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Claudy IRA attack anniversary: Catholic Church, PSNI and NIO silence over 'new' files

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One of the Claudy bombing families says it is "disappointing but not unexpected" that the Catholic Church, PSNI and Northern Ireland Office have declined to say why they are withholding some 20 boxes of evidence in relation to the atrocity.



Mary Hamilton and James Miller placing flowers at the Claudy Bomb Memorial on Wednesday morning.

The IRA murdered nine civilians with three car bombs in the village just outside Londonderry on July 31, 1972. In 2010 the Police Ombudsman made explosive headlines when it revealed correspondence showing that the RUC, Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the Catholic Church covered-up the suspected role of South Derry IRA commander and Catholic priest, Fr James Chesney, in the atrocity.

James Miller, whose grandfather David was murdered in the attack, was one of those who attended a simple remembrance ceremony at the village memorial on Wednesday.

"It was really a poignant and sombre event but at the same time it was good to come together with the other families again," he said.

Mr Miller said in Tuesday's News Letter that a further 18 boxes of mainly police evidence emerged after the ombudsman's 2010 on the cover up.

Now the Ombudsman has confirmed that over a dozen fresh boxes of evidence did indeed come to light after its report.

"We became aware of the issue of the additional boxes of information in 2016," a spokesman said. "Our investigators reviewed them and satisfied themselves they contained nothing which related to the specifics of our investigation into events connected to the Claudy bombing."

Mr Miller is one of three families taking legal action with KRW Law to access the boxes - now estimated to be 22 in number - for themselves.

"There is some new information here, for example, we thought that there were only 18 boxes of evidence," he said.

"We still feel like the poor relatives of Bloody Sunday as money came from all directions to ensure they got to the truth. By contrast we have got nothing and have to fight on by ourselves."

Asked why they were not opening up their files to the Claudy families, the Catholic Church and NIO declined to give any direct explanation.

A spokesman for the Diocese of Derry, said: "The Diocese of Derry will take part in any legal proceedings, in accordance with the law".

Similarly, an NIO spokesman said: "As there are ongoing legal proceedings relating to this incident it would not be appropriate to comment further at this time."

A detailed PSNI statement will be carried in Friday's News Letter.



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In 2010 Police Ombudsman said that in the 1970s the Secretary of State, the leader of Ireland's Catholics and the RUC Chief Constable connived to move South Derry IRA Commander and priest Fr Chesney to Donnegal and ensure that he was not questioned about the bombings.

In 2010 Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness admitted going to meet Chesney on his deathbed, having initially denied doing so. The Clady families believe McGuinness was involved in the atrocity as a local IRA commander. Mr Miller said he repeatedly promised to meet the families but always failed to do so.