Hamill inquiry hears of ‘collective memory loss’

By Lesley-Anne Henry
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Some witnesses at the Robert Hamill inquiry have taken a “collective decision” to blank the events of April 27, 1997 from their memory, a barrister claimed yesterday.

Barra McGrory QC, counsel for the Hamill family, suggested an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding Mr Hamill’s murder and the subsequent investigation was hampered because witnesses recall nothing from the night.

“This inquiry has a problem because there are a number of people who seem to have blanked this completely from their memory,” he told the sitting at Belfast Interpoint Centre yesterday.

“There are a number of people in Portadown who have taken a collective decision to come to this inquiry and say they can’t remember anything,” added Mr McGrory.

Mr McGrory’s comments were made during cross examination of Stephen Bloomer, who had been making his way home from a night out when he came across the fight.

In a statement given to RUC murder investigation officers in the weeks after the incident, Mr Bloomer recalled seeing people “beating the heads off each other”.

At that time he told police no one was lying on the ground and also recounted seeing a policeman with a baton gun. “I didn’t want to be anywhere near the place,” he told police.

In the witness box yesterday, however, Mr Bloomer said his details of April 27, 1997 were now “virtually non-existent” because he had “a lot of alcohol taken that night”.

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