

Own bombs may have killed gasworks trio

THREE men killed in a series of explosions inside the Belfast Gasworks complex in October last year, may have been trying to plant bombs at an Army post, a detective told an inquest yesterday.

Paul Marlowe, aged 32, of Nansen Street, 24-year-old Joseph Surgenor, of Sheriff Street and Frank Fitzsimmons, aged 29, of Thompson Street, all Belfast, died instantly when bombs exploded prematurely on October 16, destroying a 60 foot gas holder.

The court heard that the short series of explosions happened at a security fence inside the complex, 25 ft away from the holder and 75 yards from the Army post.

Parts of one body were found up to 150 yards from the fence.

A detective told the court that it was some time after the explosion before police established three men had been killed.

Mr. Surgenor was identified by a mole on a large piece of skin and by hairs on the scalp.

Timers, detonators, plastic bags, wooden boxes and a haversack were found near the scene.

A forensic expert told the court that one charge did not explode properly. He said that a mixture of sodium chlorate and nitro benzene was used in the bombs.

The gas holder later sank into a pool of water and it would be some years before it could be raised, he said.

Verdicts of misadventure were returned on the three men.