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Bloody throwback to dark days of Troubles

By Allison Morris

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The brutal murder of two men with links to

dissident republicanism on the same night was a bloody throwback to the darkest days of the Troubles.

The shooting of Edward Burns in 2007 came amid tensions between former associates with links to a break-away republican organisation.

One man, Gerard Mackin (26), is charged with the shooting of Mr Burns, no-one has to date been charged with the murder of his friend Joe Jones, battered to death with a spade on the same night.

The two men were killed in separate incidents on March 12 2007 following what turned out to be a fatal fall out between former associates.

Mr Mackin, from the Whiterock area of west Belfast, was later arrested living at an address in Dublin during a joint PSNI, Garda operation.

Two other suspects being sought in relation to the murder are believed to be on the run in the south.

Mr Burns (36) was found shot dead close to the Bog Meadows nature reserve in west Belfast in the early hours of March 12.

A second man, Damien O'Neill, who has since withdrawn his evidence, was brought into the Royal Victoria Hospital suffering from gunshot wounds.

On arrival at hospital Mr O'Neill directed police to the reserve where the body of the father-of-five, who had been shot in the head, was found.

Several hours later the badly beaten body of 38-year-old

Mr Jones was found in an

alleyway off Elmfield Street in

Ardoyne, north Belfast.

Both men had previous links to the Continuity IRA but had moved away from the organisation shortly before their deaths.

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