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Saturday, December 20, 2008

## Human remains identified as missing man killed by IRA

DAN KEENAN, Northern News Editor

HUMAN REMAINS found last month on a Co Wicklow mountainside have been positively identified as those of Belfast teenager Danny McIlhone.

He was abducted in 1981 by the IRA, killed and secretly buried.

The identification was formally announced yesterday by the cross-Border organisation charged with working to locate the remains of the so-called Disappeared.

In a statement, his family said they are "eternally grateful" to those who searched for his body in recent weeks and in two previous unsuccessful searches in 1999 and again the following year.

The statement continued: "We as a family are now at peace and now have the opportunity to give our brother Danny a Christian burial and to lay him to rest with our beloved mother and father."

The family thanked "most sincerely" the British and Irish governments and the members of the Independent Commission for the Location of Victims' Remains.

Referring to the experts skilled in uncovering human remains brought in by the two governments, the family added: "We would also wish to thank members of the forensic team from England who eventually found Danny and who continue to search for the remains of the other Disappeared and to all those people who have helped us throughout the years in our efforts to find Danny.

"While we have now found peace, our thoughts and prayers remain with and will always be with the families whose anguish and loss continue." The identification of Mr McIlhone was made possible by matching DNA samples from the remains uncovered at Ballynultagh, Co Wicklow, with a database supplied by relatives of all the Disappeared which is kept in England.

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Exhaustive comparisons of results, lasting some six weeks, enabled the Dublin coroner to make the identification.

Northern secretary Shaun Woodward praised those involved in the search and appealed for the fullest co-operation with ongoing searches.

"The commission has a team of dedicated experts working on its behalf," he said.

"But it can work only with information. Anyone with any information, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem, must come forward to help end the families' suffering and agony."

West Belfast SDLP Assembly member Alex Attwood said: "I repeat the SDLP call that the names of any members of the Provisional IRA or others not co-operating with the commission should be handed to the commission in order to help identify where missing victims are buried."

Five of the Disappeared have now been found. Searches continue for the bodies of Séamus Wright, Kevin McKee, Columba McVeigh and Brendan Megraw - whose murders have been admitted by the IRA - and for Gerry Evans, Charles Armstrong, Robert Nairac and Séamus Ruddy.

Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams said his party "will continue to support the other families and to work diligently on this important issue".



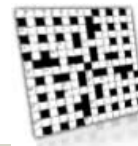
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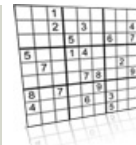
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