

1 Monday, 3 February 2025.

2 (11:00 am)

3 LORD TURNBULL: Good morning, Mr. Greaney.

4 MR. GREANEY: Good morning. Today we will begin with

5 Pen Portrait evidence relating to Esther Gibson who was 11:10

6 36 years of age when she was killed.

7 We'll begin by watching a presentation of

8 photographs. Over that presentation of photographs,

9 there has been read a statement of commemoration; the

10 person narrating the statement is a niece of Esther, 11:11

11 and then once we have watched the presentation and

12 listened to the statement, a poem will be read by

13 Esther 's sister, Caroline Martin, who sits opposite

14 me.

15 Can I indicate, sir, that those who have 11:11

16 contributed to the statement that we will hear read are

17 the four younger sisters of Esther: they are Liz

18 Gibson, Audrey Mooney, Caroline Martin, as I indicated,

19 and Wilma Kyle.

20 And so, sir, having given that introduction, could 11:11

21 I ask, please, that the presentation be played.

22 Commemoration of ESTHER GIBSON by LIZ GIBSON,

23 AUDREY MOONEY and CAROLINE MARTIN

24 *(Presentation played).*

25 "Esther Norah Gibson was born on 2 July 1962 and was 11:12

26 raised in the broad community of Usnagh near Beragh in

27 County Tyrone where she lived on a family farm with her

28 parents, William and Norah Gibson. As the eldest

29 daughter in a close-knit family, Esther took on

2

1 responsibilities from a young age, growing up with a

2 strong sense of duty and compassion that would

3 characterise her life.

4 From her early years, Esther showed a passion for

5 learning and community engagement. She attended the 11:12

6 local Hutton Primary School where she excelled

7 academically and socially. Outside the classroom, she

8 actively participated in extracurricular activities such

9 as Girl-guiding, which allowed Esther to develop

10 leadership skills and foster her sense of service to 11:13

11 others, qualities that remained central to her character

12 throughout her life.

13 Esther continued her education at Omagh High School

14 before moving on to Omagh College where she pursued

15 secretarial qualifications. Her diligence and hard work 11:13

16 earned her a position in Omagh Hospital where she first

17 began her professional career. Later, Esther

18 transitioned into the private sector to secure her

19 employment at the well known clothing manufacturer,

20 Desmond & Sons in Omagh. She worked there with 11:13

21 dedication and commitment until her untimely passing.

22 Beyond her career, Esther was a devoted Christian

23 who found joy and comfort in her faith. She attended

24 Sixmilecross Free Presbyterian Church regularly where

25 she was known for her warmth and generosity. Esther was 11:13

3

1 also actively involved in her church community. She

2 took Sunday school classes and serving as a role model

3 for the younger generation. Her commitment to her faith

4 and to helping others was evident in all aspects of her

5 life. 11:14

6 At the time of her death, Esther was engaged to be

7 married looking forward to a future filled with hope and

8 happiness. She was a young woman with much to look

9 forward to. Her career was flourishing, her faith was

10 strong and she was preparing to embark on a new chapter 11:14

11 of her life with her fiance. Esther's murder cut short

12 a life that was rich in kindness, love and promise. She

13 was deeply loved by her family, friends and community,

14 and her absence is profoundly felt by all who knew her.

15 MR. GREANEY: Caroline, could I ask you to tell us your 11:14

16 full name, please?

17 A. Caroline Bates Martin.

18 Q. And you are one of four sisters of Esther Gibson?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And she was the big sister to all four of you? 11:15

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. And, Caroline, you are going to be reading a poem to us,

23 and is that a poem that was written after Esther 's

24 death by a close relative?

25 A. Yes. 11:15

4

1 Q. And as we are going to hear from you in the course of

2 the poem, Esther is referred to as the "silent special

3 bridesmaid"?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And as "graciously smiling on her sister's wedding day"? 11:15

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And whose wedding day is it that's referred to in the

8 course of the poem?

9 A. Mine.

10 Q. And when was it that you were married? 11:15

11 A. 3 October 1998.

12 Q. And we know that Esther herself was due to be married,

13 is that right?

14 A. Yes, that's correct.

15 Q. Had you and Esther come to an arrangement about the 11:16

16 sequencing of your weddings?

17 A. Esther had suggested because -- had said, because I was

18 the younger sister, to let me have my date first.

19 Q. And so, Caroline, what I'm going to ask you to do is

20 just, once you are ready and in your own time, if you 11:16

21 would please read the poem to us?

22 *(Poem read)*

23 A. "To Esther, the silent, special bridesmaid:

24

25 "The sun shone that Saturday morn, 11:16

5

1	Villages turned out to see,	
2	A charming bride with bridesmaids three,	
3	Coordinating colours of gold and blue,	
4	Side by side in solemnity,	
5	On the Communion table a bouquet of blue,	11:17
6	In loving memory of chief bridesmaid,	
7	Who was absent from her church.	
8	Down here on earth, blue bouquet,	
9	Reminder of her tragic death.	
10	Now she walks through God's garden where no flowers	11:17
11	decay,	
12	Gathering flowers for her master's bouquet,	
13	Graciously smiling on her sister's wedding day.	
14	Underneath the beech tree,	
15	In God's cemetery bridesmaids placed,	11:17
16	That special bouquet tied with silk ribbon of blue,	
17	Damp, listless with the evening dew,	
18	Tears of yesterday,	
19	Chilling reminder of Omagh's devastating atrocity.	
20	Broken spirits, shattered dreams, blue ribbons holding	11:18
21	together memories,	
22	Sweet memories that will linger always."	
23	Q. Thank you very much indeed for reading that for us.	
24	And, sir, that concludes the evidence of the	
25	commemoration relating to Esther Gibson.	11:18
6		

1	LORD TURNBULL: I would like to thank Esther Gibson's sisters	
2	for sharing their memories of Esther with the Inquiry in	
3	the commemoration which they prepared.	
4	Esther was plainly a caring and generous Christian	
5	person with a strong sense of community, whose life and	11:19
6	personality acted as a good role model for others.	
7	Like a number of those killed on that day, Esther was on	
8	the brink of a new life full of promise and happiness,	
9	which she was so cruelly robbed of. Her absence will	
10	have constituted a profound loss to her family and to	11:19
11	all who shared her company.	
12	The Inquiry has benefitted greatly from the	
13	evidence kindly given by Esther's sister, Caroline	
14	Martin.	
15	Thank you very much.	11:19
16	A. Okay.	
17	MR. GREANEY: Sir, can we now have a break for 20 minutes	
18	please?	
19	(11.19 am)	
20	(A short break)	11:19
21	(11:44 am)	
22	MR. GREANEY: We're next going to hear pen portrait evidence	
23	to commemorate Shaun McLaughlin when he was killed. We	
24	will show a photograph of Sean on the screen, and then a	
25	statement prepared by Sean's mother, Patricia, will be	11:45
7		

1	read, it will be read by Patricia's sister, so, Sean's	
2	aunt, and her name is Marjorie, and once Marjorie has	
3	finished reading the statement, we will watch a	
4	presentation of photographs accompanied by a song, and I	
5	will introduce that presentation explaining the	11:45
6	significance of the song.	
7	Commemoration of SHAUN MCLAUGHLIN by MAJORIE MCDAID	
8	MR. GREANEY: And so, Marjorie, could I begin, please, by	
9	asking you to tell us your full name, please?	
10	A. Marjorie McDaid.	11:45
11	Q. Marjorie, we're going to show the photograph on the	
12	screen, please. Now, that's Sean in the middle?	
13	A. Yes.	
14	Q. And, Marjorie, once you are ready, if you would read the	
15	statement to us, please.	11:46
16	A. "I, Patricia McLaughlin, will say I live in Buncrana. I	
17	lost my son Shaun, aged 12 at the time, on a student	
18	visit to Omagh.	
19	Sean was born on 29 April 1986, and he weighed only	
20	five and a half pounds. It was a very complicated birth	11:46
21	and we both nearly died. However, after his birth we	
22	both were stronger, healthier and made a full recovery.	
23	Sean liked playing football with his friends and	
24	cycling and doing things that young boys do. He played	
25	football for his local club. Shaun was a lively, lovely	11:46
8		

1	boy, he was always happy and content, he always found	
2	something to smile about.	
3	Then Omagh came. Shaun was so excited to be going	
4	to Omagh with his friends and all the Spanish students.	
5	He had gone on these trips for the previous two years.	11:47
6	It had become a summer event. It never occurred to me	
7	that there were going into Omagh town. I had thought	
8	that they were just going to the Ulster American Folk	
9	Park.	
10	We had been out for the day and then came back. I	11:47
11	went down to the town in Buncrana to get the groceries	
12	and one woman said that there had been a bomb in Omagh	
13	and that a bus from Buncrana had been caught up in it.	
14	At first I asked if it was a crowd of old people who had	
15	gone there on a day out. It never occurred to me at all	11:47
16	that Shaun would be involved. I left the town with the	
17	groceries and came home and on my way in the woman next	
18	door came out at around four o'clock, she was crying and	
19	asked me "Is Shaun all right?" and I said, "Of course,	
20	why wouldn't he be?" She then told me that the bus with	11:48
21	the children had been caught in the bomb. I knew they	
22	had gone to the folk park but I did not know that they	
23	had gone on to Omagh. The folk park is a mile or two	
24	outside of Omagh. I did not think that the children	
25	would be going into the town to get sweets and things,	11:48
9		

1 it just never occurred to me.

2 I went back indoors and put on the news to see what
3 was happening and then everybody in the houses around me
4 saying to me to come out. I saw Bernie Doherty, a 11:48
5 couple of doors down, and she was very upset. I kept
6 saying to her that they would be okay, and she kept
7 saying that they were not going to be okay.

8 We had waited a while and got news then from the
9 two boys who were with them, Bernie's nephew and his
10 friend, that the four of them had gone together and 11:49
11 their parents were sent for them because they were very
12 badly injured. The parents had to go straight away and
13 I kept saying that we'll be sent for next, that
14 everything would be all right, but we would have to go
15 to Enniskillen Hospital or one of the other hospitals 11:49
16 where people were being sent to.

17 We were on the phone and talking to the RUC, the
18 Royal Ulster Constabulary, and they were trying to get
19 information for us. Along with that, we were watching
20 television for any other news. We did not go to Omagh 11:49
21 at that point. We did not think that there would be any
22 point because everything was in a mess and it was
23 obvious that there was no way we were going to see or
24 find out anything. So we waited on and we were told
25 that the bus would be coming back that night at nine 11:49

10

1 o'clock with the rest of the children. We still thought
2 there was a chance that the boys would be on it. We
3 went to the school and I think it was at that stage for
4 some reason that I felt there was a good chance that
5 they were not coming home. 11:50

6 My husband headed towards the bus and told me to
7 wait in the car with his brother.

8 *(Pause)*

9 I sat and watched all the other children coming off
10 the bus, but Shaun never got off the bus. I then headed 11:50
11 towards the bus and the parish priest was standing at
12 the top of the steps along with the Sergeant and the
13 driver. We knew the driver and I asked if anybody had
14 seen Shaun, and nobody had. I knew then that that was
15 it; that was the end. 11:50

16 My husband and Oran's father, Michael, decided at
17 that point that they would go to Omagh, so they left
18 with two other men and went down, and me and Bernie went
19 home, as it turned into the longest night of my life.

20 I would be going to her house and she would come up 11:51
21 to mine to see if there was any news, and it was about
22 an hour after the men left that the RUC kept phoning to
23 try and find out what Shaun was wearing and if he had
24 any identification marks, scars or anything on him,
25 which would allow them to identify him. The later it 11:51

11

1 got the more police kept phoning and the calls were
2 getting closer together. I knew this was not looking
3 good. They kept asking the same kinds of questions and
4 I was becoming worried that they were asking this as
5 they were trying to identify Shaun's body. 11:51

6 My husband was phoning me regularly as well, but he
7 was also visiting the four or five hospitals were the
8 injured were sent to. He started with the closest one
9 and carried on down towards Omagh. He told me that when
10 he got to Omagh they went to the leisure centre where 11:52
11 there were sheets of paper with everybody's name on it
12 to let relatives know where the injured had been sent.
13 But the later it went on, the worse it got.

14 About 7:40 am, John rang me to say he had found
15 Shaun and that he was dead. 11:52

16 Shaun was very badly disfigured and so he could not
17 be easily identified. John was only able to identify
18 him by his watch. John then came back and other
19 families that gathered in the house. John and the
20 others got back about ten o'clock the following morning. 11:52
21 I started then to think about how we would be bringing
22 Shaun back home. We were told it would be Tuesday at
23 the earliest. That meant Shaun would be on his own from
24 Saturday until Tuesday. I couldn't cope with this and
25 became very emotional and annoyed. 11:52

12

1 A good friend of ours phoned the RUC to see if
2 there was any way at all that they could hurry a
3 postmortem along and get Shaun released earlier, or if
4 we could go and see him. We got permission then to go
5 up on Sunday night to view him at the mortuary. So me 11:53
6 and Bernie went up and we were just out of the
7 postmortem at that stage. I think at that point you do
8 not actually see things right but we had to go because
9 until I saw Shaun, I still thought that he was going to
10 come home. 11:53

11 He was released on the Monday and there must have
12 been 30 to 40 cars that went up to Omagh and we brought
13 him back. I insisted on Shaun's coffin being opened and
14 I was told it couldn't be, but I insisted, and, of
15 course, they had to do a lot of work to cover up the 11:53
16 injuries.

17 The state of his face meant that it took a lot longer
18 than they thought it would and it was very late when we
19 left sometime in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

20 The crowds of people on that route were 11:53
21 unbelievable. From when we left through all the towns,
22 it was on both sides of the street, and those people
23 must have been waiting a long time because we left much
24 later than they were due to leave, but they were still
25 standing. And when we got to the bottom of the town of 11:54

13

1 Buncrana, there were thousands stood at the side of the
2 road.
3 The people visiting our house queued right down the
4 road around the corner in two lines all day and all
5 night. It never stopped. It was a distraction, but at 11:54
6 that stage I was somewhere else, I just didn't know what
7 was going on or what was happening. I did not want
8 anything to sink in, so I was blocking everything out.
9 After the funeral I just seemed to be in a lull, but all
10 my family were here, even the ones from America and 11:54
11 England, and they were very protective, but I just felt
12 totally numb, along with anger. I don't think things
13 sunk in properly for a month or six weeks. John would
14 not talk to me about it, but he spoke to other people.
15 I felt as though the funeral had been a total farce, 11:55
16 there were too many important people there from the
17 political parties. They all even had reserved seats but
18 there was no reserved seats for the three families who
19 were burying their children. Two of my brothers even
20 had to ask people to move out of their seat so that we 11:55
21 could sit down. My son was buried before I could even
22 get near his grave.
23 I have two other children, Elaine who was ten at the
24 time, and Christopher who was only seven. They both had
25 a very bad time since losing Shaun. They struggled a 11:55

14

1 lot to cope with his death and to accept it. They were
2 just in complete pieces.
3 Christopher, who shared a room with Shaun, was
4 unable to cope at all; he had nightmares and wouldn't go
5 into Shaun's room. Elaine insisted on sleeping in 11:56
6 Shaun's bed. Christopher wouldn't go into the bedroom
7 at all, he slept in my room for the first six months and
8 had recurring nightmares. We ended up having to switch
9 their bedrooms. Christopher did eventually settle down
10 but it was a long time before his nightmares stopped. 11:56
11 Along with that, there was the media to contend
12 with, although I have to say that most of them were very
13 good. They were camped outside the house on the other
14 side of the road but they weren't disrespectful, to be
15 fair. Unless I spoke to them, they didn't bother me. I 11:56
16 can't exactly remember what I said to them, the
17 attention was overwhelming.
18 We used to go down to Omagh to see the support
19 group, the OSSHG, but it was always difficult for me to
20 return to Omagh. 11:57
21 Some people say that time is a great healer. Well
22 I do not think this was true for me. I feel the same
23 today as when it happened. There are days when I get up
24 and feel so bad and other days when it feels a little
25 less bad, and there are days when you have to hope for, 11:57

15

1 and that's the same for all of us. Your outlook on life
2 changes completely.
3 I probably don't let the children do things that I
4 would have let them had we not lost Shaun. When my
5 daughter was in her teenage years, I found it hard to 11:57
6 let her go shopping because of what happened, but it's
7 even worse if she wanted to go anywhere far away. It
8 seems like a lifetime since I held him. If somebody had
9 said to me before I lost a child that you will feel
10 exactly the same 26 years later, I wouldn't have 11:57
11 believed them. I would have thought maybe a couple of
12 years that you would you be broken hearted but that you
13 would still move on, it's going to have to ease, but it
14 just doesn't. You get strength from being able to live
15 through it but you are never going to cope with it or 11:58
16 understand it or come to terms with it. Your outlook on
17 life just changes completely. You don't worry about
18 what you used to.
19 It is difficult when stories about Omagh appear in
20 the newspaper or on television. The constant battle to 11:58
21 get answers and find out what happened that day is
22 relentless. None of the families deserved what happened
23 that day. How each of us in our own way have had to
24 fight for answers is just awful, it makes me angry at
25 times. 11:58

16

1 I hope that this Inquiry will provide the answers
2 as to what happened that day and hopefully that the cost
3 of Shaun's life and all those other lives so tragically
4 lost can provide some hope for us all.
5 We have not gotten over things completely, we never 11:58
6 will, but we have learned to live with it. Some days
7 are, of course, harder than others. My first born baby
8 will always be in our minds and in our hearts.
9 Shaun personified the hope in this island following
10 the Good Friday Agreement with the hope of peace. Only 11:59
11 a few months before the bomb Shaun had written a poem
12 which he presented to the then President of Ireland,
13 Mary McAleese. The poem read:
14 "Orange and green, it doesn't matter,
15 United now won't shatter our dream, 11:59
16 Scatter the seeds of peace over our land,
17 So we can travel hand in hand across the bridge of
18 hope."
19 Q. Thank you very much indeed for reading that statement to
20 us. And so, as I indicated, we're next going to watch a 11:59
21 presentation of photographs. It's accompanied by a
22 song, and could I introduce the context of the song
23 we're going to hear, and these are the family's words
24 that I will read out.
25 "The title of the song," the family tell us, 12:00

17

1	<i>Bridge of Hope</i> , is taken from the poem of Shaun and	
2	includes the words so delicately put together by Shaun	
3	and also poems and lyrics from other families who lost	
4	loved ones. The song is performed by the Omagh	
5	Community Choir, a cross-community choir established	12:00
6	after the bomb, and fittingly accompanies the photos of	
7	Shaun as part of his commemoration.	
8	Sir, I am now going to ask, please, that we show	
9	that presentation.	
10	<i>(Presentation played)</i>	12:00
11	MR. GREANEY: Thank you. Sir, this afternoon we will hear	
12	from a witness called Ronan McGrory, who, as a young	
13	man, was also on the trip from Buncrana to Omagh on that	
14	day, 15 August, and he will tell us some more about	
15	Shaun during his evidence. But, subject to that, that	12:06
16	is the evidence of commemoration relating to Shaun	
17	McLaughlin.	
18	LORD TURNBULL: I am very grateful to Shaun's mother, Patricia	
19	McLaughlin, for the strength which she has shown in	
20	preparing her statement for this Inquiry. In that	12:06
21	statement Mrs. McLaughlin has described, in the clearest	
22	way, the lasting impact on a mother of the senseless	
23	loss of her first born son, a child who was killed	
24	before he even reached his teenage years.	
25	Mrs. McLaughlin's statement and the pictures which	12:06
18		

1	we have been shown bring to our attention the life of a	
2	happy young boy living in a supportive and loving	
3	family. Her statement also so vividly tells us of the	
4	harm and pain inflicted, not just on Mrs. McLaughlin,	
5	but on Shaun's brother and sister as well. The	12:07
6	experiences which Mrs. McLaughlin has described, and	
7	which other witnesses have spoken of in similar ways,	
8	will be simply incomprehensible to those with no	
9	first-hand knowledge of the Omagh bombing. Listening to	
10	this evidence will make it abundantly clear why these	12:07
11	sessions are so important.	
12	I would also like to thank Mrs. McLaughlin's	
13	sister, Marjorie, for reading the statement to us and	
14	extend my thanks to the rest of Shaun's family for the	
15	assistance which they have kindly provided to this	12:07
16	Inquiry.	
17	Thank you.	
18	MR. GREANEY: Sir, thank you. For good reason we will resume	
19	at 2:00 pm., please.	
20	(12.07 pm)	12:08
21	(The luncheon adjournment).	
22	(2.02 pm)	
23	LORD TURNBULL: Mr. Greaney.	
24	MR. GREANEY: Sir, thank you. We're next going to hear Pen	
25	Portrait evidence relating to Oran Doherty who was just	14:02
19		

1	eight years of age when he was killed.	
2	Sir, as you know, Oran's mother, Bernie, has	
3	provided a moving witness statement relating to her son,	
4	and that statement, in a moment, is going to be read by	
5	Bernie's daughter, Oran's sister, Lisa Dillon, who is	14:02
6	immediately across the room from me.	
7	Once Lisa has completed reading the witness	
8	statement, we're going to watch a presentation of some	
9	photographs of Oran, over which there is some music.	
10	So, Lisa, I am first of all going to ask you to tell us	14:02
11	your full name please.	
12	A. Lisa Dillon.	
13	Q. And Lisa, before you start to read the statement, we're	
14	going to put a photograph of Oran on the screen for ten	
15	seconds or so.	14:03
16	So, Lisa, would you in your own time, please, read your	
17	mum's statement to us.	
18	Commemoration of ORAN DOHERTY read by MS. LISA DILLON	
19	A. Okay.	
20	"My family and I were so happy in April 1998 as the Good	14:03
21	Friday Agreement had been signed. Oran had asked me	
22	what the Agreement meant and I told him it meant there	
23	would be no more shootings or bombings in the North.	
24	Four months later, Oran, who was only eight years old,	
25	was blown up in the Omagh bomb.	14:04
20		

1	Oran, was the fifth child of seven. He was fun	
2	loving, happy-go-lucky and he loved football. He also	
3	loved to go fishing with his daddy, his older brother	
4	and his friends. He had written one time that when he	
5	grew up he wanted to play for Celtic or be a shopkeeper.	14:04
6	Oran was on a student trip from Buncrana to Omagh, which	
7	took place as part of an exchange with Spanish students.	
8	Oran died with two other children from Buncrana, James	
9	Barker and Shaun McLaughlin, along with the Spanish	
10	school boy, Fernando Blasco Baselga.	14:04
11	He was eight years old, full of life and full of	
12	fun, just a great funny wee boy and a real character.	
13	On the Wednesday night, his cousin, who lived four doors	
14	down the road from our family home, came up and asked	
15	him to go on the trip with the Spanish students who come	14:05
16	to Buncrana every year to learn English. My sister was	
17	keeping one of the students at the time, so her wee boy	
18	came up and asked Oran if he could come along on the	
19	trip on the Saturday to the Ulster American Folk Park.	
20	Oran, of course, wanted to go, especially as his brother	14:05
21	and his three elder sisters had all gone on these types	
22	of trips over the years. The children always enjoyed	
23	those trips but Oran was only eight and I wasn't really	
24	happy to let him go. However, I continued to tell him	
25	that I would think about it. In the end, I told him he	14:05
21		

1 could go, and on the Friday night he came in and he said
2 to me "you'd better shake me hard in the morning." He
3 was always hard to waken in the morning. So around nine
4 o'clock I was supposed to wake him, but I never woke
5 until nine myself and I thought for a split second that 14:05
6 maybe I wouldn't bother, that I would just let him lie
7 on because I wasn't happy about him going really. Then
8 I thought no, it wouldn't be fair on him. So I woke him
9 and he was up like a shot, the minute I called him, he
10 jumped up. 14:06
11 I remember the last thing just talking to him on
12 the door step telling him to watch out and watch his
13 money, things like that. I just had a fear of letting
14 him go. I thought that maybe he would get separated
15 from the rest of the group. I was warning him to stay 14:06
16 with the other boys and I was warning the boys to keep
17 an eye out for him. The last time I saw him was with
18 the others heading down to get the bus at the school.
19 The day went by and I didn't think about Oran until
20 about 3:30 when I saw my two nephews who said that they 14:06
21 were checking the Teletext for football results and had
22 seen that there was a bomb in Omagh. One of the boys
23 said to me "that's where our boys will be now" and I ran
24 down the road to my sister's house to see it for myself.
25 A bit later I heard that there were five girls from 14:07

22

1 Buncrana away on the trip as well and that one of them
2 had phoned home and told her mother that there was a
3 bomb and she was hysterical on the phone. So when her
4 mother told me that, I thought the police would have
5 them all in a safe place. However, as time went on, we 14:07
6 knew for certain that they were in Omagh at that time.
7 By the evening, all the neighbours were gathering
8 outside the houses and once they heard the news the
9 street was just full of people.
10 We then heard that there were two Spanish students 14:07
11 who were hurt, but we didn't hear that they were dead.
12 At that point, we knew it was starting to get serious,
13 it didn't look good at all, and still there was no word
14 where the other children might be. As the evening went
15 on, we were trying to get through to Omagh. The next 14:07
16 message we got was that they were all safe and on their
17 way home on the bus. However, shortly after we heard
18 that this wasn't correct. The five girls from Buncrana
19 were safe and they were on their way home, but we still
20 didn't know about the others. 14:08
21 At around six o'clock, I was at my sister's house
22 and she got word that her wee boy, Emmet, was taken to
23 hospital in Enniskillen to have shrapnel removed from
24 his body, and this really panicked me. But even then we
25 still didn't think the very worst because we were told 14:08

23

1 that the bus would return to the town around 9 o'clock
2 at night, so there was still a chance that the children
3 might be safe. We went down there at 9.00 to meet the
4 bus but the driver told us that there was only 16
5 Spanish students on the bus and that the rest were 14:08
6 missing.
7 At that stage, my husband and John McLaughlin and a
8 few people from Buncrana left to go to Omagh to see if
9 they could find out anything, so I just waited by the
10 phone in my sister's house. The house was packed with 14:09
11 people and everybody was gathered together waiting for
12 some information.
13 A policewoman then phoned me and said that she had
14 to talk with me but because of policy she needed to talk
15 to me on my own. I thought at that point she was going 14:09
16 to tell me that Oran was dead, but she came down and
17 took me in the small room on my own and said that two
18 small boys were missing and one of them was Oran. At
19 that stage I just got hysterical, and we were on the
20 phone to the RUC in Omagh giving descriptions of Oran 14:09
21 and Mickey, my husband, rang from Omagh around twelve
22 o'clock that night and said that they were at the
23 leisure centre waiting but there was still no word. He
24 was saying "Don't worry, I'll find our wee man, I'll
25 bring him home." But as the night went on and on there 14:09

24

1 was still no word and we were starting to fear the
2 worst. At the back of your head I thought well maybe he
3 was unconscious somewhere and someone had taken him in.
4 At around 6:30/7:00 a.m. in the morning, I was sitting
5 at my sister's house which was only four doors down and 14:10
6 I was sitting looking up at the McLaughlin's house and I
7 could see all these people hugging each other and I said
8 to my sister, "You know, there is something going on,
9 they have got news of some sort." So she ran up there
10 quickly, came back down with the news that wee Shaun was 14:10
11 dead. At that moment the phone rang and it was my
12 husband who asked me if I had heard the news. I said
13 that I had heard about Shaun being dead, and it was then
14 that he told me Oran was dead too. I just threw the
15 phone. It was your worst nightmare come true. 14:10
16 For a while I thought I'd never be able to go back
17 to my own house because I didn't think I'd be able to
18 deal with Oran's things without him, but somehow I
19 pulled myself together and went back to the house. I
20 remember Mickey coming back from Omagh at 10 a.m. in the 14:11
21 morning and the day of Sunday being a haze. On the
22 Sunday night, my brother, his wife and my sister took me
23 up to the morgue in Omagh to see Oran's body. It was a
24 makeshift morgue in an army camp. Oran was dead from
25 3:30 on the Saturday, but we didn't know he was dead 14:11

25

1 until 7:00 a.m. on the Sunday morning.

2 It was not until the Sunday night that I got to see

3 his body. I remember going up to the morgue and it was

4 just so cold in there. At first I didn't think they

5 were going to let me see him, but eventually they did 14:11

6 and oh, it was just something that I'll never forgot,

7 seeing him laying there, he was so badly marked, but his

8 hair was wet for some reason and it had changed colour,

9 it was dark, and he had a big bruise on his cheek with a

10 deep cut as well, and he had burns over him too. I 14:11

11 don't know how I left him that night to go home. I just

12 came home and left him lying up in that morgue, and it

13 still haunts me that I didn't stay. I kept thinking and

14 imagining him laying there all alone in that morgue on a

15 Saturday evening or Sunday evening. 14:12

16 We came home again that night and it wasn't until

17 Monday night when we went back to Omagh to take the

18 bodies home. It seemed the most of Buncrana came to

19 Omagh to the Chapel of Rest to see the three bodies of

20 Oran, Shaun and James Barker. All the bodies were taken 14:12

21 to the Chapel of Rest and it was very late on a Monday

22 night before we got there. It was terrible, the sight

23 of those three coffins side by side. Some of my own

24 girls were hysterical and they were screaming and

25 wailing. I remember that night on the way back from 14:12

26

1 Omagh with the three bodies, we were behind the three

2 hearses and we went through Strabane, there were people

3 outstanding with candles, and the closer we got to home,

4 the more people were standing out. It was incredibly

5 moving. We took the bodies and went back to Buncrana 14:13

6 where the streets were thick with men, women and

7 children holding a candle. I could see old friends just

8 standing there screaming and crying. I was numb, just

9 numb.

10 We brought him home to the house that night, which 14:13

11 would have been the early hours of Tuesday morning, and

12 he stayed here until Wednesday. People from all

13 religions came, along with politicians. Even the Prime

14 Minister came. We had politicians from protestant and

15 catholic communities, including Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams, 14:13

16 Martin McGuinness and David Trimble, all of whom came to

17 the funeral. The crowd went on for miles. The church

18 was packed out, people couldn't get in, and there were

19 loud speakers outside for people to hear the service.

20 At different times, for example Oran's birthday, or 14:14

21 Christmas, I get very angry at the thought of the people

22 who did this. To lose your own child is very hard, but

23 I will always have thought to myself what if something

24 like this happened to my other children, and that's why

25 I feel that the people who did this should have been 14:14

27

1 brought to justice. I used to pray for God to keep the

2 children safe. Everyday a wee prayer in my head to keep

3 them safe from harm. However, after Omagh, I can't seem

4 to pray.

5 We always talk about Oran. There is hardly a day 14:14

6 that goes by without him being mentioned in my house.

7 My children could not comprehend the death of Oran.

8 When we would walk to the grave we would take our

9 youngest boy with us and he thought that that's where

10 heaven was. For him, the graveyard was heaven and 14:15

11 that's where Oran was, along with a whole lot of other

12 children buried there who had died of sickness or

13 accidents over the years. Oran's elder brother wouldn't

14 go back into Oran's room, so he had to change and my

15 husband and me moved into it. 14:15

16 I used to watch Oran's friends outside and I just

17 would go up to my bed, lay down and cried. All of

18 Oran's friends are grown up now and have gone on to live

19 their lives, and I can't help but wonder what Oran would

20 be doing now as a 35-year-old man. Would he have 14:15

21 settled down and had a family of his own? Would he have

22 played football for the local club? What job would he

23 be in? These are all questions that I will never get

24 answers for, and unfortunately I will still ask these

25 questions until I take my final breath. 14:15

28

1 There was many a time after he died when I would

2 wake up in the morning and just didn't want to get out

3 of bed, I wanted to lie there and not face anything or

4 anybody, but then I would think of the children, and

5 that would make me get up. 14:16

6 People always try to tell me that time was a

7 healer, but if anything, it has probably gotten worse.

8 Even though 26 years have passed since the worst day of

9 our lives, yes, I can get out of bed in the morning and

10 now I have 17 grandchildren to keep me going, but 14:16

11 nothing will ever change the fact that Oran is gone and

12 he is never coming back.

13 Sometimes the sadness just pours over you. Like,

14 he brought home sweets from the folk park before he went

15 to Omagh and the wee jar of honeycomb that he had eaten 14:16

16 one bit but then wrapped it up again. This is how he

17 left it on the bus when he got out.

18 We got that back, his wee jar of sweets, and we

19 still have them 26 years later. He should have come

20 back that evening with them, but he didn't. We didn't 14:16

21 get anything else back belonging to him except a thing

22 he had around his neck that his sister had brought him

23 home from Spain the week before; one of those little

24 necklaces with a Nike sign on it. We didn't get his

25 clothes or his footwear or anything. We never even got 14:17

29

1 the watch he had on him.

2 Bleeding and swelling of the brain and a fractured
3 skull, this is what he died from in the bomb explosion.
4 They said he would have died, if not instantly, then
5 near enough, but to this day the inquest results have 14:17
6 not satisfied me because of conflicting reports. About
7 a week after it happened, we had a letter from a young
8 girl who said that she was with Oran and that he didn't
9 die alone. She said she was with him and held his hand.
10 But she also said that he was already dead when she got 14:17
11 to see him. She was there just after the explosion and
12 worked in the street nearby. Apparently she just ran to
13 the scene and saw Oran who was laying there. She
14 described him and said she held his hand even when they
15 covered him. She said there were people calling to her 14:18
16 to let him die with dignity, but she continued to hold
17 his hand. At the time, she thought she'd wait with him
18 until his mummy arrived. We met with her twice after
19 and it was so hard listening to her describing it.
20 Later, we were told that a nurse who was on the street 14:18
21 that day, that she was talking to him and that Oran
22 spoke to her. After believing he must have died quick,
23 I started to think the worst, that he knew what was
24 going on around him. I wanted to think that he didn't
25 know anything. So when we were told that the nurse 14:18

30

1 talked to him and he told her he wanted her to phone his
2 mummy and gave her our phone number, I was in a terrible
3 state, but later on, one of the priests got it
4 investigated and went to the RUC who said to it dismiss
5 the story because it didn't add up. Nevertheless, it 14:19
6 was always in the back of my mind.
7 We didn't get the results of his death until almost
8 two years later, and that was just before the inquest.
9 The reports were sent to our doctors here in Buncrana
10 and she read it out to us listing all the injuries he 14:19
11 had suffered. He had a broken leg, broken ribs and a
12 number of other injuries. It's funny, we knew from his
13 death certificate that he had a fractured skull and
14 bleeding and swelling of the brain, but when I heard
15 then about the broken leg and broken ribs, that seemed 14:19
16 to bother me even more.
17 Oran's body was number 15. The counsel for the
18 coroner asked one the policemen to describe how he found
19 Oran. The policeman said that he came across a wee boy
20 of about eight to ten years old and that his hair was 14:20
21 still on fire but that he was dead. When the counsel
22 asked him to identify who that boy was, he replied that
23 it was body number 15, Oran Doherty.
24 I still worry that Oran was talking and that he was
25 alert to what was going on around him, even though I 14:20

31

1 hate to think it and try not to, the thought that he did
2 ask for me and I was 50 miles away is too much. I just
3 want to think that he didn't know anything. A woman who
4 lost her daughter in then Enniskillen bomb said to me at
5 Oran's wake that the emptiness I was feeling would one 14:20
6 day be filled with my memories of Oran. As the years
7 went by, I found this to be true.
8 We have lost a lot of family members in the 26
9 years since Omagh and it absolutely pains me to think
10 that they have left this earth knowing that we have not 14:21
11 been able to get justice for Oran. Are they able to
12 rest in peace knowing that nobody will ever be brought
13 to justice for what they have done that day? As for
14 those people responsible, I do wonder if they can sleep
15 in their beds at night given the absolute carnage and 14:21
16 devastation they caused for so many families with one
17 act of cruelty.
18 I have listened to and read all the excuses about
19 the fact they didn't mean to let the bomb go off at the
20 time and in the place, and they didn't expect anyone to 14:21
21 be in the area at the time. I do not accept this, and I
22 never will. If you are prepared to transport a bomb of
23 that magnitude into a crowded market town, then you know
24 exactly what could happen. It was a despicable act
25 inflicted upon people of all ages and from both sides of 14:21

32

1 the political divide, and all in the name of what? The
2 Good Friday Agreement had been signed a matter of months
3 earlier and people on this island finally had some hope
4 of a peaceful future until these cowards literally blew
5 it all away. The fact that the Omagh bomb was more or 14:22
6 less at the end of troubles doesn't make it any easier
7 for the families of the innocent civilians who would
8 have to pay the ultimate price.
9 We have heard many stories over the years about
10 certain politicians at the time and what they may or may 14:22
11 not have known and what could have prevented this
12 disaster. I hope and pray with all my heart that this
13 Inquiry can at least give us some answers as to what
14 exactly happened, what people knew and if the disaster
15 could have been prevented. 14:22
16 Whilst it would not bring our Oran back, and
17 nothing will ever come close to that or make life any
18 easier without him, it might give us some comfort as we
19 move on with the remainder of our time on this earth.
20 As for the perpetrators, I think far too much time has 14:23
21 been allowed to pass for us to get a chance to see them
22 get what they deserved. If they are out there and
23 listening, I want them to know they will never be
24 forgiven what for what they have done to my wee boy and
25 for the hurt and pain they have caused my family and so 14:23

33

1 many others.

2 To my darling son, Oran, I look forward to the day

3 when I will see you again, but for now Mummy will

4 continue to do her best to look after your brothers and

5 sisters and all your wee nieces and nephews whom I know 14:23

6 would have loved their uncle so much.

7 As a family, the pain we have had to endure all

8 these years is unbearable. It has had serious mental

9 effects on each and every one of us, and it has impacted

10 on our education and our daily lives; our kids feel it, 14:23

11 our partners feel it. Oran would have been 34 years old

12 now, but to us he will always be the wee eight-year-old

13 boy who went on a day trip on August 15, 1998, with his

14 cousin Emmet and his friends, Ronan and Shaun. The loss

15 of Oran has changed our lives forever. We, as a family, 14:24

16 suffer each and every day in our own ways and we just

17 pray that one day we will find peace.

18 As a family, we would like to extend our gratitude

19 to everyone who supported us, including family, friends,

20 neighbours and even strangers during the most difficult 14:24

21 time we have experienced. We will never forget the

22 kindness shown to our family. Thank you."

23 Q. Lisa, thank you very much. And we're next going to

24 watch the presentation of the photographs of Oran.

25 *(Presentation played)* 14:25

34

1 MR. GREANEY: That concludes the evidence of commemoration

2 relating to Oran.

3 LORD TURNBULL: Thank you. At eight years of age, Oran

4 Doherty was one of the youngest of the children killed

5 in the Omagh bombing. He travelled with his friends and 14:26

6 the other children from Buncrana on what they all

7 expected to be a fun day out at the Ulster American Folk

8 Park. What occurred was, of course, simply

9 unimaginable, no one could have dreamt that such an

10 event would take place, and Oran's mother's account of 14:27

11 what transpired in the evening of Saturday, 15 August,

12 and Sunday 16, is simply heart breaking.

13 Once again, the Inquiry has heard so eloquently of the

14 enduring loss and pain which a mother suffers on the

15 loss of a young child. In addition though, it is clear 14:27

16 from what both Patricia McLaughlin and Mrs. Doherty have

17 told us, that the loss of the children affected the

18 whole of the community of Buncrana.

19 In her statement, Mrs. Doherty posed the question

20 whether the people responsible for the bombing could 14:28

21 sleep in their beds at night, given the carnage and

22 devastation which they caused for so many in one act of

23 cruelty. She was right to ask that question. It's a

24 question that many who have listened to the evidence

25 given to this Inquiry over the last week will have asked 14:28

35

1 themselves.

2 As I said in my opening remarks, some of the value of

3 the evidence to be given in these commemorative hearings

4 is that it will inform and educate others as to the real

5 effect of terrorist violence. I can only hope that 14:29

6 those responsible for, or who condoned this atrocity,

7 will themselves have heard something of the accounts of

8 the misery and grief which they imposed on so many.

9 As Mrs. Doherty said, and as so many others will echo,

10 those responsible will never be forgiven for what they 14:29

11 did and for the hurt and pain they have caused so many.

12 My sincere thanks are extended to Lisa Dillon for

13 reading her mother's statement, and to her mother, and

14 to the rest of the family for being prepared to share

15 their grief with us and to contribute to the work of the 14:30

16 Inquiry.

17 Thank you.

18 MR. GREANEY: Thank you, sir, may we take a break for 20

19 minutes please?

20 (2.30 pm). 14:30

21 (A short break).

22 (2.55 pm)

23 MR. GREANEY: Sir, thank you. Finally, today we're going to

24 hear from Ronan McGrory who survived the Omagh bombing.

25 We're going to hear from him at this stage because he 14:56

36

1 was friendly with both Shaun and Oran and is able to

2 help us to understand something of their movements on

3 that day.

4 PERSONAL STATEMENT OF RONAN McGRORY

5

6 MR. GREANEY: So, Ronan, I am going to ask you, first of all,

7 please to tell us your full name.

8 A. Ronan McGrory.

9 Q. And, Ronan, I hope that you are happy that I refer to

10 you by your first name in the course of your questions? 14:56

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Ronan, were you 14 years of age on the day of the Omagh

13 bomb?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And on that day were you a visitor to Omagh? 14:56

16 A. Yeah. So, we went up with the Spanish students and we

17 were leaving, me and Shaun were in the same class at

18 school and we had said that we'd take...

19 Q. Let's just take it in stages and if at any point in time

20 you need a break, Ronan, you just need to say, everyone 14:57

21 will understand how upsetting this is for you. But I

22 think it's the position that you lived in Buncrana, is

23 that right?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And that on 15 August, you made that trip to Omagh as 14:57

37

1	part of the Spanish-Irish exchange programme about which	
2	the Inquiry has heard?	
3	A. Yeah.	
4	Q. And you went along with your best friend Shaun	
5	McLaughlin, is that right?	14:57
6	A. Yeah, and -- so we said we'd take the two younger boys	
7	and we'd look after them.	
8	Q. And the two younger boys that you took were Emmet	
9	McLaughlin, who was eight years of age?	
10	A. Yeah.	14:57
11	Q. And Oran Doherty, who was also eight years of age?	
12	A. Yeah.	
13	Q. And, Ronan, did you know all of those boys, whose names	
14	you have just mentioned, well?	
15	A. Yeah. I would have been good friends with their older	14:58
16	brothers. So, we just grew up together and two of their	
17	older brothers were meant to go, like two of them, one	
18	was definitely going but he couldn't go, so we said	
19	sure, we'd make sure we'd look after them and...	
20	Q. And one of the points that you make in your witness	14:58
21	statement is that although no one could for a moment	
22	think that you did the slightest thing wrong that day,	
23	you felt that those younger boys had been entrusted to	
24	you?	
25	A. Yeah.	14:58

38

1	remember weather wise. It's... I just always remember	
2	the sun shining just.	
3	Q. So the sun was out and that at the folk park you	
4	remember you and your friends, including the young lads,	
5	just having lots of fun?	15:00
6	A. Yeah. Yeah...	
7	Q. And what you tell us in your witness statement was that	
8	the day had begun perfect, as you put it?	
9	A. Yeah.	
10	Q. So a brilliant day to begin with?	15:01
11	A. A good day, yeah.	
12	Q. And had you and your friends been given some money for	
13	the shopping trip to Omagh in case it was needed?	
14	A. Yeah. So that morning Shaun wanted to go and buy	
15	something for his mammy and --	15:01
16	Q. And I think you remember that you bought some sweets, is	
17	that right?	
18	A. Yeah.	
19	Q. And that Oran had bought himself a full cooked children	
20	to eat?	15:01
21	A. Yeah.	
22	Q. Which fondly reflects Oran's child-like innocence, as	
23	you put it?	
24	A. Yeah, I mean he started eating it when we were standing	
25	on the street, so he did.	15:01

40

1	Q. And you felt that very deeply, haven't you?	
2	A. Yeah.	
3	Q. And on that day were there a number of other children	
4	with you on the trip to Omagh, including many Spanish	
5	students?	14:59
6	A. Yes, there was a bus full of them, so there were, and	
7	then there was more, probably ten Irish children, about	
8	six or seven extras with us, but we were with them, we	
9	were just on the same bus.	
10	Q. And on the trip was there a real sense of excitement on	14:59
11	the part of all of the children?	
12	A. Yeah.	
13	Q. And real happiness about what you were going to be doing	
14	that day?	
15	A. Yeah. Just we'd rarely get away so to have the chance	14:59
16	to get out of town for the day was a big deal.	
17	Q. And what we have stood is that you were going to be	
18	making a visit to the Ulster American Folk Park and then	
19	after that go and do some shopping in Omagh?	
20	A. Yeah. So, in the American Folk Park we were just having	14:59
21	the craic, running about, just messing, and it was just	
22	good fun so it was.	
23	Q. And is it right that one of the things that you remember	
24	about that day was the weather being beautiful?	
25	A. Yeah, it was probably one of the nicest days that I	15:00

39

1	Q. And this was a full chicken, was it?	
2	A. It was a full chicken. It was the last thing he ate.	
3	Q. And you also remember, and I have told Shaun's mum about	
4	this today, and she was very touched, you remember that	
5	Shaun had wanted to buy something for his mum?	15:02
6	A. Yeah. It was sweets, so it was. Was it or? Yeah...	
7	aye, so he wanted to go and buy his mother something and	
8	we were in a shop, and I can't remember what kind of	
9	shop it was, and I don't even know if he got to buy	
10	something for her, I am not sure, I can't remember.	15:02
11	Q. The fact that what Shaun had in mind was to buy	
12	something for his mum, that maybe reflects something	
13	about his personality and his thoughtfulness?	
14	A. Yeah, he was always really good.	
15	Q. When you were just finishing up your shopping, were you	15:02
16	told to move across the street by a police officer?	
17	A. Yeah. So we were just standing and they had asked us to	
18	move. I paid no attention to them, so I didn't, we just	
19	went over and... as if nothing was happening, and we	
20	were just messing about.	15:03
21	Q. You were young boys, weren't you?	
22	A. Yeah, just ... it meant nothing to us.	
23	Q. And were there five of you all together at that stage?	
24	A. Yeah.	
25	Q. So that would be you, Shaun?	15:03

41

1	A.	Me, Shaun, Oran, Emmet and James.	
2	Q.	And do you remember that you were stood at the front of	
3		a shop?	
4	A.	Yeah. And -- so we were told then to move on up again.	
5		So, we were standing there, and at this stage the police	15:03
6		officer goes "can you move... could you keep moving?"	
7		So we moved, and still again it meant nothing, we just	
8		walked up and just enjoyed messing about. The thing was	
9		messing. Like, we took nothing serious.	
10	Q.	So you had been told by the police officer to move	15:04
11		across the street, you had not paid a lot of attention	
12		and the five of you carried on messing around. And then	
13		what, after about ten minutes another police officer	
14		told you to move further up the street?	
15	A.	Yeah.	15:04
16	Q.	And what you tell us then in the statement is that	
17		little did you know but that you had been moved right	
18		beside the Vauxhall Cavalier that was carrying that	
19		bomb?	
20	A.	Yeah. And it just went off then, and there was just no	15:04
21		memory of it, there was as if it didn't happen.	
22	Q.	What I'm going to do is just read the next section to	
23		you, Ronan, and ask you if it's right. And you say:	
24		"Next thing I knew it had just happened, the bomb had	
25		exploded. The only way I am able to describe the impact	15:05
42			

1		is that it felt like I was dead without knowing I was	
2		dead."	
3		And does that set out what it was like?	
4	A.	Yeah.	
5	Q.	And then you say this, and I'm going to read it out and	15:05
6		then I do have a couple of questions for you. You say:	
7		"I do not remember any particular sounds or a loud bang.	
8		All I remember is that I had woke up and all of a sudden	
9		it had gone from being a beautiful sunny day to the	
10		darkest day ever."	15:05
11		And is that how it felt at the time and feels now?	
12	A.	It feels now, yeah. Nothing has changed.	
13	Q.	And, Ronan, you have: "Not only due to the chaos I had	
14		woken up to but because of the smoke that seemed have	
15		engulfed my surroundings."	15:05
16		So, I am just going to pause for a moment. You and I	
17		have had an opportunity to talk before you gave your	
18		evidence, haven't we?	
19	A.	Yeah.	
20	Q.	And I know that there is something that you feel it's	15:06
21		important to say in the hope that it gives some comfort	
22		to Shaun and Oran's family. And so, I am going to try	
23		to summarise what you said to me. And if I have got it	
24		right, you can simply agree, and if I have got it wrong,	
25		will you tell me that I have got it wrong?	15:06
43			

1		And what you explained to me, Ronan, I think, is that	
2		you and Shaun and Oran and the other two were all	
3		together at the time of the explosion?	
4	A.	Yeah.	
5	Q.	And that you knew nothing at all about the explosion,	15:06
6		did you?	
7	A.	Nothing.	
8	Q.	You came to, you came around?	
9	A.	Yeah.	
10	Q.	But, as we know, Shaun and Oran didn't?	15:06
11	A.	Yeah.	
12	Q.	And your firm view is that just as you knew nothing	
13		about what had happened, that the two of them knew	
14		nothing of what had happened?	
15	A.	Yeah.	15:07
16	Q.	And so, in your mind I think, Ronan, you are very clear	
17		that neither Shaun nor Oran had the faintest idea of	
18		what had happened to cause, we know, their deaths?	
19	A.	Yeah.	
20	Q.	Have I captured what you said to me?	15:07
21	A.	Yeah.	
22	Q.	Now, when you did come around do you remember that you	
23		were beneath rubble?	
24	A.	I just... I don't actually remember stuff being on me,	
25		just... just shouting for help, just... and not knowing	15:07
44			

1		what had happened, not knowing that it was a bomb that	
2		went off.	
3	Q.	And do you remember that a policeman heard you, came to	
4		you and carried you either to a police car or to an	
5		ambulance?	15:08
6	A.	Yeah. He put me -- there was a holy medal placed into	
7		my hand, but I don't know where it came from, and I was	
8		still holding it and they were trying to take it out of	
9		my hand, and they couldn't get my hand released to let	
10		go of it.	15:08
11	Q.	So somehow a holy medal had come to be in your hand?	
12	A.	Yeah.	
13	Q.	And no one could take it from you because you were	
14		gripping it so tightly?	
15	A.	Yeah.	15:08
16	Q.	And to this day you don't have the faintest idea where	
17		that holy medal came from?	
18	A.	No.	
19	Q.	Now, Ronan, I know that you suffered serious physical	
20		injuries, didn't you?	15:08
21	A.	Yeah.	
22	Q.	And are you content that in this public environment that	
23		I should set out what those were?	
24	A.	Yeah.	
25	Q.	And you suffered a ruptured spleen, internal bleeding,	15:09
45			

1	burns to your face, mainly to your left eye, a large	
2	volume of shrapnel in your legs and above your eyes, and	
3	you also have now a large scar on your abdomen because	
4	you had to undergo a major operation?	
5	A. Yeah.	15:09
6	Q. And did you spend a number of weeks in Omagh Hospital?	
7	A. Yeah. Transferred then to Altnagelvin in Derry for a	
8	week.	
9	Q. And since then, notwithstanding that many years have	
10	passed, have you been in and out of hospital many times	15:10
11	as you continue to suffer from your injuries?	
12	A. Yeah.	
13	Q. I just want to ask you about one thing that happened	
14	when you arrived at the Omagh County Hospital. What	
15	were you wearing that day?	15:10
16	A. I was wearing a Liverpool top and -- I was a lover of	
17	Liverpool -- and they asked could they cut the top and I	
18	said no because I loved that top, and when I woke up the	
19	first thing I asked was how did Liverpool do? So,	
20	that's all, that's all I was worrying about was a	15:10
21	Liverpool game and a Liverpool top. But eventually they	
22	cut the top.	
23	Q. And then that night, that first night in hospital, were	
24	you thinking about your friends who had been with you	
25	when the bomb exploded?	15:11
46		

1	A. Yeah.	
2	Q. And by that stage you would have known, wouldn't you,	
3	that there had been a bomb that exploded?	
4	A. At that stage I knew there was a bomb, yeah.	
5	Q. And over the days that followed, did you ask your dad	15:11
6	over and over again about your friends?	
7	A. Yeah. But I never got any answers from anybody.	
8	Q. No doubt that was because they were trying to protect	
9	you from what had happened?	
10	A. Yeah.	15:11
11	Q. But one day, whilst you were still in hospital, probably	
12	at an earlier stage, did you have the news playing on a	
13	television in the ward that you were on?	
14	A. Yeah. So, a nurse wheeled the TV in and put it on, so I	
15	was on my own and Brian Kennedy was singing 'Danny Boy',	15:12
16	and that's when they were reading out all the names.	
17	So, that's when I found out that they were dead was	
18	listening to Brian Kennedy singing and the names being	
19	read out.	
20	Q. And so, it was by watching the news that you discovered	15:12
21	that Shaun and Oran, and indeed James, had also been	
22	killed?	
23	A. Yeah. And I can't listen to that song anymore now, so.	
24	Q. And in your statement you say the news hit you like a	
25	tonne of bricks and you remember it and you believe will	15:12
47		

1	remember it forever as the worst moment of your life?	
2	A. Yeah.	
3	Q. And I am going to read out to you the next sentence	
4	because it's important that the public should understand	
5	the impact that this bombing has had on, not only the	15:13
6	families of the bereaved, but also upon those who have	
7	survived, and what you say is: "I was overcome with	
8	instant guilt because Shaun and I were the older ones	
9	and we were supposed to look after the younger boys,	
10	including Oran and James. I just remember crying	15:13
11	inconsolably particularly because I knew the funerals	
12	had already taken place."	
13	A. Yeah. And that I missed them, the funerals.	
14	Q. Has that day changed your whole life?	
15	A. Yeah.	15:14
16	Q. And, of course, you were due, I think, to start	
17	secondary school shortly after those events, is that	
18	right?	
19	A. Yeah, me and Shaun, yeah, were starting first year in	
20	secondary school. So, we started school later, so yeah,	15:14
21	Shaun was meant to be starting with me, yeah.	
22	Q. So you were supposed to be starting secondary school	
23	with your best friend, but he couldn't because he had	
24	been killed?	
25	A. Yeah.	15:14
48		

1	Q. And because of your injuries and the trauma, did you	
2	have to delay, in fact, the start of your first year?	
3	A. Yeah, just by a couple of weeks, but in a way it was	
4	delayed for a year I'd say because there was just no	
5	concentration, just nothing, I didn't really care about	15:15
6	anything like.	
7	Q. So, what you are explaining, I think, is that even once	
8	you did manage to get back to school, because of what	
9	had happened, you struggled to concentrate and really	
10	suffered during that period of time?	15:15
11	A. Yeah.	
12	Q. And you also felt self-conscious because of the scars	
13	that you had on your face and body?	
14	A. Yeah.	
15	Q. Was sport one of the things that helped you during that	15:15
16	period and your teenage years?	
17	A. Yeah, football. Just, if it wasn't for football I	
18	probably would have been worse off than what I had been.	
19	Q. But nonetheless -- I am sorry, did I talk over you?	
20	A. No, no, you are okay.	15:16
21	Q. Nonetheless, as you got older did you get involved in	
22	risk-taking behaviours and lose a lot of motivation for	
23	further education and work?	
24	A. Yeah.	
25	Q. So that there came a point, probably in your late	15:16
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1 teenage years, where, because of what had happened to
2 you on that day in Omagh, you just didn't care about
3 life and had no goals?
4 A. Not really, no.
5 Q. Have your injuries followed you into adult life? 15:16
6 A. Yeah. I think it has just got harder as you get older
7 because you're not as busy doing things, you are more
8 relaxed and you have more time to think about things
9 than you are when you're younger when you can distract
10 yourself of loads of things, and it's just something 15:17
11 that's there really.
12 Q. Did it take you, sadly, many years to agree to get
13 support to your own mental health?
14 A. Yeah.
15 Q. And was it about 20 years after the bombing that you 15:17
16 started to receive bereavement counselling and support
17 for your psychological injuries?
18 A. Yeah. And it was something that I had to do myself
19 because there was, there was never any help since the
20 day it happened from nobody: you were just left behind. 15:17
21 Q. And so, by the time that that kind of support was
22 available to you, I think you felt that it was too late
23 to make the difference that was needed?
24 A. Yeah.
25 Q. Because you were left trying to talk to counsellors, not 15:18

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1 about trauma that had just happened but about a full 20
2 years of trauma?
3 A. Yeah.
4 Q. And so, we won't go into any detail, but you have
5 suffered and you continue to suffer with, not just 15:18
6 sadness, but with depression?
7 A. Yeah.
8 Q. And every year, as the anniversary of the 15th August
9 approaches, do you find that particularly difficult?
10 A. Yeah, it's a very hard time, especially when it comes up 15:18
11 to the big anniversaries. In the last few years I have
12 been feeling better about myself because I think there
13 is less talk, but obviously when this stuff comes up,
14 this consumes you, you are thinking about things over
15 and over and over again. Like, this now, and we're back 15:19
16 to square one.
17 Q. Ronan, now you have a wife, and she is seated beside
18 you?
19 A. Yeah.
20 Q. And you have two children? 15:19
21 A. Yeah.
22 Q. And since you have had your own children, have a lot of
23 new feelings developed?
24 A. Yeah. Mainly of not taking care of Oran because he
25 never came back with us and because he was so young, and 15:19

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1 that I see his family about and they see me and I always
2 feel bad, even though I probably shouldn't, but...
3 Q. Well, everyone will agree that you probably shouldn't
4 feel bad, but we'll understand, no doubt, why that
5 feeling comes over you. 15:20
6 And are there other environments in which you find it
7 very difficult, such as other market towns?
8 A. Yeah. Like, if you're going down a street fair
9 somewhere and you get this thing that comes over you
10 thinking that something, something can happen, I know 15:20
11 it's not going to happen but sometimes it's just
12 something consumes you and you are just thinking about
13 it, it goes away but it's a strange feeling to have.
14 Q. And loud bangs as well are very difficult?
15 A. Yeah, yeah. 15:21
16 Q. We have nearly finished now but I know, Ronan, there are
17 a couple of other things that you are keen to say, and
18 one of them is that you always think about the policeman
19 who found you and you think as well about his wife,
20 because she was one of the nurses who looked after you 15:21
21 in hospital?
22 A. Yeah, so when he took me in, like a few days later she
23 had said that it was her husband who had saved me, but
24 when I left then after the week, or whatever it was, and
25 I always thought of them but I never got their names or 15:21

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1 anything like that, really, to say thank you just.
2 Q. Well, I am certain they'll have heard that now. And I
3 am just going to read out the final paragraph of your
4 statement and then we'll be finished. And what you say
5 in that final paragraph is: 15:22
6 "Everyday I think about the bomb and it never leaves me.
7 I do not think it will ever leave me. The trauma and
8 injuries have continued to haunt me, and this can be
9 very exhausting. I dearly miss my friend Shaun and I
10 resent the fact that I had the chance to live my life 15:22
11 and reach every life milestone that I have. I resent
12 the fact that his life was taken from him too soon and
13 that he did not get a chance to live his life fully."
14 And does that set out, Ronan, how you feel?
15 A. Yeah. 15:22
16 Q. So, Ronan, thank you very much for answering my
17 questions and thank you, too, for the enormous courage
18 that you have shown in giving this evidence.
19 So, that concludes the evidence of commemoration that we
20 will hear today. 15:23
21 LORD TURNBULL: Mr. McGrory, yours is the first evidence the
22 Inquiry has heard from a survivor of the bombing and I
23 am grateful to you for your strength in being prepared
24 to recount the events of that day to us. As a
25 14-year-old boy, suffering such severe injuries and 15:23

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1	trauma must have been an incomprehensible event.	
2	In addition, of course, you had to cope with the anguish	
3	of the death of your young friends.	
4	It's very clear from your evidence that the effects of	
5	the bombing have been both powerful and long lasting, at	15:23
6	times, they appear to have been overwhelming, so it was	
7	very generous of you to agree to explain the horrors of	
8	that day to the Inquiry and your fortitude in doing so	
9	is most commendable. Your evidence has been of real	
10	value. I am very grateful to you, Mr. McGrory.	15:24
11	MR. GREANEY: Sir, could we resume at 10:00 a.m. tomorrow	
12	morning, please?	
13	(3.24 pm)	
14	(Inquiry adjourned until 10:00 am the following day)	
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