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Moment of relief for victim's father

By Barry McCaffrey

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PAUL McIlwaine allowed himself a momentary sense of satisfaction as he sat in the public gallery of Belfast Crown Court yesterday to witness Steven Brown being convicted of his son's murder.

It is nine years since Andrew Robb and his friend David McIlwaine were lured to a lonely country road near Tandragee in Co Armagh and brutally stabbed to death.

The Portadown teenagers were taken from a party by a UVF gang who had been unable to find two other men they had intended to murder in retaliation for the UVF killing of the town's UVF leader Richard Jameson weeks before.

Almost immediately there was speculation that at least some of those involved in the murder were police agents.

In the intervening years Paul McIlwaine has lost his business and home as a result of a decision to devote all his time to bringing his son's killers to justice.

Yesterday he expressed satisfaction that Brown had been found guilty but he described the verdict as just another step in his quest.

"It's been nine long years but we won't not stop here," he said.

"We won't rest until every single person involved in David and Andrew's murder is brought to justice.

"I don't care if it takes another nine years."

He said his family had been through an "utter nightmare".

"If it had just been the death of a loved one, we could have tried to get on with our lives but it wasn't like that," he said.

"We were a family who believed in law and order. We believed that the police protected decent people and sent the bad guys to prison.

"But from the very beginning serious failings in the original murder investigation began to emerge.

"It wasn't the fault of the decent CID officers who did their best to bring the killers to justice."

Mr McIlwaine claimed it was "clear" that at least three people involved in the killing were being protected because they were police agents.

"We've had to go to court time and time again to drag the truth out of [the police] and even today they're still protecting some of the killers," he said.

In 2007 police told the McIlwaine family that a building firm jointly owned by Portadown UVF leader Richard Jameson had received £370,000 in government contracts for work carried out on police stations and prisons.

But last year Deputy Chief Constable Paul Leighton told the McIlwaines that police had miscalculated the figures and that £5 million in government contracts had been paid to the UVF leader's company.

Mr McIlwaine said he has since learned that the company actually received more than £11m in government contracts.

Andrew Robb's mother Ann said: "When you go to bed you don't want to wake up because you know you are going to have to live through it the next day again – but today has brought us some comfort, knowing that if you fight you can get there, and we intend to keep fighting on.

"I loved Andrew. He was my son and I will never stop loving him and I know I will be with him again."

Speaking about Brown's failure to show remorse, Mrs Robb said: "I hope he has nightmares every night and that he sees Andrew's and David's faces every night as he goes to sleep.

"I see Andrew's face every night when I go to bed to go to sleep."

Last night police said they had nothing more to add at present.

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