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Plaque unveiled to child shot dead by IRA in 1971

(Marie Louise McCrory, [Irish News](#))

A plaque has been unveiled at the spot where a toddler was shot dead 36 years ago – just days after the IRA issued an apology to the family.

Seventeen-month-old Angela Gallagher was killed as she was brought to a sweet shop by her older sister off the Falls Road in west Belfast.

The IRA issued a public statement last week admitting responsibility for the shooting.

It told them Angela "was killed after she was struck by a ricochet when the IRA fired shots at a British army patrol in the Iveagh Drive/Iveagh Street area of Belfast.

"The IRA leadership offers its sincere apologies to the family of Angela Gallagher for the pain and heartache that they have suffered as a result of our action."

Angela, who was from nearby Cavendish Street, had been in a pram pushed by her sister on September 3 1971 when the tragedy happened.

She had been visiting her grandmother in Iveagh Crescent when she and eight-year-old Paula left to walk to the shop.

The bullet passed through Paula's skirt and hit the toddler.

The family had spent the last 36 years wondering about the exact circumstances of her death.

As the anniversary approached, they took the decision to exhume Angela's remains from her grave in Milltown Cemetery to be buried alongside her father Peter, who died several years ago.

Her tiny white wooden coffin was placed inside another and was carried by her brothers Michael, Kevin and Peter and nephew Christopher to its final resting place, also in Milltown.

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Yesterday, a large crowd gathered at Iveagh Drive for the unveiling of the memorial in Angela's honour.

Two plaques were erected, one at the spot where she was killed and another at the top of Iveagh Drive.

During the moving event, a decade of the Rosary was said and Angela and Christopher Power – a niece and nephew of baby Angela – laid flowers and read a poem in her memory.

The plaque was unveiled by Angela's mother Irene and sister Paula.

Her brother Michael – who was born nine months after his sister's tragic death – said the event was about "remembering Angela and the circumstances in which she was killed, in her own community".

"I'm honoured as we pay tribute to a little girl who lived and played on these streets and was taken tragically from us," he said.

"The plaque means Angela's memory will live on. A lot of time and emotion has gone into it.

"We hope this will be a symbol of hope for the future."

Mr Gallagher said the exhumation and reburial of his baby sister had been "highly dignified".

"It was an unreal yet beautiful experience." He added that his family accepted the IRA statement.

"It is part of the healing process," he said.

Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams, who attended the event, said the Gallagher family had shown "great courage and great compassion".

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