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Hamill witness 'loses his memory'

By Barry McCaffrey

12/03/2009

A PORTADOWN loyalist identified by police as having jumped up and down on the body of Robert Hamill is facing potential perjury charges after allegedly repeatedly lying at the public inquiry into the Catholic man's murder.

Rory Robinson (37) yesterday gave evidence at the public inquiry into the April 1997 killing of the Catholic father-of-three in Portadown town centre.

Robinson was one of six men originally charged with the 25 year-old's murder.

He was identified by at least four policemen and four civilians in their witness statements at the time – and to the inquiry – as having jumped up and down on Mr Hamill's body as he lay unconscious on the ground.

A year later the charges against all six were unexpectedly dropped.

In 2004 Canadian judge Peter Cory recommended a public inquiry into Mr Hamill's murder over concerns that police had failed to properly investigate the killing.

When he appeared at the inquiry yesterday Robinson claimed to have suffered memory loss and could no longer remember anything about the attack.

During three hours in the witness box Robinson repeatedly claimed he could not recall events and had never heard of the Troubles.

In a bizarre series of answers Robinson said he had never heard of the UVF or IRA or even the Maze prison, despite having spent five months on an LVF wing inside the jail awaiting trial for murder.

Robinson claimed that he was even unaware of tensions in his native Portadown throughout the 1990s over the Drumcee dispute.

He denied having loyalist sympathies despite being asked to be housed on an LVF wing inside the Maze.

Asked when he had lost his memory, Robinson replied: "I can't remember."

After he repeatedly rebuffed even the most banal question, with the words "I can't recall" and "I can't remember", barrister Kevin Murphy asked: "How did you remember to come here today?"

Robinson replied: "My wife reminded me."

However, the 37 year-old became agitated and even more evasive when questioned why he had a loyalist tattoo with the words 'Rem 1690' on his arm – a reference to the Battle of the Boyne.

He denied having the tattoo but refused to show his arm to the inquiry, claiming that he did not see the relevance.

Inquiry chairman Sir Edwin Jowitt warned Robinson that he would decide what evidence was relevant to the inquiry.

Robinson's legal team immediately asked for an adjournment to consult with their client.


When the hearing resumed 10 minutes later barrister Mark McComb told the inquiry he could confirm that Robinson did have a 'Rem 1690' tattoo on his arm.

Robinson was then released by the inquiry chairman.

However, an inquiry spokesman last night confirmed that Robinson had now been reported to police for alleged perjury.

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