

Seat unveiled in memory of Martin

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FAMILY and friends of the young Hollywood man missing for over five and a half years have unveiled a 'tribute' seat to him at the spot where he disappeared.

They gathered at Clarendon Dock in Belfast on Sunday from where Martin Kelly vanished without trace on New Year's Day 2006 after a day out with friends.

Also in attendance were police who have worked on Martin's case, a representative of the Harbour Commissioners who own the dock and Holywood Parish Priest Father Peter O'Kane.

The tribute plaque says, "Always in our thoughts, Martin Kelly, aged 21. Last seen here on the 1st of January 2006. Sadly missed by loving family and friends."

Martin's dad Raymond, who has been among those campaigning to keep open the investigation into the disappearance of his son, now aged 27, explained the importance of the 'tribute' seat.

He said, "It acts as a constant and very public reminder about the fact that Martin is still a missing person even after more than five and a half years.

"It will hopefully also encourage anyone who sees it, and who can provide any information about what has happened to him, to come forward with it.

"It is important that the bench is actually positioned at the very spot where Martin was last seen. The Harbour Commissioners not only agreed to this but went on to supply and fit it too.

"Their representative Mark Doherty was also there on Sunday. I

would like to thank him and everyone else who came to see the bench being officially unveiled."

Martin, an apprentice plumber and part-time barman in the Old Priory Inn in Holywood, was last seen on January 1, 2006.

He had spent New Year's Eve working in the Hollywood bar and was celebrating the New Year with friends in Pat's Bar in Belfast's Clarendon Dock the next day.

Martin was last seen when he left the bar at about 7.30pm, possibly intending to return to his home in the Kinnegar area of Holywood.

Exhaustive land and sea searches and a high profile publicity campaign across Britain and Ireland have so far failed to turn up any clues as to what happened to Martin Kelly.

The young Hollywood man definitely had everything to live for and was in the prime of his life when he disappeared.

He had embarked on a promising apprenticeship and supplemented that income with part-time work in the Holywood bar. He hoped one day to buy a property abroad.

Just a few nights before his disappearance Martin attended a party in Carmichaels of Holywood, where he was seen chatting, joking and laughing with friends.

There are only theories as to what has become of the young Hollywood man. Could he have fallen into the docks and tragically drowned, with his body becoming trapped or snagged under the water in some way?

Could he have lost his memory after being innocently injured in some way or even been attacked by persons unknown?

Searches were conducted by police and other divers of the

harbour where Martin disappeared.

Hundreds of volunteers joined extensive searches along the shores of Belfast Lough and the marshlands known as the Kinnegar Lagoons, which border the harbour estate.

At one point a specially trained dog, which can sniff out evidence of human remains in the water, was used in additional searches of the harbour.

Martin's family members conducted their own relentless searches for any scrap of information as to what has become of him.

His mum Karen embarked on her own month-long search mission to highlight his case across England, Scotland and Wales.

Her trip, during which she fell ill with suspected heart trouble, publicised his case in 14 cities with accompanying TV, radio and newspaper information appeals.

The journey was funded with the proceeds of two charity tribute concerts which were held for Martin in his home town and raised over £12,000.

Martin's dad Raymond extended his own search for his missing son to the south of the border.

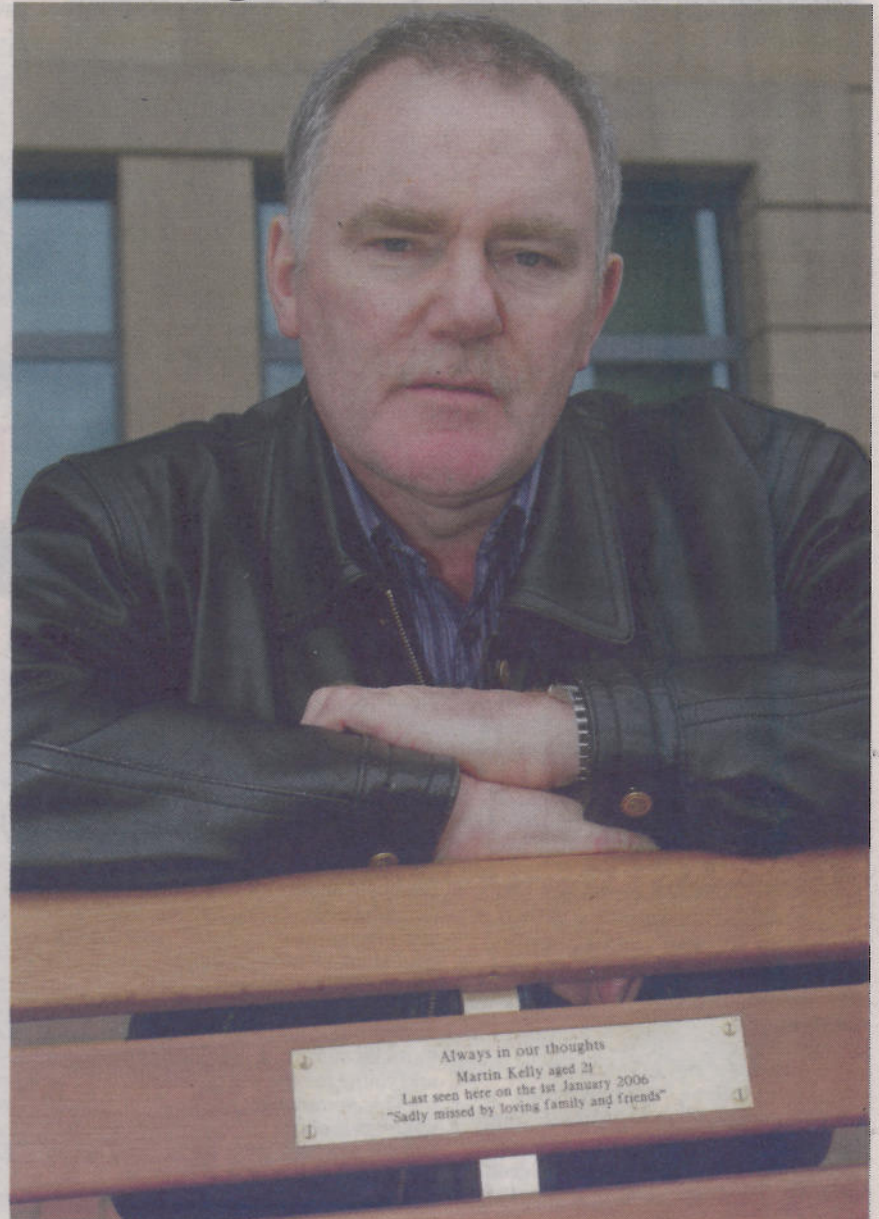
He went to the Republic on a number of occasions in search of any scrap of information, including trips to Dublin, Limerick and Clare.

Martin Kelly is described as being six feet one inch tall and of slim build with short dark black hair.

When last seen over five years ago he was wearing a black Guinness T-shirt and a pair of blue jeans.

The investigation into Martin's case is being conducted by the PSNI at Musgrave Street station in Belfast. They can be contacted on 0845 600 8000.

Further information can be obtained via www.ourmartykelly.com



Raymond Kelly with the bench dedicated to the memory of his son Martin who went missing in the Belfast Docks area on January 1, 2006. M4-08/09