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Robert Hamill witness says he 'didn't trust' RUC officers

By Victoria O'Hara
Wednesday, 28 January 2009

A witness to the murder of Robert Hamill last night revealed how he ignored approaches by RUC officers investigating the case five or six times because he "didn't trust the police".

Mr Hamill (25) died after being attacked by a sectarian mob in Portadown in 1997.

Vincent Dermot McNeice said that in the weeks following the killing police had called at his home at least twice but he didn't answer the door.

The inquiry into Mr Hamill's death heard that Mr McNeice, a civilian witness, went to solicitor Rosemary Nelson three weeks after the attack to make a statement.

He was accompanied by a fellow civilian Colin Hull, who he had been drinking with him in McKeever's bar in Portadown on the night of the assault.

After the incident despite being approached to make a statement to the RUC Mr McNeice said he ignored them.

"I didn't want to talk to them, I didn't trust them," he said.

He then went to Mrs Nelson after hearing on the "community grapevine" that she was dealing with the case.

The witness said he thought that the police would eventually see his statement, however he added that he left no instructions with Mrs Nelson, instead he left it up to "her discretion" as to what to do with the statement.

Under questioning both Mr Hull and Mr McNeice learned that the statements given to Mrs Nelson about that night was not seen by police until a year later.

Mr Hull described the events surrounding the fatal assault on April 27, as "a crazy night".

He spotted Mr Hamill's body on the ground and between five or six seconds he was being kicked. "There was a mob of between 25-30 people around. It was mayhem," he said.

After the incident Mr Hull, who had drank between 8-9 pints of beer, was asked why he did not give a full statement to police.

Mr Hull said he went to a solicitor as he "didn't trust the police" and thought that the statement he also gave to Mrs Nelson would be passed on to the RUC.

However during the inquiry Charles Adair QC told Mr Hull the document was first read by police when it was sent to the RUC complaints and discipline department.

He asked: "Are you aware now that the first time this statement was ever seen by anybody in the police was October 1998?"

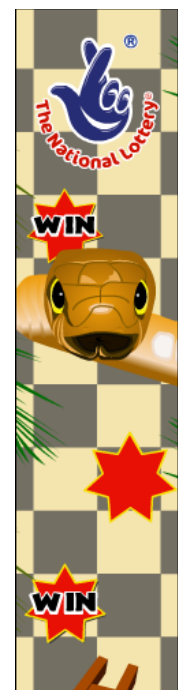
Mr Hull said he was "not aware" and he thought a copy had been sent to the RUC.

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IRA checkpoint



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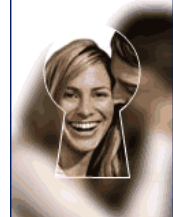
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