

Payne, Davy (Hugh David)

by Patrick Maume

Payne, Davy (Hugh David) (1948?–2003), loyalist paramilitary, was born in Belfast, where he was brought up in the Woodvale area of the Shankill Road. He was involved in loyalist activism from his teens (although he later falsely claimed to have been radicalised by IRA bombings in the early 1970s). He participated in the 1964 Divis Street sectarian riots (which followed the police removal of a tricolour from Sinn Féin election offices) and in the 1966 protests against the arrest and trial of Gusty Spence for sectarian murders. For a time a regular attender at Ian Paisley's Martyrs Memorial Church, he was active in the Young Citizens Volunteers, the youth wing of Spence's revived UVF, and in the Tara organisation led by William McGrath (qv), before becoming a founding member of the loyalist paramilitary Woodvale Defence Association, subsequently the core of the Ulster Defence Association.

Payne first attracted official notice when during an army raid on a house where he was staying he brandished a ceremonial sword (as used at Orange meetings) from a window and threatened to use it on any soldiers who entered the house; the house was raided but Payne was released as no guns were found. He was one of six loyalists prosecuted for holding an Apprentice Boys march on the Shankill in defiance of a ban on demonstrations imposed after riots in June 1971.

Although Payne was never convicted of any murder, it is generally believed that with John White he led a gang of about thirty Shankill Road loyalists who from 1972 perpetrated some of the most vicious murders of the Troubles, in which they were assisted by the declaration of a 'no-go' area in the Shankill from the beginning of July 1972. Payne rapidly acquired a reputation as an exceptionally violent and volatile man with an unusual willingness to kill and a talent for projecting menace (several commentators called him a psychopath), assisted by malevolent and sadistic black humour. He allegedly coined the term 'romper room' – taken from a contemporary children's television programme – to describe areas within loyalist clubhouses and pubs where victims were beaten and tortured. The use of the cover name 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' when claiming murders (to protect the UDA from being declared illegal) and of the code name 'Captain Black' (a reference to John White) were also attributed to Payne and certainly emanated from his group.

Payne's group picked up Catholics at random from the streets and took them to locations (often locked-up garages) where they were subjected to various forms of torture before being murdered. One victim, who was forced to stand on tiptoe with his hands tied to a rope lashed to the roof beam, was found to have 110 puncture marks on his body inflicted before death; locals heard him crying out 'kill me' repeatedly. Payne later claimed that these horrors were not the result of personal sadism but represented a deliberate strategy aimed at deterring, through

sheer terror, catholics from supporting the IRA. Some of his associates later joined the 'Shankill butchers' UVF gang led by Lenny Murphy (qv). Payne was also 'provost marshal' of the UDA, enforcing internal discipline. In this capacity, as at later stages of Payne's career, his punishment tactics, including beatings, electrocution, blowtorches and (allegedly) the light#hearted suggestion that electric drills should be used for kneecappings, antagonised many loyalist colleagues.

Among the murders attributed to Payne were those of the traditional singer Rose McCartney and Patrick O'Neill, who were stopped while taking a short cut across the Shankill to the Falls after a folk concert in Ardoyne to the north; they were taken to a club where O'Neill was tortured during 'interrogation' (led by Payne) and McCartney was forced to sing to the assembled loyalists to prove she was indeed a musician. They were then taken to a lock#up garage and shot dead; the journalist Kevin Myers claims that one of the participants later told him that although the interrogators wore hoods and could not have been identified, Payne insisted that McCartney and O'Neill should die because he wanted to know what it was like to kill a woman.

Payne and White were also generally believed to have been responsible for the murder of the SDLP senator Paddy Wilson (qv) and his companion Irene Andrews; Wilson was stabbed 32 times and Andrews sixteen times. In November 1973 Payne was one of a fourteen#man loyalist team who attended political discussions in Amsterdam. Payne and White were interned soon afterwards (a development which, Gerry Fitt (qv) (1926–2005) later recalled, made him privately much less enthusiastic about ending internment). After their release in 1974 Payne and White were repeatedly taken into custody and interrogated about the murder; White eventually confessed but Payne remained silent. In other social contexts, however, he enjoyed introducing himself to strangers with the words 'I'm Davey Payne. They say I killed Paddy Wilson'.

On his release in 1974 Payne became 'North Belfast brigadier' of the UDA, and in 1975 he delivered the final threat leading to the departure from Northern Ireland of the west Belfast UDA leader Charles Harding Smith, who had lost a leadership struggle against Andy Tyrie. (Payne is earlier alleged to have kept Smith from killing two loyalists who had engaged in talks with the Libyan regime in November 1974 by declaring that they were under his personal protection.) Payne's leadership was unpopular because of his disciplinary methods, volatile temper (after a quarrel with the new West Belfast brigadier, John McClatchey, Payne sent men to his house to kill him, but they hesitated and McClatchey escaped) and rumours of financial misdemeanours.

After Payne was accused of embezzling UDA funds he resigned from the organisation and began a new career as a manager of community workshops and youth training programmes. He was feted in Belfast and Dublin as a reformed terrorist; from 1976 he worked as a Shankill Road organiser for the Peace People, and gave a speech warning young people against paramilitary involvement; in April

1978 he was wounded in a shotgun attack carried out at the behest of a west Belfast UDA leader.

Payne soon ingratiated himself with the UDA leadership again and when he resigned from his community post after the discovery of financial irregularities he was reimposed by the UDA inner council as North Belfast brigadier, with instructions to crack down on indiscipline and increase profitability. This was an unpopular decision; Payne's characteristic bullying tactics and a holiday to Florida which he took soon after the disappearance of part of the proceeds of a bank robbery (intended to fund arms purchases) led to complaints against him to the leadership, which added to its own unpopularity by ignoring them. When the UDA issued a discussion document setting forth its political strategy, *Common sense*, Payne was the only one of the six brigadiers who signed using a pseudonym ('Cecil Graham'); this probably reflects awareness of his general unpopularity.

In February 1987 Payne was intercepted at Templepatrick, Co. Antrim, while driving a scout car in the company of two other cars carrying 144 rifles, 28 handguns and a large amount of ammunition stolen from Laurel Hill Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) base in Coleraine, Co. Londonderry. Payne escaped prosecution as there were no arms in his car, but four other paramilitaries (including two Coleraine UDR men) received heavy sentences. Despite this narrow escape Payne insisted on personally overseeing the transport to Belfast from a farm in Co. Armagh of the UDA's portion of an arms shipment smuggled from South Africa in conjunction with the UVF and Ulster Resistance. Apparently hoping that his personal participation would increase his chances of succeeding Tyrrie as 'supreme commander', Payne ignored warnings that he was too high-profile for such an operation, and his paramilitary career ended when he was arrested in Portadown on 9 January 1988 while driving the first of three cars containing 61 rifles, 30 pistols, over 10,000 rounds of ammunition and 150 hand grenades.

After this second fiasco rumours circulated that Payne was a police agent who would receive a light sentence and flee abroad. These proved to be unfounded and he received a sentence of 19 years. He claimed he had been set up by two other UDA leaders and that two attempts had been made to poison his food in jail. Meanwhile, the UDA denounced Payne as a torturer and fantasist who had exaggerated his own role in the organisation. (Speculation about his betrayers centred on the UDA racketeer Jim Craig, killed by the organisation on 17 October 1988, on the UDA intelligence officer Brian Nelson (qv), revealed at the end of 1989 to have been a long-serving agent of the security forces, and on the West Belfast brigadier Thomas 'Tucker' Lyttle (qv)). Payne's capture, following the assassination of John McMichael (qv), and followed by the resignation of Tyrrie and the imprisonment of Lyttle and other veteran leaders after the exposure of Nelson, led to a complete changeover at the top of the UDA and the emergence of a younger, more aggressive leadership group which oversaw a significant increase in loyalist violence in the early 1990s.

Payne was released early because of ill health; he was suffering from the heart condition which eventually killed him, and took no further part in loyalist paramilitarism. His death notices state that he managed several 'men's clubs' in north and north-east Belfast, but it is not clear whether this refers to his last years or an earlier period. He died of heart failure in a Belfast hospital on 16 March 2003. Numerous tributes were paid to Payne by fellow loyalists, with UDA press spokesman Sammy Duddy hailing him as a fearless man who had given his life to loyalism. He was predeceased by his wife Isobel, with whom he had one son and one daughter.

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Steve Bruce, *The red hand: protestant paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (1992); Peter Taylor, *Loyalists* (1999); *Belfast Telegraph*, 17, 18, 19 Mar. 2003; *Irish News*, 19 Mar. 2003; *Sunday Independent*, 23 Mar. 2003; *Ir. Times*, 25 Mar. 2003; *Irish Echo*, 26 Mar.–1 Apr. 2003; Henry McDonald and Jim Cusack, *UDA: inside the heart of loyalist terror* (2004); Ian S. Wood, *Crimes of loyalty: a history of the UDA* (2006)