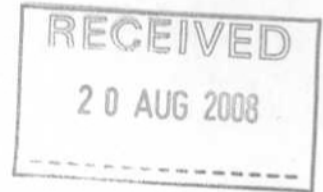


STATEMENT OF WITNESS



STATEMENT OF DARREN PAUL WRIGHT

DATED THIS DAY 18TH OF AUGUST 2008

I, DARREN PAUL WRIGHT 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. In April 2001 I was an Investigating Officer employed by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. I had joined the Ombudsman's office in November 2000 and was engaged on the investigation of complaints against the police in Northern Ireland. I had received training in the nationally approved method of conducting interviews. I previously worked for the Leicestershire Constabulary as a researcher and prior to my work in Belfast I was employed by a local authority as a policy officer specifically looking at failing council services under the best value regime.
3. I am now employed by Garda Siochana Ombudsman Commission in Dublin as a senior investigating officer a role I took up in March 2007.
4. On 10 April 2001 I was asked to attend Armagh with another Police Ombudsman investigator, [REDACTED]. We met Chris Mahaffey a senior investigating officer employed by the Ombudsman and two other investigators from the office, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] at the Charlemont Arms Hotel in Armagh city. Chris Mahaffey briefed us all on developments of that day and the previous few days regarding a co-ordinated arrest operation run by the PSNI.

5. The operation was in relation to the death of Robert Hamill. I was informed that following investigative work undertaken by the PSNI individuals were being arrested in Northern Ireland and Wales. One of those being arrested was James Michael McKee.
6. Each of us was assigned to supervise interviews being carried out as part of the interview phase of the operation and I was assigned the interview of James Michael McKee. It was made clear to me that I was to take no active part in the interview but was there simply as a supervising officer acting as an observer and that I should take notes during the interview about what was discussed.
7. I do not recall receiving a briefing from the police prior to the interview but I can remember sitting in an office at Gough Barracks waiting for the interview to commence, there were delays because those arrested wanted the same solicitor a [REDACTED] and the Police wanted simultaneous interviews so there was some delay while other solicitors were arranged. When the interviews were ready to go I was taken to the custody suite where I was introduced to the Detective Sergeant and the Detective Constable who were to conduct the interview. I don't recall any briefing from them other than a cursory introduction.
8. I cannot recall now whether I knew prior to the interview or subsequently about the substance of the case as I had not been involved in the supervision of the case until being briefed on 10 April 2001. It was clear to me, at some point, that a complaint had been made, an investigation was underway into the death of Robert Hamill, and the suggestion, I think, that officers were present in the general area and didn't take steps to intervene. Michael McKee's role would have been in terms of the alleged conspiracy to cover up that murder and the particular issue of disposing of clothing of those directly involved in the murder.
9. The interview with James Michael McKee commenced and I recorded contemporaneous notes [Pages 16232 - 16238] which were intended to brief Chris Mahaffey and therefore were not verbatim. I used a shorthand note and

would record individual's names with their initials which I circled so that they stood out from the page.

10. I recorded in my notes [Page 16232] the date as 10 April 2001 and a time of 11.48. I noted the Christian names of the Sergeant and the Constable and the name of the solicitor representing Michael McKee as [REDACTED]
11. The interview began with the police explaining the purpose of the interview and why we were all there. The contents of Michael McKee's statement were discussed and his association with Robert Atkinson. He was asked if the statement was true and McKee had a conversation with his solicitor where the solicitor asked for a consultation with his client. The police voiced a view that the interview had only just started and that they did not want the interview to keep being stopped. There was a consultation between McKee and his solicitor which could only have been very brief as I recorded the times as 11.54 and 11.55 when the tapes were restarted.
12. I am unable to say what had been disclosed by the police to the solicitor prior to the interview commencing.
13. When the interview re-commenced McKee went onto confirm that the statement he had made to the police was not true and that Robert Atkinson had asked him to cover making a phone call and he had stupidly agreed to do this.
14. Michael Mckee was taken through his statement and he agreed that he told lies about making the phone call and that he shouldn't have done so. There were certain pieces in the statement that he could not remember. Throughout the interview Mckee referred to his heavy drinking, his dependence on alcohol and that he didn't care about anything.
15. I have had the opportunity of reading the tape transcripts of the interviews [Pages 20998 – 21075] with Michael Mckee and my contemporaneous notes [Pages 16232 - 16238] for the preparation of this statement and they accord with the questions and answers recorded during those interviews.

16. The police interview appeared to be thorough and covered the areas which I had been briefed about and a lot of areas I had not been briefed about.
17. At the end of the interview I cannot remember when I apprised Chris Mahaffey of what had went on during the interview but I did so as that was the purpose of my presence at the interview. I did record details of the interview in my notebook [Page 14462] and from those notes I prepared a witness statement [Page 27124] which is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.
18. The interview stays in my memory for a number of reasons. Mckee presented himself on the day, in my opinion, as a broken man resigned to his fate. He was a man who had difficulties in his life, relationship difficulties, alcohol and possibly business difficulties. His body language was defeatist, his shoulders were slumped and he had no presence at all. Physically he was quite a big man who, I would have thought from his martial arts, could physically command a room but he did not come across in that way.
19. I was not in a position to comment in depth about the investigation, but I was not convinced about his selective memory when answering some of the questions. Although he had obviously made his mind up when confronted at the beginning of the interview to admit his involvement in telling lies about the phone call he relied on his loss of memory to avoid some of the questions put to him. Although he used his alcoholism to avoid questions there was a lot of information that he was very clear about which included his admission about telling lies about making the phone call from the home of Robert Atkinson.
20. I was satisfied in my role as supervising observer that the police interview was conducted properly. The admission by Michael McKee appeared to be straight forward when he realised the weight of the evidence against him and to my knowledge there were no inducements made in order to obtain his confession. The interviewers conducted the interviews with Michael McKee professionally and in accord with nationally approved interview technique.

21. I had no further input to the Hamill investigation after the 10 April 2001 other than the preparation of my witness statement [Page 27124] which I handed to Chris Mahaffey after completion.

SIGNED: .....
DARREN PAUL WRIGHT

DATED:18/8/08.....