

Tuesday 28th January 1964

Tuesday 28th January 1964 is a day that will always be remembered in the history of Springtown Camp. A silent protest march took place from Springtown Camp on that day to the guildhall in protest at the conditions in which the families of Springtown were forced to live in. The conditions of the huts where the men women and children lived were described as the worst housing conditions that had ever seen in the country by one reporter. As well as marching and demanding the right to have a proper home to bring up their children they also demanded jobs, which had been denied to them, as well as voting rights. The RUC had been in contact with the committee organizing the march and warned them that if they did not adhere strictly to the conditions imposed on the march then they, the RUC, would stop the march. The march made its way up the Northland road down the Rock road and on to the Strand road and then up to the guildhall steps. As the march came up the Strand road many Derry people lined the pavements and spontaneous applause broke out as the protesters passed by. Over 20,000 people signed a petition that day heaping shame on the Derry corporation for the way it had treated the people of Springtown Camp. By coincidence Willie Deery has sent us an article for Deery's diary outlining the struggle of the Springtown Camp residents for civil rights. [click more to view the article.](#)



October the 5th 1968 Civil Rights March

October the 5th 1968 Duke street, Waterside Derry a date that was to become a watershed in the history of Derry and indeed of the six counties. A civil rights march was planned to take place from the waterside train station to the Guildhall. The marchers were protesting about the denial of basic civil rights such as jobs, houses and votes. The march was banned by then home affairs minister Willie Craig. The crowd, myself included, made their way up Duke street about 500 yards where it stopped at a barricade that had been erected by the then RUC to stop the march from proceeding. After a few minutes of a tense stand off and without warning or provocation the RUC viciously attacked the protesters. The attack was captured on film and the

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images were flashed around the world in a few hours.

I am sure that for anyone who reads the two paragraphs above will notice the striking similarities of the two events. This is why when Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh, who is the treasurer of the committee set up to plan and organize the events surrounding the 40th anniversary of the 5th of October Civil Rights march in 1968 contacted www.springtowncamp.com that I was delighted to offer him our support. Myself and Willie Deery attended a meeting of the committee which was convened in Fionbarra's house at 15 Crawford square in Derry. Fionbarra invited myself and Willie to sign the back of the original Civil Rights poster on behalf of the people of Springtown Camp, this we were honored to do. This poster was already signed by many of the people who took part in the struggle for civil rights in the early days of the campaign. We at www.springtowncamp.com will do all in our power to assist the committee as it sets about its ambitious plans for the 40th anniversary and we will keep all our visitors up to date with the plans as we get them.

Here is a copy of an email that was sent to www.springtowncamp.com by Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh setting out the committee's intentions.



A Chara Hugo,

Derry Civil Rights Reunion? A broadly-based Civil Rights 40th Anniversary Commemoration Committee, established some months ago in Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, intends in the near future to hold a press conference in Belfast to announce its existence and outline an extensive programme of commemorative events. Such are planned for various locations across the six-counties, and beyond, the first being a reunion currently being organised for Derry, by local civil rights' veterans. Derry is well represented on the commemoration committee. Its regular meetings are attended by prominent figures such as John Hume, Ivan Cooper, Austin Currie, James Doherty, Brid Rodgers, and former Labour MP, Kevin McNamara, to name but a few. Among its patrons are Dr. Conn McCloskey and his wife Patricia, of Dungannon, founders of the Campaign for Social Justice in N. Ireland, Michael Canavan, former treasurer of the Derry Citizens' Action Committee, Dublin academic Dr. Anthony Coughlan, former MPs Paul Rose, Frank Mc Manus, and Bernadette McAliskey (nee Devlin), well known local solicitor Claude Wilton, local retired GP, Dr. Raymond McClean and Jane Coyle, wife of the late Vincent 'Vinny' Coyle, who was the Chief Marshall of the local 700-strong civil rights stewards' organisation. An executive member of the anniversary committee, Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh, a co-founder of NICRA in 1967, is currently working with documentary-makers and other interested sections

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of the mass media. He points out that it is hoped that people interested in the anniversary project will make contact with the committee, which is chaired by Denis Haughey, a NICRA executive member. The vice-chair position is occupied by author and human rights lawyer, Michael Farrell, a co-founder of the university student-movement, People's Democracy. Mr. O'Dochartaigh remarked, "The planned reunion is highly desirable as we are conscious that we have not been able to reach all those who were involved in the leadership of the Civil Rights movement in 1968 at a central or local level. We would appeal to anyone whom we have not been able to contact and who is interested in attending this reunion to contact us." He stressed, "The reunion is not just for prominent figures of the civil rights era, but aimed also at those many grass-roots' people such as the dockers who downed tools, the shirt factory 'girls' who left their respective workplaces to defy the ban imposed on marches inside Derry Walls, former residents of Springtown Camp and the homeless families who occupied Derry Guildhall, and many more besides. Our invitation is also being extended to those who took part in the 1968 October 5th march and those who made up the mass demonstration in mid-November, the various sit-downs and other protests which took the civil rights struggle into the living rooms of countless millions across the globe". He concluded, "This planned reunion is already attracting a great deal of interest particularly as many involved in those days have not met for many years, and wish to renew old acquaintances. Interest is also being expressed by younger generations, as well as several community-based groups. It certainly could turn out to be a truly historic get-together and an occasion to remember, for us "oldies", our families, and friends and of equal import, youthful supporters, mindful and appreciative of the principled stand taken and sacrifices made, also for them, by their parents' and grandparents' generations." Those wishing to participate in the Reunion or other 40th anniversary events are cordially invited to contact the local organisers, after 6 pm any evening, on Derry 71-286359 or by e-mailing rights.civil@googlemail.com

