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Father heartbroken at son's murder

Eddie Burns was due to have major heart surgery in the Royal yesterday

Andersonstown News

Aine McEntee

15/03/2007

The heartbroken family of local taxi man Eddie Burns, who was found brutally murdered near the Bog Meadows on Monday morning, have spoken of their utter devastation.

Eddie's father, John, spoke just hours before Eddie's body was brought home on Wednesday. The funeral is due to take place on Friday.

"He was just a great fella, a brilliant father to his kids, really quiet, and worked hard," he said.

"We just can't believe it. Everyone is just in shock."

The PSNI have said they are still searching for a motive for the murder of both Eddie Burns and Joe Jones and the attempted murder of a third man early on Monday.

The police say that the murders come against a backdrop of tensions within dissident republicanism in West and North Belfast.

On Tuesday forensic officers recovered guns and ammunition from gardens in Butler Place in Ardoyne, near where Joe Jones' body was found in an alleyway

Heart problems

Eddie Burns was a taxi driver and was well liked in the Ardoyne area.

The 36-year-old supported Glasgow Celtic FC and played darts for a local team in Ligoniel.

He lived in Prospect Park with his wife Claire and their five young children. Although a relatively young man, he had a history of heart problems and had a pacemaker inserted several years ago.

Yesterday [Wednesday] was the day he was meant to go into the Royal Victoria Hospital for major heart surgery.

"This has come as a complete shock to us, totally," John said.

"Our priority now is the kids."

Neighbours in Prospect Park described Eddie as a "quiet man" and a "gentle giant" who would always stop for a chat.

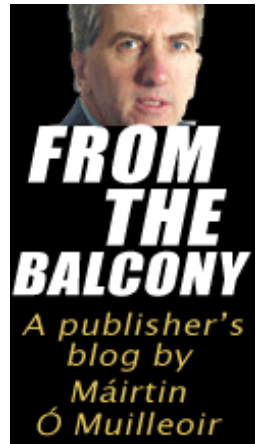
He came from a large family of seven brothers and sisters. He was the eldest son.

His family last saw him alive on Sunday, just hours before he was found brutally shot in the grounds of St Gall's GAC near the Bog Meadows.

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Condemnation of double killings swift from parties

West Belfast's political leaders have united in expressing their sympathy for the families of the two local men killed this week.

Father-of-three Joseph Michael Jones (38) from Poleglass and Edward Burns, originally from the Grosvenor Road, but living in Ardoyne, were killed in the early hours of Monday morning. A third man, Damien O'Neill, received gunshot wounds to his upper body.

Sinn Féin West Belfast MP Gerry Adams said: "Our thoughts are with the families who have been bereaved."

He urged any witnesses to help the PSNI with their investigations.

"While the circumstances surrounding the two deaths is not yet clear, if they were killed, then anyone with any information should bring that information to the police and should co-operate to bring the perpetrators to justice."

SDLP Assembly member Alex Attwood said the deaths were reminiscent of "the bad old days".

"But if we are going to have better days, then people need to help the police with this inquiry," he said.

Meanwhile Father Aidan Troy, the North Belfast priest who administered the last rites to Joe Jones as he lay in an alleyway at Elmfield Street, described the scene as "horrendous".

"It would be impossible to identify the person and that's the shocking part of it."

Shots fired by PSNI yesterday

Shots were fired by the PSNI yesterday afternoon shortly before 5pm in the Oldpark area.

A spokesman for the PSNI said that there were no reports of any injuries. The Police Ombudsman's Office has been informed. Meanwhile the PSNI called off a hill search near the Monagh Bypass yesterday. They said the search was carried out after a hoax call.

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