

# Veronica guerin-the one who stood up

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Veronica Guerin-The one who stood up Veronica Guerin (5 July 1958 – 26 June 1996) was an Irish journalist who was murdered on the 26th June 1996, on the Naas Road, Dublin, as a result of her work as a crime journalist specialising in the drug world of Dublin. Guerin was born and brought up in Artane where she lived with her four siblings and her parents, Christopher and Bernadette. She acquired the nickname "Ronnie" during her childhood and she received her education in the Catholic schools of Dublin's north side. She became an accomplished athlete in camogie, soccer and basketball.

Soccer, in fact, remained a lifelong passion of Guerin's; she was a fanatic supporter of England's Manchester United professional soccer team. One of her most prized possessions was a picture of her and the famous United player Eric Cantona, which was taken on a trip to Old Trafford. Guerin married Graham Turley who she had a son Cathal with. She studied accountancy at Trinity College Dublin and on her graduation she was hired by her father at his company. After her father passed away three years after her appointment at the company she left and started a new career in public relations.

She started a new firm in 1983 which was run by her for seven years. After leaving the firm she took up journalism, first as a business writer for Dublin's Sunday Business Post and then as a news reporter for the city's Sunday Tribune. Then in 1994, Guerin became an investigative reporter for the Sunday Independent, the largest-circulation weekend newspaper in Ireland. This move signalled not only Guerin's subsequent rise to somewhat fame in

Ireland but also led to the sequence of events that ended in her eventually being murdered.

Her murder along with detective Jerry Mc Cabe's murder three weeks earlier sparked the Irish government and the Irish people into life on tackling the war on drugs head on and without fear. For years she had mounted a high-profile war against Ireland's drug barons on the pages of the Sunday Independent. Guerin tackled, without fear and without regard for her own safety, the drug kings of Dublin. The work she was involved in was obviously extremely dangerous and her life was put in danger on a number of occasions. In October 1994, Guerin was subjected to her first incident of violence to stem from one of her stories.

Two bullets were shot through her house window as she was playing with her son at home. This incident came a month after she had written a newspaper article on the drug baron "the general" after he was shot dead in his car. The second major incident to arise out of her news reporting was a very serious and life-threatening one, in January 1995, a masked gunman burst into her home when she answered the door and pointed a handgun at her head but lowered it and shot her in the thigh. Guerin suspected that the gunman was hired to "hit" her because of an article that she had written about the theft of \$4 million from a supposedly secure depot near Dublin airport. This was the largest cash robbery in Irish history. (Encyclopedia.com) When Guerin was released from hospital after being shot she went along with her husband to every crime boss in Dublin she knew and handed them a letter letting them know that she was unafraid and unwilling to give up the fight on drugs. It was a statement of intent. A security system was

installed at her home after the attack and the guards gave her 24 hour escort.

They accompanied her where ever she went but Guerin, after a few days, stopped the guards accompanying her, as she felt it hindered her work as she was unable to talk to people and get the information she needed for her articles. (Film: Veronica Guerin) Then in September 1995, Guerin paid a visit to a horse farm owned by the notorious John Gilligan, a known leading player in Dublin's underworld. She confronted him about how he had amassed such a fortune and good lifestyle without been able to show where he had obtained all themoneyfrom.

He reacted in a brutal, cowardly and savage way to these allegations by tearing open her shirt while looking for a wire and beating her senseless. Sometime after Gilligan phoned her and threatened her and her son Cathal. He told her he would kill her and harm Cathal if his name was ever mentioned in any news article that she wrote. (Freemedia. com) Guerin was never scared or would never let the drug baron's sees that she was scared. She insisted that she would not be intimidated by any of them but friends of Guerin did admit after her death that she was fearful of Gilligan for the fact that he had threatened to harm her son.

She didn't let this phase her and she continued her tireless and fearful work and she continued to try and get closer to these drug kingpins. As she once said " they would find it harder to kill someone they knew". That statement I feel summarised how she basically felt about reporting on such a dangerous topic she knew the danger not only to her life but also to her families lives but she knew she had some sort of protection in the fact that she knew the

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people she was mostly reporting on and her statement is entirely true they would find it harder to kill someone they knew.

In December 1995, Guerin received the International Press Freedom Award from the Committee to Protect Journalists. On June 26, 1996, Guerin was in court in Dublin on a road traffic offence she travelled onto the Naas road and stopped at a set of traffic lights when the court was finished. She was alone in her car when she stopped at the traffic lights and made a call to friend and colleague, Chris Mulligan, on her phone having previously rung her mother to let her know she had been let off with the traffic offence in court. Then two men pulled up along the right hand side of the car and one of them opened fire.

Guerin was shot five times in the neck and chest, killing her instantly. The men then took off at speed before anyone could react. Her funeral, near Dublin airport was full with mourners, that included Ireland's president, and head of the armed forces; while thousands of others watched the service on television. On July 4, there was a moment of silence in her memory, people everywhere across the country stood quietly and bowed their heads in tribute. People just wanting to pay their respects gathered in front of the offices of the Sunday Independent to leave flowers and sign a condolence book. Encyclopedia. com) As soon as Guerin had been shot dead the guards launched an investigation into her murder. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that she had been the victim of a "hit" ordered either by someone she had already written about in her articles or someone she had planned to report on in the near future. It was unsure at the time whether her culprits would be brought to justice as the guards knew it would be a long and pain

staking investigation. However in October 1996, a man by the name of Paul Ward was charged with the conspiracy to murder Veronica Guerin.

He was the first person arrested and charged over the murder but the guards were hopeful he wouldn't be the last. Most people including the guards believed that Gilligan was behind the "hit" although this proved very hard to prove. Gilligan left Ireland for Amsterdam the day before Guerin was murdered. Sometime after, Gilligan was caught with half a million in cash trying to board a flight he was unable to explain where the cash had legitimately come from. He claimed he won the vast amount of money gambling but was arrested on charges of trying to launder profits from selling illegal drugs. Encyclopedia. com) Since she was murdered, a number of things have happened that showed she did not die in vain and die for no reason. Since her death journalists who report on dangerous topics have been given better protection. Also after she was murdered the Irish government held a special meeting to come up with and discuss a way which they would be able to create anti-crime legislation in order to put a huge crack down on drug crime and also to make it easier for the guards to create and implement cases against crime bosses.

These new measures forced many of Dublin's crime bosses to flee the country before the guards had the chance or opportunity to arrest them. Veronica Guerin not only changed the level of drugs on Dublin's streets, she changed how people reacted to drugs on their streets residents in some of Dublin's poorest areas demanded change and set up groups that marched the streets and kicked the drug dealers out. After her death the drug crime rate in Ireland fell by 50% the following year. (Freemedia. om) As a result of

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her murder the government established the Proceeds of Crime Act 1996 and the Criminal Assets Bureau Act 1996, so that assets purchased with money obtained through crime could be seized by them. This led to the formation of the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB). Veronica's murder was seen as an outrage and as then Taoiseach, John Bruton, described it, " it was an attack on democracy". (Encyclopedia. com) Charles Bowden, a member of Gilligan's gang, was arrested along with the other members of the gang that were still in the country following the murder.

In an agreement with the Attorney General of Ireland, he agreed to turn state's witness. In doing this he became the first person in history to enter the Republic of Ireland's witness protection programme. A programme that is now very prominent in the Irish legal system. (Encyclopedia. com) Her life and death signalled change in many institutions in Ireland mainly Social and Political. From a social point of view obviously the effect the fall in drug taking and drug crime would of having would have been very positive.

A fall of 50% in drug related crime the year after her death symbolised just how much of an impact her death had on Dublin's drug run underworld. Her actions obviously had a symbolic effect on drug users. From a political point of view this is the institution that Guerin's life and death had the biggest impact on. Her actions as a journalist ultimately led the Irish government to change the Irish constitution they introduced two new acts which led to the formation of CAB. This was a historic moment in Irish history a moment that has played a major role in the way criminals are treated in this country.

The fact that one woman's life could change the Irish constitution through her actions is undoubtedly remarkable it's just a shame it took her murder to

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spark the government into action. Her death obviously had a huge effect on a lot of people most notably her husband and son. She was admired by a lot of people for her tireless work on bringing the drugs problem in Dublin onto a national level. A piece from an article written by her work colleague, Kelly Fincham, summarises her mindset on the problem of drugs in Dublin. Like all mothers, she worried about her child's future but she also worried that her son would grow up in a crime-infested city as the authorities appeared to be ignoring the drug epidemic. Unlike many people in journalism and indeed Dublin, Veronica felt it was a foolish choice to avoid the problem by isolating yourself from it". (Irishabroad. com) Guerin's actions and fearless reporting changed the view on drugs in Ireland forever. Her murder signalled a social change that will forever be prominent in our country.

With the establishment of the above acts not only was the criminal justice system changed in this country but the Irish constitution was also changed. Guerin wanted to change people's lives through her reporting. She had met with young drug addicts and it's for this reason that she strived to expose the main drug dealers in Dublin. She saw that these " drug addicts" didn't have to live the life they were currently living and that they could change themselves along with other things. Everyone in the Republic of Ireland remembers where they were when they heard Veronica Guerin had been murdered on the Naas Road. Film: Veronica Guerin) Referencing Film: Veronica Guerin. (2003). Directed by Joel Schumacher. Dublin Ireland, (DVD). Website: Encyclopedia. com. (2004) Veronica Guerin. Available at <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3404707176.html> Accessed on 5/12/2011 Freedia. com (2000) Veronica Guerin Ireland, World Press

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