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By Michael Donnelly
Friday, 3 October 2008

Three of those accused of involvement in the murder of Ballymena teenager Michael McIlveen were identified by name in court yesterday as being in the alleyway where the schoolboy was bludgeoned with a baseball bat and kicked and punched.

A fourth man, 20-year-old Mervyn Wilson Moon from Douglas Terrace, Ballymena, who has already pleaded guilty to the murder of the 15-year-old, was also named by the witness, Christopher Graham, whose home backs onto the alleyway where the attack took place.

The 19-year-old Ballymena man also told Antrim Crown Court that he "heard someone say Mervyn do it", as he and others sheltered in his back garden after a crowd of about "ten to 15" arrived on the scene.

He said he "didn't know who said that" and at the time Moon "was just standing there".

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Mr Graham also named 19-year-old Jeff Colin Lewis of Rosssdale, 22-year-old Christopher Francis Kerr, of Carnduff Drive, and Christopher Andrew McLeister (18), Knock Crescent, all Ballymena, as also being in the alleyway at the back of his home. They along with a 17-year-old youth, who cannot be named because of his age, and Aaron Cavana Wallace (20), Moat Road, Ballymena, deny the murder of Michael McIlveen who died in hospital from head injuries on May 8, 2006.

What are these?

Mr Graham claimed that initially he saw Michael, Lewis and Moon, and that he thought he then saw McLeister and Kerr who, although wearing hoods, he could still see their faces.

He further alleged that in addition to Lewis having a short fight with Michael, he then attacked his back gate with a baseball bat.

Mr Graham claimed that he saw Lewis through a gap which had been battered through the locked gate.

He said that following the attack on the gate a friend's mother "was shouting" and the attack ended and "calm had returned".

When first questioned by prosecuting QC John Orr, Mr Graham claimed that as he walked his girlfriend up the alleyway to be collected by her mother outside on the roadway, he saw Michael, Lewis, and Moon.

"Jeff Lewis and Michael McIlveen were fighting," he claimed, but added the "fight lasted not that long, around 20 seconds".

Mr Graham said that the fight was broken up by a Sean Norris "and someone else who pulled them away from each other".

He claimed at this stage the other group of "around ten to 15 people" came into the alleyway and he went into his garden, locking the gate behind him.

"It all happened so fast, I was in the back gate and it was locked and I didn't know what happened after that," he said.

He said sometime after the gate was locked "it was being hit by a baseball bat, and it broke".

Mr Graham said he looked through the now damaged gate and saw Lewis, "he was hitting the gate with the baseball bat ... about eight or nine times".

The trial continues today.

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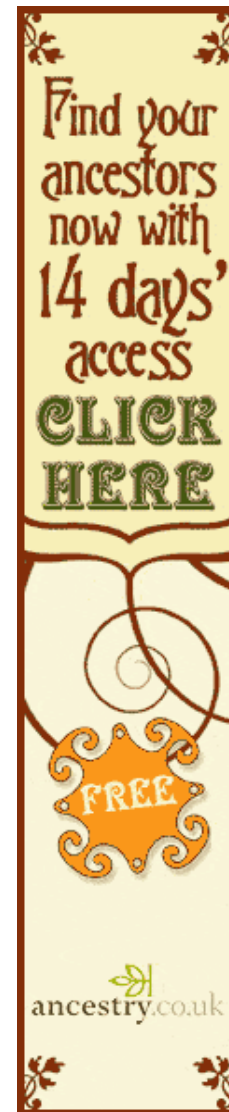
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