

ROBERT HAMILL INQUIRY

Day 60: 9 September 2009

Testimony of Mr. Philip Michael Irwin

The witness was in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID). He was involved in a large number of paramilitary and non-paramilitary murders as a detective constable and detective sergeant, before being promoted to the role of inspector.

Mr. Irwin explained a bit about the investigation when he was first introduced to it. As he was reading the statements made by witnesses, he noticed there had been no early arrests made at the scene and knew that it was going to be a difficult investigation. As he was reading the documents, he raised actions and issues that he felt should be priority at that time. He began his investigation by focusing on those 64 actions and issues.

He also spoke to the forensic examinations. He had numerous phone calls with Mr. Marshall, in which they discussed the clothes that had been submitted for forensic examination and in what manner the examination should take place. They determined that the blood should be examined first, with hair and fibers coming secondary. At that stage the witness believed the report from Mr Marshall would be submitted quickly and so he did not put down his preliminary thoughts, rather thinking it prudent to wait for the evidence.

Mr. Marshall examined a drop of blood on Stacey Bridgett's trousers. The witness explained that if the drop of blood was shaped like a drip or teardrop mark on the trousers, it would indicate that Bridgett was moving. However, it was not shaped in this manner, leading Mr. Marshall to conclude that Stacey Bridgett was actually standing over Robert Hamill and that it had dripped straight down onto his trousers.

The witness explained that they had placed Stacey Bridgett at the scene. Constable Neill had placed him close to Robert Hamill. Reserve Constable Silcock had been over helping Robert Hamill when somebody shouted the word, "Stacey", and he looked round to see a person with blood coming from his nose and one of the females that was with Robert Hamill said, "That's the one that done it".

The witness described that the investigators are hunting for evidence. They are looking to get what evidence they can place before a court. The witness explained that his thought process and actions were: "Let's get the evidence here. Let's see what witnesses there are. Let's try to manipulate as much information. What's out there? What are the possibilities?" He knew that there was a risk of losing witnesses. They were being asked to testify against a certain number of individuals in communities where they had friends and relatives. There was a lot of pressure on these individuals to withdraw their evidence.

In the handwritten statement, there was the name "Fonzy" or "Gonzy." However, before an arrest could be made of the person known as "Fonzy," an ID parade had to be arranged. The witness tried to get the individual who identified Fonzy, Mr. Timothy Jameson, to come back for an ID parade but he declined, saying that he was not prepared to go on an identity parade. The witness explained that he believed Mr. Jameson knew Fonzy and did not want to give evidence against him for fear of retaliation.

The witness addressed allegations that he had said a Land Rover was placed at the scene by a video. He explained that what actually happened was that the charges had been withdrawn from a number of individuals, and Robert Hamill's family had called at the police station. The witness discussed video evidence with them and explained that there was no video evidence. The Land Rover was located outside the First Trust Bank. It had moved from there down to the junction outside the Alliance & Leicester. The only chance of any video recording ever getting the Land Rover would have been outside the First Trust Bank, and all it could possibly have seen was the side of the Land Rover, if it had taken the footage. But there was no video in the First Trust Bank, so the Land Rover could not possibly have been on it. The witness had sent DC Keys down to check the videos immediately for any footage, but none was to be found.

The witness also discussed the possible identification of an individual at the scene by Mr. Prunty. He explained that Mr. Prunty had identified the individual who was put into and taken out of a Land Rover as wearing a red, white and blue scarf. The witness clarified that this identification wasn't of an individual (believed to be Mr. Lunt), but the identification of the circumstances that linked Mr. Lunt to the case, in that a person was arrested wearing a red, white and blue scarf, he was placed in the Land Rover and taken out. He elaborated on this distinction, explaining that Mr. Prunty was not saying, "I identified the actual individual, and, if I see him again, I would know him again" but that he identified an individual wearing a particular scarf (red, white and blue) that went into a police Land Rover and came back out of it again.

The police were continually assessing the individuals they were interviewing, getting vibes from them, and if there was a weakness in one individual that could lead to him saying something more about his involvement, then the police would take appropriate action. The interviews were really a method of assessment. Allister Hanvey was one of the individuals they were assessing through interview. The witness explained that as he moved in the interview process, he got a feel for individuals that were closer to the scene than other individuals. He was eliminating or assessing and determining where they were in relation to the attack: "Well, they were probably outside the immediate area of the attack. Here's individuals that were closer to the attack."