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## Mystery man gave mum's rings back to McConvilles

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By JIM CUSACK  
Sunday December 07 2008

THE eldest daughter of [Jean McConville](#) will visit Templetown beach on the Cooley Peninsula in [Co Louth](#) today, as she has done every year since 2003, when the remains of her mother were finally uncovered after she was murdered 36 years ago this month and secretly buried by the IRA.

[Helen McKendry](#) will visit the site of her mother's secret with her

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children and some of her seven grand children. The site, she said yesterday, is now called "Granny's beach" by her family, her husband Seamus and three sons and two daughters.

The decade-long campaign by Helen and Seamus to discover Jean's whereabouts led to the wider campaign to discover the secret graves of others murdered and secretly buried by the [IRA](#) which began in the late 1990s after the IRA ceasefire.

"Our children were wonderful during the whole campaign when we were trying to find out what happened to my mummy. They had to go without when we were going through all that campaigning. They never complained. They were just wonderful."

The McKendrys now have seven grandchildren.

Helen, aged 15 when her mother was murdered, and her nine brothers and sisters were left orphans and destitute when the IRA abducted their mother from her Divis Flats home in West Belfast the after branding her an informant.

At the time the 31-year-old who had been recently widowed was being vilified in the locality because she had shown compassion to a young British soldier who had been shot and seriously wounded outside her home. She was branded a 'Brit-lover' by local republicans.

An IRA gang which is alleged at the time to have included a young [Gerry Adams](#) was at the time imposing strict control over Catholic areas in [Belfast](#), killing or beating people including many women who showed any sympathy to the police or army.

Before Jean McConville's body was found at Templetown Beach the last sign her children had of their mother was when a man, a complete stranger, called to the children still in their home and handed over Jean's purse. In it were the three rings she had along with a 50 pence piece, all the money she had at the time she was abducted. Helen asked where her mummy was and the man said he didn't know and left.

Fifteen other Catholics who were also branded informants were taken away like Jean McConville, murdered and secretly buried. Their remains are still turning up.

The latest was 19-year-old [Danny McIlhone](#), abducted and murder in 1981 and whose remains were discovered only last month at Ballynultagh in the [Wicklow](#) hills. Searching is still going on for another, [Gerry Evans](#), who was abducted from his home in south [Armagh](#), murdered and secretly buried in 1979.

Yesterday Helen McKendry said she and her family have "moved on" and she is preparing to erect a statue to her mother, a figure of a woman surrounded by her children, in a lily garden she is planting at her [Co Down](#) family home. "My mother loved lilies. I remember that. This will be our tribute to her."

- JIM CUSACK

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