

- Skip
- Skip
- Skip
- Skip
- Skip



- HAVE YOUR SAY
Send us your stories, pictures and comments



• News

- Editors Viewpoint
- Letters
- Columnists

• Entertainment

• Jobs

• Cars

• Homes

• Other Titles

• Services

• The digital gateway to Northern Ireland news, sport, business, entertainment and opinion

[Home](#) > [Opinion](#)

Lesley-Anne Henry: Lasting legacy of the bombing nightmare that won't go away

Friday, 15 August 2008

In their quest for justice, the families of some of the victims have mounted a civil case against five men they believe bombed Omagh. Evidence from the case has thrown a spotlight on to the difficulties facing the relatives. Lesley-Anne Henry reports

Print Email

Search

Bookmark & Share

Digg It

del.icio.us

Facebook

StumbleUpon

Evidence from the Omagh civil action has presented a shocking insight into how some families have suffered.

Stumbleupon

What are these?

Lord Daniel Brennan, a barrister for the six families taking the ground-breaking case, said the bombers exerted "real power in the most awful, criminal way" when they abandoned that car on August 15, 1998. And as victims' relatives poured out their broken and troubled hearts to Belfast High Court it was clear just how much power those terrorists still wield today.

The ongoing case, part funded by a Government grant of £850,000, is being brought against five men believed to be behind the 500lb car bomb. It marks the first time victims of terrorism have sued the alleged perpetrators and is considered as the families' last hope for justice — one final attempt to weaken the Real IRA's grip and move on.

The families of Geraldine Breslin (43), Aiden Gallagher (21), Esther Gibson (36), Anne McComb (45), Alan Radford (16) and Lorraine Wilson (15), among the 29 people killed in the 1998 bombing, wept as they gave harrowing accounts of their shattered lives.

A leading psychiatrist, Dr Nicholas Cooling, gave the plaintiffs a bleak prognosis and said none were likely to fully recover.

Michael Gallagher, who lost his 21-year-old son Aiden, has suffered "complex mental health" problems as a result of the bomb. The former mechanic was said to be so "pre-occupied with the pursuit of justice it became his life".

Mr Gallagher, who was thrust into the public eye after the bomb, said his life was is a stark contrast to his existence prior to Aiden's death.

"That day certainly changed me and probably everybody else that had had any serious involvement in it. Really, before the bomb, if anybody had pointed a camera at me I would have run in the opposite direction."

His wife, Patsy, gave the court a frank and honest insight into her home life during her time in the witness box. She told of her formerly fun-loving, placid husband and how the bombing had taken its toll. She said her husband had changed from a placid family man who rarely drank to someone who took fits of temper and turned to alcohol as a means of coping and had been consumed by the quest for justice.

Mrs Gallagher said: "He never drank before very much, maybe at a wedding or something. At the beginning he wasn't too bad.

"Then he was on tablets but he'd go into fits of temper. He stopped taking them. Then he turned to alcohol.

"I used to tell people I had four children and Michael was the naughtiest of the lot. He was always with the children and playing tricks on me. He's not like that now. He's very aggressive, very bad tempered — he doesn't sleep well. He thinks he's our boss — he demands things. If he goes to meetings and things don't go right, it's as if it is our fault."

Among those most tragic victims is Anne Wilson, who lost her 15-year-old daughter Lorraine in the bombing. She was described in court as a "shell of a woman".

Her husband, Godfrey Wilson, a plant worker, recalled how life seemed almost impossible after the bomb. Fighting back tears, he said that in the depths of despair he and two of his children tried to take their own lives.



The agony of that fateful August 10 years ago, lives on for the families of the Omagh victims

enlarge

GO Advanced Search

©belfasttelegraph.co.uk Legal
Terms & Policies | Contact Us |
Sitemap | RSS Feeds | Group
Websites | Daily Newsletter

"I was on a country road driving like a lunatic hoping a tractor would come out in front of me to end it all. I cried until I had ulcers in my eyes. I couldn't stop. I must have cried for three months.

"Sleeping was terrible. I couldn't get the morgue out of my head. I had a continuous picture of Lorraine's face, the shrapnel and how her lovely long hair was blown off. She had head injuries. Her face was full of shrapnel. Her right eye was missing and there was a tear in her left eye. I took out a tissue and I soaked it up and put in my breast pocket. I still have it.

"That's the very little I have left of her."

Another victim, Stanley McComb, who lost his wife Anne, suffers chronic depression. He described how lonely his life had become: "I don't go to bed anymore because I don't want to wake up to nothing in the morning.

"I tried to keep going but it's lonely without Anne. That is when my hatred started. I hated those people so much and never hated anyone in my life. Every day since that day I have been so angry. I'm sorry but that's just the way I feel."

Meanwhile, Paul Radford told the court of the guilt he feels because he spent time helping at Omagh hospital oblivious to the fact that his younger brother, 16-year-old Alan, had died in the explosion. Having been mistakenly informed by a friend that she had been with Alan at the time of the explosion, Mr Radford remained at the hospital for several hours to assist with caring for the injured before resuming the search for his brother.

"I can't get it out of my mind when I was helping someone else, I wasn't there for my brother. I have a problem with that. I'm very pessimistic about life. I was helping someone else when he needed help. I find that hard to live with."

The civil action has also heard claims that ruthless Real IRA leader Michael McKevitt, who recently lost an appeal against his 20-year jail term, wanted to overshadow the horrors of Omagh with another so-called spectacular. McKevitt his alleged number two Liam Campbell, Seamus Daly, Seamus McKenna and Colm Murphy all deny any part in the Omagh massacre.

The case, which was due to last for eight weeks but is months behind schedule, is expected to resume again in three weeks.

Post a comment

Limit: 500 characters

[View all comments](#) that have been posted about this article

* Name (only this field displayed)

* Email

* Town/City

* Country/State

Offensive or abusive comments will be removed and your IP address logged and may be used to prevent further submissions. In submitting a comment to the site, you agree to be bound by BelfastTelegraph.co.uk's [Terms of Use](#)

* Required field

Remember Me

Also in this section

- Kevin Myers: How US helped make China most awesome entity in entire world
- Maureen Coleman: Almost 50, but for a material girl, Madonna wears it well
- Laurence White: Why a woman doesn't ask to be raped, even after a drink