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Robert Hamill had injuries very similar to car crash victim

Thursday, 15 January 2009

The Robert Hamill public inquiry has heard evidence that the 25-year-old died from brain injuries similar to those suffered by car accident victims.

The early stages of the inquiry are focusing on the exact cause of Mr Hamill's death.

A number of medical experts are scheduled to address the issue this week.

And it has been pointed out that the evidence may shed light on details of the sectarian murder attack.

Mr Hamill, a 25-year-old Catholic, died on May 8, 1997, 11 days after an assault in Portadown town centre.



Diane Hamill with a picture of her murdered brother Robert Hamill, who was beaten to death in a sectarian attack in Portadown in 1997

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Medical witnesses due to give evidence today include Professor Jack Crane, State Pathologist for Northern Ireland.

Professor Crane prepared the original post mortem report on Mr Hamill.

He will be followed by Dr Brian Herron, a neuropathologist

Dr William Lawler, the inquiry's independent expert pathologist, will give evidence tomorrow, followed by two nurses who treated Mr Hamill at Craigavon Area Hospital.

Witness statements from other medical experts are also due to be read out during the hearings.

Introducing the key medical issues to be considered at the inquiry, its lead counsel Ashley Underwood QC said this evidence may reveal something about the "intensity and duration of the assault".

The public inquiry's remit include establishing whether armed police officers in a Land Rover parked close to the scene could have intervened to save him from his attackers.

It will also scrutinise the subsequent police investigation into the murder and the role of the Director of Public Prosecutions in dropping charges against a number of suspects.

The three-person inquiry panel will also study an allegation that a suspect was tipped off by a police constable to get rid of clothes he was wearing on the night.

It was emphasised at the inquiry this week that this officer denies any wrongdoing.

Civilian witnesses will begin giving their evidence to the inquiry next week on the late night sectarian violence that resulted in Mr Hamill's tragic death.

He was assaulted in a flashpoint area, where the paths of Catholics and Protestants crossed on the way home from nights out.

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Peter Robinson, Middle East visit, 1984

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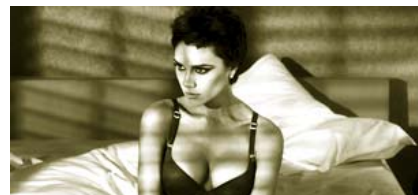


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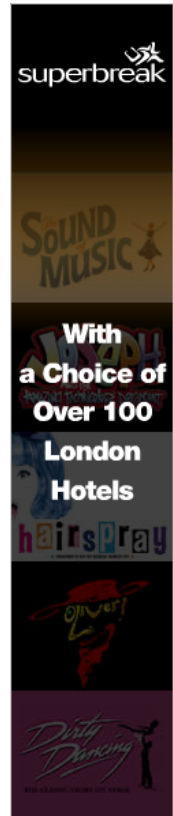
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