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- + Latest News
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- + Match Analysis
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Belfast Telegraph Home > **News**

Divers step up hunt for missing Martin

By Debra Douglas

06 February 2006

DIVERS are today expected to carry out searches of the River Lagan for missing Co Down man Martin Kelly.

The 21-year-old, from Holywood, has not been seen since leaving Pat's Bar in the Docks area of Belfast on New Year's Day and today, Ministry of Defence divers, under the direction of the PSNI's dive team leader, will carry out searches in the Docks area.

The Army divers are expected to search in an area where CCTV footage shows a person standing where Martin was last seen.

A police spokesman confirmed a side-scan sonar would be used during the searches as well as hi-tech equipment.

Both the PSNI and the Harbour Police will have boats out on the water also as part of the search operation.

In recent weeks, the Kelly family have been critical of the police response to Martin's disappearance but have welcomed today's searches.

Speaking to the Belfast Telegraph, Martin's heartbroken mother Karen said: "They have said that as long as there isn't another tragedy like Ardglass the divers could be there for two to three weeks," she said.

"We are very pleased with that and have to thank them - it's fantastic.

"I hope that our Martin isn't lying there in the sea," said Ms Kelly.

"I think about that every day. All I want is Martin home - if they find him there we will bury him but I'm still hoping he will pick up the phone and say he is okay."

Some of the divers involved in searching for missing fisherman Connor Bogues also offered to help with searches but Mrs Kelly said that as the conditions are dangerous, the Harbour Master has requested that only the Army divers go in.

Martin's family and friends have launched a website in the hope it will jog someone's memory about him. The web address is: www.ourmartykelly.com

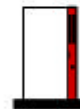
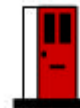
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