

TOP GARDA SAYS FAMILIES OF MISSING WILL GET ANSWERS

EXCLUSIVE
BY DANNY DE VAAL

THE disappearances of Trevor Deely and schoolboy Philip Cairns will be solved, a senior garda believes.

Detective Chief Superintendent Colm Noonan, who leads the Missing Persons Unit, has said his investigators will never give up.

As part of this paper's Missed campaign, the head of the Garda National Protective Services Bureau also stressed how vital it is for the public to come forward with even the smallest piece of information

Trevor vanished on December 8, 2000, while walking home from his work Christmas party in Dublin at around 4am.

Schoolboy Philip, 13, was last seen on October 23, 1986, when walking back to Coláiste Éanna Secondary School in the south of the city.

Asked if the cases will be cracked, Det Chief Supt Noonan told us: "The simple answer is yes, because people don't go missing and are never seen again.

"Somebody knows something. Somebody has seen something. The reason I say 'yes' is because the guards and all the other people who are involved around missing persons - they just don't give up.

"There's some piece of information out there. The teams assigned to investigate will keep exploring every possible avenue.

"They're not going to say. 'Look, it's just too long. 'We're going to give up'. We'll keep pushing. We will do searches on sites.

"We'll keep pushing. We'll go to locations and do searches

DET CHIEF SUPT COLM NOONAN

"We will go to locations, we'll do extensive searches until there's no further actions left to do. The most simple piece of information could turn an investigation.

"So the appeal from us as always is just give us a shout. Contact us.

"If somebody was on holiday and they said, 'Oh, I thought I saw that person,' or 'I saw their name in a newspaper in Australia', or 'I heard that they had died'.

COMFORT

"Within days, we can pick up the phone to our colleagues in any part of the world and say, 'Can you go to this address? Can you look up this car for us? Can you get the CCTV? We can pursue those lines.

"A lot of them will end up at a dead end but you keep plugging away.

"Because it only takes one person to pick up that paper and say, 'I thought I saw that person last week' or 'I thought he was living in Donegal' to pick up the phone.

"That will give a family unbelievable comfort, whether alive or deceased, that at least they found their person."

In recent years, high-profile missing persons probes, such as those of Annie McCarrick, Deirdre Jacob, and Elizabeth Clarke, were re-classified as murder investigations.

Det Chief Supt Noonan said probes are regularly reviewed and will only be upgraded if there is concrete evidence to suggest foul play.

He explained: "It's not just that they've been missing for 20 years or 25

WE WON'T GIVE UP SEARCH

NO STONE
UNTURNED
Detective Chief
Supt Colm
Noonan

Vow over baffling Trevor Deely and Philip Cairns cases

'Teams will keep on exploring every possible avenue'



MYSTERIES Trevor Deely vanished in 2000; right, Philip Cairns was last seen in 1986



years because we've seen numerous cases where they've been found (after that time). There has to be a sufficient degree of suspicion that the person has died by criminal means."

Since the start of July, there are 936 live missing person cases, with the earliest dating from 1936.

Det Chief Supt Noonan revealed that in the last two months alone, his officers closed two cases that had been open for years.

One involved an Irish person who went missing abroad. Officers in the other nation found human remains that were positively matched with the

victim's DNA. In the other instance, an Irish person was located safe and well in the UK after 26 years.

Det Chief Supt Noonan explained: "We got onto the person and we said, 'You were reported missing in Ireland. Is it you? Are you safe?'

"Do you want the people who reported you missing to know? If you do, we'll put you in touch with each other."

COMPLEX

The officer said people need not wait 24 hours to report someone missing.

He also explained that people go missing for a multitude of complex reasons, and each case is unique, adding: "There isn't any one reason why

people go missing.

"I think the common trend is that there's some sort of struggle going on - either in their personal lives, their school lives, in their professional lives. "There's something going on in their lives that they simply can't cope with. It's often tied into some mental difficulties.

"Some of the big reasons are being unhappy at home, conflict, abuse, neglect in the family situation, considerations even around being exploited - sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation people are escaping from that.

"The big thing for us is every single case is unique and every single circumstance is unique.

"A missing persons investigation stays open until the person is found. It's not closed, it's not

MISSING WILL GET ANSWERS

Big thing for us is every single case is unique

DET CHIEF SUPT COLM NOONAN

HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE MISSING PERSONS UNIT
Email: missing_persons@garda.ie
Phone: +353 1 666 9476



BRIEFING
Reporter
Danny De
Vaal with
Det Chief
Supt Colm
Noonan



MURDER PROBES From left, Annie McCarrick, Deirdre Jacob and Elizabeth Clarke

A missing person inquiry stays open. It's not archived - it stays open

DET CHIEF SUPT COLM NOONAN



FUTURE AI can create likeness based on remains

'AI will help crack cases for Gardai'

ARTIFICIAL intelligence will eventually be able to help Gardai crack historic missing persons cases, it's believed.

Det Chief Supt Colm Noonan said the emerging technology will play a massive role in the years to come and said early indications are promising.

He said scientific advancements, such as DNA testing, already play a huge role in helping gardai bring closure to the families of those missing.

When asked if he felt AI would play a role in the future, Det Chief Supt Noonan said: "Definitely."

He believes it will help the Gardai create an aged version of what a person might look like after a certain period of time has passed.

There are also models being developed which can create faces after analysing a skull.

The top cop added: "AI will definitely, without question, be a tool to allow us to make appeals in the future.

"Certainly to extrapolate if we have an unidentified human remains that we're able to use AI [to] create an image and likeness of that person that we can then use to appeal to the media, I can see that working very, very well.

RECONSTRUCTION

"We're not quite at that stage yet. There is facial reconstruction, there is aging, but there's a bit of work to be done."

He said DNA testing has been hugely successful and has helped bring old cases to a resolution.

It has been particularly instrumental in helping solve Operation "Runabay" cases - which was set up to identify the bodies of people located on the western coast of Great Britain who may have been reported missing here.

A crucial help is also known as Interpol's I-Familia database. The global match-making system helps identify missing persons using what's known as "DNA kinship matching".

The database seeks to identify missing persons or unidentified human remains when direct comparison is not possible by using DNA samples from family members instead.

Other tools available to gardai include issuing alerts to other police forces and receiving alerts if a missing person uses their ID at a port or airport.