



Violence on the streets of Belfast during the Troubles.

Crawford witnessed the violence firsthand. He saw people killed and injured, and he saw the destruction that the conflict was causing.

"It was a terrible time," he said. "I saw things that I will never be able to forget. I saw people who had been blown apart by bombs, and I saw children who had been shot in the head. It was a senseless and brutal conflict."

### **The Army's Response**

The British Army's response to the Troubles was often heavy-handed. The soldiers were under a lot of pressure, and they were often ill-trained and ill-equipped.

Crawford said, "The Army was often seen as an occupying force. We were hated by the Catholic community, and we were feared by the Protestant community. We were caught in the middle of a civil war, and we were just trying to do our job."



Crawford criticized the Army's use of internment without trial. He said, "Internment was a disaster. It only served to alienate the Catholic community and drive more people into the arms of the IRA."

Crawford also criticized the Army's use of excessive force. He said, "The Army was often too quick to use violence. We were supposed to be peacekeepers, but we often ended up making things worse."

## The Human Cost

The Troubles had a devastating impact on the people of Northern Ireland. Thousands of people were killed or injured, and many more were displaced from their homes.

Crawford said, "The Troubles were a tragedy. They caused so much pain and suffering. I saw the best and worst of humanity during my time in Northern Ireland. I saw people who were capable of great kindness and compassion, but I also saw people who were capable of great cruelty and violence."

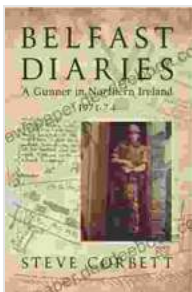


Victims of the Troubles.

Crawford left Northern Ireland in 1974. He was glad to be home, but he never forgot the people he had met and the experiences he had had.

"The Troubles changed me," he said. "I learned a lot about myself and about the world. I learned that war is a terrible thing, and that it never solves anything. I also learned that peace is possible, but it takes a lot of hard work and sacrifice."

Belfast Diaries is a powerful and moving account of the Troubles from the perspective of a British soldier. Crawford's insights into the conflict and its human cost are invaluable. This book is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand this dark period in Irish history.



## Belfast Diaries: A Gunner In Northern Ireland 1971-74

by Steve Corbett

★★★★☆ 4.1 out of 5

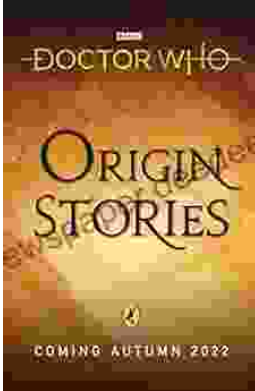
Language : English  
File size : 42267 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 445 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported





## 50 Amazing Color Paintings Of Pierre Paul Prud'Hon French Romantic Painter

Pierre Paul Prud'Hon (1758-1823) was a French Romantic painter known for his graceful and ethereal compositions. His work is characterized by soft colors, delicate brushwork,...



## Doctor Who Origin Stories: A Comprehensive Exploration of the Time Lord's Beginnings

The Mysterious Doctor The Doctor, the enigmatic protagonist of the long-running British science fiction television series Doctor Who,...