

Case-Notes

The Omagh Bombing

The Omagh bombing resulted in huge loss of life and extensive damage to property – the like of which had not been encountered in the UK in for some considerable time.

Suspect Sean Hoey was apprehended and accused of involvement in a series of bombings which included the Omagh tragedy and was prosecuted for murder and a range of other offences.

Cogent Forensic Consultants was asked by the defence legal team to review evidence from the bomb-making materials and textile fibres recovered by the Crown's scientists. Two Cogent consultants were involved; one of whom eventually gave evidence in court for the defence.

A range of fibres had been examined by the Crown's scientist to establish whether or not the bombing incidents were linked in a series and whether the devices could be linked to Hoey's home.

There was no dispute between the Cogent consultant and the Crown's scientist relating to the scientific findings themselves, but there was disagreement on their interpretation. Part of the prosecution evidence centred around the presence of a small number of black acrylic fibres found on a device recovered from the scene, which matched fibres present on items in Hoey's home and mobile phone.

The Crown's scientist attached some significance to these. However, the Cogent consultant was of the opinion that the presence of these fibres was most likely to be co-incidental and therefore not necessarily incriminating.

As a result of this and other factors, Hoey was eventually acquitted of all charges.

