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Local & National

Omagh suspect a drunk, says ex-wife

Thursday, April 17, 2008

By Lesley-Anne Henry

The first named defendant in the Omagh civil action was described in court today as a "drunkard".

Seamus McKenna is one of five men being sued by relatives of the 29 people slaughtered in the bombing on August 15, 1998.

During day eight of the landmark legal action at Belfast High Court against five men accused of the bombing, transcripts of a police interview with his estranged wife Catherine McKenna were read to the court.

Mrs McKenna, who had been separated from her husband for about four or five years at the time of her arrest, told police her husband was an alcoholic.

She was being questioned by police about a telephone call made to her house in Dundalk by Seamus McKenna less than an hour after the Omagh explosion.

During the course of the 17 interviews at Strand Road RUC station in Londonderry, Mrs McKenna claimed to have limited contact with her ex-husband and said if he telephoned her home it was usually when he was drunk.

In the witness box for a second day Detective Sergeant John Gilmour said he agreed with the suggestion put to him by a barrister for the first named defendant that Mrs McKenna had "virtually no relationship with Mr McKenna".

The court also heard that Mrs McKenna did not remember receiving a telephone call on the day of the Omagh bombing and that her ex-husband had never said anything about the blast during their limited contact.

Despite his reputation as a drunkard, Mrs McKenna told police she did not regard Seamus McKenna as "a liar". She told them she was not afraid of him, the RUC or the IRA, but had no information about any telephone call.

During the interview it emerged that Mrs McKenna's first husband had died from alcoholism and that her son from that first marriage also had a serious drink problem.

Yesterday, Detective Sergeant Gilmour told the civil action how Mrs McKenna had lied about her whereabouts on August 15, 1998.

He said that she initially agreed she had received a telephone call to her house but later changed her story and claimed to have been in Galway on that day.

At hearing

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