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Two loyalist brothers have admitted involvement in the murder of a paramilitary chief eight years ago.

Standing in the dock of Belfast Crown Court yesterday dressed in black suits, 34-year-old David Ian Stewart and his older brother Robert Ian Stewart (38) both pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting the murder of Tommy English on October 31, 2000.

The brothers, from Carntall Rise and Ballyearl Court, both Newtownabbey, also pleaded guilty to hijacking a Renault Laguna car and possessing a gun with intent to commit hijacking and to falsely and injuriously imprisoning 'Witness A'.

They also pleaded guilty to a series of further charges that, between October 1995 and August last year, they were members of the UVF.

As the pair entered their guilty pleas, Mr English's brother inhaled



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The Christmas Party Gallery

sharply as he sat in the court's public gallery just a few feet away.

What are these?

It was eight years ago when UDA chief English was gunned down in front of his wife in their Ballyduff home, one of seven killings during a bloody UVF/UDA feud.

Before his murder, the 40-year-old took part in Stormont talks that led to the Good Friday Agreement.

The prosecution is the first to be brought before the courts by the Historical Enquiry Team, set up after the Police Ombudsman report in 2007. Speaking outside the court, director of the HET David Cox said the team were "delighted" at the result but that their thoughts were with the English family.

"We are delighted with the development but it is a continuing, ongoing work," said Mr Cox, who added that they were "working closely with the Public Prosecution Service and we are continuing with the investigations".

Mr Cox said the HET was investigating a total of 19 murder, 14 attempted murders and a range of other criminality but would not be drawn whether or not more charges would be forthcoming.

Mr Justice Hart remanded the brothers into custody and said he would pass sentence at a later date.

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