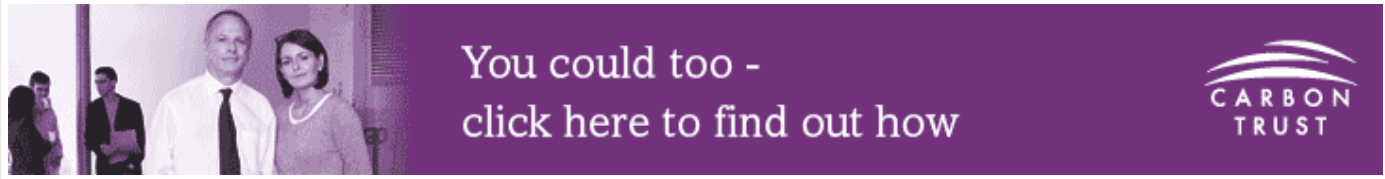


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Local & National

'Sub-human thugs' killed former Provo

Murder one of worst coroner has seen

Saturday, October 27, 2007

By Claire McNeilly

A former IRA man was stabbed in the face with a bayonet by "sub-human thugs", his inquest has heard.

Coroner John Leckey was speaking at an inquest in to the murder of 44-year-old Eamon Collins, which he described as one of the most brutal he had ever seen.

The body of Eamon Collins was found at Dorans Hill, on January 27, 1999 a few hundred yards from home. He had been stabbed to death while out on an early morning walk in Newry.

A subsequent post-mortem examination established that his death was due to multiple stab wounds. Although no one has been charged with the murder, Detective Chief Inspector Kenneth McFarland told the inquest he believed that the south Armagh IRA was behind it.

Giving evidence, Northern Ireland State Pathologist, Professor Jack Crane, said that the cause of death was stab wounds to the head, although he had also been stabbed in the back twice.

Prof Crane also confirmed that the victim had been beaten as well as stabbed.

He said: "To penetrate the skull a considerable amount of force is required," and he described the way Mr Collins met his death as "very savage indeed".

Prof Crane said the victim's injuries were caused by "a bladed weapon, a sturdy knife or a bayonet".

He also said he believed Mr Collins died at the scene of the brutal attack.

Bernadette Collins told the inquest that prior to her husband's death her family was "experiencing difficulties".

It emerged that graffiti was being painted on to walls in the area in which they lived after her husband - who had renounced violence and turned informer spoke out about the Omagh bombing.

But when questioned by Mr Leckey over her fears of reprisal for her husband's actions, she replied: "I never thought seriously about it, it may have been a worry."

She also blamed the IRA: "I do believe they were from a republican background, but where from I don't know."

Chief Inspector McFarland said that inquiries and intelligence received "led me to believe the south Armagh IRA carried out his murder" - which he added "was conducted with hatred".

The Chief Inspector added that there was evidence to suggest the victim fought back and that an assailant injured himself in the execution of the murder.

Despite every line of inquiry being "thoroughly pursued" he confirmed that no one had subsequently been charged.

Representing the Historical Enquiries Team, Mr Miller assured Mrs Collins that her husband's death was a case that would be reviewed.

Summing up, Mr Leckey extended his sympathy to Mrs Collins and her family and acknowledged that her

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husband's death has had "a profound effect on them".

He said he hoped "the sub-human thugs who carried this out will be brought to account and charged with the murder and receive an appropriate sentence".

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