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Omagh shadow still haunts

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Friday December 21 2007

REUNIVES of the 29 people murdered in the 1998 Omagh bombing are appalled at the outcome of the trial of Sean Hoey. Like the relatives of those killed in the Dublin and Monaghan bombings 24 years earlier, their search for the truth has led nowhere, for now.

Sean Hoey was acquitted by a judge at Belfast Crown Court yesterday. He had been in custody for four years and faced 56 separate charges. He will now be at home for Christmas and his acquittal means that nobody in Northern Ireland has been convicted of the worst single atrocity in more than 30 years of violence.

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- [More pain for Omagh families in trial fiasco](#)

IAN O'DOHERTY ISPY



• Republican whingers -- the Queen's not your problem

Honestly, the things some people get upset about. The latest example of petty-mindedness from our Republican friends comes with the howls of outrage which have greeted the proposed visit to our shores by Ugly Betty herself, the Queen of England.

SEANAN MOLONY POLITICS



One can only guess at the feelings of dismay and frustration as the relatives heard Mr Justice Weir berate those members of the police service, whose sloppy handling allowed potentially vital evidence to be contaminated.

He was extremely critical of the way in which exhibits were bagged and labelled and said that police officers had joined in a deliberate and calculated attempt to deceive. In other words, they had lied to the court.

The relatives of the murdered listened to this and watched while Sean Hoey waned as the verdict was delivered and his supporters clapped their hands.

The relatives who had followed the trial closely during its 56 days may indeed have been appalled as they listened to Mr Justice Weir's judgment and his criticism of the slapdash behaviour of the PSNI, but they are unlikely to have been too surprised.

The prosecution case had relied heavily on low-copy number DNA evidence. This new and delicate form of testing had been regularly challenged by the defence as it was presented.

During the trial forensic experts disagreed about the validity of the evidence. In the end, the judge remained unconvinced and reached his verdict on the basis of the evidence before him, evidence which he considered flawed.

Indeed the relatives of the murdered have reached a cul de sac, but they still have their support and self-help group and, like the families of those 1974 bombing victims, they will not rest until they get answers.

Their appeal for an international investigation into the Omagh atrocity is no less than a plea to the British and Irish governments for help.

In the wake of a botched police investigation, their cry should not go unheard.

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What are these?



- **Put us out of our misery Bertie -- give us all a break**

THE only person who can stop this dreadful drip, drip of revelation, a political version of Chinese water torture for every citizen, is the Taoiseach himself.

MARY KENNY OPINION



- **Only lawyers divorced from reality support clean breaks**

Some of the most strangely cordial relationships occur between couples who have separated and divorced -- and, after a few years' non-communication and healing -- have returned to a mellow friendship. Indeed, some ex-spouses get along so well, as friends, you wonder why they split up in the first place.

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