

STATEMENT OF WITNESS



STATEMENT OF COLETTE QUINN

DATED THIS *25th* DAY OF *September*, 2008

I, COLETTE QUINN declare that this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that if it is tendered in evidence at the Inquiry I will be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

1. The Inquiry has disclosed a number of documents to me. Where I make specific reference to a document in my statement I have given the number of the relevant page.
2. I am a Bachelor of Science in chemistry and biochemistry and I have a Masters Degree in analytical chemistry. I am employed by the Forensic Science Agency for Northern Ireland in the biology section as a reporting officer. In 1997 I had transferred into the biology section as a reporting officer.
3. In 1997 contact with the Royal Ulster Constabulary depended on the type of case. If it was a case which required scene examination then a call would come through to the duty scientist who would dispatch the 'on call' reporting officer to the scene and at that stage first contact would be made with the senior investigating officer. If there was no scene examination, the police would initiate a request for examination by sending forms and exhibits into the Submissions Unit at the Laboratory who would authorise the work and the forms would be sent through customer services to the biology section or to any other section as appropriate.
4. The submission forms were titled A, B, C and D. The A form gives the general outline of the incident and then B and C were the injured party and the suspect forms. Form D was for any items that were not associated with either the suspect or injured party.

5. If work was requested to be done urgently then there would be a follow up conversation between the reporting officer and the senior investigating officer usually within 48 hours. That may extend up to 72 hours, or in fact beyond that, depending on the length of time someone may be held in custody.
6. The laboratory in 1997 was always under pressure and extremely busy, I cannot give a figure on the cases we were dealing with but effectively we really dealt with urgent cases on a daily basis. In 1997 we had eight reporting officers in the biology section that were handling all of the cases in Northern Ireland. We have now recruited new staff that are under training and have nine reporting officers.
7. Timeframes on reporting would always be agreed with the investigating officer. Where people were charged they would take precedence and usually the report was produced within 90 days which was the time limit we were supposed to have, or 120 days where people were on bail. It very much depended on the caseload that people were handling at the time and the complexity of the cases.
8. I first became involved in the Robert Hamill case on 18 June 2002 when I had a meeting with the senior investigating officer. I made a note of that meeting [Page 72896]. I became involved because the reporting officer Lawrence Marshall, who was in charge of the case, was on sick leave and my business manager asked would I meet with the senior investigating officer and discuss the case in his absence.
9. I had not pre-read the case papers prior to going into the meeting on 18 June 2002 and had no previous involvement in the case. My notes [Page 72896] indicate that I was briefed by the senior investigating officer about the background to the case and we discussed various exhibits introduced by the police from the reporting of Lawrence Marshall.
10. The discussion centred on key exhibits raised by the police and the likelihood of further DNA analysis. We also discussed upgrading the DNA from the quad system used in 1997 to the SGM+ which was then operating in 2002. The quad system looked at four specific regions on the DNA module where SGM+ looked

- at ten increasing the frequency of the test and the statistical significance of the test.
11. We also discussed the viability of exhibits for fibres and hairs on clothing.
  12. At the end of the meeting I agreed to report back to the senior investigating officer with an analysis of the information on the file.
  13. I went through the case file after the meeting on 18 June 2002 and prepared a file note 'File review' [Page 72897] where I went through the different items I had been requested to look at. In each of the areas I commented on what had previously been achieved as far as the exhibit was concerned. That DNA results would be upgraded to SGM+ and those samples which were unsuccessful when tested in 1997 would be run again for low copy number analysis.
  14. On 25 June 2002 I faxed to the police a copy of the notes [Page 72897] I had prepared after examining the case file.
  15. From those notes I prepared a chart [Page 72901] indicating what work could be done for each exhibit to progress the case and this was also sent to the police for their consideration.
  16. I have been shown a PSNI document [Page 72904] which relates to the papers I faxed to the Police on 25 June 2002. On the papers are two distinctive styles of handwriting. Neither is mine although I do recognise the smaller style of writing as that of Lawrence Marshall. I believe that Lawrence wrote on these papers at a later date when he returned to work and commenced examination of the exhibits.
  17. On 9 October 2002 I again met with the police to discuss the case together with [REDACTED] the police submissions manager and [REDACTED] from the police submissions unit and I again made a hand written note [Page 72908] of the meeting. The note lists the work that we had already done and my hand written comments were typed up and I completed an estimate for the scientific support

manager of what our work commitments in terms of time and obviously financial restraints would be. That note [page 72909] was sent to the police on 15 October 2002.

18. Lawrence Marshall made a phased return to work in September 2002 and after I had the meeting on 9 October 2002 I handed the file back to him and obviously indicated the work that was agreed with the police. He then initiated the work from there onwards.
19. I had no further involvement with the case other than I quality assured one of Lawrence's reports in the case. The report [page 38900] was reviewed by me on 5 April 2004. Our quality assurance system ensures that each report has to be peer reviewed. I made sure that there were no composition errors. I would make sure that what had been stated in the report corresponded with the work that had been done on the file. I did not go back and check any further work because that was out of my responsibility.
20. I am able to comment on SGM+ profiles where all ten regions have been typed then a full profile is obtained and that is reported as one in a billion for the statistical frequency in the Northern Ireland population. In his report [Page 38902] Lawrence Marshall refers to two unidentified men 'A' and 'B' as each having DNA characteristics of one in a thousand million, which is the definition of a billion.
21. The Northern Ireland DNA database has three lines of submission, firstly Criminal Justice samples taken from a suspect at the time of charging. Secondly, from no suspect crime scenes, and finally from samples from case work. It is very much a case of discussing with the investigating officer whether they want any of the crime stains to go onto the database.
22. Lawrence Marshall reported that stains 'A' and 'B' were entered onto the Northern Ireland database on 31 March and 1 April 2004 respectively. I had mentioned in my review that these stains should be put onto the database.

23. The Forensic Science Service in England and Wales are the custodians of what we call the national database and they set specific criteria on what can be uploaded as a sample on the national database. Prior to the Forensic Science Agency of Northern Ireland achieving its accreditation at the end of 2004 we were not allowed to routinely upload samples. Prior to that we could only do one off searches. You could fill out a form, submit it to the custodian of the national database and ask for a search against their database. It would not be permanently uploaded.
24. In 1997 where unidentified crime stains had been reported upon, a request to search the national database would effectively be made by the investigating officer, but obviously at the suggestion of the scientists involved.
25. As far as I am aware from my knowledge of the Hamill case file the unknown stains 'a' and 'b' have not been searched against the national database.
26. From the review that I undertook of the case papers in June 2002 there is no indication of a written forensic strategy agreed between the police and the FSANI as far as I am aware. It depends case by case and really on the individual investigating officers. Some would come to the laboratory and spend a lot of time there effectively making sure that the work they had requested was being done. The major factor would be the time from an incident and when items were submitted and the urgency of the examination of those exhibits. There was always the major criterion that if someone was charged that the case would assume a different degree of urgency.
27. I have been asked to explain how the Forensic Science Agency examined blood stains for pattern analysis. All biology reporting officers have an expertise in blood pattern analysis.
28. It is usually very difficult to get any interpretations from one particular stain. You are interpreting a pattern as opposed to a stain, but you may well get some idea of how it came to be there. The shape and size of a blood stain can give some indication and you can usually differentiate between a stain and a smear.

Where blood has been projected the shape may give you some indication of the angle at which it hit the surface.

29. Where urgent requests for DNA analysis are made to the laboratory we usually turn around cases with 72 hours, and most cases are within 48 hours.
30. A statement to prove the DNA suspect sample after an initial database 'hit' as being linked to the crime stain will depend upon the police providing an evidential sample from the alleged offender.

**SIGNED:** Colette L. Quinn

**COLETTE QUINN**

**DATED:** 25th September 2008