



Families will never forget

(Catherine Morrison, [Irish News](#))

Ciaran Megraw was just 18 when his older brother Brendan vanished in 1978, abducted by a gang of men who injected his pregnant wife with a syringe and lay in wait for him to return home.

When he arrived, they took him away in a car. Brendan was never seen again by his wife or family.

As the days turned into years, the uncertainty of what had happened was agonising – feelings shared by all the families of the 'Disappeared'.

"We didn't know what had happened and were always thinking he might be back," Ciaran said.

"It went from days into years and you couldn't find out any information. As the years went on we realised he wasn't coming back but we have still had no closure."

After the IRA admitted Brendan's murder in 1999 the family were hopeful that it may lead to the recovery of his body but seven years later they are still waiting.

Seamus Ruddy's mother, unable to give her son a proper Christian burial, inscribed his name on the family tombstone six months before she died, hoping that one day he would be returned to her.

"She had made sure that his name was in stone, that way, she said, nobody could forget about him," Seamus's sister Anne Morgan said.

Her brother was abducted and killed by the INLA in Paris in 1985 where he had been working as a teacher.

A year later, clothes that Seamus had been wearing when he was murdered were fished out of the River Seine in France.

But 22 years later, his family is still waiting for a body to bury.

"The two of us were very close," she said.

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"I'm the youngest girl and Seamus was the youngest boy."

Her last memories of her brother are happy ones. Months before he went missing, Anne – also a teacher – had stayed with Seamus while on a school trip to the French capital.

"During that time a teacher took a photo of myself and Seamus and that is the last picture we have of him," she said.

"No-one admitted his killing and we had to wait until 1995 before there was any admission by the INLA that he had been killed.

"My mother was still alive at that time. When she read that he was dead she put his name on my father's headstone and within six months she was dead too."

Despite death threats, the family has worked to keep their brother's case on the political agenda.

Because he was the only 'Disappeared' to have gone missing outside Ireland, Anne said there was a real danger that he would be "forgotten twice".

"One of the major difficulties is communicating with the French. We have no contacts in France and the language barrier is a problem," she said.

"I have spent two years since 2005 campaigning solidly for all of the 'Disappeared'. Myself and Anna McShane [daughter of Charlie Armstrong] went to Washington DC and lobbied George Bush.

"There has been a lot of work going on behind the scenes. People need to know that the government just did not take this on – pressure had to be put on them and it had to come from the families."

Anne and her brothers and sisters are now planning to travel back to France and convince the government that they should allow further searches for Seamus's body.

Confidential information line may provide answers

The Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains (ICLVR) was set up in April 1999 to find the bodies of the 'Disappeared', following a long campaign by victims' families.

Special legislation was rushed through the British and Irish parliaments offering limited immunity from prosecution to encourage IRA members to come forward

with information and a special unit in the paramilitary group was set up to help with the searches.

However, only three victims have been found through information passed on by the Provisionals.

In an attempt to revitalise the commission's work, it brought in a forensic scientist, Geoff Knupfer, to carry out a review.

Mr Knupfer made a series of recommendations including the setting up of a confidential telephone number and a PO Box address.

Those found:

- **The body of Eamon Molloy, abducted in 1975, was left in a coffin in Faughart Cemetery, Co Louth in May 1999**
- **One month later the remains of friends John McClory (18) and Brian McKinney (22), missing since 1978, were found together in bogland at Colgagh, Co Monaghan**
- **the remains of Jean McConville were found on a Co Louth beach in August 2003 – almost 31 years after she was kidnapped.**

Those still missing:

- **Seamus Wright (25) from Andersonstown, west Belfast, who disappeared in 1972**
- **Kevin McKee, also from the west of the city, abducted in 1972 with Seamus Wright**
- **Columba McVeigh (17), from Donaghmore, Co Tyrone, who was abducted in 1975**
- **Brendan Megrav (22), from west Belfast, vanished in 1978**
- **Danny McIlhone, also from west Belfast, was kidnapped in 1981**
- **in 1999 the IRA also publicly admitted for the first time that it killed undercover British soldier Captain Robert Nairac but was unable to locate where he was buried. The 29-year-old was abducted and killed in May 1977 after visiting a republican bar in Co Armagh.**

Those not on the 'Disappeared' list but believed to have been murdered by the IRA:

- **Father-of-five Charlie Armstrong (57) from Crossmaglen was last seen on his way to Mass in August 1981. The family have conducted their own search of land in Iniskeen, Co Monaghan.**
- **Gerard Evans, (24), from Crossmaglen, who went missing in 1979.**

Murdered by the INLA:

- **Seamus Ruddy (35), who had been working as a teacher in Paris before being abducted and murdered in 1985. Attempts by the French police to find his body have been unsuccessful.**

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