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Just a Year, Friday 10.15 pm BBC1

Aftermath of the bombings

Three of the people who suffered in the Birmingham pub bombings exactly a year ago talk on Friday about what happened and how it has affected them. Here, Dilip Hiro talks to a victim and a doctor

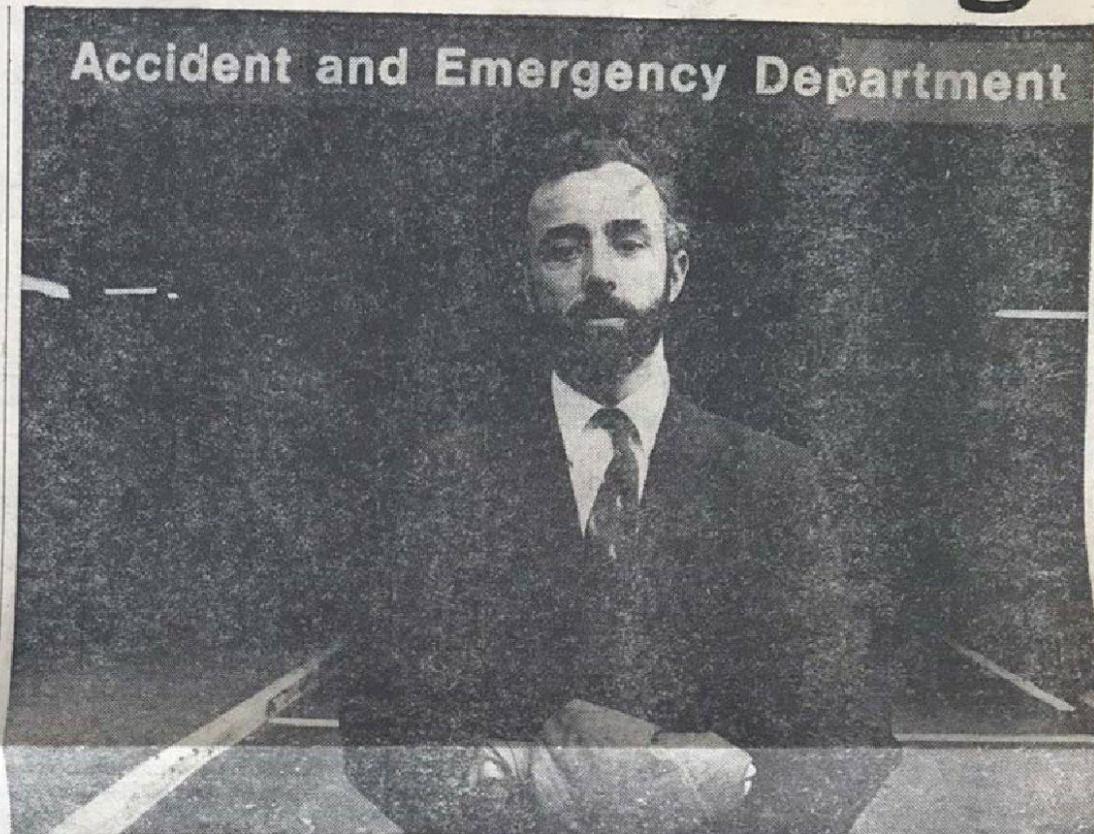
'WORSE THAN ULSTER; 19 dead, 202 hurt' was the headline splashed across the front page of the *Birmingham Evening Mail* on 22 November 1974 - the day after two bombs had exploded in pubs in the city centre. Sensational, but true.

'More people were injured and killed in a single incident in Birmingham that evening than in any single incident in Northern Ireland,' says Mr Thomas Waterworth, then a senior surgical registrar at the city's general hospital, one of the three hospitals that treated the victims of the explosion.

The bombs exploded at about 8.20 pm on 21 November. Some minutes earlier, a man with an Irish accent had telephoned the editorial department of the *Birmingham Post*, and, after saying the code word which signified a genuine bomb warning, had told them that a bomb had been planted in the Rotunda, a giant office block in the city centre. This information had immediately been passed on to the police. But, the bombs - in the Mulberry Bush on the ground floor of the Rotunda and the Tavern in the Town in a basement nearby - went off too soon to allow for the evacuation of the crowded pubs.

Waterworth was in the hospital mess bar when he was bleeped on his pocket radio and told to go straight to the casualty department. 'I arrived there at the same time as the patients were coming in,' he recalls. 'It was a sight I'll never forget - the patients, the police, and others - all pouring through the door. Soon it was like a battle station. We put into effect our scheme for major disasters.'

How did this work? 'Quite well,' he says. 'But, because of the instant publicity given to the incident on radio, our telephone lines got jammed, so that we couldn't phone anybody. On the other hand, on hearing the news, many outside



Mr Thomas Waterworth, a surgeon: 'A year has gone by, but some of the victims are still in pain'

doctors and consultants came in to help. One consultant, who was going away on holiday, turned around when he heard the news on his car radio, and headed for our hospital. Within 30 to 40 minutes, we had 30 doctors and consultants working in the casualty department.'

'That night really shocked me'

They were all needed; because 82 patients were brought to the department. They worked under the overall direction of Waterworth, who - say his colleagues - showed an unusual calm. Most of the patients were treated for shock and minor injuries, and discharged. Of the 19 severely injured victims, 14 were operated on that night.

'I must have performed operations on six or seven patients myself,' says Waterworth. 'It was seven in the morning when I left the operating theatre. Then I went around the hospital. It was not until seven in the evening that I got back

home. But I was not alone. The whole hospital staff rallied together in a spirit never seen before. As they say, adversity brings the best out of people.'

This applied as much to the people inside the hospital as to those outside. They sent presents, flowers, clothes and small sums of money, addressing them to the 'bomb victims.' Some children drew cheerful pictures and sent them to the patients. 'People were good to us too,' says Waterworth. 'A Midland air charter company took us on a free trip to Paris, which was kind of them. But, we could have done without it. We had only done our job.'

For Waterworth, 'doing a job' has always meant being a surgeon. He began performing surgical operations soon after he qualified in 1965. 'As a surgeon, one thinks one becomes hardened to human injury and maiming; but, I tell you, that night really shocked me,' he says. 'I never want to see anything approaching it again. A year has gone by, but some of the victims are still in pain.

We're still patching them up.'

One such person is Derek Blake, a 29-year-old Brummie. Last month he returned to hospital for an operation on his perforated eardrum. This was his second major operation, the first having taken place the day after the bomb explosion. He was in the Mulberry Bush that evening a year ago to see his fiancée, Pamela Joan Palmer, a 19-year-old typist, to make plans for their wedding.

'I had just picked up a drink for her at the bar, and turned - when there was a flash and a bang,' he recalls. 'Then darkness and dust. People began screaming for help. I was worried about Pamela. I kept shouting her name. I tried to get up, but found that I couldn't. My right leg was trapped. So, I just had to wait. Help came soon - within minutes.'

'When they took me to the accident hospital, I didn't know what my injury was. Later, they told me that my right leg had been bashed up, and the main artery severed. They → 15