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Local & National

They took my Darren's life. It feels like it was for nothing

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

By Clare Veir

The former partner of Londonderry murder victim Darren Thompson has told how she is defying threats so the little girl he never saw can visit his grave.

Donna Stoner also told how she does not know how to explain to her two-and-a-half year old daughter why her daddy was so cruelly taken from her.

Two men were recently jailed for seven years each for their involvement in the murder of the 22-year-old on October 1, 2004. James Edward Taylor (42) and Richard Harkness (29) were both sentenced at Belfast Crown Court.

Originally Harkness, from Baranahilt Road in Claudy, and Taylor, from Lincoln Court in Derry, had been charged with murdering Darren Paul Thompson.

After three weeks of evidence, Taylor pleaded guilty to assisting Mr Thompson's killer by removing the murder weapon from the scene, while Harkness admitted possessing a Citroen Xsara in circumstances that gave rise to the suspicion that he had it for a terrorist purpose.

Speaking from her home in England, Ms Stoner, who was three months pregnant with Darren's daughter Darla at the time of his murder, said she was "disgusted" by the sentence.

She also told how she heard about her partner's brutal slaying on the radio and revealed she received threats when she first left Northern Ireland for her native Nottingham after his death.

"I met Darren because our mums were great friends and we hit it off too. It was love at first sight, really," she said.

"He was a great guy, he was pleased when we found out I was pregnant. We were getting things for the house together and he was enjoying his new job.

"I suppose we will never know why he died. He was a normal guy, he liked a drink, like most young guys, he could be a bit of a wally, but he wasn't a criminal and not political at all.

"That morning I had been to the midwife and I rang him to tell him about it but his phone was off.

"I rang his dad, Gilbert, who also rang him with no answer.

"Then I heard on the news at 11am that there had been a shooting and I thought, 'That's the way Darren goes to work'. We later found out that it was Darren."

She said she is stunned that Harkness and Taylor could be free in just a few years.

"With 50% remission, they could be out in two and a half years.

"They took Darren's life away, it feels like his life was for nothing," she said.

"I'm just so shocked. They have families, they have kids, I have to take Darla to a grave to see her daddy, or show her pictures.

"I hope God can see them now. I have to tell Darla when she is older why those horrible men took away her daddy and I just don't know.

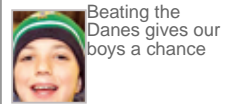
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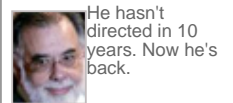
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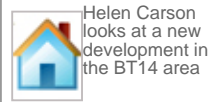
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"Me and Darren's family, all we are left behind with is our grief and our memories. They will be free in no time.

"Darla has kept me going, she is my consolation. When I look in her eyes I see Darren and that is so sad in one way, but happy in another."

And Donna defiantly refused to listen to threats made to her when she left Northern Ireland.

"Someone called me and said something along the lines of, 'We hear you're leaving, don't come back.

"But I will because it is my home and Darla's daddy and her family are there."


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
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