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Local & National

I love my family, dying bomb victim told police

Inquest hears how ex-UDR man was killed by lunchbox bomb

Tuesday, January 30, 2007

By Sarah Brett

Brave bomb victim David Caldwell told a policewoman in his dying words: "I love my family", an inquest into his death heard today.

At Limavady Coroner's Court, the tearful widow and daughter of the former UDR man consoled each other as graphic evidence was read out about the injuries he sustained in the Real IRA bomb blast of August 1, 2002.

Staggering from the scene of the blast at the Territorial Army camp in Derry, his face covered in blood, his torn clothes flapping around his body, peppered with holes, Mr Caldwell made a heroic attempt to tell witnesses as much as he could about the booby- trapped lunchbox before he finally succumbed to his wounds.

The 51-year-old father of four was the last person to be killed in a terrorist bomb in the North West. The Derry Brigade of a group calling themselves Oglagh na hEireann claimed responsibility for "the execution" of Mr Caldwell some weeks later, but a chief forensic officer told the inquest he did not believe the Eglinton man was specifically targeted.

Nine people were arrested shortly after the murder, but nobody has ever been charged. Police admitted again today that they are no closer to catching the killers than they were almost five years ago.

Mr Caldwell, from Backhill Road outside Eglinton, was working as a digger driver subcontracted to do renovation work at the TA camp when he picked up a lunchbox packed with explosives which blew up in his hand.

Witness Lancelot Thompson told the court: "I saw his face was covered in blood and barely recognisable, his clothes were in tatters, his shirt was open and there were a number of puncture wounds, his right hand was almost gone.

"He staggered towards me and said, 'It was in a lunchbox on the table.' I asked what was on the table and he said 'the bomb'."

In an extraordinary coincidence Mr Thompson suddenly realised that he had served in the UDR with the fatally wounded man in his arms. "I saw it was Davy, Davy Caldwell," he told the court.

A police constable then took over and accompanied Mr Caldwell to hospital where she heard his last known words: "I love my family."

An hour later a doctor emerged from theatre to tell Mr Caldwell's common law wife Mavis McFaul and the couple's daughter, that he was dead.

She never got to speak to him before he died.

"I had no idea he was so brave," she said outside court today. "I'm so proud of him."

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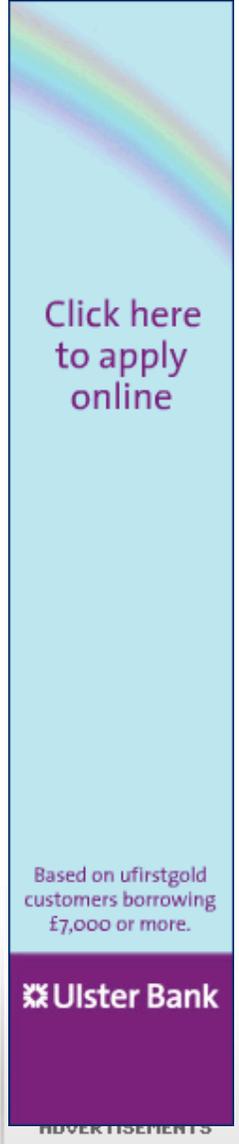
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