

DUNLOUGH BAY

As the man reached shore from the unforgiving waters of Dunlough Bay, he knew he had to get help. He could see his colleague still in the water and there was no hope of him being able to swim to safety. Panicked, the young man grabbed on to his holdall and looked around for someone to raise the alarm. However, it was not yet 7.00am and there was nobody to be seen in the rocky inlet.

It was 2 July 2007 and the Englishman had been overthrown from a rib in the seas off Mizen Head, in West Cork. Saturated wet, he decided to go to one of the houses he could see in the distance. Knocking on the door of one of the farmhouses, he hoped someone would hear him. Although it was still early, his knock was answered.

When Michael O'Donovan opened his farmhouse door, he was confronted by a stranger, who was shivering and soaking wet. The shaken young man explained that he had been out fishing with two friends and that their rib had been overturned by the rough seas. He said he was originally from

Monaghan, his name was Gerard O'Leary and that, ironically, that day was his birthday. According to O'Leary, one of his friends was still in the rough waters lashing off the rocks of Dunlough Bay but he stressed a number of times that there was no need to call the emergency services. Michael O'Donovan gave the visitor a hot drink and a change of clothes. Although it was July, Ireland had been experiencing a particularly bad summer and the sea conditions in recent days had been similar to wintry storms. As a result, O'Leary's tale came as little surprise.

Despite his protestations that his friends would be safe, Michael O'Donovan decided to look out to sea himself to check on them. He saw a small watercraft sailing around a headland towards Mizen Head, with what appeared to be just one crew member on board. Still worried about the possibility of someone being in trouble in the sea, he decided something had to be done and he contacted his sister, who in turn raised the alarm. As Gerard O'Leary was being looked after, a call was put in with the coastguard about the overturned rib and the possibility of his friend being lost at sea. Members of the local coastguard team arrived, shortly afterwards, and the young man told them he had been staying with friends locally in recent days.

There was a strong possibility that Gerard O'Leary could suffer hypothermia and efforts were made to warm him up to

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prevent this happening. Meanwhile, members of the coastguard made their way to the nearby pier to launch a search and rescue operation for O'Leary's friend. When they got there, a green British-registered jeep was parked in front, and two men were standing nearby. Both were strangers and did not arouse suspicion, at first, as the coastguard's priority was locating the man in the sea. Indeed, by now there was also talk of another man being in the water, and emergency volunteers were busy with the rescue operation.

A man could be seen in the water, and it was clear he was wearing a life jacket. With such rough seas, there was nothing left to chance – a major rescue operation was launched. Now that the coastguard members knew he was wearing a life jacket, they were hopeful of a safe recovery. A lifeboat from Castletownbere had been alerted to come to the scene, and was on its way. Its crew were surprised at the early call out on a Monday morning. However, they were regularly called out to help in similar incidents, and headed towards Dunlough Bay, arriving there shortly after 9.00am. A rescue helicopter was also enlisted in the operation.

Space was at a premium on the tiny roadway leading down to the bay. Without thinking, a member of the coastguard parked his vehicle in front of the green jeep. The move effectively blocked the path of the vehicle. Others began to arrive at the scene shortly afterwards, including Gardaí who had also

been contacted about the emergency. Further vehicles were also parked in the way of the jeep. Emergency workers got their operation underway, giving little thought at first to the two strangers. Indeed, as far as they were aware, the priorities of the two men seen near the jeep were also focused on saving the men, particularly as one of the strangers told the emergency workers there was a man in the water who needed saving.

However, the increasing presence of Gardaí, and other emergency workers at the scene, had taken the concentration off the two strangers long enough for them to disappear from the scene. They opted to leave their jeep blocked by the rescue vehicles, while they escaped through the fields. While the emergency volunteers had rushed to the scene, the man known as Gerard O'Leary had remained in a distressed condition in the nearby house. He was taken away to Bantry General Hospital, shortly afterwards, by one of two ambulances that had arrived at the scene. Despite the efforts of locals, it was suspected he had developed hypothermia as a result of his ordeal.

Emergency personnel felt it was important to get as many details as possible about the circumstances of the men's arrival into Dunlough Bay, as they prepared for the rescue of one of O'Leary's friends and the search for the other one. However, they began to feel that the young man who had raised the

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alarm was being slightly evasive with some answers. When they reached the pier, they quickly began to piece together the answers themselves. Several large packets could be seen floating in the sea near the overturned rib and the man they were trying to save. When the lifeboat crew arrived from Castletownbere, they quickly pulled the man from the cold sea, and the coastguard helicopter airlifted him to shore. It was evident that he too was suffering from hypothermia, and he was wrapped in blankets before being laid onto a stretcher. He was given oxygen at the scene, before being removed by ambulance to the nearest hospital, in Bantry.

While he was being treated at the scene, he managed to urge the lifeboat crew to keep searching – as there had been three of them out on the rib. He also told them that his own name was Anthony. Although there was an urgency among emergency workers to continue their search for the third man, their attentions were also taken up by the packets in the sea. Up to fifty mysterious packages could be seen and Gardai believed they had inadvertently come across a drug smuggling operation that had fallen foul of the weather. It was time to extend the operation from a rescue mission to a drug investigation, while rescue teams continued their search for another man.

Members of the West Cork drugs unit arrived at the scene, from Bandon, after 11.00am that morning, joined by

members of the customs drug enforcement team on board the service's only boat, *An Suirbhéir*. The *LE Orla* was also dispatched to the scene as part of the inter-agency taskforce approach to the operation. As the bales were winched from the water by the helicopter, the search continued for a further two hours for the alleged missing third man. However, after 1.00pm, a decision was taken to step down the search, as it became obvious that there was nobody else in the water. It was becoming increasingly unlikely that the men, now being treated in hospital, had been on a fishing trip, as Gerard O'Leary had claimed.

By now, some of the bales had been airlifted to shore, and one had been taken to nearby Schull for testing to establish its contents. A preliminary examination of the bale proved the suspicions of Gardaí, customs and the navy – it contained cocaine. This proof gave a new urgency to the recovery mission and the need to interview the two men in hospital. The irony of the seizure was that it came just weeks after a meeting was held in Bandon between law enforcement agencies and maritime residents as part of the Coastal Watch initiative, aimed at reminding people living on the coast to be on the lookout for suspicious activities at sea. There had not been a major shipment apprehended off the coast of Ireland since the seizure of cannabis resin on board the *Posidonia*, near the Fast-net in 1999. It was clear now that the emergency services had

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stumbled on another major catch off the West Cork coast and the concern was that the shipment could have escaped the authorities, if the seas had not been so rough in Dunlough Bay that morning. However, the fact that someone had put the wrong fuel in the rib's engine was another key factor. Quoted in the *Evening Echo*, senior counsel Blaise O'Carroll, later said: 'Some idiot put diesel into it when he should have put petrol in it and the engine lost its power and ended up on rocks.'

Gardaí were at the hospital after 2.00pm that afternoon, when O'Leary was discharged. Confident now that the rib's accident at sea had led them to a major drug smuggling effort, the officers arrested O'Leary and took him to the nearby Garda station for questioning under drug trafficking legislation. Meanwhile, a major land search was underway on Mizen Head to trace the two men who had left the scene at Dunlough Bay. Investigators were convinced of a connection between them, the men in the hospital and the cocaine bales. They had managed to draw suspicion on themselves by telling the rescue workers to help the man in the sea, but failing to stay in the area to see if they could assist in the operation.

The crew of the Baltimore lifeboat had also been drafted in by now. The bales of cocaine were airlifted onto the lifeboat. For the Baltimore crew, the operation was not like anything they had ever been tasked to do before. However, they took to

their new role easily and loaded more than fifty bales onto the lifeboat. The cargo was removed to Baltimore where the bales were then taken into the possession of customs by Paddy O'Sullivan, before being transferred to Bantry Garda station. An incident room had been set up at the station, under the direction of Detective Chief Superintendent Tony Quilter, and 150 Gardaí were assigned to the different strands of the investigation. As the operation had developed, personnel had been drafted in from Cork city and national units including the Garda National Drugs Unit, the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Air Support Unit and the Technical Bureau.

As officers combined all elements of the investigation, one man living on the nearby Sheep's Head peninsula grew increasingly worried for his son's safety. Joe Daly Senior had heard radio news reports about the massive rescue operation off Mizen Head and feared his son had been lost at sea. He had been living in the area, after moving from England, in recent years. His sons were in the area on holidays for a couple of weeks. He had come to his house that morning to borrow a rib to go fishing, and he had not heard from them since. Other members of his family contacted Gardaí and the worried man was taken to Bantry to visit the two men in hospital. Neither was his son Joe. However, he instantly recognised the man who had been plucked from the sea and said he was one of his

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sons' friends. He told Gardaí the man's name was Martin. Unwittingly, the man further raised the suspicions of officers about what the men had been doing when the accident happened. Mr Daly's assertion that the man was named Martin was a contradiction of what the rescued man had already told them. Subsequent investigations revealed his name was actually Martin Wanden, a UK national from Kent. Wanden had no fixed address but had a home in South Africa.

The day turned into night and Joe Daly still had not returned to his father's house. The two men who had been seen at Dunlough Bay had still not been traced either and checkpoints were mounted on the peninsula, in an effort to find them. If the men had been in the area for genuine purposes, why had they disappeared when they knew at least one man was fighting for his life in the water? Investigators keen to find an answer to that question had alerted locals to be on the lookout for the two men. Gardaí on foot and in patrol cars searched for the men on the ground, while a helicopter also flew over the surrounding areas to determine where the men were. With a tight security ring around the area, it was felt they could not have gone far, especially as their jeep was left behind at Dunlough Bay. Over the next twenty-four hours, reports of two dishevelled men being seen between the bay and Schull were made to Gardaí, but they still managed to evade the authorities.

The investigation now had many strands, including regular

checks with hospital staff in Bantry to check on the condition of the man who had been plucked from the sea. In the nearby Garda station, the young man who had raised the alarm was now being questioned about a possible link to a drug smuggling enterprise. It was becoming clear that the botched effort would have been the largest ever consignment of cocaine to have been brought into Ireland, if the weather had not been so stormy. Sixty-one bales of the Class A drug were recovered from the sea over the two days following the rescue operation, and Gardaí estimated the haul was worth a staggering 107 million. A further one was recovered months later – on 27 November, when all hope had been given up of retrieving it. Like the rest of the bales, it weighed 25kg and was worth a

1.75 million – a figure which would have made it a very significant seizure, if found on its own in any other drug enforcement operation on land. The provisional value was reached on the basis that the cocaine had a purity of between 12 per cent to 15 per cent. However, analysis of the haul revealed it had a purity of 75 per cent – bringing the street value to a massive

440 million, as it was likely it would have been mixed with an agent to make it go further, if it had not been seized. One of those giving evidence was forensic expert Geraldine O'Neill, who said recent tests of cocaine sold in Ireland showed that the average purity of cocaine in early 2008 was 6.7 per cent. If broken down to this level, the Dunlough Bay seizure could

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have an estimated value of 1.2 billion.

Other items had also been taken from the water in the immediate aftermath of the seizure. These included the rib, debris and a global positioning system – which would later prove vital in the investigation. A waterproof box was also taken from the water and it held a satellite phone, which was undamaged by its time in the sea. Each item was carefully removed to preserve all vital evidence, before being sent for technical analysis.

As Wanden remained in a stable condition for two days after the rescue operation, Gardaí continued their search for the two men who had left the scene. Literally forty-eight hours after Wanden had been taken from the sea, officers received vital information from a man living on the Mizen peninsula. He had seen two men walking along a roadway several kilometres from Dunlough Bay, at a place called Gubbeen, Schull. He believed they were the men Gardaí had been looking for. Local Sergeant Gerard Prenderville followed up the information and met the two men walking along the road. When he questioned them, they gave very little information. They were both arrested and taken to Bantry Garda Station. The two men cut dishevelled figures but were in good condition, despite being at the mercy of the elements for two nights without food or beds. Their arrests were a mixed blessing for the Daly family as one of them was the missing Joe Daly. The

other man was identified as Englishman Perry Wharrie from Pryles Lane, Loughton, Essex, who had also been staying locally in recent weeks. The two were later removed to Bandon Garda station to enable the recording of their interviews, as there were not enough facilities in Bantry to deal with all the prisoners.

Case officers knew there was a substantial network of people behind the consignment lost to the rough sea. The green jeep parked near Dunlough Bay was seized as evidence, and investigations led customs officers and Gardaí to two other jeeps parked in the nearby village of Crookhaven, also on the Mizen peninsula. The vehicles were removed from the tourist village for technical examinations to help establish vital missing links in the investigation. Joe Daly had links to the adjoining Sheep's Head peninsula, through his father, and it was only a matter of time before officers widened their net to cover that area as well. A suspect Volkswagen Passat was found on that peninsula, in the village of Ahakista. It was also discovered that two houses, a short distance away in Kilcrohane, had been rented in recent weeks by the three of the four men and a number of others who were suspected of having been the landing party for the drugs. Another rib had also been found in Durrus, the village where the two peninsulas met. That rib was taken away for examination as well. It was suspected that it had been intended to use the vessel to transfer drugs. It was

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now clear that the arrival of the drugs into Dunlough Bay was a major mistake caused by the chaotic seas. It was far more likely that an inlet on the Sheep's Head peninsula had been the intended landing point.

The discovery of the Volkswagen Passat in Ahakista was a vital stroke for the investigation team. Three mobile phones were seized from the car. Gardaí hoped that analysis of communication traffic involving the phones could provide valuable information. Most significant, however, was a key document involving the young man who had raised the alarm after the rib overturned. Until now, he was believed to be named O'Leary and have strong links to Monaghan. However, when his genuine passport was discovered in the Passat, it quickly emerged that the O'Leary passport was false and that his real name was Gerard Hagan. Armed with this information, officers took the twenty-three-year-old to Macroom District Court to have his period of detention extended by Judge James McNulty, under the provisions of drug trafficking legislation. With court extensions, he could be held for up to seven days and officers felt the investigation was so expansive that they required the extra time to help build a case. It emerged in court evidence from Chief Superintendent Kevin Ludlow that Hagan had obtained the false passport in the name of a dead baby from Monaghan, whose birthday was, ironically, the date of the Dunlough Bay seizure. Hagan's own

birthday was in April, and he was from Hollowcroft in Liverpool. The application for the passport had been made through the name of a firm of solicitors allegedly based in London. However, the firm did not exist.

The O'Leary passport helped officers establish the route used by the group behind the operation. It had been stamped in a Caribbean port with the name *Lucky Day* and this gave investigators the clue they were looking for in helping them track the mother ship from which the cocaine had been transferred to the smaller rib. Officers established that the *Lucky Day* catamaran had travelled from the island of Margarita through the Caribbean, with stop-offs in Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados. It progressed from there at the end of May, arriving at a point off the Mizen Head over a month later. It was believed the transfer of drugs took place at that point over a number of hours early on 2 July.

The false passport revealed Hagan had travelled to Trinidad and Tobago on 19 April 2007, and arrived in Barbados on 6 May on board the *Lucky Day*. The vessel was checked by local law enforcement officers on 19 April and there were three people on it – two Lithuanians and a man who gave his name as Gerard O'Leary. He produced a passport in that name and was the man now known to be Hagan.

The passport was not the only thing to prove a connection to the *Lucky Day*. Communication between two satellite

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phones – one of which was in the waterproof box – also helped establish a link. Phone records of the phone found in Dunlough Bay revealed a number of calls between it and another satellite phone, which was later established to have been on the *Lucky Day*. Satellite phone technology allows for the identification of locations where the phone is when calls are received or made, through global positioning system technology. As a result, analysis of the calls made to and from the satellite phone on the *Lucky Day* enabled Commander Eugene Ryan, of the naval service, to plot charts showing the catamaran's progress across the Caribbean and the Atlantic, before its arrival off Mizen Head.

The catamaran had been bought just months previously, after it had been advertised for sale on an internet website. The ten-year-old vessel had been built by French company Fontaine Pajot and was advertised at a price of \$132,000. The boat was brought from Florida in March for the venture, which ended up in the seizure of the cocaine in Dunlough Bay.

Officers guessed the *Lucky Day* was at sea, moving further and further away from the south coast of Ireland after its long journey. Frantic efforts were being made to trace it by one team of officers, while another team were trying to locate at least six men believed to have been part of the landing party for the drugs in West Cork. Following the seizure in

Dunlough Bay, the men had disappeared. Their disappearance was noted by locals, who had come to know the men in recent weeks as they had mingled among residents in bars, hotels and shops. Some had even played golf on golf courses around West Cork. In the weeks leading up to the seizure, men had stayed in local bed and breakfast establishments and hotels, giving addresses from various parts of England, including Kent. CCTV footage from businesses were scrutinised and the focus had been extended to include footage from airports and ports across Ireland to determine if, how and when they had left the country.

On the troubled seas, the navy and customs officers were still looking for floating bales of cocaine, with searches being conducted from first light. A naval diving team were on standby throughout the week, waiting for an opportunity to search caves in the area for any missing bales.

Back in Bantry town, Gardaí were anxiously awaiting news from hospital staff on Wanden's condition. He was eventually discharged from hospital, three days after he was winched from the sea. Like Hagan, he was arrested immediately and taken for questioning. As his time in custody began, officers prepared to make an application to extend the questioning period for Wharrie and Daly.

The men were brought before Judge McNulty at a special sitting of Clonakilty District Court, amid delight by case

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officers at news just breaking from Spain that the *Lucky Day* had been successfully traced. While the four men sat in Garda interview rooms in West Cork, two Lithuanians had been making their way steadily towards the Spanish coast on board the catamaran. The boat was detained at sea by Spanish authorities and was brought under escort into the port of La Coruna. It was flying the American flag at the time of its detention. The breakthrough came after Gardaí had enlisted the help of Spanish police, through Interpol, in an effort to trace the mother ship. When the vessel arrived into La Coruna, the two men were taken from the catamaran. Images of them being escorted from the vessel in handcuffs, t-shirts and shorts were broadcast on international television. In Ireland, officers on the case hoped that the capture of the vessel would provide them with evidence which could move the investigation forward. However, there was no trace of any contraband on the *Lucky Day*. The Lithuanian crew members remained in custody for many weeks, but were subsequently released without charge.

In Ireland, another avenue of investigation was the background of the rib found in Dunlough Bay. Enquiries led Gardaí to South Africa. It was established that the vessel had been bought from a company there before being transported to Ireland, through the UK.

Although officers were making advances, they were not

being aided by the four men in custody. Five days on from the seizure, another application was made to extend the detention periods of Wharrie and Daly. A similar application was made for Wanden, who had no fixed address but who had been living in Hout Bay in South Africa until recently. It emerged in court that he was also known as Anthony Claude Lyndon. By now it was felt that there was sufficient evidence against Hagan to charge him. He was taken before Clonakilty District Court on two charges of possessing a controlled substance. One was the more serious charge of having a controlled substance for sale or supply. He was granted free legal aid and remanded in custody.

As he was being escorted to prison, the other three men were still being questioned. A decision was taken to charge Wanden and Daly with similar offences three days later, on 10 July. The men were taken to Skibbereen District Court, arriving amid the scream of sirens, as up to twenty Gardaí surrounded the courthouse. Among the officers were members of the armed Emergency Response Unit. There was little doubt that the botched importation had hit the profits of the network of organisers – and the State was not going to take any chances in relation to security. Both men were also remanded in custody at the hearing and were taken to join Hagan in Cork Prison.

Wharrie was the last to be charged and was brought to

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Dunmanway courthouse under tight security the following morning. The intense security visible in Skibbereen the previous day was repeated in Dunmanway. At one point, windows of the tiny courtroom were closed to ensure maximum security. Wharrie was joined at the short hearing by Hagan, who was facing a further remand application by the State. Both were rushed to Cork Prison after the hearing. Officers returned to the incident room in Bantry to work on the preparation of the Book of Evidence.

At this stage, the tentacles of the investigation were spreading all over the world. They extended to Britain, Spain, Eastern Europe, as well as the Caribbean and South America. A clearer picture was beginning to emerge of the men in custody and the major operators pulling the strings in the background. It was clear that the gang were not small-time operators, particularly given the pedigree of the arrested men.

Wharrie was just a month away from his forty-eighth birthday when he was arrested near Schull. He was a married man, who had served a prison sentence for the murder of an English policeman called Frank Mason during an armed robbery of a security van in England. The incident took place outside a bank in Hertfordshire in 1988. He was sentenced to life in prison after being found guilty of PC Mason's murder and charges relating to the possession of a firearm, at Southwark Crown Court in April 1989. Six years later, he was granted

conditional release. Among the terms of his release was that he would be under the supervision of the probation service. He was also restricted from travelling or working outside the UK. The released was revoked in January 2006 after he breached the terms, and he was recalled to prison. However, he did not return and was at large until he was arrested in West Cork in 2007. Ironically, another man convicted of murder and firearms offences, following the murder of PC Mason, was caught after being on the run for thirteen years, while Wharrie was in prison awaiting trial in Ireland in November 2007. James Hurley had topped the list of Britain's most wanted criminals and was arrested in the Netherlands. Police in the UK had offered a stg£30,000 award for information on his whereabouts.

Wanden also had a criminal record in Britain, as well as in France. He had no fixed address in England but had known links to Kent where he had married his wife Sonya in 1995. The forty-four-year-old had been linked to drug trafficking operations before the Dunlough Bay seizure, and had convictions in France for possessing and transporting cocaine. At the time of his arrest in West Cork, a European Arrest Warrant was in existence for him. It had been issued in May 2005 by the French authorities, after he had escaped from custody in October 2001. He was wanted for drug trafficking, smuggling of prohibited goods and

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escaping with the use of violence.

Joe Daly also had convictions. The married father-of-three had been fined in 1990 for assault of a police officer and was given community service in 1998 from Bexley Magistrates Court for possessing an article with a blade or a point in a public place.

Investigations into establishing the key figures behind the scenes revealed that the operation was the culmination of efforts between a number of gangs in the UK, who had forged links with the Medellin cartels in Colombia. Two of the gangs were based in Liverpool, although key figures were by then living in Spain. A gang based in Kent were responsible for organising the logistics of the operation, including key figures who had moved to the south of Ireland for the weeks leading up to the botched effort. While the Book of Evidence was being prepared for the trials of Wanden, Daly, Wharrie and Hagan, efforts were still underway to trace those who had fled from West Cork in the immediate aftermath of the Dunlough Bay seizure.

More than six weeks after the men had been charged, the DPP directed that a further charge – possession of more than 13,000 of a controlled substance for sale or supply – be brought against the four men. That charge carried a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years. By now, the men had been moved to Cloverhill Prison in Dublin for security

reasons. The positive aspect of this move was the location of a courthouse adjacent to the prison. This made it easier than the situation in Cork, where large numbers of Gardaí had to travel with the accused from the prison in Cork to courthouses in West Cork because of security concerns.

When the new charges were brought against the men, criticism against the State's decision was voiced by Judge David Anderson at Cloverhill District Court. Under the guidelines governing the DPP, the Book of Evidence is to be served on an accused person within forty-two-days. However, the new charges against the Dunlough Bay four were brought after the forty-two-day period had expired. The judge accused the DPP of buying time over and above what the State allowed, and referred to the move as 'subterfuge'. However, counsel for the State pointed out that investigations were continuing and that the latest charge could only be brought after a detailed forensic examination of the evidence. Despite fears that the men could be released because of the move, they were eventually remanded in continuing custody.

The men were sent forward for trial at Cork Circuit Criminal Court. At a hearing of that court on 11 December, State counsel Tom Creed said that up to 400 witnesses could be called in the men's trial. Mr Creed outlined that the State had already provided 383 witness statements from the Book of Evidence to the men's defence teams. He said a further thirty

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statements from witnesses, outside the jurisdiction, would also be handed over. The trial got underway on 21 May, under tight security at the courthouse on Cork's Washington Street. On the opening day, selecting a jury to hear the trial proved difficult as many of the panel had holidays booked. Eventually, nine men and three women were sworn in to hear the trial, which was presided over by Judge Seán Ó Donnabháin. The judge said the trial would last up to ten weeks. As expected, legal argument dominated the trial. Hagan had pleaded guilty before the selection of the jury, leaving them to decide on the fates of Wanden, Wharrie and Daly.

Over the course of the trial, witnesses were drawn from the Gardai, customs and navy, as well as locals who had been involved in the rescue operation. Witnesses were also flown in from Barbados, South Africa and Spain to give evidence about the international investigation.

It emerged that Joe Daly's brother, Michael, was by then in custody in the UK, following a significant coastal drugs seizure there. It was revealed that Michael was a retired detective sergeant in the London Metropolitan Police.

As the jury listened intently to the evidence, they were unaware of two major events which had recently taken place in Wanden's life. His wife Sonya had died some months before the trial got underway and property belonging to the couple in South Africa had been

confiscated by the South African Asset Forfeiture Unit.

The property was to be auctioned in South Africa on 8 August, just weeks after the end of the trial. Despite efforts by Wanden and Daly to persuade the jury of their innocence by giving evidence themselves, three unanimous guilty verdicts were delivered in Courtroom number two of Cork Courthouse on 22 July 2008. The jury had taken more than seven hours to decide on the men's fates. A day later, Judge Ó Donnabháin made legal history when he handed down thirty-year sentences to Wanden and Wharrie, along with a twenty-five-year sentence to Daly. Hagan's sentencing was to be held later that year. Addressing the court at the July sentencing hearing, the judge said: 'I think these three defendants are committed and dedicated to this criminal activity. Let's face it, they are in it for the money. They are prepared to deal in drugs, to deal in death and destruction for profit. Let's strip away everything else, that is what they were in it for.' As the three were led away to begin their sentences, fascinated members of the public were in awe. The sentences handed down were the longest ever delivered by a judge in an Irish court for drug offences.