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Judge considers the evidence as double murder trial finishes

Thursday, 12 February 2009

A senior judge yesterday revealed he will give "careful consideration" to three months worth of evidence regarding the murders of two teenagers in Tandragee before delivering his verdict.

Mr Justice Gillen reserved judgment at the end of the non-jury trial into the murders of David McIlwaine (18) and 19-year-old Andrew Robb, who were lured to a country road in Co Armagh and knifed to death in February 2000.

Steven Leslie Brown, also known as Steven Revels, has spent three months in the dock of Belfast Crown Court where he faces charges of murdering Andrew and David.

The 28-year-old accused, a former taxi driver from Castle Place in Castlecaulfield, denies involvement in the savage double murder, during which both young victims sustained multiple stab wounds and had their throats cut.

After listening to closing speeches from both the Crown and the defence, Mr Justice Gillen said he planned to give careful consideration to all the evidence and told the court "I will give my verdict as soon as I can".

Earlier this week, Crown prosecutor Donna McColgan said there was enough evidence to convict Brown of the "barbaric and totally brutal" murders of Andrew and David.

During the trial, evidence was heard from suspect turned 'supergrass' Mark Burcombe, who claimed the two victims called to Brown's Sinton Park home in Tandragee following a night out looking for a party.

Mr Burcombe (28) claimed Andrew made a disparaging remark about UVF leader Richard Jameson, who had been murdered the previous week, which angered Brown and his friend Noel Dillon.

Mr Dillon has since taken his own life.

He said the teenagers were driven to a country road on the outskirts of Tandragee in Brown's Peugeot car, where they were murdered.

Mr Burcombe — who was initially standing trial for the murders before turning Queen's evidence — said Brown and Dillon murdered both men, and admitted that while he was at the scene he played no part whatsoever in the killings.

However, in his closing speeches earlier yesterday, defence barrister John McCrudden said Mr Burcombe was a "cunning" man who has the "capacity to mislead", and who had literally gotten away with murder.

Telling Mr Justice Gillen he should reject Mr Burcombe as being a "credible witness", the barrister said he "wished he had a penny" for every time Mr Burcombe changed or added to his version of events.

He also told the court there was "no direct evidence" to link Brown to the murder of Andrew Robb as Mr Burcombe claimed that while he saw Brown stab David, he did not witness Andrew's murder.

Mr Crudden said the Crown relied on one remark from Mr Burcombe who told police that when he asked Brown what happened to Andrew as they made their way home from the murder scene, Brown told him "I did the stomach and Noel did the throat".

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