

Hungry British Bobbies 'ate the evidence'



In a new twist on the old schoolyard excuse that 'the dog ate my homework', several members of Her Majesty's Constabulary who were a little too hungry to secure a conviction, inadvertently ate unclaimed pizzas at the scene of the crime without realising they were significant potential evidence.

This allegation was made by prosecutors in December at the Old Bailey, in respect of a case of torture and intimidation alleged to have taken place last year in Hertfordshire.

The British police may have occasionally be accused of losing, abusing or even tampering with evidence, but eating it is almost certainly a first for any police force anywhere in the British Isles.

The evidence in question turned up in the form of two deep pan pizzas that a Domino's delivery boy was unsuccessfully trying to deliver to the suspect's house, when the long arm of the law arrived at the scene. The victim had escaped: the suspects had fled the scene. What then is any self-respecting 'Copper' to do, except bag – or in this case,

doggy-bag – the evidence?

The pizzas had been ordered by a gang who were allegedly holding a drug dealer hostage in a house in Hertfordshire, north of London in April 2010.

The Old Bailey court heard that the gang ordered Domino's pizza as they tied their victim to a chair and struck him in the face with a frying pan. But the victim managed to escape through a window and call for help and the gang fled before the food arrived.

According to prosecutor Ms Sally Meaking-McLeod, all of those involved in the incident had left the house by the time the police arrived; but not before an order had been placed at the local pizzeria. By the time the Boys in Blue arrived, the only person left on the scene was a somewhat confused delivery boy, who wanting to cut his losses, took the officers up on their offer to buy the pizzas at a reduced rate for themselves.

The officers then "ate most of the evidence", before putting the boxes in the back of a police car. The following day, another police

officer found the empty pizza boxes in the back of the squad car with key details written on the pizza box including the suspect's address, the time of order and a mobile phone number.

The boxes were then seized and finally turned up in court on as evidence allegedly placing the accused at the scene of the crime.

The court heard the attack was arranged by another drug dealer, known as CJ, who thought the victim was trying to take over his territory.

The alleged attackers, Anthony Costello, 42, Darren Barker, 35, and Carl Tomlin, 26, are also accused of stealing the victim's watch, mobile phone, cash and Mercedes CLK.

Costello and Barker denied charges of false imprisonment, robbery, grievous bodily harm and assault. Barker also denied theft of a Mercedes and perverting the course of justice.

Tomlin admitted false imprisonment, causing grievous bodily harm and taking the car. ●