



On behalf of the sisters and family circle of the late William (Billy) McKavanagh R I P may I welcome and thank you all, for your attendance at this press conference.

Forty years ago today we were in mourning over the tragic and untimely death of our brother Billy, who was shot in the back by the army, and also trying to come to terms with the horrific abuse, by the army of our late brother Pat and our cousin Teddy, who were arrested at the scene of the shooting.

As you can see from the copies of the newspapers printed just after Billy's death and also following his inquest, that Billy was described as a terrorist, a sniper, gunman and looter. You can only imagine the hurt these statements caused not only to us, but to our late mother, who was suffering grievously over the death of her beloved son. There was also the perceived stigma attached to the family by the reporting of the way of Billy's death and the thing's which he was called, which only now has been lifted.

Whilst in our hearts we always knew that Billy was an innocent victim, it was only when we were contacted by the Pat Finucane Centre, four years ago, and made aware of what was actually in the statements of the soldiers involved in the killing of Billy, that a glimmer of hope was raised, that at long last we might be able to prove Billy's innocence and to rectify some of the thing's said and printed about him, all those years ago.

We eventually engaged with the Historical Enquiry Team and after they had completed an indepth review of the statements made by all those



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involved, an interview with the soldier who shot Billy and numerous meetings with the family, the H.E.T in the conclusions to their report state and we quote ;–

“Billy’s death was an absolute tragedy that should not have happened. He was an innocent man who did nothing more than pick up a pair of waders, which had been stolen by someone else, and then ran away when confronted by the army” They also state that it is their hope that their report sets out clearly the circumstances of Billy’s death and will allow for the consideration of an apology at government level as the family deserves no less.

When Pat and Teddy were being taken to Hastings Street Barracks, not only were they physically abused but they also were used as human shields and threatened with being shot if anyone fired on the personnel carrier. The HET state that they were so badly beaten by the soldiers whilst they were in the barracks that the soldier, who shot Billy, told them that the pair had received such severe facial injuries, between the time he last saw them when Billy was shot and when he saw them later that same day in the barracks that he did not recognise them, until someone identified them to him.

Although we have been totally vindicated in our quest for the truth about Billy's death, we are extremely conscious of the fact that there are numerous families still seeking the truth about their loved ones. Indeed some of the families of those killed in Ballymurphy and in McGurk's bar are here with us today, and we hope and pray that all those families similarly affected will receive the same justice and peace of mind that we have received.

Copies of the HET report have been forwarded on to the Ministry of Defence, to Owen Patterson Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, The Dept of Foreign Affairs in Dublin and to various Political Parties.

In conclusion may we express our sincere thanks to the Historical Enquiries Team for the way they carried out their detailed investigation, production of and conclusions in their final report and kindness shown at all times.

Special words of thanks are due to Paul O'Connor and, and no relation, Maggie O'Connor of the Pat Finucane centre, who have guided and helped us over this past four years and without whom this review would never have seen the light of day.