

Losing Life, Fighting on behalf of a Democracy

A democracy, such as ours, employs professional soldiers to fight on our behalf. One of the most dangerous tasks is to try to separate groups of warring people; often soldiers become the targets themselves.

Pte Bryan D. Soden was a pupil of Chance Street School before pupils transferred to the Comprehensive in 1972. However, he was born in Herefordshire, his three brothers and four sisters only moving the Tewkesbury in 1963. On leaving school he joined the Army as a Junior Soldier at Crickhowell, where he was assigned to the *Royal Regiment of Wales*. He thoroughly enjoyed Army life and won medals at Boxing and Rugby - as well as being a crack shot. After passing out, he was posted to Osnabruck in Germany where he also enjoyed skiing in Bavaria.



on manoeuvres in Germany



Ready to go on patrol in Northern Ireland

[Both photos of Bryan Soden by courtesy of Mrs. Bayliss, Bryan's Mother]

Although he was only 20 years of age when he lost his life, he was then serving on this third tour of Northern Ireland, his regiment having been one of the first to be famously 'welcomed' into the province as 'peacemakers' in 1969. The province, known as Ulster, has been a focus of conflict for generations but British troops were sent there to keep the peace between Protestants and Catholics.

However, they soon found themselves under attack from the I.R.A..

Pte. Soden was killed 40 years ago on 19 June 1972. He was patrolling the Ardoyne area of Belfast when bullets penetrated the rear door of his armoured one-ton truck. Four other soldiers survived but he was struck fatally in the head.

Pte. Soden was awarded a military funeral in Tewkesbury Abbey and he is buried near the entrance of Tewkesbury Cemetery. His name is also attached to the Cross. In addition, Pte. Soden's death is commemorated at Llandaff Cathedral, the home of the *Royal Regiment of Wales*.

Bryan Soden was married and left twin girls who were pupils at the school and who were both talented drama and music students. Pte. Soden's mother still lives in Mitton His brother, Alan, being in The

Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, had served with Bryan in Ulster but he had just left the army. His sons, Brian's nephews, were also educated at Tewkesbury School.

It is hopefully a small consolation that the "Troubles" ended in 1998 with the *Good Friday Agreement* which set up a democratic administration - but only after at least 502 British service personnel had lost their lives.

