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## Local & National

# Omagh trial was a farce: relative

Tuesday, August 14, 2007

By Chris Thornton

A man whose wife was killed in the Omagh bombing has predicted that the electrician accused of the massacre will be freed later this year - describing the trial of Sean Hoey as "a farce".

Kevin Skelton, whose wife Philomena was killed in the 1998 blast, said he would not convict the south Armagh man on the available evidence.

Several Omagh victims have privately expressed concerns about the case, but Mr Skelton is the first to speak publicly about his concerns.

"It was a shambles," he told the Sunday Business Post. "It should never have went to court.

"I wouldn't convict him on the evidence that was presented to the court.

"The police witnesses were a disaster, it was all over the place."

The ninth anniversary of the attack, which killed 29 adults and children and two unborn babies, will be marked on Wednesday.

Victims and families are still awaiting a verdict in the trial of Hoey, from Molly Road, Jonesborough, which began last September.

The trial judge, Mr Justice Weir has been considering his verdict for almost eight months. Hoey faces 29 counts of murder and more than two dozen other charges.

There is some expectation in legal circles that he will deliver his judgement in the case when Crown Court hearings resume in September.

During the case, the judge ordered a Police Ombudsman investigation into the way some statements were altered.

Defence lawyers argued that Hoey should be freed because witnesses beefed up their evidence, exhibits were interfered with and prosecution witnesses undermined one another.

At the conclusion of hearings, Hoey's lawyer, Orlando Pownall QC, claimed that those bereaved in the Omagh bomb, like Mr Skelton, "could not now dispassionately conclude that the man trumpeted is in truth responsible" for the devastating effects it has had on their and their families' lives.

Prosecution lawyers argued that DNA and fibre connected Hoey to a series of bomb attacks that also linked him to Omagh.

During 47 days of evidence, Mr Justice Weir heard from dozens of witnesses and saw nearly 500 exhibits.

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