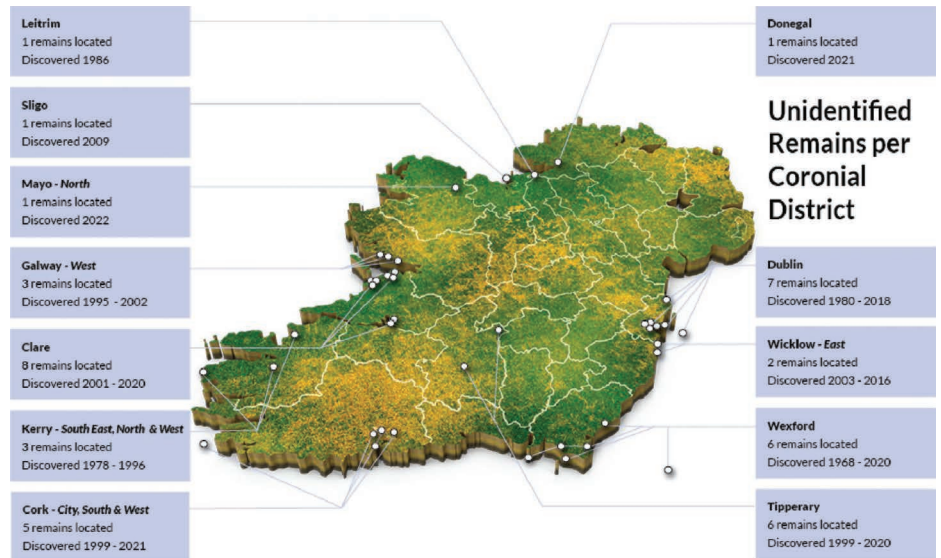# DATA PUBLISHED FOR FIRST TIME
ON UNIDENTIFIED HUMAN REMAINS

With over 856 unsolved missing persons cases live on the Garda Pulse system, while most are resolved quickly, many cases may go unsolved for a long time. However, the Department of Justice has now compiled the Unidentified Remains Database following an analysis of coroners' records that may assist in the identification process for the first time.

Unidentified Remains per Coronial District

Leitrim
1 remains located
Discovered 1986

Sligo
1 remains located
Discovered 2009

Mayo - North
1 remains located
Discovered 2022

Galway - West
3 remains located
Discovered 1995 - 2002

Clare
8 remains located
Discovered 2001 - 2020

Kerry - South East, North & West
3 remains located
Discovered 1978 - 1996

Cork - City, South & West
5 remains located
Discovered 1999 - 2021

Donegal
1 remains located
Discovered 2021

Dublin
7 remains located
Discovered 1980 - 2018

Wicklow - East
2 remains located
Discovered 2003 - 2016

Wexford
6 remains located
Discovered 1968 - 2020

Tipperary
6 remains located
Discovered 1999 - 2020

Advancements in DNA profiling have led to major breakthroughs in many missing person cases in recent years. The provision of a DNA profile to Forensic Science Ireland by family members of a missing person can assist in solving unidentified bodies and missing person cases.

In December 2022, county coroners were asked to return updated details of any unidentified remains for their coronial district as part of their annual statutory returns to the Minister for Justice. Minister Helen McEntee committed to publishing this data once collated.

The Department established a Forum in July 2021 in association with the Garda Missing Persons Unit and Forensic Science Ireland (FSI) to facilitate information exchange on unidentified remains. The Unidentified Remains Database has been compiled following an analysis of coroners' records.

The data published comprised 44 records; DNA profiles for 28 Unidentified Remains are on the National DNA Database, while the Department of Justice intends to arrange for samples of the remaining 16 unidentified remains to be attained where possible.

Forensic Science Ireland will then attempt to extract DNA from these samples and upload DNA profiles to the National DNA Database. Given the complexities associated with historical remains, this process is expected to take some time to complete.

While the data published comprises the first full list of unidentified remains, additional cases may come to light over time. As a result, the Department of Justice intends to publish updates to the unidentified remains data on an annual basis.

Chris Enright, Director of Forensic Science Ireland, said that his agency continues to work closely with the Missing Persons Bureau of An Garda Síochána. "In 2022 we assisted in 74 Missing Persons cases where DNA reference samples from family members were submitted to FSI for DNA profiling and subsequently uploaded to the National DNA Database. Forensic Science Ireland remains committed to continuously developing the science and technology available in support of Missing Person investigations."

GREATER INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

The Gardaí started a substantial body of work in 2018 in relation to unidentified human remains, and this work continues to date, according to Detective Chief Supt Colm Noonan.

"An Garda Síochána is part of a working group established by the Department of Justice to explore the creation of an Unidentified Remains Database with representatives from the Department of Justice, Forensic Science Ireland and the State Pathologist's Office.

"Operation Runabay was established in 2017 by the Missing Persons Unit, with a particular focus on advancing the investigation of cases involving unidentified persons discovered along the western coast of the UK.

"In recent years, the unit has expanded this operation to include greater co-operation with the British National Crime Agency and other neighbouring jurisdictions, exchanging information related to missing persons and unidentified human remains at home and in other jurisdictions."

As a member of the Maritime Missing Persons Expert Group, An Garda Síochána can circulate alerts to a number of countries enabling faster conveyance of information of unidentified remains. "The force has worked in partnership with Forensic Science Ireland over the past number of years to deliver a DNA testing facility for the families of missing persons.

"This service was available to the families of missing persons at the National Missing Persons Day ceremony in December 2022 and is available for any family of missing persons to engage with An Garda Síochána."

Dataset on **Unidentified Human Remains**