

**Ireland of the unwelcomes?**  
Are Ireland's immigration procedures too arbitrary and too open to individual officers' discretion?

**Magic Moments**  
Win a VIP trip to cheer on Leinster electric atmosphere at the All Ireland Football Final between Tyrone and Kerry today with the launch of two commemorative stamps, was also revolutionary

Home » Ireland » In the North » In Depth  
Other  
Today's Paper

Home » Ireland » In the North »

Email to a friend Print RSS Text Size:

Friday, September 26, 2008

# Man tells of his sister's horrific bomb death in Omagh

THE BROTHER of an Omagh bomb victim stood beside her body for two days to stop anyone discovering the horrific scale of her injuries, the High Court heard today.

Edmond Gibson's account of shielding family and friends from the ravages inflicted on his sister Esther was revealed during evidence read out at the civil action in Belfast.

Other bereaved relatives and their partners also told how their lives were destroyed by the terrorist attack which killed 29 people and unborn twins in August 1998.

Some thought of suicide, while others turned to drink in a bid to block out their pain.

Brett Lockhart QC, for the families who are taking a multi-million pound lawsuit against five alleged dissident republicans, went through a series of statements from those who had lost loved ones.

The court heard how Mr Gibson, a police officer at the time of the bombing, joined a clean-up operation following the attack. At this stage he was unaware his 36-year-old sister was among the dead.

Later he recalled identifying her shattered body and then, as the oldest brother, standing next to it day and night during an extended wake.

"I was told no one could touch her body as there was nothing behind her face or chest," he said.

"When it came to carrying the coffin I almost collapsed as I was so exhausted from the emotion of standing in Esther's room for two days.

"I felt at this stage I was wiping away everyone else's tears and had no tears left to cry myself."

As post-traumatic stress set in his job became so difficult that eventually he was medically retired from the police service.

ADVERTISEMENT

## Latest »

- 10:31 Money markets seize up as US bailout stalls
- 09:41 Cowen to lead delegation at Scotland meeting
- 09:32 Kilkenny mine to close over three years
- 09:21 German police arrest two terror suspects on KLM plane
- 09:19 Keane hopes for Mersey derby start
- 08:56 Dragon appoints new non-executive chairman
- 08:55 Kim's Ryder Cup form continues
- 08:31 Guantanamo prosecutor seeks immunity

## Popular Stories

### Most Read

- 1 Seven hedge funds bet millions on Irish banks falling
- 2 Ireland flanker Best facing lengthy ban
- 3 Exchequer faces EUR 7bn tax shortfall as recession confirmed
- 4 Why it may be time to consider handing in my Irish passport
- 5 Family and friends mourn journalist

Haunted by guilt and thoughts that he could have lifted his sister's body as he helped clear debris from the bomb scene, he added: "As a policeman it should have been me that died, not Esther."

Mr Gibson's wife Heather also told how he has never got over what happened, with his sense of pride and love of sports wiped out.

"It's as if he had been in the bomb," she stated.

Their accounts emerged as lawyers for the families confirmed that two men who lost wives in the bombing would be seeking £225,000 and £160,000 in damages for loss of dependency and loss of services.

One of them, Mark Breslin, sat head bowed in court as Mr Lockhart went through statements from doctors who treated his wife Geraldine (43), as she lay dying.

At one stage the barrister said he did not want to refer to the injuries discussed by the medical experts.

All sides in the action against Michael McKeivitt, Liam Campbell, Séamus McKenna, Colm Murphy and Séamus Daly sat in silence as the emotion-charged accounts were read out.

The mother of 15-year-old victim Lorraine Wilson, Geraldine Ann Wilson, said they were blighted by grief, rows, attempted suicides and heavier alcohol dependency.

Ms Wilson also disclosed the impact on son Colin, a 10 year old with some learning difficulties at the time of the bomb.

"Colin was plunged into a world of chaos and depression," she said in her statement.

"He had gone from having a good family life . . . to a family who were bitter and upset, drinking and argumentative."

The boy became so frightened that he had to sleep on a mattress on his parents' bedroom floor.

"The death of Lorraine has scarred Colin for life," his mother added.

Ms Wilson's older son, Gary, told how he became so depressed after losing his sister that the only way he got through it was to leave Northern Ireland and go travelling.

He had tried to take his own life and also suffered the "cruel harassment" of comments sprayed on the walls at work by republican-supporting colleagues, the court heard.

Eventually moving to Perth, Australia with his wife, he said: "I could no longer live in Northern Ireland.

"I can never forget the murder of my sister Lorraine and the day of August 15, 1998."

The trial was adjourned until Tuesday, when it will again hear evidence in Dublin.

© 2008 The Irish Times



This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

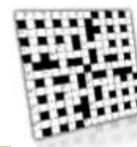
## Your Vote »

Do you think Ireland should honour her commitment to the UN target of spending 0.7 per cent of GNP on overseas aid by 2012?

« Yes | No »

Results

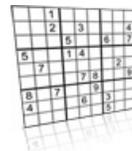
## Crossword Club »



Today's Interactive Irish Times Crosaire and Simplex crosswords, plus 10 years of crossword archive.

ADVERTISEMENT

## Sudoku »



Download and print the daily Irish Times sudoku grid

ADVERTISEMENT

CLASSIFIED

### Homes



Castlegrange, Castaheary, Dublin 15 Price: €329,500

Bedrooms: 3 See More »

Select your categories

Next »



Audi's new TT goes quietly and potently off to play in Band B

Find »



I am a

Looking for a

Located

Only with photos:

Next »

© 2008 irishtimes.com