



STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF MAUREEN McCOY

DATED THIS DAY OF 2008

I, MAUREEN McCOY, 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 have lived at my house in Portadown from 1986 until the present. At the time of the incident I was in a relationship with Colin Prunty, and we had been together for about 1 year at that stage. I am no longer really going out with Colin; our relationship is on/off these days and we are more like friends.
3. On the night of the incident, 26 April 1997, I went to St. Patrick's Hall with Colin. I was wearing a navy jacket, jeans and a top. St. Patrick's Hall was not a regular Saturday night venue for me. It was usually a place that would hold dances on some nights, or a fundraising event or a St. Patrick's Day celebration, so I used to go there perhaps half a dozen times a year.
4. St. Patrick's Hall is on Thomas Street, past the British Foreign Legion. I cannot recall what time I arrived at St. Patrick's Hall with Colin, but my statement containing pages 09106 to 09110 reminds me that it was at about 10.45pm. In my statement I said that we had gone to the Royal Oak Public House in Woodhouse Street beforehand. I am informed that Colin says in his statement containing pages 09101 to 09105 that we were both at the Parkside Inn on the Garvaghy Road before going to St. Patrick's Hall. Both may be right. The

Parkside Inn is beside my house so we might have called in there and then walked up to Woodhouse Street.

5. St. Patrick's Hall was absolutely packed that night. Perhaps over 100 people were there, but I cannot give a number because I do not know how many individuals would fit inside. There must have been a specific reason – perhaps it was Easter Saturday or perhaps the St. Mary's Football Club were there – but there was a good crowd. I cannot remember who was there and I do not recall seeing the D,E,F or Robert Hamill at the venue. I knew F and E from when we were at school, but they are younger than I am; they also lived near my ex-husband in Obins Street so I would have known them just to say hello or to perhaps have a chat. I knew that D was married to E and that the man I now know as Robert was one of the Hamill family. I only knew Robert Hamill by sight and not to talk to, so I would not have been socialising with him. Colin might have known D from darts, but I am not sure if he knew Robert Hamill other than just by sight. I cannot recall what any of these people were wearing that night.
6. Over the whole night, I would say that I drank about 10 bottles of Strongbow cider that night. That is equivalent to about 10 half-pints. Whilst I would not say that I was sober, I was not drunk either. I cannot recall how much Colin had been drinking that night. He is a big guy and he is one of those people who can hold his drink and would not be falling down drunk. I would not say that he was behaving boisterously that night.
7. My statement at page **09106** reminds me that we left St. Patrick's Hall at approximately 01.20 on Sunday 27 April 1997. The bar probably would have closed at around 00.15 to 00.30 and the band would have finished at about 00.45am. People would have been finishing their drinks and heading home at this time. I can recall that there were lots of people left back in St. Patrick's Hall because the Hall would give people enough time for finishing their drinks before trying to get everyone to leave at about 02.00. I cannot remember if many people were leaving at the same time as we were and I do not remember seeing, or would not have noticed, the D,E,F or Robert Hamill leaving St.

Patrick's Hall before me. I just remember waiting for a taxi and there being none around, or we might have phoned for a taxi and were perhaps told it would be a half an hour wait. As a result, Colin and I decided to walk home to my house on Woodside Hill. We started walking towards the town centre, heading for Thomas Street to go down Woodhouse Street, and heading through the park which brings you up to the Garvaghy Road.

8. I said in my statement at page 09106 that I met up with E, F and D and Robert Hamill as I was walking down Thomas Street. I do not recall seeing anyone else walking down Thomas Street until I met up with these people, but that is not to say that no one else was about. When I first noticed the D,E,F and Robert Hamill, they were walking on the same side of the road as we. I think this would have been the right-hand side of the road. We then met up with the D,E,F and Robert Hamill halfway down Thomas Street as we approached the Credit Union and the British Legion, which I think is just after the bend on the right hand side of the road, just across from McGuire's bar as you walk down Thomas Street. I have been shown a map of Portadown town centre [73912] the "interview map", and have marked the British Legion as "BL" and the approximate point where I met the D,E,F and Robert Hamill with a circle. I recall that they were just standing in the street.
9. F seemed nervous, worried and frightened. My statement records at page 09106 that she said "*Don't be going down there Maureen as there is a crowd down there*". I cannot recall the demeanour of the others or how they were standing because I only spoke to F. I do recall saying to F that it would be all right because the police were down there. No one else said anything to me and I cannot recall if D or Robert Hamill were drunk or if Colin spoke to them.
10. I was a bit apprehensive at what F had said, but I thought it would all be okay because of the number of us. I had heard in the past that the junction of Market Street, Thomas Street, High Street and Woodhouse Street was a flashpoint area for sectarian violence, but personally I had not been involved in any trouble there. Normally I would get a taxi back from St. Patrick's Hall but unfortunately we had decided to walk home on that occasion.

11. I still recall today what I recorded next in my statement. I was standing approximately at the bend in Thomas Street and probably had a view straight down to the junction with High Street. I have marked on the interview map a circle indicating roughly my position. I could see a group of 10 to 15 males standing outside a bakery shop on the corner of Thomas Street and High Street. I am no good at measurements, but I would say that I was about 80 yards from the men. I could see them peering around the corner then leaning back again. I have marked their position on the interview map as "men". I knew the men were Protestants because Catholics would not have been in the town centre at that time of night in those sorts of numbers. I am informed that Colin recalls in his statement at page **09102** seeing about "*30 odd fellas coming from the left of the main street*". I assume by the "main street", Colin meant Market Street. I do not know if some of that group had moved over to the corner where I saw them or whether there might have been 30 people at the corner anyway. I would assume that we were referring to the same group of males. I cannot really recall seeing any people on the opposite corner of Market Street and Thomas Street.
12. When I saw the group of men I looked, then I stopped, and after that I remember seeing a police Land Rover at the top of Woodhouse Street at the junction of High Street. I must have still been at the bend on Thomas Street at this point. The Land Rover was further away than the men on the corner, but there was less distance between the Land Rover and the men, than the men and us. I cannot recall seeing the whole Land Rover, but I could see part of the side and the back of it. It was halfway across Woodhouse Street, facing towards Bridge Street. I have marked on the interview map the position of the Land Rover with the initials "LR". I think the doors were closed but I could not be sure. My statement at page **09107** reminds me I could not see any police officers outside of the Land Rover, nor did I see anybody else standing near it.
13. When I saw the police presence of the Land Rover, I felt that it would be safe enough to go on. I just said to Colin that it would be all right because the police were down there. I do not recall Colin saying anything back to me, so we

continued walking down Thomas Street. We left the D,E,F and Robert Hamill behind us. I am informed that Colin said in his statement at page 09101 that we were at the back, with the D,E,F in the middle and Robert Hamill at the front. Having looked at my statement again that is not my recollection. I do not know how far behind us the D,E,F and Robert Hamill were and I do not recall hearing them talking.

14. I recalled in my statement at page 09107 that Colin and I walked to within touching distance of the group outside the bakery, with Robert Hamill and the D,E,F behind us. That is still my recollection. The men then started shouting at us. I think that we had reached the corner at this stage and I have marked on the interview map our position with my initials "MM" and a cross. I cannot recall if they had been looking at us or shouting at us before we reached the corner, but I can see from my statement that they started shouting "*Fenian bastards*" at us once we were down at the corner. They looked like an angry crowd now. I did not say anything back to them, nor can I remember Colin saying anything or moving towards the crowd. I did not see anyone else around Market Street or High Street at that stage, but I was probably too frightened to take much notice.
15. The crowd then surged towards Colin and me, and obviously towards the D,E,F and Robert Hamill who were in the vicinity behind us. It was mayhem. I was scared and I only remember running across to the left hand side of the road to get away from them. I went into the doorway of a shop that was called Eastwood's Clothing at the time. I have marked the position of Eastwoods clothing store on the interview map as "ECS". I do not know where Colin was at this stage. I did not hear anybody shouting out to me as I ran away; no one would have known me. Fighting had broken out at the junction of Thomas Street and Market Street and the High Street. I probably did not run to the Land Rover because my recollection is that the crowd were fighting across the interface between the streets and I perhaps would have had to go through them to get to the Land Rover.

16. There were two girls at the Eastwoods Clothing store. I am not sure whether they followed me or whether they were already there. I did not know them and had certainly never seen them before; I just assumed they were from the Protestant side of the community. I gave a description of 1 of the girls in my statement at page **09107**, but I cannot recall it now. I think we were talking, saying how terrible this fighting was. At the time from the whole commotion I could see that someone was being attacked, but it was like a swarm of bees so I could not see the victim. The fighting had moved out into the road a bit; I think it was onto Market Street near the centre where there used to be flowerbeds. The fighting was close to me now. I was probably less than 12 feet away, but the attackers did not turn to me at any stage. I could see the attackers, but I did not know any of them. At this point there was quite a crowd but how many were in it, I do not know. There were perhaps about 10 people in the crowd, but I could not be sure.
17. I did not recognise any of the attackers and cannot describe any of them beyond saying that they were maybe in their early to mid – 20's, so a bit younger than me. I would not know anyone from the Protestant community unless perhaps I had worked with them. I do not know Rory Robinson, Marc Hobson, Allister Hanvey, Stacey Bridgett, Dean Forbes or Wayne Lunt.
18. I do not know where Colin was at this stage, and I could not see any of the **D.E.F** or Robert Hamill. At that point I did not know the person being attacked was Robert Hamill because there were so many men around him that I could not see. I am informed that Colin records in his statement at page **09102** that he saw the front members of a group of 30 or so people running from the left of Market Street, catching Robert Hamill and dragging him to the ground. I am told that Colin also describes himself as ploughing into the group of attackers. There were so many things going on, I honestly do not recall seeing that.
19. I was not taking much notice of the police Land Rover because I was hiding away from the road, and I just assume that it was still there. I cannot remember seeing any police officers when the fighting broke out and the individual was attacked.

20. One of the girls standing with me in the doorway of Eastwood's Clothing then took up a Buckfast bottle and ran into the crowd. I do not remember her saying anything, hearing her call out anyone's name or seeing her assault anyone. I then ran across Market Street and stood next to the Alliance and Leicester which I believe on the corner at the top of Woodhouse Street. I do not know, but I think I probably ran across the street because I did not fancy standing near the girl with the Buckfast bottle. I cannot recall whether I ran around the fight, or whether it had stopped, nor can I recall seeing any police officers. After I had run across to the Alliance and Leicester I noticed a man lying on the ground, just where the fighting had taken place. I assumed that he was unconscious, but at that stage I would not have made out who it was.
21. I stood at the Alliance and Leicester for a matter of a few minutes. I cannot recall whether I could still see the Land Rover at this point. The crowd had run off towards St Mark's Church, but I do not know what had caused them to run off. It had been a frenzied attack. The fight had not lasted very long, perhaps between 5 – 10 minutes, but it probably seemed longer than it actually was. I cannot recall if I paused, but then I went over to the man lying in the street. My statement at page **09108** reminds me that he was lying on his left side with his face towards the ground and facing away from me; I was probably looking at his back. He was in Market Street near the central reservation where the fighting had taken place. I have marked on the interview map where I think he was positioned with the initials "RH". I could see a pool of liquid underneath his body and around his sides; I could not see clearly that it was blood but I probably thought it was a pool of blood because of its pattern. I think that the liquid was probably coming from a head wound, but I cannot recall if it was just around his head or his torso. I did not see any bottles or anything else around his head and his body, and I did not see any marks around his head. He was not moving and I assumed that he was unconscious but still alive. I remember kneeling down beside the man's body towards his back. I still did not realise that he was Robert Hamill. I remember putting his head in my lap and did not do anything else. I do not recall turning his head, I probably just cradled it towards me. I think I did this just for comfort.

22. I cannot remember him making any sound and I did not know whether he was breathing. I was not trained in first aid so I could not give the man any first aid. I did not notice any bruising or cuts on his face or head and I do not recall if there was any blood on his face or head. I was not kneeling in any liquid but I think that I got some blood on the jacket that I was wearing. I do not believe that was I kneeling in glass because I think I would have remembered if I had been doing this.
23. The crowd of men were still behind me in the direction of St. Mark's Church. My statement at page 09109 reminds me as I was kneeling beside the man I noticed a police officer standing to my left, but I do not recall this now because things happened so quickly. I had not been by the man for long, perhaps seconds. I think it was a male police officer but I could not describe him. I was upset and crying, but I do not recall him saying anything to me and I did not say anything to him. While I was there, the police officer did not try to administer first aid or assist the man. I did not call an ambulance, nor did I hear the policeman calling one. I cannot really recall what the police officer was doing; I assume he was there to keep the crowd away but I do not know.
24. My statement at page 09109 records that I saw F on the corner of Thomas Street giving assistance to a man I assumed was D. He was not lying on the same side of Market Street not far from Robert Hamill, but more towards Eastwood's Clothing store. I am not sure, but I have marked on the interview map the initials "D" where I think D was positioned. F shouted over to me, "*That's our Robert. Watch him*". I think E was with F giving assistance to D, but I could not see what condition D was in.
25. F then came over to me and I saw a group of males making their way down the town again from the direction of St. Mark's Church. I thought they were the same men that had been fighting before because they were a very angry, aggressive crowd. As far as I recall they were shouting and my statement at page 09109 reminds me that someone shouted, "*I hope he dies, the Fenian bastard*". The group of men were fairly close to us, but I am not sure exactly

- how close. I was staying low and did not turn around, but I could hear them behind me and I think that I was crying. I do not recall anyone attacking Robert Hamill while he was lying there on the ground, and there was no reaction from him.
26. As the group of males moved towards us, I do not know if the police officer was still standing by me. I do not know if there were other officers in the street, nor do I remember **F** speaking to any police officers. I cannot recall seeing any other police vehicles and I do not know if the Land Rover was still there because I was not taking much notice of it at this stage. I cannot recall if there were police officers holding back the crowd but I do remember seeing quite a few people milling around. I am not sure whether these people were involved in the initial attack, but I think they were all Protestants and did not see or recognise anybody from the Catholic community.
27. In my statement at page **09108**, I record Colin coming over to me at this stage. He was angry, agitated and nervous and I think that he just wanted to get me out of there. I cannot remember him saying anything to me initially. He looked nervous, but I cannot recall whether he had any bruises or other signs of having been in a struggle of some sort. Colin tried to take me away from Robert, saying something like, "*Come on. Mo. Get out of here*". He took me over to the Alliance and Leicester, but, from reading my statement, I do not think I stayed there for too long. My statement reminds me that there was still a crowd of people near to Robert Hamill, about 10 – 12 feet away. I believe that they were just coming back from St. Mark's Church. I did not know anyone in this crowd and no one stood out as being more aggressive than the others. I heard shouting and swearing, but I did not see who was responsible. Despite this, I went back to Robert Hamill until the ambulance arrived, probably because I just wanted to comfort him.
28. It was perhaps shortly after the group of men approached us that an ambulance arrived. I think that it was just 1 ambulance, but I do not know for sure. I think the ambulance parked at the junction at the bottom of Thomas Street and Market Street. I was fully aware that a group of males, still volatile and angry, was

close to us shouting various things. How close they were I do not know and I cannot recall whether this group were around the ambulance. Also I cannot remember how many paramedics were there, whether they came over to give first aid or whether I was still with Robert at the time. To my knowledge, I did not have a conversation with the paramedics and I think that once they arrived I would have left them to it. I assume that F was still there with him. I do not know how many people went in the ambulance, but, although I did not see it myself, I obviously realise that Robert was taken away. I do not know if the paramedics put D into an ambulance because as I did not go near him at the scene. I did not take much notice so I cannot say whether D was ever standing up or walking around after the fight. I do not recall when the ambulance eventually left the scene.

29. My recollection of the police presence at the scene is limited up until this point. I believe that more police showed up at this stage. I am assuming this a little because had police officers not been there I am certain there would have been another riot. I think Colin was with me at this stage. I then went over to the police Land Rover. I was very angry because the whole thing could have been avoided. There was a policewoman standing there at the Land Rover. In my statement at page 09109 I said she was blonde-haired. She was also probably taller than I and perhaps of slim build. To my recollection, she was not on the radio or doing anything and there were no other officers with her. I remarked to her that the events of that night were terrible and uncalled for. I was very upset but I do not think I was shouting at her and I did not ask her where she had been, or anything of that nature. I was just angry and in disbelief at the whole situation that had unfolded because I probably could not really understand why it had happened. To my knowledge Colin did not say anything to the policewoman, but I think he was angry, shocked and stunned. The policewoman did not say anything to me and I did not see any other officers outside of the Land Rover. The doors were open so I did see a man sitting inside the Land Rover wearing a Rangers scarf. I did not recognise him, and I cannot recall having seen him involved in the crowd beforehand. He was just sitting there and he did not say or do anything. The policewoman was not talking to him; she was just posted at the Land Rover doors.

30. I was only at the Land Rover for a couple of minutes when the policewoman let the man out. I had to say to her, "*What did you do that for?*" because I assumed that this man had been arrested in connection with the disturbance. I do not recall shouting at her or using a sharp tone, but I was quite angry because, after an event like that, I could not believe she was actually letting him out of the Land Rover. Colin probably also asked, "*What did you do that for?*" She did not say anything to us.
31. At this stage the atmosphere had definitely died down a bit and the crowd were starting to disperse and mill about. I cannot honestly say whether I saw any police officers moving people back to St. Mark's Church, but I think there were more police about at this stage. Colin and I then left the scene and went home. The whole event was probably shorter than it felt, so I think that we left the scene at about 02.30. We probably would have arrived home within 10 - 15 minutes.
32. I have been asked whether I saw any Catholics from the dance at St. Patrick's Hall along Market Street during the incident. The only ones I can recall are the 6 of us that I have mentioned, but that is not to say that there were no others. I did hear after the event that a man had left St. Patrick's Hall previously and walked down Thomas Street into Woodhouse Street when the crowd and the police were there. I heard afterwards that he had informed the police that there was a dance on in St. Patrick's Hall. However I did not see this man and this is all hearsay to me. It is possible that Colin and I left the dance a bit early that night. I cannot recall, but I assume that the majority of people in the Hall would have waited to take taxis home. I do not find it strange that there were not more Catholics around: a crowd of Catholics, perhaps 100 people or however many were there in St. Patrick's Hall, would not leave and walk through the town centre at night.
33. I have been asked to comment upon the evidence of some other witnesses from that night.

34. I am informed that there is a witness who said that there were a group of women and 3 men walking down Thomas Street when one of the men, described as approximately 5'10" tall with dark short hair, wearing a waist-length black leather jacket and black trousers or jeans ran down the road and hit another man at the junction of Thomas Street and Market Street. I do not recall seeing any incident of this nature and I cannot say whether this description fits Robert Hamill. The only thing I could confirm is that Robert Hamill had black hair. I did not know Robert Hamill other than by sight, but from what other people say, he was a very quiet and unassuming man. I did not see Robert or D involved in any fighting that night, nor do I recall anyone else from St. Patrick's Hall being involved in any fighting.
35. I understand that a second witness recalled seeing a man about 25 years old, with very short hair and wearing a blue shirt and striped tie, and with smart dark trousers shouting towards a crowd of Protestants. I cannot recall what Colin was wearing that night but he was certainly not 25 years old at the time of the assault. He might have been wearing a tie, but I cannot see him putting on a tie to go to St. Patrick's Hall. I do not recall Colin shouting at anyone that night. Once the fight started, I just ran across the road and I assumed that Colin was helping Robert Hamill and D.
36. After the incident I do not recall Colin saying anything to me about it, apart from telling me that he knew a couple of faces, but who they were I do not know. Likewise I cannot recall having any discussions with F or E about how D and Robert were doing. I probably would have asked Colin about it because I do not know the girls well. I do not know how the fight started and I can confirm that since the incident I have not heard anyone else say how the fight started.
37. In my opinion I think that the police could have prevented the fighting that night. Although there was only 1 Land Rover at the scene, the police were there and I assume that they could see us when we were walking down. The police station was also only round the corner, and they could have radioed through for assistance, or they could have even contacted St. Patrick's Hall and warned

them, "Look, there's a crowd in town". I do not recall seeing any police pushing back the crowd, nor did I notice how many officers were present at the scene. I imagine they must have called for other police officers later, but I cannot comment.

38. I made my statement to the police on 9 May 1997 about what happened that night. I cannot recall whether I contacted the police or they contacted me. The statement was taken at my home and it was the first and last I ever heard from them. At some stage I gave the navy jacket I had been wearing on the night to the police for their inquiries. The police never asked me to attend any formal identification parades and I did not speak to any officer about the incident after I had completed my statement. They did not approach me to give evidence at any trial either.

39. I also made a statement to [REDACTED] about the incident. I do not know whether someone requested that I make this statement, or whether I instructed a solicitor myself.

SIGNED: Maureen McCoy  
MAUREEN McCOY

DATED: 01/01/09