

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

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12 DEC 2008

STATEMENT OF ERIC JOHN WILLIAMSON

DATED THIS DAY 12 OF DECEMBER 2008

I, ERIC JOHN WILLIAMSON declare that this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that if it is tendered in evidence at the Inquiry I will be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

1. The Inquiry has disclosed a number of documents to me. Where I make specific reference to a document in my statement I have given the number of the relevant page.
2. I served in the Royal Ulster Constabulary between 1979 until I retired from the Police service for Northern Ireland [PSNI] in September 2005. I presently work for the PSNI in a civilian capacity as a HOLMES office manager.
3. In April 1997 I was a Detective Constable attached to the Regional Crime Squad [South] based at Armagh. I had 18 years experience as a police officer, five years as a uniform officer the remainder as a detective. I had served as a detective constable in Lisburn, Newry and Banbridge. I had attended a Junior CID Course in 1985 and had been trained in the HOLMES system in 1991.
4. Although I had never been stationed in Portadown, being a native of the town I am well aware of the tensions which built up at certain times of the year. The issues were exacerbated in 1996/1997 by the initial decision to stop the Orange Order marching down the Garvaghy Road after the Drumcree Parade. Easter would be a time that tension would rise from the nationals and, certainly in Portadown, there were the Drumcree tensions prior to July 12. In the majority of cases people just lived with it and carried on their lives as normal. It was one of those things that was always there but not always on the surface.

5. On 9 May 1997 I had commenced duty at Newry on Regional Crime Squad duties I was directed to go to Portadown with Detective Constable John Dickson and assist with inquiries into the murder of Robert Hamill.
6. At Portadown I was briefed by DI Irwin and DS Bradley and was given actions to work on with DC Dickson. My first enquiry was with John Johnson and we visited him at his hairdressing shop arranging to meet him at his flat in Thomas Street after 18:00 that evening.
7. DC Dickson and I then made enquiries with a Stephen Sinnamon regarding his knowledge/involvement in the public order incident on 27 April 1997. Sinnamon denied involvement but his body language and demeanour indicated to me that he was aware of something.
8. I then made enquiries at the flat of a Mr. [REDACTED] with DC Dickson. Mr. [REDACTED] did not want to make a statement but DC Dickson wrote up the action [page 07774].
9. DC Dickson and I returned to Portadown Police Station for a conference taken by DCS McBurney, DCI **P39** and DI Irwin. I cannot now recall what was discussed neither do I have a record of that briefing.
10. After the conference I recorded in my notebook that together with DC Dickson we saw John Johnson at his flat and obtained a statement [page 9123] from him between 18:45 and 19:20 on 9 May 1997. Johnson's flat was above Jameson's Bar and I have a vague recollection of looking out of Johnson's window to see what he could see. I believe the flat was on the top floor of the building. I have been shown a photograph [page 224] of the front of Jameson's Bar which has a ground, first and second floor. I cannot say which of the windows on the second floor I looked out of. What I can say is that the view from the window afforded a view down into Thomas Street and the junction with High Street/Market Street. I looked out of the window to confirm what the witness was saying he could see from his flat.

11. I know that when we called to see John Johnson at his place of work he was wearing glasses and when we saw him later that evening at his flat he was wearing glasses which is something I did not record in his statement. I recall that he said that he got out of bed when he heard noise outside in the street. I did not ask him whether he was wearing glasses when he looked out of his window.
12. In his statement [page 9123] Johnson referred to looking out of his window and he saw a police Land Rover parked near the Alliance and Leicester Building Society and later saw a man put into the rear of the police vehicle. Having now viewed the photographs [pages 224 & 225] I cannot be certain if I opened the window of the flat and looked out from an open window or merely looked out from the closed window. I believe I was satisfied at that time that what Johnson told me he could have seen from his window.
13. Mr. Johnson did not say when he saw police officers on the street but he did refer to seeing officers trying to prevent men kicking at a man who was on the ground. Whilst I have recorded as the last sentence of his statement "*The police were trying to help the man on the ground some of those around were still trying to kick at him but were pushed away.*" This may have come from my simple prompting at the end of the statement '*is there anything else that you can think of or help in any shape or way in respect of this incident.*' I don't know in which order Mr. Johnson was referring to seeing the police officers trying to protect the man on the ground but I would have expected this to have been before Mr Johnson referred to seeing the ambulance arrive. It was added at the end of his statement because he had recalled it after my prompting if he could remember anything further.
14. I cannot remember asking Mr. Johnson how many police officers he saw or when he saw the second police vehicle arrive. I am now aware that there was a complaint made against the four police officers in the land rover but I do not believe that I was aware of that on 9 May 1997 therefore I was more interested in obtaining from the witness what he had seen of the fighting in the street below his flat.

15. Having taken a statement from John Johnson we would have raised at the next conference what Johnson had said and we would probably have discussed [REDACTED] and his reluctance to provide a statement about what he had seen.
16. On 10 May 1997 I commenced duty at Portadown at 09.00 and attended a conference taken by Mr. McBurney with DCI P39 and DI Irwin. I was detailed to interview a Stacey Bridgett with DC Strain. I cannot recall if arrests were discussed at the evening conference on the previous day but I had no part in the arrests made on 10 May 1997. After the conference I was briefed by DI Irwin regarding interviewing Bridgett and given a briefing pack in preparation for the interview. This included statements of officers at the scene and of civilian witnesses.
17. During the interview with Stacey Bridgett [page 7278] I referred to a civilian witness naming people involved in kicking and jumping on Robert Hamill. I have no idea who this witness was at this stage neither do I know if I had a full copy of that statement or only a part of the statement to use for interview purposes. During the interview the solicitor for Bridgett was asking questions about whether the witness was identifying or recognising the people named or whether the witness had any convictions or was an informant. I couldn't answer those questions and I don't believe pre interview disclosure was made to defence solicitors at that stage.
18. I cannot recall now if we had two civilian witness statements included in the briefing pack but there was certainly information whether in summary form from one witness. Similarly I cannot remember witnesses being referred to as witness 'A' or 'B' and I don't recall the name Tracey Clarke.
19. During interview with Stacey Bridgett he was asked about an injury to his foot but I have no idea whether he was medically examined to ascertain what the injury consisted of. Bridgett had said [page 7238] that he had been struck a blow on his nose which bled. Later in that interview [page 7255] he was asked if had jumped on or kicked Robert Hamill and he replied '*I didn't touch him*' he was

further asked [page 7279] if he was anywhere near Hamill and he said he wasn't.

20. At the end of the interviews I believe I obtained a buccal swab from Bridgett for DNA purposes I was unaware that this had also been obtained when he was arrested on 6 May 1997. I was not asked to carry out any further interviews with Stacey Bridgett after the 10 May 1997 to clarify how Bridgett's blood came to be on the jeans of Robert Hamill. I cannot recall being made aware of any DNA result regarding Bridgett linking him to Hamill.
21. On 12 May 1997 I interviewed and obtained a statement [page 587] from a Christopher Henderson following other inquiries I again saw Henderson on 13 May 1997 to clear up certain issues and made a note in my notebook [page 72920] that I saw him at 11.50;

"Spoke with Christopher Henderson re his movements after 2.0am on 27.4.1997. He stated he stood about talking bottom of town to approximately 3.0am. walked uptown with Ian Carville saw [redacted] looking party – Barry Harrison's – address. N/K (address not known.) Didn't get in. Walked to Tracey McAlpine's in Brownston [redacted]. Used to go out with her. Dawled round. Got there about 5.0am, approximately five people in living room. Tracey asleep, sick, upstairs. Allister Hanvey, Stevie Sinnamon, possibly Dean Forbes, (unsure) girl Kelly Lavery. No talk of fight. Might have mentioned it casually. No talk of who did what. Lavery asleep. Someone painted her face talk and laughter re same. She woke up threw a psycho, everybody threw out; walked to Z Cabs with Allister Hanvey; got taxi home; thinks Jason (Jasey) McClure may have been there might be wrong. Weekends very similar. Can't say what Hanvey was wearing, possibly jeans and jacket. Can't remember what he, himself, was wearing. Nicknames 'Fonzie' Andrew Allen."

22. I made a statement on 3 September 2001 [page 21624] regarding my interview with Henderson the details were taken from the notebook entry I made on 13 May 1997.

23. On 20 May 1997 I interviewed and obtained a statement [page 548] from Pauline Newell in the presence of her mother. I believe that I had initially seen Pauline Newell at her place of employment, a fruit and vegetable shop, but later saw her at her home. My recollection is that her father had been the subject of a serious assault a few years before and the family were bitter and were reluctant to become involved in any police investigation because they thought the RUC hadn't investigated their father's assault fully enough. I have been shown information [page 50182] submitted by an Inspector Tucker I have no idea whether I had this information when I interviewed Pauline Newell.
24. On 21 May 1997 I re interviewed Stephen Sinnamon following my initial meeting with him on 9 May 1997. I recorded on the action [page 3692] the outcome of that interview as Sinnamon did not make a statement;

"Raised from questionnaire. I re-interviewed Steven Sinnamon again. States is unable to recall who he walked with from Boss Hoggs to St.Mark's Church. Initially said he walked with Pauline Newell and Tracey McAlpine. Pointed out neither mentioned him. Then he stated he walked on his own. Recalled seeing Marc Hobson and Allister Hanvey. Didn't walk with them. Also saw Stacey Bridgett, Dean Forbes. Didn't walk with them. Denies seeing the fight in the centre of the town, just people running about. Was at the church when he saw this. Did not believe Sinnamon's account. He was evasive in his answers and replies. He knows or witnessed more but will not divulge it. No statement recorded."

25. I therefore had the view that there was no point in taking a statement from Sinnamon at that stage.
26. I was unaware whilst working on the murder investigation into Robert Hamill's death of allegations made against Robert Atkinson, one of the officers in the Land Rover involved in the public order incident on 27 April 1997. I had not seen the allegations in the statement of Tracey Clarke which alleged that Atkinson had warned Allister Hanvey to dispose of clothing. As I have

previously stated I believe I only had part or a summary of Tracey Clarke's statement when I interviewed Bridgett.

27. I believe that I left the Hamill investigation in June 1997 to go onto another double murder investigation and did not have any other input to the inquiry until I was asked to make a statement in 2001.

28. It was sometime later when I learned of the allegations against Atkinson, probably when they became public and arrests were made. I didn't know Atkinson and I had not worked with him.

SIGNED.....

ERIC JOHN WILLIAMSON

DATED.....*11/12/2008*.....