



Enjoy more agile handling with  
Audi lightweight construction.

» Rollover

Audi  
Vorsprung durch Technik



All-in-One Printers

# My hero: Jean McConville

by Amanda Foreman



**Amanda Foreman**

The Guardian, Saturday 30 October 2010

A [larger](#) | [smaller](#)



Jean McConville with two of her children shortly before her disappearance. Photograph: REUTERS

Jean McConville died in December 1972, but her mutilated body remained hidden for 30 years. It was only in 2003 that her skeleton was accidentally unearthed by beachcombers in County Louth, Ireland. She is now buried in St Paul's Catholic Church, Belfast. But even now, almost 40 years on, no one has been brought to justice for her torture and murder. This even though we know who did it and why.

Jean, pictured left with two of her children, was born in 1934, a Protestant from east Belfast who converted to Catholicism when she married Arthur McConville. Both suffered prejudice and abuse for "marrying out". But when they went to live in the Falls Road in west Belfast, it seemed as though they had found a certain amount of acceptance in the Catholic community. They went on to have 10 children, one of whom became an active member of the IRA. After Arthur died in 1971, Jean was left to bring up the children on her own: the oldest was 14, the youngest, six. According to reports, Jean angered the IRA after she offered water to a dying British soldier who had been shot outside her front door.

On the night of 7 December, 1972, 12 masked men and women burst into the McConville home. Jean was dragged from the bathroom, in front of her screaming children, and hauled into a waiting car. It was the last anyone saw of her. We now know that she was tortured – "interrogated" in the words of the IRA – for several days. Her fingerless hands speak for what she suffered. Finally, she was taken to County Louth. Forced to walk on the stones on Shelling Hill beach in her bare feet, she was killed with a single shot to the back of her head. Her orphaned children were then subjected to a campaign of terror and abuse from which most have never recovered.

Jean's name is largely forgotten. There is no statue to commemorate her courageous act of humanity – or the terrible price she paid for it. But she is my hero.

