

DRAFT

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF STACEY BRIDGETT

DATED THIS

DAY OF

2008

I, STACEY BRIDGETT, 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 was in the town centre of Portadown on night of 26/27 April 1997. I was later arrested and charged with others of the murder of Robert Hamill. The prosecution later withdrew the charges against me.
3. This is the first witness statement I have made in connection with the death of Robert Hamill. I was arrested on 6 May 1997 and interviewed under caution that day. A copy of the transcript of that interview, provided by the RUC, is now produced and shown to me, page number 7128. I was also arrested on 10 May 1997 and interviewed under caution. A copy of the transcript of that interview, provided by the RUC, is now produced and shown to me containing page number 7299. These are true transcripts of the interviews to the best of my knowledge and belief.
4. In 1997 I was 19 years of age and had lived in Portadown for all of my life. I was working as a labourer. I went to the Coach Inn at Banbridge every couple of weeks.
5. On 26 April 1997 I took the bus to the Coach Inn with a friend of mine Dean Forbes. I do not recall what time we took the bus although I think it was about

DRAFT

21.00pm or 21:30. We returned to Portadown again by bus I was happy drunk but couldn't say how much I had to drink. We got off the bus at the top of Bridge Street near 'Z' cabs and walked up the High Street on the Woodhouse Street side of the road. There were probably others walking up the street at the same time but I cannot now remember who or how many people were doing so. Some people would go up High Street; some people went to Bridge Street towards Killycomain, some people would go to Herron's. I do not recall noticing anyone coming up from Thomas Street.

6. I think I may have gone to Boss Hoggs, a fast food outlet, but I am now not certain of that.
7. I knew St Patrick's Hall at the time which was a place where mostly Catholic's from Portadown would drink.
8. There was a police Land Rover parked in the mouth of Woodhouse Street. Dean and I approached the Land Rover to speak to the officers. We were just being friendly. I knew Rodney Sharpe who was in the back of the Land Rover, just from the town. Everyone knew him just because we were in the town all the time. Dean was with me but I cannot recall if he was talking to officers.
9. Rodney Sharpe was asking me how my night was and I was also talking to the woman who I know is Denise Cornett. She was sitting in the passenger's seat of the Land Rover. We were just talking about my clothes and about Ralph Lauren They asked me where I got all my stuff. I got it for £30 and they asked if I got it off the back of a lorry.
10. Before I reached the Land Rover to speak to the officers a man walked across the street from the direction of Thomas Street towards Woodhouse Street. The man turned towards me and said that he didn't want any trouble. He must have thought that I was going to start on him but I wasn't. I just met him because we were walking the same way. I said to the man that I wasn't looking for trouble either and then he went into Woodhouse Street. I can't think of any reason why he might think that there would be trouble. He was probably being paranoid or

DRAFT

drunk. I do not think that it was because Woodhouse Street was a Catholic area. If you go to the top bit of town that's a Catholic area but I was at the mouth of Woodhouse Street.

11. There is now produced and shown to me the statement of Reserve Constable Cornett dated 27 April 1997 containing page **9678**. She says that she had to shout at Dean and myself to prevent a fight. I cannot remember the officer shouting at us.
12. RC Cornett in her statement page **9678** refers to me having a green glass bottle in my hand. I was asked when interviewed, page **7196**, whether I was carrying a bottle whilst standing at the Land Rover and I replied, *"I can't remember if I had a bottle I don't think I did."*
13. When I was standing at the passenger's door of the police vehicle another man came and pulled open the driver's door and he was shouting at the driver Constable Neill. The man was saying, "Are you going to be sitting around." He was giving them a real bad time but I didn't know what he was talking about because I couldn't see anything from my side of the Land Rover. I thought this man was Catholic. I don't know why I thought he just looked like one, or it may have been something he said. He was 30 to 40 in a blue suit and a shirt and tie. It was nine years ago but at that time I assumed that's what they wore.
14. I let on that I was a Catholic too because he was a big lad and I thought he was going to cause an incident. I got the impression that he was going to punch me because he was in hysterics. He was shouting and running at the police officers.
15. I think that's when the fight started straight afterwards. There was then a confrontation at the back of the Land Rover with a different man. I cannot now recall if I thought he was Catholic or Protestant. I can't recall where this man came from. All I recall is going to the back of the Land Rover and getting my nose busted, I do not remember any conversation between me and this man.

DRAFT

16. I hadn't done anything to warrant being assaulted. It was just the one blow to my nose which immediately started to bleed. He was just being a bully. Maybe he was drunk. I wasn't ready for a fight; I don't fight when I'm drunk. He was small and stoutly. He didn't take much to go to the ground. I do not know what happened to him afterwards; he just hobbled up the street.
17. I didn't get involved in any fighting. My nose was bleeding and I just tried to get away and went up towards St. Marks Church in Market Street. I remember seeing fighting just around the middle of High Street between Woodhouse Street and Thomas Street. When interviewed I said at page 7240 *"Yes well when I got struck I run up to sort of look around there was people just a free for all."* I did not get involved in this fighting.
18. Jonathan Wright in his statement of 15 May 1997 page 9141 has said, *"During the course of this incident I saw Stacey Bridgett trading punches with one person."* I know Jonathan Wright because we went to school together but I wasn't trading punches with anyone.
19. I cannot remember who was fighting and I was asked during my interview under caution page 7167 whether I saw who had been fighting and were the boys from the Coach involved I replied *"Yes a couple."* I couldn't think who they were then neither can I now.
20. I do not remember seeing anyone lying on the ground when I saw the fighting. I did not get involved in the fighting neither did I kick or punch anyone on the ground. I am aware that Constable Silcock in his statement of 24 May 1997 containing page numbers 702 to 703 said *"The woman identified to me a male who'd been jumping on the head of Robert Hamill as someone in the crowd by name of Stacey and the man responded to his name."* This woman is obviously a liar or she is mistaken. I was not involved in the violence.
21. I was asked about the statement of Tracey Clarke when I was interviewed by the police on 10 May 1997, page 7254 of the interview the officer asked, *"It was at this time I saw a number of persons gather around the person lying in the centre*

DRAFT

of the road. These persons were kicking the person on the ground around the head and the body. I saw them jump on the person on the ground. They jumped all over him and kicked him. I saw the persons who were doing this and I can identify them as – and this person identifies five people the third of who is named Stacey Bridgett.” My reply was I didn’t touch him. I did not get involved in fighting and I did not kick anyone on the ground.

22. I was away from where the fighting was taking place and at page **7243** of my interview under caution I said, *“The fighting was going on all around Eastwoods and stuff like that there and I was up at Dorothy Perkins, Dorothy Perkins was safe enough like.”* My nose was bleeding and I did not want to get involved a girl did wipe my nose with a tissue and I refer to this during interview at page **7142**.

23. I did not get involved with the crowd until the police started to move people away from where the fighting had taken place. I am aware that Constable Cooke in his statement dated 27 April 1997 containing page numbers **9225 to 9227** says that he saw me at the front of the crowd. I wasn’t I was at the back. He’s mistaken. During my interview under caution page **7245** I told the police, *“Because the police was moving everybody on everybody was calm, the police was moving everybody on and I walked on with everybody after it was all over.”* I then went home I did not go to Tracey McAlpine’s house and Stephen Bloomer is mistaken in his statement containing page numbers **585 to 586** when he says that he saw me there. I was not there.

24. When I was arrested by the police I did have a sample of blood taken from me. On the advice of my solicitor I am not going to discuss the analysis of my blood or any forensic results which show my DNA being on a blood spot found on the jeans of Robert Hamill.

SIGNED:

STACEY BRIDGETT

DATED: