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Friday, October 24, 2008

Youths' murder trial halted

THE TRIAL of six young Ballymena youths facing charges arising out of the murder of schoolboy Michael McIlveen in May 2006 was halted yesterday and the jury dismissed.

The Antrim Crown Court jury of eight women and four men were told only that "as a result of certain matters which have arisen", they were being discharged from any further involvement in the 27-day trial.

Mr Justice Treacy also thanked the jury, first sworn in on September 8th, telling them that given their commitment to the trial since then, he would, if they wished, discharge them for life from any further jury service.

No other details surrounding the legal move were given in court and the case has now been adjourned until November 10th when a new jury will be sworn in.

This is the second dramatic turn of events to overtake the running of the case.

Within days of it first opening, one of the original accused, 20-year-old Mervyn Wilson Moon, from Douglas Terrace, Ballymena, pleaded guilty to his involvement in the murder of the 15-year-old.

The schoolboy died from brain injuries the day after he and friends were allegedly chased and attacked in an alleyway by Moon and others on May 7th, 2006.

Moon, who faces life imprisonment, has been remanded back into custody to await sentence at the end of the retrial of his former co-accused, five of whom deny murder.

Those still on trial for murder are a 17-year-old who cannot be named for legal reasons; Jeff Colin Lewis (19), Rossdale; Christopher Francis Kerr (22), Carduff Drive; Aaron Cavana Wallace (20), Moat Road; and Christopher Andrew McLeister (18), Knock Crescent. All are from Ballymena.

A sixth defendant, Paul Edward David Henson (18), Condiere Avenue, Ballymena, denies charges of affray and criminal damage. Mr Henson, Mr McLeister, Mr Wallace and the 17-year-old were freed on continuing bail, while Mr Lewis and Mr Kerr were remanded back into custody.

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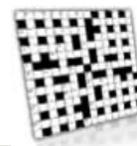
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