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I defied threats to return to Derry

Murdered man's girl taken home to see father's grave

Tuesday, November 20, 2007

By Clare Weir

The mother of a child a murdered Londonderry man never lived to see has told how she has defied threats so their little girl can see where her daddy is buried.

Darren Thompson (22), was shot as he walked to work at Altnagelvin Hospital around 7.30am on September 29, 2004.

After being struck just above his left eye by a bullet, the young labourer fought for his life but was pronounced brain dead at the hospital on October 1.

The shooting was originally believed to be part of a loyalist feud, but the victim was recently described by a judge as "completely innocent".

James Edward Taylor (42) and Richard Harkness (29) were both sentenced recently at Belfast Crown Court for their involvement in the murder, and were given sentences of seven years' imprisonment.

Mr Thompson's partner, Donna Stoner - who now lives in England - revealed that she has been receiving threats, but she insisted she would not let them prevent her coming back to Derry, so that she and her daughter Darla can visit the grave.

She added: "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."

Donna was three months pregnant at the time of the murder. On the morning of the shooting, she had been for a scan and was eagerly trying to contact Darren on his mobile phone to tell him, but he didn't answer.

At 11am that day, as she listened to the radio, she heard a report that a man had been shot and it entered her head that this was the way her partner walked to work. But it was only later that day, that she discovered Darren had been taken from her, his family and his unborn baby girl.

As little Darla faces a full life without her father, Ms Stoner reflected on the 50% remission system that will see the men involved in his killing released after serving half of their sentence.






No-one has been convicted of his actual murder.

Allowing for time served in custody, Taylor and Harkness could be free in two and a half years, she said.

Ms Stoner added: "They have families, they have kids, I have to take Darla to a grave to see her daddy, or show her pictures."

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