

Betrayal of Hyde Park victims: IRA bomb suspect accused over slaughter of troops and horses walks free because letter from Blair's blundering officials gave him immunity

- John Downey, 62, had been told he was not wanted by police in 2007
- This was despite there actually being outstanding warrant against him
- Downey's lawyer successfully argued defendant should not go on trial
- Final ruling couldn't be reported until prosecution said it won't appeal
- Families furious over blunder, saying they feel 'devastatingly let down'
- Shocking attack in 1982 in Central London park left four soldiers dead
- PSNI chief constable says force accepts 'full responsibility' for failures

By [Rebecca Camber](#) and [David Jones](#) and [Sam Webb](#) and [Mark Duell](#)

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Convicted IRA member: John Downey, 62, of County Donegal, arrives at the Old Bailey last Friday

They have waited more than three decades for justice.

But yesterday the families of the soldiers killed in one of the IRA's most notorious mainland atrocities watched as the man accused of the Hyde Park bombing walked free from court.

The case against him collapsed following a catalogue of appalling blunders by police and prosecutors.

John Downey, 62, was arrested last year and was due to stand trial for the July 1982 nail bomb atrocity which

killed four Household Cavalry soldiers and seven horses and injured 31 people. Another horse, Sefton, survived and became a national hero.

But convicted IRA terrorist Downey was told yesterday that he would not face prosecution because of a letter – dubbed a ‘get-out-of-jail-free card’ – mistakenly sent to him saying he was not wanted by police.

It can now be revealed that:

- Nearly 200 suspected IRA terrorists on the run have received similar letters, effectively granting them an amnesty under a deal by Tony Blair and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams.
- Downey was wrongly issued with a letter in July 2007, assuring him he was not wanted for any offence despite a warrant for his arrest existing since May 29, 1983.
- The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), which carried out the checks on Downey, was accused of being ‘reckless’ after officers realised in 2008 a mistake had been made, but nothing was done.
- Downey could be entitled to thousands of pounds in compensation for wrongful arrest and imprisonment after being locked up for three months and spending six months on an electronic tag.

Last night the families of the victims said they felt ‘devastatingly let down’ by ‘catastrophic failures’ and called for a review of the ‘comfort letters’ issued to IRA suspects.

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Two of the four victims: The families of Household Cavalry soldiers Anthony 'Denis' Daly (left) and Roy Bright (right) said they 'never ceased in their desire to see that justice be done'



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Deaths: Simon Tipper (left) and Jeffrey Young (right), the other two soldiers killed in the bombing in 1982

In a statement, the relatives of Corporal Roy Bright, 36, Lieutenant Anthony Daly, 23, Trooper Simon Tipper and Lance Corporal Jeffrey Young, both 19, who were slain when a bomb packed with 30lbs of nails exploded as the Blues and Royals rode to the Changing of the Guard ceremony, said: 'It is with great sadness and bitter disappointment that we have received the full and detailed judgment and that a trial will now not take place.

'This news has left us all feeling devastatingly let down, even more so when the monumental blunder behind this judgment lies at the feet of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

'The end result is that the opportunity for the full chain of those terrible events will never be put in the public domain for justice to be seen to be done.'

Judith Jenkins, 52, the widow of L/Cpl Young, added: 'It's the cruellest injustice. For 32 years we have waited for justice.

'We all had our hopes raised and this has been a total shock. It's absolutely staggering how many blunders have happened in this case. This case has made a mockery of the criminal justice system.'



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Explosion: A detachment of the Queen's Household Cavalry lay dead, victims of a concealed car bomb detonated in London's Hyde Park



© Popperfoto/Getty Images

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More than 30 years after the 1982 IRA Hyde Park Bombing John Anthony Downey was charged with the murder of four soldiers. The case against him has now collapsed

Charles Daly, brother of Lt Daly, demanded an apology from PSNI, saying: 'The fact the judgment determines the trial will now not take place fills the families with immense anger, frustration and disappointment.'

'The opportunity for the full chain of those terrible events will never be put in the public domain for justice to be seen to be done'

Statement by families of four victims

Downey was arrested by chance at Gatwick Airport on May 19 last year as he was on his way to Greece for a sailing holiday, after border officials checked the flight passenger list.

Despite being one of Britain's most wanted terrorists with an outstanding warrant for his arrest, Downey, who lives in County Donegal in Ireland, travelled to the UK eight times from 2008 to 2013.

The Old Bailey heard that Downey produced the amnesty letter just 24 hours after his arrest.



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Devastation: Cars removed from the scene of the Hyde Park car bomb in which four soldiers died in 1982



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Investigation: Police forensic officers working on the remains of the IRA car which housed the Hyde Park car bomb in which four soldiers died in 1982

But Sue Hemming, head of Special Crime and Counter-Terrorism at the Crown Prosecution Service, decided to charge him with murdering four soldiers and 'intending to cause an explosion likely to endanger life' two days later.

187 FUGITIVES WHO ESCAPED PROSECUTION

Nearly 200 suspected IRA terrorists on the run have escaped prosecution after effectively being granted an amnesty, it can now be revealed.

Some 187 fugitives, including murderers, have received letters of assurance that they will not face arrest if they return to the UK.

The Old Bailey heard how then prime minister Tony Blair, Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Mandelson and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams conducted secret negotiations to deal with the so-called 'on-the-runs' – an issue said to be a crucial stumbling block to decommissioning of weapons.

Mr Blair promised Mr Adams on May 5, 2000, that the issue would be resolved, saying: 'If you can provide details of a number of cases involving people "on the run", we will arrange for them to be considered by the Attorney General.'

But the Attorney General, The Lord Williams of Mostyn, privately expressed concerns about Mr Blair's repeated promises.

He wrote to the PM's Chief of Staff Jonathan Powell, saying: 'The integrity of the criminal justice system is a fragile thing and in reaching any decision about prosecution, acting outside Government as I do, I must not act for reasons of political convenience.'

On July 20, 2007, John Downey was sent a letter saying: 'There are no warrants in existence, nor are you wanted in Northern Ireland for arrest, questioning or charge by the police. The Police Service of Northern Ireland

are not aware of any interest in you from any other police force in the UK.'

Henry Blaxland, QC, defending Downey, said his arrest threatened to destabilise the peace process.

He said: 'It represents a breach of trust which is and continues to be an essential element of the peace process.'

Mr Justice Sweeney ordered that the prosecution be stayed, ruling: 'As the prosecution conceded, the defendant was wholly misled.'

'The public interest in ensuring that those who are accused of serious crime should be tried is a very strong one (with the plight of the victims and their families firmly in mind).'

'However, in the very particular circumstances of this case it seems to me that it is very significantly outweighed in the balancing exercise by the overlapping public interests in ensuring that executive misconduct does not undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system and bring it into disrepute, and the public interest in holding officials of the state to promises they have made in full understanding of what is involved in the bargain.'

He blamed PSNI for 'catastrophic failures'.

Yesterday Brian Altman, QC, prosecuting, said both the Attorney General and the CPS stood by the decision to bring the prosecution. Downey was identified as a suspect a month after the Hyde Park bombing when his fingerprints were found on car park tickets where the bomb car was left.

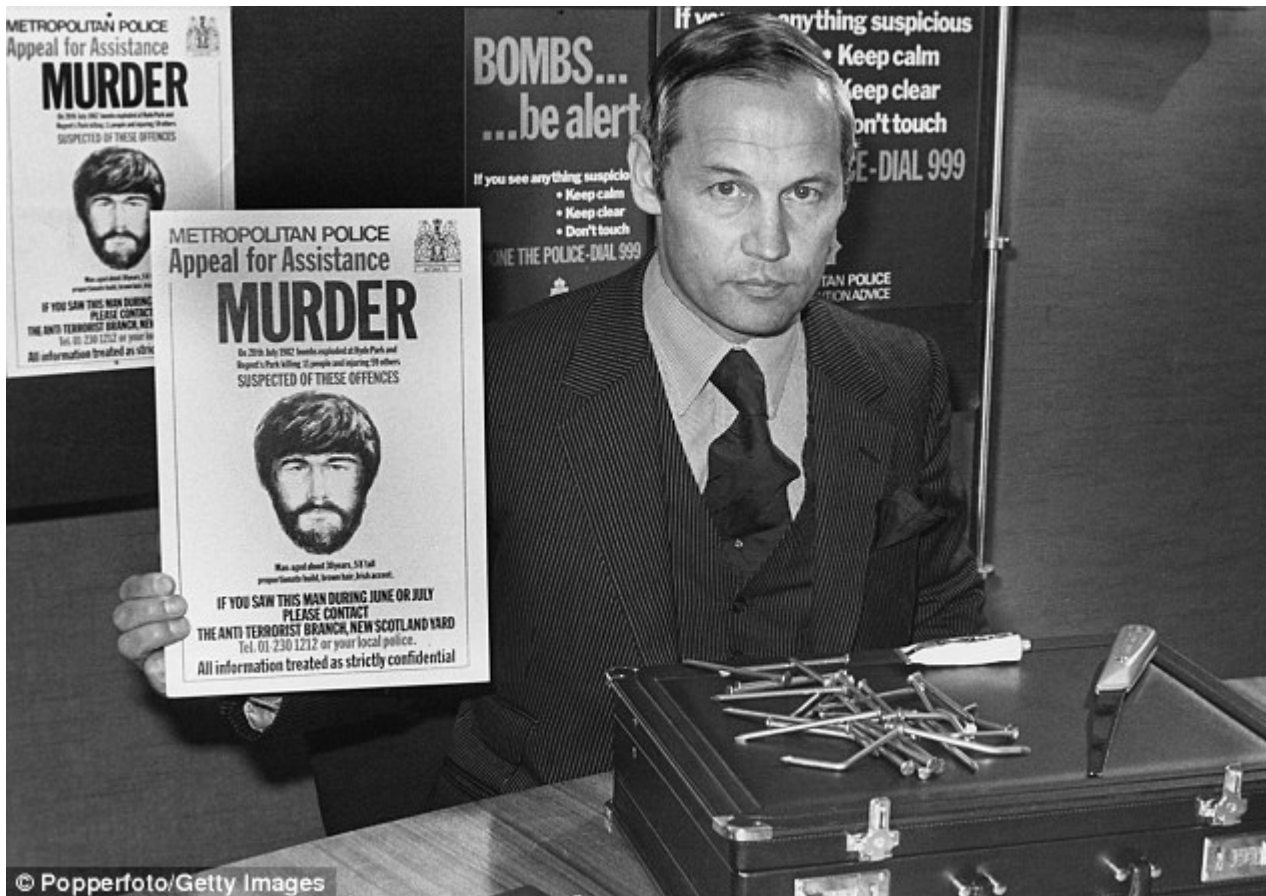
He was convicted of IRA membership on May 21, 1974, and was also wanted in connection with the murder of two UDR members in a car bomb in Enniskillen on August 28, 1972.

He was also suspected of a second explosion in a Regents Park bandstand hours after the Hyde Park bomb, which killed seven Royal Green Jackets bandsmen.

Yesterday Downey, who denied four counts of murder and causing the explosion, showed no emotion as the case against him collapsed. He later left the High Court without commenting.



Funeral: The flag-draped coffin carrying Lt Anthony Daly, the Blues and Royals officer killed in the Hyde Park bombing



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Commander WH Hucklesby of Scotland Yard's C 13 Anti-Terrorist Branch holds a poster of a man wanted in connection with the Hyde Park and Regent's Park bombings at a press conference at Scotland Yard in 1982

Last night former chief constable of Northern Ireland and current president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, Sir Hugh Orde, and PSNI Chief Constable Matt Baggott apologised to the families of the victims and survivors for the 'serious error'.

Miss Hemming, of the CPS, said: 'We respect the decision of the court and note that the court made no criticism of our decision to charge Mr Downey.

'The legal issues in this extremely serious case were complex and it was appropriate that they should be fully argued before the court for a judge to rule upon.'

Cold-blooded fanatic from 'the England Department'

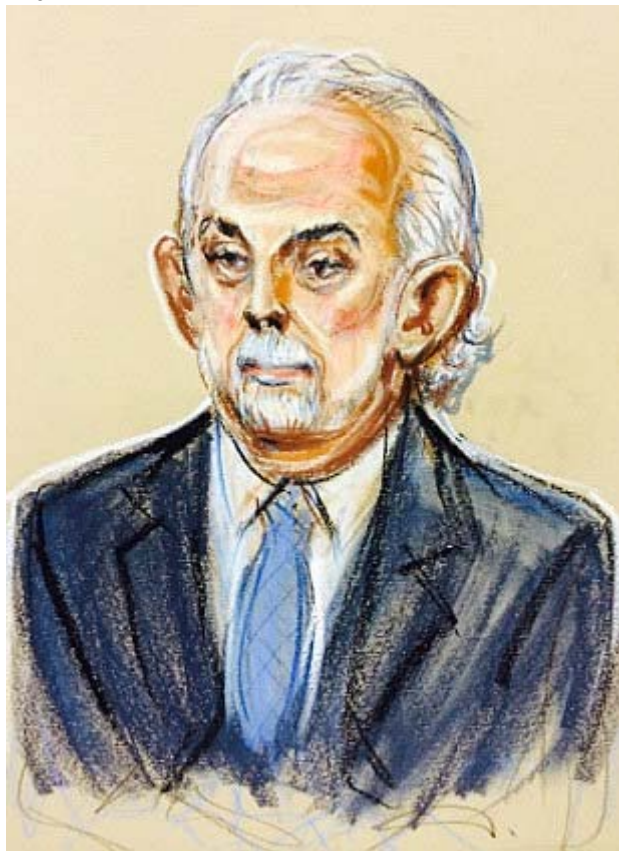
For many years John Downey led a shadowy existence moving between Republican safe houses – particularly during the Eighties after he was named as the prime suspect in the Hyde Park bombing.

Today he lives openly – though privately – with second wife Jill and two of their three children, in a hilltop cottage.

Until recently he ran an oyster farm just outside a village in Donegal on the north-west Irish coast; but a couple of years ago, neighbours say, the business fell on hard times and closed. It has allowed him more time to pursue a hobby: rearing horses.



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Collapsed prosecution: John Downey arrives at the Old Bailey last week (left) and an artist's impression of him in court yesterday is pictured (right)

'I know what people will think when they hear he's very fond of horses,' a neighbour told me this week. 'You

could say it's an odd coincidence.' A macabre irony might be a better way to describe it.

Four cavalymen were murdered that warm summer's day in 1982, when the Provisional IRA's so-called 'England Department' detonated a car bomb packed with six-inch nails as they rode through Hyde Park.

In truth, though, what set this slaughter of innocents apart from others perpetrated by IRA were the graphic images of the horses, their blood-matted torsos glistening in the sun.

John Downey has always denied involvement. Two months after the bombing, police issued an artist's impression – thickly bearded, with dark hair and rugged, Celtic features – drawn with the help of three witnesses. The following year, a 'wanted' poster was issued using the same sketch – and John Anthony Downey was named. He was said to be about 30, 5ft 8in and of 'proportionate build'.

Could the cold eyes in that bearded face have belonged to the 62-year-old man we saw smiling in court yesterday? So many years have passed, it is impossible to say.

Whatever the truth, he has acquired some useful allies. Among the four people who stood surety for him was leading media commentator and former Daily Mirror editor, Roy Greenslade. The court heard that Professor Greenslade owns a home near Downey's in Donegal. The journalist also got his oysters from Downey, it was said.

Downey was born in Kilrush, County Clare, in 1952. According to well-placed sources, he was friends with Joe O'Connell – later to become the England Department's master bomb-maker.



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Hearing: Another artist's impression of Downey (centre right) at the High Court in Central London

Whereas Downey had left school without completing his education, O'Connell was academically gifted (landing a job with electronics company Marconi, where he reputedly honed his evil craft). The pair remained close, and indeed Downey served as best man at O'Connell's wedding.

In 1974, Downey received his only known criminal conviction. Found guilty of being an IRA member by the

Special Criminal Court in Dublin, he spent a year in Portlaoise, the Republic's only high-security prison.

By the early Eighties, he and first wife Philomena had moved to Donegal, where one newspaperman describes him as 'a man of mystery'.

According to Sean O'Callaghan, the IRA assassin who repented to become a double agent for the security services during the Eighties, he had good reason to lie low.

In his memoirs, O'Callaghan describes Downey as a 'front-line operator' in the England Department between 1981 and 1983. During that time the unit exploded five bombs on the mainland, including one at Harrods which killed six.

O'Callaghan said Downey was 'very solid, experienced, with a disciplined temperament – the kind they got to do big jobs'. In May 1983, after police issued the wanted poster, O'Callaghan says Downey was withdrawn from the 'front-line'.

From now on, John Downey can waltz through passport control with a piece of paper that makes him untouchable. For the families of four cavalrymen, however, there is no escape. Not from the grief. Not from the memories.

Timeline: Three decades from deadly bombing to final ruling

FOUR SOLDIERS KILLED IN BLAST



Lieutenant Denis Daly

The 23-year-old had been married for just 27 days when he died at the scene. The blast tragically happened as his mother was waiting in nearby Horse Guards for the mounted troop to arrive. Lt Daly had not long returned from a tour in Northern Ireland where his replacement was shot and killed by a sniper



Squadron Quartermaster Corporal Roy Bright

The 36-year-old was the standard bearer of the Blues and Royals, and died in hospital three days after being injured in the blast



Trooper Simon Tipper

The 19-year-old had also been married for less than a month, and died at the scene

Lance Corporal Jeffrey Young

The 19-year-old was married with two children, aged three and 22 months. He died the day after the blast - a week before his 20th birthday

For more than 30 years, John Downey has had the IRA bombing in Hyde Park hanging over his head - and the families of four victims denied justice.

- **May 21, 1974** - John Downey, then 22, is convicted in Dublin of membership of the IRA.
- **Tuesday July 20, 1982** - IRA Hyde Park bombing. A Morris Marina car containing 20-25 pounds of explosives with wire nails as shrapnel is left in South Carriage Drive. It killed four soldiers as they rode through the park to the changing of the guard. The explosion injured other members of the Royal Household Cavalry and killed seven horses as they travelled from their barracks to Buckingham Palace. An artist's impression of a suspect is released by the police.
- **1983** - Downey is identified as the suspect and an arrest warrant is issued over the bombing.
- **October 21, 1984** - The Sunday Times publishes Downey's picture and alleges he is wanted over the bombing. Meanwhile, Scotland Yard prepares to seek his extradition largely based on fingerprint evidence on parking tickets.
- **1985-1987** - The Sunday Times publishes three more articles repeating that Downey is wanted by police.
- **November 21, 1989** - The then attorney general Sir Patrick Mayhew considers Downey's case and decides the finger print evidence is not compelling enough to seek extradition.
- **June 1991** - a review by Scotland Yard backs up the decision not to seek extradition.
- **1993** - Scotland Yard decide: 'The subject is not extraditable but is obviously arrestable should he be detained within the UK jurisdiction...'
- **August 29, 1994** - the warrant for Downey's arrest is accidentally removed.
- **October 31, 1994** - when the error is spotted the warrant is recirculated.
- **April 10, 1998** - the historic Good Friday Agreement is signed. It provides a framework for the early release of serving prisoners.
- **From July 1998** - as part of the extended negotiations between the British government, Sinn Fein, and the Northern Ireland government, the names of 187 On The Runs (OTRs) - including Downey - can be submitted by Sinn Fein for checks whether they are wanted by authorities in Northern Ireland or in the UK.
- **2001** - the UK makes a commitment not to pursue those who might benefit from early release schemes.
- **July 20, 2007** - Downey, 62, of County Donegal, receives a 'letter of assurance' that he is not wanted in Northern Ireland or the UK when in fact there is an outstanding warrant against him in the UK. The letter is sent by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) on behalf of the secretary of state for Northern Ireland and the attorney general. The letter reassures Downey that he can visit his son and grandchild in Canada. He also travels several times to the UK and Northern Ireland.
- **2008** - a chain of emails between two PSNI officers indicates that the PSNI knew that Downey was wanted over the Hyde Park bombing by the Metropolitan Police and that this was not mentioned in the 2007 letter. In the summer, before travelling with his wife to Canada, Downey contacts the Canadian authorities for a temporary residence permit. He says: 'The reason for the above application is that I served a term of imprisonment in Portlaoise prison in the Irish Republic in 1974...I was named in some British newspapers as being responsible for the Hyde Park & Regents Park bombings in 1982, which I strenuously deny. No warrant was ever issued by the British authorities to have me extradited and I understand from contacts which have taken place between British and Sinn Fein that they, the British, have no further interest in me. I have strongly supported the peace process from the very beginning of the talks and I believe that the only way forward for all people on the island of Ireland north and south is in peaceful co-operation and mutual respect and understanding for each other...' The application is granted.
- **2009** - Downey visits Londonderry and Belfast in his role to promote greater understanding between Republican and Loyalist ex prisoners.
- **2010-2013** - he visits the United Kingdom seven times without incident and in 2012 attends the National Commemoration of the Hunger Strikes in Northern Ireland.
- **May 19, 2013** - Downey is arrested at Gatwick Airport en route to Greece. He allegedly told police: 'I am surprised that this had come up as I have travelled in and out of the UK on a number of occasions to see family and I have travelled to Canada from Dublin. When I went to Canada I contact the UK government to check it would be OK as I didn't want any problems. They said that would be fine.' He is subsequently

charged over the murder of four British soldiers and causing an explosion.

- **January 2014** - a trial date is listed at the Old Bailey before Mr Justice Sweeney. Instead, Downey's defence team launch an 11th hour bid for the case to be thrown out due to an 'abuse of process'.
- **February 2014** - Trial judge Mr Justice Sweeney throws out the case because of the PSNI error in sending the letter and not correcting the false impression it gives Downey. The final ruling was handed down on Friday February 21 but could not be reported until the prosecution had decided in discussion with the Attorney General not to appeal.

Slaughter in Hyde Park: Car bomb killed four soldiers and seven horses and left 31 people injured

On July 20, 1982, a car bomb left on South Carriage Drive killed the soldiers as they rode through Hyde Park in Central London to the changing of the guard.

The explosion killed Roy Bright, Dennis Daly, Simon Tipper and Jeffrey Young and injured other members of the Royal Household Cavalry. Some 31 people were injured in total.

Seven horses were also killed as the soldiers travelled from their barracks to Buckingham Palace. Another horse, Sefton, survived terrible injuries and became a national hero.



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Aftermath: Workmen cleaning up the scene of the devastating car bomb

The investigation into the bombing led police to Downey, through fingerprints on parking tickets and a description given by witnesses of two men carrying out reconnaissance in the area before the attack.

An arrest warrant was issued, but it was decided not to seek Downey's extradition from the Irish Republic in 1989, in part due to the lack of strong evidence against him, the court was told.

Then in 2007, Downey received assurance he was not at risk of prosecution as part of a scheme run by the Northern Ireland police.

He was one of 187 On the Runs (OTRs) to seek clarification from the authorities in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement.

Mr Blaxland said: 'Sinn Fein impresses it is impossible to overstate the importance of the assurances given to the 187 people.'



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Probe: Police forensic officers work in 1982 on the remains of the IRA car which housed the bomb

Warning of the political fallout if a trial should go ahead, Mr Blaxland said: 'Once the trust starts to break down the whole edifice starts to crumble.'

The court heard that Downey had been heavily involved in the peace process long before the Good Friday Agreement and had even given up his oyster farm to work on it full time.

The court was told by Downey's legal team that there were other factors, aside from the clerical error, that meant Downey should not face trial.

These included the length of time - more than 30 years - since the offence, as well as the commitment in 2001 not to pursue those who might benefit from early release schemes.

However, in his judgment, Mr Sweeney only upheld the argument that the letter of assurance and the failure to correct it amounted to an abuse of process.

Evidence quickly took detectives to convicted IRA member

Evidence from the Hyde Park bombing quickly led police to John Downey.

RULING 'A DARK DAY FOR JUSTICE'

John Downey should never have been brought before a court, Sinn Fein insisted tonight.

But while the republican party welcomed the decision not to pursue the prosecution of a man it described as a

valued member and long time advocate of peace, the Democratic Unionists described the outcome of the case as a 'sad day for the victims of terrorism'.

Not unexpectedly the Old Bailey ruling has been met with contrasting reactions from the two main partners in Stormont's mandatory power-sharing executive.

Sinn Fein Mid Ulster MP Francie Molloy (*below*) said the arrest and charge of Downey was a clear breach of the commitments given by the UK government at the Weston Park talks of 2001 not to pursue so called On-The-Runs (OTRs).



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'Following the Good Friday Agreement both the British and Irish governments accepted that the issue of those defined as OTRs was an anomaly and the two governments committed to resolve the issue,' he said.

'A process was put in place to deal with outstanding cases including that of John Downey. Sinn Féin made it clear from the outset that the decision to prosecute John Downey was the wrong one.

'This position has been vindicated by the decision of the judge ruling in John's favour. John Downey should now be allowed to return home to his family immediately.'

But Stormont First Minister and DUP leader Peter Robinson (*below*) claimed the republican had been handed a 'get out of jail free card' by former prime minister Tony Blair's government. He said justice should not have a 'sell by date'.



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'This conclusion is an outrage and a dark day for justice in the United Kingdom,' he said.

'It is little wonder that some have lost faith in our justice system.

'Mr Downey was being tried for one of the most heinous atrocities of the Troubles, but has now invoked a get out of jail free card which he and his cohorts were handed by Tony Blair's government.

'As has been witnessed in recent days throughout the United Kingdom, Blair could not be trusted. The letters his government issued to some terrorists were ill-conceived. No one should be above the law and everyone should be equal under the law however this shortsighted and irresponsible process has now denied justice to victims of PIRA terrorism.'

But the opportunity to let a jury decide on whether he was guilty or innocent of the IRA attack has eluded authorities and families of the victims.

At the time, it was not considered by the Attorney General or police to be strong enough to secure a successful extradition from the Irish Republic.

Nevertheless, a warrant for Downey was issued by Scotland Yard and remained active for three decades in case he should come into the UK of his own accord.

The evidence centred around NCP parking tickets with Downey's fingerprints on them, according to an overview of the case set out in his judgment by Mr Justice Sweeney.

Downey, 62, of County Donegal in Northern Ireland, has always strenuously denied he was involved in the bombing which killed four soldiers and seven horses, and injured 31 more people.

It was caused by a remote control improvised explosive device which contained 20-25 pounds of commercial high explosive with wire nails as shrapnel.

The bomb was hidden in the boot of a blue Morris Marina car parked in South Carriage Drive and detonated as the guard was passing en route to the changing of the guard.

The victims were Lieutenant Denis Daly, 23, Trooper Simon Tipper, 19, Lance Corporal Jeffrey Young, 19, and Squadron Quartermaster Corporal Roy Bright, 36.

The Marina had been bought the week before at a car auction in Enfield by a man with an Irish accent who gave false details, according to the court document.

The prosecution case was based on the fact Downey had been convicted in 1974 of being a member of the IRA, according to the judgment.

His appearance in 1982 was allegedly consistent with photofits and artist's impressions created from three witnesses who reported two men carrying out reconnaissance in South Carriage Drive on June 30 and July 1 1982.

Furthermore, three of Downey's fingerprints were found on a ticket dispensed when the Marina was driven into an NCP car park in Portman Square, London, on July 17 1982 and surrendered when the car was driven away the following day - two days before the bombing.

And two more fingerprints were found on the ticket dispensed when the Marina was driven into the NCP car park at the Royal Garden Hotel in Kensington, west London, at 6.39pm on Sunday July 18 1982 and driven away at 6.51am on Tuesday July 20, just four hours before the bombing, the judgment said.

Downey became a suspect when police allegedly matched his fingerprints on the Royal Garden Hotel ticket with prints taken by the Garda in the Irish Republic in July 1980.

A photograph of Downey was found from a 'delicate source' and believed to match a photofit from one of the witnesses, the judgment said.

After he was arrested last year at Gatwick Airport, Downey was charged with the four murders and with causing an explosion.

Members of the victims' families had sat in the public gallery as lawyers for the prosecution and defence argued over whether a trial should go ahead.

After Mr Justice Sweeney gave his judgment, throwing out the case, Downey declined to comment to reporters in Court One at the Old Bailey.

Household Cavalry soldier who survived attack while riding

Sefton stabbed his two children to death before turning knife on himself

A soldier who survived the Hyde Park bombing never recovered from the attack - leading to devastating consequences three decades later.

Michael Pedersen, a former sergeant in the Household Cavalry, stabbed his two children to death before turning the knife on himself just weeks after telling his doctor that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The 1982 bomb attack hit as Pedersen's unit was taking part in a changing of the guard ceremony. Four soldiers and seven horses were killed in the explosion.



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Michael Pedersen with Sefton, the 19 year old cavalry horse injured in the Hyde Park IRA car bomb attack that became a symbol of hope following the tragedy

Pedersen was riding Sefton - the horse that became the symbol of the struggle against the IRA after beating the odds and surviving the attack. The horse had 34 separate wounds and needed eight hours of surgery.

The animal was subsequently awarded Horse of the Year, a prize Pedersen, who served in the army for 20 years, picked up on his behalf.

Three decades after the attack, Pedersen killed his two children - seven-year-old son, Ben, and daughter, Freya, six.

Less than a month before the killings, Pedersen told his GP that he could have been suffering from PTSD, the inquest into his and the children's deaths heard.



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**Pedersen never recovered from the attack and three decades later killed his two children
- seven-year-old son, Ben, and daughter, Freya, six**

The bodies of the trio were found next to a Saab 900SE convertible car in a remote bridleway near Andover, Hampshire, on September 30, 2012.

Pedersen, who had been living in Chertsey, Surrey, before his death, had also struggled to come to terms with the breakdown of his marriage, the hearing was told.

His 10-year marriage to his wife Erica collapsed after a violent row at a military reunion earlier that year, the court heard. After the incident he was served an injunction not to visit the family home.

Mrs Pedersen told the hearing that when she went back to the house in Ashford, Middlesex, following her husband's departure it looked like it had been 'burgled' and her chef's knife had been taken.



© PA

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Household cavalry: Sefton, the horse injured in the bombing (second right, white blaze), returning with the cavalry escort for the Queen's procession after the State opening of Parliament in November 1982

It was later used in the brutal killing, the court heard.

Post-mortem examinations found the two children died from multiple stab wounds to the chest. They also both had defensive injuries to their hands and arms, the hearing was told.

Pedersen, who had worked as a lorry driver, then stabbed himself through the heart, the inquest was told.

Central Hampshire coroner Grahame Short recorded verdicts of unlawful killings of the two children and one of suicide for Pedersen.

Victims' families feel 'devastatingly let down' by judgment

The families of the victims of the Hyde Park bombing said they felt 'devastatingly let down' after the prosecution of convicted IRA member John Downey collapsed.

The relatives of Household Cavalry soldiers Roy Bright, Anthony 'Denis' Daly, Simon Tipper and Jeffrey Young said they 'never ceased in their desire to see that justice be done'.

They said that the grieving for the fallen soldiers 'never stops', adding: 'The torment for the families will be ongoing, knowing that John Downey will be returning to his family and life will be normal for him.'

Here is their statement in full:

WE REGRET FAILINGS, SAY POLICE

Police in Northern Ireland have accepted 'full responsibility' for failures resulting in the collapse of the John

Downey prosecution.

Chief constable Matt Baggott (*below*) apologised to the families of the victims and survivors of the Hyde Park atrocity.



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'I wish to apologise to the families of the victims and survivors of the Hyde Park atrocity. I deeply regret these failings, which should not have happened,' he said.

'We are currently carrying out a check of these cases to ensure the accuracy of information processed by the PSNI.'

The legal wrangle raises questions with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) which, the court heard, knew about the UK arrest warrant for John Downey but did nothing to correct the error of 2007.

Northern Ireland Secretary Theresa Villiers has said police in Northern Ireland should reflect on 'the serious error' following the collapse of the Downey prosecution.

She said the Government does not support amnesties for people wanted in connection with terrorist offences.

'The PSNI will wish to reflect on lessons learned from this case and the circumstances that led to the serious error which occurred,' she said.

Mr Baggott said the PSNI accepts the court's decision and full responsibility for the failures which resulted in this outcome.

He added: 'We will be referring this matter to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.'

Mr Downey was part of a scheme for dealing with so-called on-the-runs which was set up by the previous Labour Government.

The current Government reviewed the scheme and decided that any future requests should be referred to the devolved authorities in Northern Ireland, with the Northern Ireland Office dealing only with pending cases for which requests had been received before the general election, Ms Villiers (*below*) said.



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She added: 'The Government is looking carefully at the judgment of the court, and we are working with the police to identify whether there are other cases similar to that of Mr Downey. It is right that time is taken to consider the full implications of this judgement.'

Ms Villiers said the Government believed in upholding the rule of law.

'That is why both the Coalition parties strongly opposed the legislation introduced by the Labour Government in 2005 which would have introduced what was effectively an amnesty for so-called on-the-runs,' she said.

'The Government is also clear that terrorist atrocities such as those committed at Hyde Park and Regent's Park never had any justification.

'Those responsible were unable to see that a path of violence would never succeed, and that the status of Northern Ireland will only ever be determined through democracy and consent.

'It is, though, also important to recognise how far we have come since this despicable act of terrorism over 30 years ago. Only by working together can the community in Northern Ireland achieve a more peaceful, stable and prosperous future.'

Peter Hain - the Northern Secretary between 2005 and 2007 - said that while he understood the anger of the families, the arrangement for dealing with the on-the-runs had been an essential part of the peace process.

'You often get this at the end of wars and conflicts. You often get what seem to be unseemly processes in order to end the violence and stop them happening again,' he told the BBC Radio 4 PM programme.

'In May 2013 the families of the victims murdered by the Irish Republican Army in Hyde Park on July 20, 1982 received notification of the arrest of John Downey in connection with the bombing. The families of those so treacherously murdered whilst on duty on that fateful day have never ceased in their desire to see that justice be done.

'It is with great sadness and bitter disappointment that we have received the full and detailed judgment and that a trial will now not take place. This news has left us all feeling devastatingly let down, even more so when the monumental blunder behind this judgment lies at the feet of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). The end result is that the opportunity for the full chain of those terrible events will never be put in the public domain for justice to be seen to be done. The judgment clearly sets out the core facts for all to see.

'In the interest of maintaining progress of the Northern Ireland peace process (a process that began with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998) an administrative scheme was introduced to deal with the anomaly of those people still effectively 'on the run' (OTR). This unique scheme involved individuals being put through a series of stringent checks which, if proven clear, resulted in a letter being issued in the name of the Government with assurances that the recipient was not wanted, with the obvious implication that they would not be arrested or prosecuted unless new evidence came to light. John Downey is in receipt of such a letter, and it is the existence of this letter that has resulted in this judgment.

'The issuing of such a letter was due to a catastrophic failure within the PSNI - specifically those involved in Operation Rapid. There is evidence to support the fact that the PSNI were aware that Downey was wanted by the Metropolitan Police in relation to the Hyde Park bombing. However, when the PSNI were specifically asked by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) - before the issuing of the letter - whether a check had been made against the police national computer (PNC), Operation Rapid informed the NIO that such checks had been done, but failed to mention that the check in relation to Downey had shown that he was wanted by the Metropolitan Police in relation to the Hyde Park bombing.

'This catastrophic failure of Operation Rapid in 2007 was compounded in 2008 when it was appreciated by Operation Rapid that the director of public prosecutions (Northern Ireland) (DPP (NI)) had not been informed in 2007 that Downey was wanted for the Hyde Park bombing, but no step was taken to put matters right. This failure was further compounded when in 2009 Operation Rapid again appreciated that Downey was wanted for the Hyde Park bombing, but again nothing was done to put matters right.

'The fact is that no sensible explanation for the various Operation Rapid failures of the PSNI has been presented. The failure to properly check the PNC was not brought to the attention of anyone outside the PSNI because had this been done, the check would have produced a positive result. Rather, on the day the letter was sent, the PSNI assured the NIO that the relevant check had been carried out with nothing to report.

'Our men signed up to serve their country in good faith, yet now it seems that that faith was not supported by those within certain areas of authority. The families now seek a degree of accountability for this catastrophic failure. Two opportunities are known where the error in the issuing of this letter could have been raised; yet nothing was done. Had such an error been raised, it is recognised as being of such importance that it would immediately have required action and would not have gone uncorrected. However, on both occasions nothing was done.

'With no sensible explanation from the PSNI, this must surely now raise the question have there been other errors in the issuing of other such letters, and the families urge a thorough review of what remains of the administrative scheme to avoid a repeat of what has happened here.

'The grieving never stops for Lieutenant Anthony Daly, Staff Corporal (SQMC) Roy Bright, Lance Corporal Jeffrey Young and Trooper Simon Tipper of The Blues and Royals, Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment. The families would like to take this opportunity to pass on their sincere and grateful thanks to the Metropolitan Police for all their kindness, commitment and dedication in this investigation.

'The torment for the families will be ongoing knowing that John Downey will be returning to his family and life will be normal for him. Families of the Hyde Park bombing have learnt over time to live with the consequence of the bombing but now have to learn to live with the knowledge that justice will now never be seen to be done for our lost loved ones.

'May we take this opportunity to request that our privacy will now be respected in order to come to terms with this situation whilst we continue to mourn our loss.'

The statement was issued by Christopher Daly and Phillipa Vaughan, the brother and sister of Anthony 'Denis' Daly; Marion Bright, widow of Roy Bright; Judith Young and Vincent Young, the widow and brother of Jeffrey Young; and Louise Brown and Mark Tipper, the widow and brother of Simon Tipper.

Dilemma over handling of old cases from Northern Ireland conflict

The collapse of the case against the man accused of the 1982 Hyde Park bombing after he was falsely told that he was not wanted by British police has highlighted difficulties in addressing the legacy from Northern Ireland's conflict.

John Downey received a 'letter of assurance' in 2007 when in fact there was an outstanding warrant against him

in the UK over the murder of four British soldiers and causing an explosion.

It shines a light on one of the most contentious unresolved issues of the 30-year troubles - what to do about terrorist suspects who are on the run from justice?



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Terror: The Duke of Edinburgh's car passing the site of the Hyde Park bomb in which four soldiers died

To atrocity victims whose loved ones were murdered or maimed, allowing fugitives to return home without serving a single day in prison looks like an amnesty from justice.

To others, including Sinn Féin, the toxic influence of history needs to be dealt with through a South African-style truth-telling and reconciliation commission where those who took part, in their view war combatants, can speak free from fear of prosecution.

Northern Ireland's attorney general, John Larkin QC, crystallised the debate but also prompted a furious political reaction with his intervention last year.

'More than 15 years have passed since the Belfast Agreement, there have been very few prosecutions, and every competent criminal lawyer will tell you the prospects of conviction diminish, perhaps exponentially, with each passing year, so we are in a position now where I think we have to take stock,' he said.

'It strikes me that the time has come to think about putting a line, set at Good Friday 1998, with respect to prosecutions, inquests and other inquiries.'

Prime Minister David Cameron said the Government had no plans to legislate on any form of amnesty and Irish Premier Enda Kenny warned it could breach international human rights norms.

But the issue of the past is arguably still the most emotive facing post-conflict Northern Ireland. With more than 3,000 killed during the Troubles and most murders unsolved, countless bereaved continue to campaign for truth and justice. Meanwhile, thousands injured in the violence daily suffer the physical consequences.

An agreed mechanism to address the conflict legacy has proved elusive.

The most recent attempt by former US diplomat Richard Haass, who failed to broker all-party agreement in December, proposed limited immunity from prosecution for those who testified about their chequered past.



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Taking images: A police photographer at the scene of the car bomb, in which four soldiers died

His mooted Commission For Information Retrieval would allow all forces responsible for conflict deaths, from the IRA to the British Army, to give evidence in a truth commission-style forum.

Efforts to solve the fugitives problem date back more than a decade, to British and Irish governments-chaired 2001 Weston Park political negotiations on the peace process, which initially also ended in deadlock.

The governments agreed a wide-ranging package and subsequently the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) attempted to pass legislation meaning those accused of paramilitary crimes before the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement could appear before a special tribunal then be freed on licence.

Aileen Quinton, who lost her mother Alberta in the IRA's 1987 Enniskillen Poppy Day bombing in Co Fermanagh, had opposed the legislation.

'We are not looking for vengeance, we are not looking for sympathy, we are looking for justice and justice has to be the bedrock of any kind of peaceful or decent society,' she said.

The plans covered up to 150 people wanted for crimes committed before 1998. Republicans had objected to the inclusion of security force members accused of wrongdoing in the scheme, with Sinn Fein branding the proposals an act of bad faith by the British Government.

The draft law was scrapped in 2006, with then-Northern Ireland secretary Peter Hain telling Parliament that legislation was necessary but Sinn Fein's rejection made it unworkable.



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Aged 36: Groom Christine Stroud in 2002 with former Cavalry horse Yeti, the last horse to survive the IRA nail-bomb attack in Hyde Park, who died peacefully in June 2004

'The Government remains of the view that this anomaly will need at some stage to be faced as part of the process of moving forward,' he said. 'It is regrettable that Northern Ireland is not yet ready to do so.'

All parties in Northern Ireland welcomed the bill's demise, with unionists concerned about the impact on victims of terrorism and the Police Federation objecting to including officers with terrorists in the plans.

Since 2006 powersharing between Sinn Fein and unionists has been consolidated and despite disagreements on key issues like contentious loyal order parades and the flying of British or Irish flags the institutions at Stormont are not under serious threat.

Unionist concerns about Sinn Fein's attitude to the past remain, from alleged glorification of terrorist atrocities through commemorative parades and speeches to a fear that republicans will not tell the unvarnished truth about past wrongdoing.

Sinn Fein has made clear its opposition to the campaign of violence by dissident republicans while backing people such as peace process supporter John Downey.

But in a perceived throwback to the events of Hyde Park and countless other attacks, an extremist group calling itself the IRA recently attempted to return terror to the streets of England by leaving suspected bombs at army recruiting offices.

Brother of cavalry trooper criticises 'monumental' blunder' by police

The brother of a cavalry trooper killed in the Hyde Park IRA bomb blast has criticised the Police Service of Northern Ireland for their 'monumental blunder' and said he felt 'devastatingly let down' by the failed prosecution.

Career soldier Lieutenant Denis Daly, then 23, died alongside three other members of his regiment the Blues and Royals, part of the Household Cavalry, when a bomb packed with wire nails and hidden in a parked car was detonated as they passed along South Carriage Drive in London on July 20 1982.

Responsibility for the deadly blast, which killed seven of the regiment's horses and injured more than 30 others, was later claimed by the Provisional IRA.

[Brother of cavalry trooper criticises 'blunder' by police](#)



But with the collapse at the Old Bailey of the case brought against 62-year-old John Downey, previously convicted of membership of the Irish republican terrorist group, over his alleged role in the plot, Mr Daly's younger brother has spoken angrily about being 'let down' by the authorities.

The PSNI apologised and accepted 'full responsibility' for the botched prosecution and regretted the failings, which he said 'should not have happened'.

Lawyers acting for Downey successfully applied that the Crown Prosecution Service's (CPS) case be thrown out over an abuse of process, after it emerged he was given a letter by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in the name of the Government in 2007 stating he was not being sought by the authorities over the attack.

Downey has always firmly denied any involvement in the bombing.

The sending of what is known as an on-the-run (OTR) letter - introduced under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement - to Downey, of County Donegal, was due to a 'catastrophic failure' by the PSNI, Mr Daly said.

Chris Daly, a former major in the Blues and Royals, said the families of the bomb victims felt 'devastatingly let down', adding that the blame for the 'monumental blunder' lay squarely at the feet of the PSNI for wrongly telling Mr Downey he was not being sought, despite the fact a warrant was out for his arrest.



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Temporary memorial: People lay floral tributes at the scene of the Hyde Park bombing in 1982

He added there was evidence to suggest the PSNI discovered its error but twice failed to rectify the problem, or inform the province's director of public prosecutions.

Mr Daly, who was 18 when his brother died, is now asking for an apology for the victims' families from the police force and a full investigation into what went wrong.

He also said it was crucial that further inquiries were made to discover whether any other such letters had been sent 'in error'.

He said: 'The fact the judgment determines the trial will now not takes place fills the families with immense anger, frustration and disappointment. I think everyone is eager to get to the bottom of what went wrong.

'It stems very directly to the issuing of the letter Downey has in his possession where the Government has given him assurance he will not be prosecuted. And therefore how did Downey come into possession of this letter?

'It transpires the PSNI issued this letter to Downey in July 2007, thinking that he was not wanted either in Northern Ireland or by any other police force in the United Kingdom.



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Explosion: The bomb killed four soldiers as they rode through the park to the changing of the guard

'This is despite the fact that three months earlier in April the same team within PSNI knew that Downey was wanted by the Metropolitan Police, on the police national computer, so the letter was issued in error.

'A year later this error was flagged up by the PSNI but nothing was done about it. Why wasn't something done about it?

'Then a year later, in 2009, again the error of the issuing of the letter was recognised but nothing was done about it.

'Peter Hain has said in his statement, within the judgment, that had such an error been notified to his office or the attorney general that corrective action would have taken place, because this letter was far too important to continue to be in existence.'

Mr Daly revealed that his brother was killed as his mother was waiting in nearby Horse Guards for the mounted troop to arrive - the blast meant she never saw her son alive again.

In another twist of fate, Lt Daly had not long returned from a tour in Northern Ireland where his replacement was shot and killed by a sniper.



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On the ground: The explosion killed seven horses as they travelled from their barracks to Buckingham Palace

Mr Daly said: 'What needs to happen is a clear flushing out of what went wrong here.

'A full and detailed explanation from PSNI as to how come this letter was issued in error and on the two possibilities there was to correct that mistake - neither opportunity was taken, it was simply kept within PSNI.

'By being put through that angst, an apology to the families is what we seek from PSNI. They should also review their processes to ensure that no other letters have been issued in error.'

The 49-year-old said 'no action - civil or otherwise - can be brought against Downey' following yesterday's judgment, and it was now 'unlikely' anybody would be held to account for the deadly bombing, which was one of two IRA bombs which exploded in London that day.

In the second detonation just over an hour later, seven bandmen of the Royal Green Jackets were killed in a Regent's Park bandstand.

Mr Daly added there could be 'no reason' for any dialogue between the victims' families and Downey, in the vein of truth and reconciliation, because Downey has always denied any involvement in the attack.

He said the fact Downey would be returning to a normal life was 'a torment' for the families left behind, for whom the grief of loss would never end.