

INQUIRY LEGAL TEAM CHAPTER 3 FACTUAL EVIDENCE SUMMARY

PART 3: 12 to 14 AUGUST 1998

1. This factual evidence summary comprises a selection of witness accounts and matters recorded by the police in the course of the investigation of evidence of potential relevance to the period 12 to 14 August 1998.¹ The purpose of the summary is to provide the Chairman, Core Participants and the public with a digest of accounts and records that are in the Inquiry's possession relating to the three days prior to 15 August 1998.
2. The summary is an overview of potentially relevant evidence. It is not intended to provide a recitation of everything that each account or record contains, nor does it include every account or record. Which evidence, if any, is reliable is a matter for the Chairman.
3. This summary contains details that some may find distressing. Only the evidence that is strictly necessary to understand the eyewitness accounts is set out in this summary. The summary will refer to locations and people, including physical descriptions, and some may find these details distressing to read.
4. This summary is, so far as possible, arranged in a chronological order in the following sections:
 - a. The theft of Paul Ward's Vauxhall Cavalier
 - b. Attempted thefts of other vehicles in Carrickmacross
 - c. Report to An Garda Síochána ["AGS"] and its response
 - d. Notification of the RUC
 - e. Potential sightings of the stolen Vauxhall Cavalier

¹ The 24-hour clock is used for the timings that are referred to.

- f. Border crossings of potential relevance
5. Unless otherwise indicated, ranks of An Garda Síochána officers are recorded as they were in August 1998 to avoid confusion about the chain of command or the relative authority of the individuals at the time.

Section 1: theft of Paul Ward's Vauxhall Cavalier

Paul Ward

6. The first witness statement of Paul Anthony Ward was taken by AGS on 16 August 1998 at Carrickmacross Garda Station. He provided several further statements to AGS; those being dated 18 August 1998, 29 November 1998, 14 January 1999, 21 October 2000, 12 December 2001, as well as an undated statement. Mr Ward also provided a statement on 6 May 2005.
7. Mr Ward was a student at Dundalk Regional Technical College (RTC) and he also worked part-time. He lived at home with his parents in Castleblayney, County Monaghan. Mr Ward said in his 16 August 1998 statement that *"In September of 1997 when I resumed my studies at Dundalk R.T.C. I bought a car – a maroon-coloured Vauxhall Cavalier, 1600 c.c. petrol from Martin Carragher, Annyalla, Castleblayney, paying £3,300 for it. I would describe the car as being wine in colour and in very good condition. It had central locking, sun roof, electric windows and had a tow bar fitted – a standard type one."* Mr Ward said in his statement of 12 December 2001 that he bought the car in October/November 1997.
8. Mr Ward said that the cars registration plate read 91DL 2554 written in black on a white background with an "IRL" crest in the corner. Mr Ward knew that the car had been imported. He knew the windows were marked H 175 CAE. Mr Ward had been told from the person who he bought it off that it had previously been owned by an AGS officer who lived in Donegal. The car was undamaged with no dents or scratches save for a small spot of rust on a rear panel. He said: *"It had a telescopic chrome aerial fitted on the back panel on the passenger near the boot lid. This aerial was always in the extended position and was fixed in that position from not being moved."* The only

additions to the vehicle were two main mud flaps, which Mr Ward had fitted himself. The car also had a badge on the front windscreen relating to his part-time employment. Mr Ward said in an undated statement to AGS that the car displayed a tax disc and insurance disc in a white plastic rectangular holder which was located on the front windscreen in the centre and behind the rear-view mirror. There was no logo or writing on the holder. The tax disc had expired in July 1998 and insurance was due to expire in July 1999. The word "*Pilkington*" was written on the windscreen directly below the white plastic holder.

9. Mr Ward said he drove the vehicle to Dundalk RTC daily, parking it in the car park in the Dublin Road. He said he "*was the sole driver of this car and [he] was very protective of it.*"
10. Mr Ward told AGS on 16 August 1998 that he was dating Theresa Connolly of 56 St Macartans Villas, Carrickmacross, from May 1997. He said he saw her "*almost every weekend since buying the car*". Miss Connolly lived at home with her mother. Mr Ward said "*Since September 1997 I would routinely park my car outside 56 St Macartans Villas most weekend nights and it would normally be parked for up to 4 hrs*".
11. Mr Ward said he had his car washed and filled with petrol on the evening of Wednesday 12 August 1998. He left his home at around 20:30 and drove to Miss Connolly's house in Carrickmacross. Mr Ward stated that he drove "*along on the main Dublin/Derry road to Carrickmacross and then through Cloughvalley up Farney Street and on into St McCartans Villas, where I parked it outside number 56 for about 30 minutes*". He then left the property with Miss Connolly and travelled in his vehicle to Hope Castle in Castleblayney, parking in a car park at that location. This is understood by the Inquiry to have been a licensed premises.
12. Mr Ward and Miss Connolly stayed at that other property until 22:40 when they left to return to Carrickmacross. He said he returned to his car and found it as he had left it. Mr Ward stated that, at this stage, "*All lights worked on the vehicle on this journey and all had been working perfectly up to that date, other than the light flashing unit on the headlight switch. Nobody followed me to my knowledge and on arrival at 56 St Macartans Villas at 11.pm I saw nothing unusual. I parked my car about 10 feet forward of the entrance to number 56 and adjacent to a high green hedge. I locked the*

car, having clicked the Steering wheel into the locked position. When I parked it, the milometer read 96,660 or thereabouts, 50 miles up or down.”

13. Mr Ward said that when he locked the car, he left a number of items within it, including a high visibility vest and yellow coat with black print. His name was printed on both items. He left several other personal items. He said *“In the boot was a five-foot length heavy chrome link chain. A spare wheel jack and wheel brace and part of the Air horn which I removed from the engine compartment some time earlier.”*
14. Mr Ward said that he and Miss Connolly entered the house at St Macartans Villas at 11:05pm on 12 August 1998 and he stayed there until around 3:00am the following morning, during which time nobody entered or left the property. Mr Ward said: *“I heard no activity outside the house, nor did I hear any cars coming or going. We were at the back of the house in the sitting room. At 3.30.am I left number 56 St Macartans Villas to return home to Castleblayney to find my car was gone. At first I thought I had forgot where I had parked it but then I realise (sic) that it had been stolen. I ran back to number 56 and I rang the Guards. And they arrived a few minutes later and I told them what had happened.”*
15. Mr Ward concluded his first statement by stating that he examined the ground, expecting to find glass, and found nothing. The car did not have an alarm. There was only one key, which he handed to AGS on 16 August 1998. Mr Ward stated that nobody had permission to take or use his car at any time. In his statement from 12 December 2001, Mr Ward said he may have had brake pads fitted once at the place from which he bought the car, but he had no record of when this occurred and the car would have been in the garage for a few hours. He said the only other occasion the car was out of his possession was when it had a new exhaust fitted in January or February 1998.
16. In Mr Ward’s statement of 18 August 1998 he said: *“I now wish to add that I left my girlfriends house on 12/8/98, prior to going to the Hope Castle for a drink.”* He said that at around 20:45 he drove his car, with Miss Connolly in the front passenger seat, from 56 St Macartans Villas onto the Dundalk Road where it pulled up at a recently erected steel effigy of Patrick Kavanagh. Mr Ward said that he parked his car facing Carrickmacross town and remained there for five minutes standing on the footpath. He then returned to 56 St Macartans Villas at about 20:55. He said that the remainder

of his movements were as described in his first statement. Mr Ward concluded this statement by describing the car's number plates and items in the car, such as the chain in his boot. Mr Ward said: *"I just thought of these things since I was talking to you last"*.

17. Mr Ward provided several further statements in the days immediately after the bombing. In Mr Ward's statement made on 29 November 1998 he said:

"When I saw the number used on my car in the Omagh bomb I knew the MDZ-5211 plates as I had seen it a few times on a car the same as mine. The car was very like mine in colour, make, model and in its fresh appearance. It actually nearly ran into me one morning when I was going to College at Hoey's filling station and shop in Cullaville. The only connection between the two cars is that they were almost identical cars and both drove through Cullaville on most days, going in opposite directions."

Rose Finnegan

18. Rose Finnegan provided a statement to AGS on 22 August 1998. She lived at an address in Drummond Heights in Carrickmacross. She said that on 12 August 1998 she was at home all day. Ms Finnegan said that at around 00:15 on 13 August 1998 she accompanied someone out onto the footpath outside her home. In doing so, she noticed a maroon car parked on the street. The person she was with noticed that it had a Donegal registration plate. Ms Finnegan thought the car was probably owned by a relative of a neighbour who lived in Donegal. Ms Finnegan states she noticed that the case had a "91-DL" number plate but she did not remember the figures.
19. Ms Finnegan went on to say she knew *"nothing"* about cars but that it was a maroon car facing the end of a cul-de-sac. She stated that she had her hand on the *"front passenger wing of the car"* and that she had seen the maroon car parked in a similar position on a number of previous occasions and, whilst she did not know the owner, she knew the car to see. Ms Finnegan did not see or hear anything of relevance.

Patrick Conlon

20. Patrick Conlon provided a statement to AGS on 17 August 1998. He was at his home in Carrickmacross, close to the area from where Mr Ward's vehicle was stolen, on the evening of 12 August 1998. He described it as a quiet residential area consisting of a row of houses which had an entrance at each end. Both entrances were described as being on a steep rise. At around 01:00 on 13 August 1998 Mr Conlon noticed car lights reflecting off his front sitting room window, which was just above where he was watching television. Mr Conlon said that he was very wary of strange people or cars being in the area. He pulled up the roller blind, looked out and saw a car travelling from the direction of Dundalk. Mr Conlon described it as "*cruising very slowly*". Mr Conlon thought the vehicle was a red Peugeot 405 car and said "*I'm almost 100% sure on this*". He thought it was suspicious given it was travelling slowly. Mr Conlon thought the registration plate included the details "*JJ*" and possibly "*RJJ*". He said that three people were in the vehicle. It travelled towards Carrickmacross town centre, which is when he last saw it.

Section 2: potential attempted thefts of other vehicles in Carrickmacross

Hugh McFadden

21. Hugh McFadden provided a statement to AGS on 22 August 1998. He lived in Letterkenny, County Donegal. He said that on 10 August 1998 he travelled in his blue Vauxhall Cavalier to Dublin for work. It was a five-door hatchback model. His car had been imported from England six or seven years before. He left Dublin, intending to travel home, on the night of 12 August 1998. When he reached Carrickmacross, County Monaghan, at around 21:00 – 21:30, he stopped for a rest. Mr McFadden stated that he parked his car facing towards Monaghan on the left side of the street across from the toilets at the bottom of the town.
22. Mr McFadden said he got out of his car and locked it with his key, which had the effect of locking the door permanently and disabling the engine. It could only be released by the car key. On the way to a bathroom across the road, he noticed a large white Peugeot 405 parked facing the same direction as his car on the opposite side of the road. Two men were inside. He continued to the bathroom and saw the same two men

sitting in the car. He thought they were watching him. Mr McFadden went to check his car, focusing particularly on the rear left passenger door. The central locking on this door was not working properly, and he sometimes would forget to check it manually. He told AGS, that having checked the car, he then went to look for a restaurant he knew. On seeing that this particular restaurant was busy, he decided to travel on to Donegal.

23. As he walked back to his car he saw, initially from a distance of around 200 yards, the two men who had earlier been sitting in the white Peugeot 405 at his car. The first was the passenger of the Peugeot 405, who was standing beside the driver's door of Mr McFadden's vehicle. That individual was looking into the sunroof of the vehicle. Mr McFadden described him as *"very well built, very robust, about 17 stone, close to 6 foot in height, in his early 30's. His hair was scrappy looking, straggly at the back, greasy and combed back as if he had fun (sic) his fingers through it. It was black in colour. He had a black goatee beard with a moustached (sic) as part of it, the rest of his face had stubble on it. He was a bit fattish around the face. He would be overweight. He wore a check shirt, with the colour Black in it and blue jeans. They wee (sic) faded out looking, but not dirty."*
24. Mr McFadden said that he had the impression the person had tried the driver's door to see if he could open it. He said the other individual was at the back of the car and that he was *"leant over and it looked as if he was trying to open the front"* and *"He had gone onto the footpath on the passenger side of my car, and I saw him looking into my car. He also seemed to be trying the door handles."*
25. Mr McFadden also said, *"The second fellow was smaller than the first, about 5'10, about mid to late 20's, 25-27 years with sandy blond hair, short and straggly, looked little as if he just got of bed. He had a stubble of beard, about 3 days growth. He was rough and ready looking, about 12 stone weight, fairly fit looking, without excess weight. I cannot remember what he was wearing. He was the driver of the 405."* He also said the second individual looked very much like a friend of his.
26. Mr McFadden said that when he was about 30 yards away, he got the impression the two men had seen him and started to move back towards their car. He unlocked his car and got in, looking across at the Peugeot 405 when he saw the *"big hefty fellow was*

staring at me, staring me out.” Mr McFadden said the Peugeot drove off, doing a U-turn and coming back up the street and away.

27. Describing the Peugeot, Mr McFadden said it *“was a pearl white colour, it needed a wash but looked to be in good night (sic)”* and the *“car had no spoiler and no wheel trims, just standard trims. I would say its an 89 or 90 model, a fresh enough looking car. I cannot say anything about the number plates. I cannot remember what they were like. It was bright at this time and weather was dry.”*
28. Mr McFadden met with AGS officers in September 1998 to compile a compu-sketch of the people who were at his vehicle on 12 August 1998.

Teresa Drumgoole

29. Teresa Drumgoole provided a statement to AGS on 18 August 1998. She lived at 45 St Macartans Villas. Her husband drove an Izuzu van while she and her family drove a maroon four door saloon Vauxhall Cavalier vehicle, with a registration number 90 MN 2231. She described her car as being in reasonable condition but that it was hard to start due to a problem with heating plugs.
30. She said that, on the night of 12 August 1998, she parked her car outside number 47 St Macartans Villas as the space outside her home was occupied. She described her car as being about 10-15 yards from her front gate. She left the car unlocked, as she said she always did, and she did not check that the steering lock was in place. Ms Drumgoole went to bed at around 00:15 on 13 August 1998, her bedroom being in the upstairs front bedroom of her property. The window was open and curtains were drawn. Ms Drumgoole said she lay awake for some time. At a time around 00:45 to 00:50 she heard the engine of her car being turned outside. She said *“It just gave one engine spin and then stopped which is also a feature of the starter of my car, it will only turn once and you then have to return the key and start again. There was complete silence after that. I heard no vehicles or persons or anything outside.”* Ms Drumgoole said she went to the window seconds later but did not see anything or anyone. From

where she was standing, Ms Drumgoole could not see the place where she had parked her car.

31. Ms Drumgoole went back to bed and went to sleep. She did not hear anything else. She went to her car at around 12:15 on 13 August 1998. The car had not been moved and there was nothing unusual on the vehicle or on the ground or the car. She noticed that the driver's door was closed but not fully secure, saying "*You would have to give it another push to fully close it*". She did not notice any damage in the car or anything missing. It started normally for her, although she noticed the wiper switch was on, and had been running normally since. She said her husband reported the matter to AGS after she became aware on 17 August 1998 that the car used in the Omagh Bomb had been stolen from St Macartans Villas.

Aidan Drumgoole

32. Aidan Drumgoole is the husband of Teresa Drumgoole and provided a statement to AGS on 22 August 1998. He said he went to bed at around 00:15 on 13 August 1998 and fell asleep immediately. He was woken by his wife at around 00:45 to be told that someone was trying to take her car. He said: "*I heard the engine of the car crank once and I knew it was my wife's car, I have no doubt about that*". He said Teresa looked outside but could not see anything. He did not hear anything else and went back to sleep. Mr Drumgoole did not think of the matter or look for his wife's car when he was leaving home later that morning at 06:30.
33. Mr Drumgoole brought the vehicle for examination on 17 August 1998.

John Brady

34. John Brady made a statement to AGS on 14 August 1998. He lived at 25 St Macartans Villas in Carrickmacross. He said that he owned a metallic blue Opel Vectra 1600cc petrol saloon four door car. The car had a registration 90 D 34629, which he had bought around four years earlier. He described it as a standard model with no extras

whatsoever and that it had an individual door locking system which was all working. An alarm had been fitted but it had not been working for two or three months.

35. Mr Brady said he normally used his car around the town or to travel to Bailieborough or Dundalk to shop or socialise. On 12 August 1998 he was at home all day and his car was parked directly outside his front gate. At around 21:45 Mr Brady travelled in his car into town and parked outside the A.I.B. bank, sitting in his car for about 15 or 20 minutes. He then left to return home in his car at around 22:20, parking directly outside his house under a streetlight at 22:30. He locked the car by clicking the steering lock into place.
36. He told AGS that, at around 01:45 on 13 August 1998, he heard the voices of males outside, coming from the area of the road or footpath outside his house. He did not check on the voices, and he could not make out the accents. Mr Brady said he was conscious about his car being parked outside and protective of it since there had been a previous attempt to steal a different car of his four years earlier. He said that at 09:00 on 13 August 1998 he left his house and when he went to unlock his vehicle, he saw that it had been tampered with. The driver's door had been damaged where someone had pulled the plastic mould surrounding the door lock. He could see some type of instrument had been used to do this as a deep, round score mark had been made on the metal surrounding the mould. Mr Brady pushed the mould back into place and travelled to work, before reporting the incident to AGS that night.
37. Mr Brady also told AGS about the movements of the vehicle before and after the 12 and 13 August 1998. Photographs of Mr Brady's car and damage caused were taken.

House to House Enquiries

38. One of the house to house calls made by AGS following the Omagh Bomb received information from a person to say they had returned to St. Macartan's Villas at around 02.30 on Thursday 13 August 1998 and that they were definite that Mr Ward's vehicle was gone by that time.

Section 3: Report to An Garda Síochána and response

Patrick McKeon

39. Garda Patrick McKeon was an officer in AGS stationed at Carrickmacross in August 1998. He provided an undated statement to AGS stating that he commenced duty as a public officer at around 22:00 on 12 August 1998. He said *“At 3.30am I received a phone call from a Paul Ward, C/O 56 St Macartans Villas, Carrickmacross...Mr Ward stated his wine coloured Vauxhall Cavalier m/car 91-DL-2554 had been stolen from outside No 56 Macartans Villas. I passed this message on to the members on mobile patrol. I notified Monaghan Station and Control for countrywide circulation. I notified Castleblayney Station.”* Garda McKeon said he and Garda Lavelle then interviewed Mr Ward at the station, establishing that he had parked his vehicle at 23:00 and returned at 03:30 approximately. Garda McKeon made an entry into an Occurrence Book, showing where details of the stolen car were disseminated. He stated that he completed Form A100, which the Inquiry understands was a form used to record details of a stolen car on the Garda National Computer System which was faxed to the Garda Communications Centre in Dublin, and that a search of the area was carried out by the members on mobile patrol.

Noel Lavelle

40. Garda Noel Lavelle was an officer in the AGS station at Carrickmacross in August 1998. He provided an undated statement to AGS stating that he was on mobile patrol duty with Garda McKenna on the morning of 13 August 1998.
41. Garda Lavelle said he received a radio message from Garda McKeon at around 03:30 on 13 August 1998 that a wine-coloured Vauxhall Cavalier car, registration 91 DL 2554, was stolen from outside number 56 St Macartans Villas, Carrickmacross and that the owner was Mr Ward. Driving immediately towards that address, Garda Lavelle said he met Mr Ward already walking to the AGS station. Mr Ward reported the theft of his car and was noted to be in an anxious state and very concerned about his car and its contents. Mr Ward had the key for the car in his possession.

42. Garda Lavelle said Mr Ward attended Carrickmacross AGS station when he and Garda McKeon obtained details of the car, when Mr Ward had last parked it and when he returned to it. He concluded by stating that a search of the town and its vicinity was carried out for the stolen car.

Section 4: RUC notification of the theft

43. The witness statement of AGS Garda McKeon states that he completed Form A100 and forwarded it to Control. The AGS has stated to the Inquiry that *“It is to be noted that Garda Control, Dublin was notified of this unauthorised taking at 3.45am on 13th August 1998 by way of a facsimile message”*.
44. The Inquiry understands that a report was sent by AGS to the RUC reporting details of the theft of Mr Ward’s car at 13:00 on 13 August 1998. The AGS has stated that *“At 1.00pm on 13th August 1998, the Garda Communications Centre, Dublin Castle (known as Command and Control) issued an up-to-date list of stolen and located vehicles within the Republic of Ireland up until 1.00pm on 13th August 1998”* and that *“Details of the stolen/located vehicles were forwarded to CVI Belfast, Galway, Ennis and Dublin Airport Police”*. The Inquiry also understands that the RUC circulated details of this force wide at 13:23 pm on the same day.²
45. ACC Martin provided affidavit evidence on behalf of PSNI in the judicial review proceedings brought by Michael Gallagher against the decision of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland not to order a public inquiry in relation to the Omagh bomb. In an affidavit sworn on 12 December 2018, ACC Martin stated at §52 that:
- “The details of all of the stolen vehicles would have been passed to the RUC by AGS”*.
46. ACC Martin then set out the views of an individual called Michelle McBride, a PSNI SM3 Grade Managing Switchboard and PVI (Person Vehicle Index) who could state:

² The Inquiry understands that “CVI” is an acronym for “Central Vehicle Index.”

“From the NICHE records retained by the PSNI that the RUC were notified by AGS that a maroon Vauxhall Cavalier registration number 91 DL 2554 had been stolen. The alert is effective from 1300hrs on the 13th of August 1998. The alert states it was stolen in Ireland. The alert refers to MSG 2120 and I have asked staff to recover a hard copy but I have been advised these messages have been destroyed due to the passage of time.”

Section 5: potential sightings of the stolen Vauxhall Cavalier

13 August 1998

Eugene McKenna

47. Garda Eugene McKenna was an officer in AGS stationed at Carrickmacross in August 1998. He provided an undated statement to AGS stating that on the night of 13 August 1998 he was on duty on mobile patrol. He said:

“At approximately 1.00am or 1.05am while approaching Main St., Carrickmacross from Parnell St., Shercock Road direction I slowed down to stop my vehicle. As I did so I observed a dark red or maroon coloured car, an Opel or Vauxhall car, Cavalier model drive down Main St. towards the Courthouse or Castleblayney direction. It was travelling fairly fast but not too fast. I recall part of the Registration Number as 91-DL-5---. I cannot recall the other figures in number plate, it was actually the DL caught my attention. There appeared to be two occupants in front of vehicle. I got a fleeting glimpse of the driver, description as follows, a young male, late teens or early 20’s, good or broad build, seated over steering, sharp features, slightly pointed nose, short hair, appeared fair or mousey, fairly distinctive appearance, possibly wearing a dark coloured jacket, he appeared square shouldered. I cannot say for definite if there was a front seat passenger, I was aware of a shadow only.”

48. Garda McKenna said that Garda Lavelle had accompanied him as an observer on the date in question, but he had returned to the station to take a meal break when he observed the vehicle on Main Street.

49. Garda McKenna said he later spoke to Mr Ward at around 03:30 when he reported his vehicle stolen and that *“He didn’t appear to be the person observed in the red car earlier on Main St.”*

Bernadette Byrne

50. Bernadette Byrne provided a statement to AGS on 19 August 1998. She said that on the morning of 13 August 1998 she drove her car to Crossmaglen to do some shopping. At approximately 10:45, while seated in her car in the square in Crossmaglen, facing the direction of the Dundalk Road, a vehicle passed her towards the Dundalk Road. She noticed it bore a ‘DL’ registration plate. It immediately came to her attention as a friend of hers also had a DL registered car and such a registration number would rarely be seen in Crossmaglen. Ms Byrne said: *“I looked at the years (sic) and it was 91-DL and it had four digits in the number, the two in the middle were the same. I noticed that he (sic) car was middle range in size and maroon in colour. These facts I am quite definite about and when I heard the description of the car I knew it was the one I had seen.”*
51. Ms Byrne could not say how many people were in the car as she focused on the number plate. The car travelled towards the Dundalk Road, but she did not see it park or the direction in which it continued to travel. She said it was being driven in a normal way for the road and weather conditions, which were wet. Ms Byrne said she had no doubt that the number and colour of the vehicle were clear in her mind.
52. Ms Byrne said that she *“noticed that the number plate on the rear of the vehicle was black lettering on a white background and it had what I thought was a badge at one end of the plate...It was a normal saloon car and was travelling slowly.”*

Bernadette McCroary

53. Bernadette McCroary gave a statement to AGS on 28 August 1998. She said that on 12 August 1998 she travelled to Castlebellingham, County Louth, to attend a function. On

the night of 12 August into 13 August 1998, she stayed at a B&B called Spencer House, just outside Kilsaran in County Louth, on the Drogheda side of Kilsaran. She described it as being on the right as one travels towards Drogheda.

54. She said that on the morning of 13 August 1998, at around 11:45, she left the B&B in a vehicle driven by her partner and headed for Dundalk. After around three minutes of travel on the main road, a maroon-coloured car over took her car at speed. It was raining heavily. She then saw the vehicle's brake lights come on shortly after and it appeared to undertake two vehicles which had stopped ahead of it, as the first of those two cars in front intended to turn right. Ms McCroary said she had seen that the maroon-coloured car was a Donegal registered car.
55. Ms McCroary's vehicle then came behind the maroon car and said "*...the numbers of the plate were very similar to a number that I use in everyday life. The number I saw on this car was DL-2554. The first year number was in the 90's but I cannot say which one of them it was. This car had a boot and it was a Vauxhall Cavalier. About 100 or 150 yards after we undertook the gravel lorry [which was the second of the two cars that the maroon vehicle had first undertaken], the maroon car turned left into what appeared to be a housing estate.*"
56. She said she did not see anyone except a driver in the car. She said the driver was a male. Ms McCroary said she read the Belfast Telegraph on 17 August 1998 and "*The number of the bomb car in Omagh was given in this paper as 91-DL-2554 and I was sure this was the number of the car I saw in Kilsaran on the Thursday previous.*"

Brian McDonnell

57. Brian McDonnell provided a witness statement to AGS on 19 August 1998 to say that on 13 August 1998 at around 19:30 – 19:40 he was travelling with family members between Carrickmacross and Lough Egish when a car passed him. He said, "*It was 91-DL registration and was a burgundy Opel or Vauxhall, but I am not quite sure of the model, but I took it to be that type of car.*" He said it passed him in a dangerous place and was travelling fast. It was around 2-3 miles outside Carrickmacross. Mr

McDonnell said there was only the driver in the car and he formed the impression the person was “fairly young”.

14 August 1998

David Shakespeare

58. David Shakespeare provided a witness statement to police on 2 September 1998 stating that he had travelled to Finaghy on the evening of 13 August 1998. He was driving home at around 01:30 on 14 August 1998 when he had passed the Ballygawley roundabout and was driving along the Ballygawley road when “a car flew up on my right side overtaking me...This car was a burgundy colour Vauxhall Cavalier and I would see at least three people in it. There was a passenger seated in the back seat behind the front passenger seat...I thought this car began with MBZ. This is a number which Mercedes Benz drivers look to buy. This car was travelling fast and I as drove on towards Omagh I caught up with it again as it passed Kellys Bar on the left. I thought this strange as it was then I saw the number started with MDZ and the numbers were 5211. This car pulled ahead again and I next caught up with it, as it had slowed down, at the Travellers Rest. I thought the boys were no good and remember doing a double check on the number again.”
59. Mr Shakespeare said he didn’t see the car again until the night of 23 August 1998 when it was on television in relation to the bomb. He said, “I thought long and hard about this car before contacting police to make sure my facts were correct. This Cavalier car was just a plain car with nothing distinctive and I think the reason I thought it was initially MBZ was that a bolt or screw was in the number plate in the D.”

Robert Hamilton

60. Robert Hamilton told police on 20 August 1998 that at around 07:40 on 14 August 1998 he was at a bus stop on the Fintona to Omagh Road. He noticed a maroon-coloured vehicle which he believed was either an Astra or Cavalier which was a hatchback or saloon type model. He said it had rounded panels rather than squared corners and was a new type of model. Mr Hamilton thought the vehicle looked suspicious as he

had not seen it in the location before. He looked inside, thinking someone may be asleep, but it was not occupied. Nothing looked out of the ordinary. The car had a light-coloured interior, but he was unsure of the colour. The exterior of the car did not have significant marks, but he remembered it was very clean and shiny. Mr Hamilton did not look at the registration plate on the car. Mr Hamilton said *“In the area at the time there was a strange smell. It smelt like a garden centre would and I thought at the time that it may be from the derelict farm very close by.”* Mr Hamilton said the car was still there at around 08:45 and *“I remember still thinking about the strange smell in the area and thought of chemicals or fertilizer associated with the near-by derelict farm.”*

Stella Fulton

61. Stella Fulton provided a witness statement to police on 16 August 1998 stating that as she left a house on the main Aughnacloy to Ballygawley Road at around 11:15–11:45 on 14 August 1998 she saw a *“maroon or burgundy Vauxhall Cavalier coming from the direction of Aughnacloy. I took particular attention of this vehicle as one of my sons drives a car the same as this...”* Ms Fulton followed the vehicle and noticed its registration plate to read 91 DL 244. She said there were four digits at the end of the registration number, but she did not remember the fourth. Ms Fulton said she remembered the registration as another of her sons had a car with the same year. She thought this vehicle was better looking than her son’s. Ms Fulton followed the vehicle until the Ballygawley Roundabout. She could not say if there was anyone in the rear or the front passenger’s seat.

Thomas Hillen

62. Mr Hillen provided a statement to police on 26 August 1998 to say he was with his wife in Dundalk and then Ravensdale on 14 August 1998. He said he was travelling on Ravensdale Park Road, through the Ravensdale Park Estate, at approximately 13:30. He saw an ongoing jeep *“travelling fairly fast for the condition of the road”*. Mr Hillen pulled over to let this vehicle pass. He did not know the make or model of the jeep

vehicle or see its registration plate. There were two people within the car and the driver was male.

63. Mr Hillen travelled along the road and saw a maroon-coloured car travelling towards him. It was around 200 yards behind the jeep. As Mr Hillen pulled over, he said *“I remember looking at the registration plate which bore the figures MBZ or MDZ, I didn’t catch the numbers but I think that they were fairly low. The vehicle was a maroon coloured Cavalier”* and that it was not particularly clean.
64. Mr Hillen said *“the driver would have been in his thirties with a roundish face and fairly well built, he had short black hair with side locks. There was only one person in the car and it appeared to be raised at the front.”* Mr Hillen thought the vehicle must have been re-registered as it looked like a car from 1987 or 1988 and the registration plate *“I thought would have referred to a vehicle from 1992 onwards.”* Mr Hillen stated that the point at which he saw the maroon vehicle was around 500 yards from the Drumad Garda Station on the Ravensdale Park Road which is close to the border with Northern Ireland.

Agnes Simpson

65. Agnes Simpson said in a witness statement provided to police that on Friday 14 August 1998 at around 16:00 she was walking down Market Street towards Campsie and noticed a maroon coloured Vauxhall Cavalier parked outside McElroy’s shoe shop. The letters of the registration were MDZ, which she observed as those letters originated from County Antrim and she said *“caught my eye”*. Ms Simpson believed there were four numbers in the registration but could not remember what they were when providing her statement to police on 21 August 1998. She remembered that the vehicle was not clean and looked like it had not been washed for a while and did not notice anyone within the vehicle.

Maurice Gillanders

66. Maurice Gillanders provided a statement on 16 August 1998 to say that on 14 August 1998 he left his home at 17:20 to travel to Clones. He was driving his grey Vauxhall Cavalier car. He crossed the border from Middletown into the Republic of Ireland at around 18:30. As he went through Castleshane, and was at a junction for the Dublin/Monaghan Road, he noticed a dark red Cavalier or Opel approach from the left. He thought the letters on its registration were KDZ *“but definitely something DZ”*. The driver was the only person in the car and was a male who was smoking, aged between 35-40. Mr Gillanders said *“He had very dark brown hair, it was fairly long and straggly. He had a very sparse beard or hadn’t shaved for three or four days. He had a fairly thin face.”*
67. Mr Gillanders said this vehicle did not have an indicator on but stopped and turned right into the road which Mr Gillanders was seeking to exit, following another vehicle which was blue or blue/grey, and which had come from Mr Gillanders’ right. Mr Gillanders saw both vehicles sitting parallel to one and other in a side road they had turned into.
68. Mr Gillanders said the grey car had one person, the driver who was male and was in his 50s. He had grey curly hair and looked heavily built. He had a round face. Mr Gillanders commented that he thought what he had seen was suspicious as it was 18:40 and, that when he was watching the television news on 16 August 1998, the details of the bomb car’s registration plate rang a bell as to what he had seen.

Anonymous source

69. The AGS received information from an anonymous source on 22 August 1998 to the effect that the anonymous person had been travelling from the Fairways Hotel in Dundalk at around 21:20 to the Crossmaglen area on Friday 14 August 1998. The source said that as they turned left at Mullaghbawn they noticed a red Vauxhall with registration details “DL”. The note records *“it was shining and he thought it had bright wheels. 2 men in front – woman in back”*.

Ian Brown

70. Ian Brown reported in a witness statement to police on 18 September 1998 that he got into his parked vehicle roughly outside the Cosy Corner public house in Market Street in Omagh between 21:00 and 22:00 on 14 August 1998. He saw *“a red Vauxhall Cavalier with a Donegal registration drive up Market Street past my vehicle.”* Mr Brown could not say where the vehicle went but that it was a saloon shape and seemed in a good state of repair. It was freshly cleaned. There were two men in the car, and the passenger was shorter than the driver.

Section 6: change of number plates

Bernard McGinn

71. Whilst Paul Ward’s vehicle was the vehicle which carried the bomb to Omagh on 15 August 1998, it did not display the registration plate which belonged to that car. The registration plate on the bomb car was MDZ 5211. These registration details belonged to a vehicle owned by Mr Bernard McGinn.
72. Mr McGinn provided a statement to the RUC on 16 August 1998 stating that he was the owner of a red maroon coloured Vauxhall Cavalier car, registration MDZ 5211. He had owned this vehicle since February 1996 and at no point since had he lost or replaced either number plate.
73. Mr McGinn provided a further statement to the RUC on 17 August 1998 stating that he was employed by a company in the Finnabair Industrial Estate in Dundalk (which the Inquiry understands is located close to the Coes Road in Dundalk) and that he worked from its factory premises every day. Mr McGinn travelled to and from work through Castleblayney and Cullaville. He stated that he bought a maroon-coloured Vauxhall Cavalier, registration MDZ 5211, in February 1996 from a garage in Bessbrook, County Armagh. He stated *“I have the vehicle at the moment and it has never been out of my possession since I purchased it.”* He stated that he parked his car at the front, side or rear of his home but that it would be visible from a road which passes his home. He stated that he was also at work at times on 13, 14 and 15 August 1998. During those

dates his car was not outside the Castleblayney, Cullaville or Dundalk area and no other person drove his car.

74. Mr McGinn provided a further statement to the RUC on 19 August 1998, providing further details around his personal circumstances and his purchase and ownership of his vehicle. He repeated that the vehicle's registration plate read MDZ 5211 and that the registration plates were made from plastic, with the front plate being white and the rear plate yellow. He stated that he had *"never noticed anybody checking out my car or looking at the registration plates. I have no idea as to why my registration numbers would be used on another vehicle"*. Mr McGinn explained the route that he took to work when working an early shift or on a late shift, the latter concluding by travelling on the Coes Road in Dundalk.
75. Mr McGinn spoke with D/Garda John Costello on 27 October 1998 and subsequently provided a statement to AGS on 16 November 1998 about where work and servicing of his vehicle was carried out, where it was washed or any further information he had. Mr McGinn's statement said that several months prior, in the early part of 1998, he purchased an aerial for his vehicle from Meegan's in Cullaville. It was fitted by an individual called Jeff Irvine. D/Garda Costello's note of the conversation of 27 October 1998 appears to record *"This is Auto Plates & Spares which also manufacture Reg. Plates."*
76. Mr McGinn said that he also bought a wheel bearing for his car in and around April (the year is not stated) from Meegan's, believing he bought it from a person called Terence O'Neill. Mr McGinn's statement refers to having his vehicle washed in places such as Castleblayney and Dundalk as well as *"in the other place in Cullaville...that's Hoey's"* and that he had gotten his car washed in Cullaville around eight weeks before the Omagh bombing. He said he didn't know anyone in that place.
77. D/Garda Costello's note of his conversation with Mr McGinn on 27 October 1998 continues that Mr McGinn *"also got his car washed in Auto Plates & Spares in Cullaville on a number of occasions, doesn't remember the last time he got it washed there before the Omagh bomb – but thinks that it was a few weeks...he has been thinking for some time about why his reg. plates were used – but can come up with absolutely nothing."*

78. Police in Northern Ireland believe that at least some of those involved in the Omagh bomb may have been in and around the general areas in which Bernard McGinn was present between 10 and 14 August 1998.

Section 7: border crossings of potential relevance

79. The Inquiry has received a witness statement from Colonel Peter MacMullen, on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, dated 11 November 2025, which sets out details of the Permanent Vehicle Check Points (PVCPs), Patrol Bases (PBs) and Observation Posts (OPs) which were in existence in counties between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland between 1 December 1997 and 15 August 1998. There was a PVCP at a site at Aughnacloy in County Tyrone from which the military withdrew in October 1995. The site is said to have closed in February 1999.
80. In a further statement provided to the Inquiry by Colonel MacMullen, dated 10 August 2026, he said that *“vehicle monitoring arrangements and managing the border was a core component of the military response to the Troubles”*. He said that human military vehicle checkpoints on main routes were eventually phased out after the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and that a modern network of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras took over the role of monitoring major transit routes and cross-border movements.³
81. Colonel MacMullen said that it was highly probable that, in August 1998, the Aughnacloy PVCP was unmanned, with the assumption that camera systems were remotely managed from another location which was likely to be a separate military base in Aughnacloy. Stopping of vehicles occurred by RUC or army patrols from other bases at Aughnacloy following the military withdrawal from the Aughnacloy PVCP in 1995.
82. Colonel MacMullen said that each PVCP will have had cameras covering angles of vehicle movement across the border but *“The information on how many cameras, or*

³ The Inquiry has been informed of the PSNI view that the system operated by the MOD in 1998 was less powerful and sophisticated to modern systems used in the UK.

where they were located, at the Aughnacloy PVCP does not appear to have been retained in MOD records and “It is not clear who owned, managed or controlled the camera footage on the PVCPs in August 1998”. Furthermore, information on whether the camera(s) were working or not, and, if not, why not and in what circumstances, also does not appear to have been retained.

83. In a witness statement from Detective Chief Inspector Billingsley, on behalf of PSNI and dated 16 October 2025, he refers to ‘Vengeful’ or ‘Pinfold’ checks. Colonel MacMullen’s 10 August 2026 statement states that the Vengeful system was a vehicle intelligence database containing details of vehicles registered in Northern Ireland or elsewhere that were of intelligence interest to the Security Forces. The system recorded vehicle sightings for subsequent retrieval and analysis, assessing sightings in real time to alert users when defined pre-conditions were met. He said that sightings of vehicles were added manually to the database utilising information from patrols and VCPs. Colonel MacMullen states that he is unable to identify the precise technological detail of how Vengeful had evolved by 1998 or how it operated at the Aughnacloy PVCP at the time. It is also unclear whether an ANPR camera, which had been allocated to the Aughnacloy PVCP, was operational on August 1998.
84. After the Omagh Bombing, the RUC submitted a request to the Ministry of Defence for checks to be undertaken on Vengeful in respect of the bomb car. The Inquiry understands that a check of Vengeful records showed no trace of either 91 DL 2554 or MDZ 5211, or similar registration details, crossing the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland between 13 and 15 August 1998. A request was also made to the AGS, which did not return any reported sightings of the bomb car.
85. In the aftermath of the Omagh Bombing the police Video Viewing Team considered video recordings from military, police and commercial premises along the possible routes taken by the bomb car travelling to Omagh. A team of four officers viewed 237 seized videos. Insofar as the review identified information relevant to the timeframe of this summary, it noted:
 - a. A white Volkswagon Golf, registration 91 MN 432. This was described as being *“used by Peter Mark Campbell”* from Emyvale in County Monaghan. It was also described, based on information from Garda, as being *“last registered to a M*

Campbell, Carricktree, Co Monaghan.” It has also variously been described in records as having been: owned by “*Mark Campbell*” in 1999; observed to be “*driven by Michael Campbell*” in 1999; and as being “*owned by Campbell family, Aghamackalinn, Emyvale, Co Monaghan*” in 2000. This vehicle was recorded as having been observed:

- i. travelling north to south at Aughnacloy PVCP at 18:40 on 13 August 1998; It is recorded that it appeared to be driven by a male and towing a small trailer.
 - ii. travelling south to north at Aughnacloy PVCP, at 13:09 hours on 14 August 1998. The occupants of the vehicle were not visible. The Inquiry understands that a camera operator held the frame for almost 6 minutes such that the vehicles immediately following were not recorded. A prior vehicle, two minutes ahead of the white Volkswagon Golf, was a beige Peugeot 405 registration KIW 9247. The beige Peugeot 405 was registered to Michael Traynor of Sydney Lane in Aughnacloy. In a schedule consolidating the viewing logs it is recorded: “*Appears to be driver only*”.
- b. A white Renault 19, registration CAZ 2513, described as “*belonging to Francis Mackey*” was recorded as having been observed travelling north to south at Aughnacloy PVCP, County Tyrone, at 11:40 hours on 14 August 1998. The white Renault 19 was observed travelling south to north in the same location at 18:49 hours on 14 August 1998 (a report described the vehicle as “*belonging to*” Mackey and another report noted the vehicle was “*used by*” Mackey.).

The Inquiry Legal Team, 28 August 2026.