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 - Health
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 - Shopping Directory
 - Competition
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 - Jobs
 - Training
 - Dating
 - Casino
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 - Media Kit
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[Home](#) > [News](#) > [Local & National](#)

Local & National

I met IRA four times about McCartney killing: witness

Wednesday, June 04, 2008

By Ashleigh Wallace

A close friend of murdered Belfast man Robert McCartney yesterday revealed he met with senior IRA figures four times in the aftermath of the killing and was advised to "tell the truth" about what happened.

Brendan Devine revealed he met with senior IRA figures including Bik McFarlane and Harry Maguire at several locations in north Belfast in the months following the murder.

Giving evidence from the witness box for a second day at Belfast Crown Court, Mr Devine said he met the IRA on four occasions — the first was at the Sinn Fein centre on the Antrim Road, the second when he was taken to a house in the Ardoyne, the third at a cafe in the Kennedy Centre and the fourth at Holy Cross Chapel.

Under cross examination by a defence barrister, Mr Devine was asked about the meetings and he replied: "I was taken away up the Ardoyne and questioned about that night (of the murder) and I told them what happened and they said to me 'you do whatever you have to do. Tell the truth.'

"They said at that present stage I had nothing to fear."

Mr Devine and Mr McCartney had been in Magennis's bar on the evening of January 30, 2005 when a brawl which broke out in the pub resulted in both men being stabbed.

The trial has already heard the violence erupted after a rude gesture was made in the bar towards a group of woman, one of whom was the partner of 51-year old defendant Terence Malachy Davison of Stanfield Place, Belfast.

After having his throat slit in the bar, Mr Devine left the bar with his friend and as both men made their way along Market Street they were followed by what one witness described as a crowd of men, some of whom were armed with sticks and bottles.

Bleeding heavily from his neck wound, Mr Devine said as he walked to the top of Market Street he turned around and saw two men standing over Mr McCartney who was lying slumped against a fence.

He claimed one of the men in question was "gouging" his friend's eyes and he later picked out Davison from an identification parade.

He also told the court he was in "no doubt" that a stab wound he sustained to his side was inflicted in Market Street.

Davison is standing trial for the murder of Mr McCartney and of causing an affray on the same date.

James McCormick (47) and Joseph Gerard Emmanuel Fitzpatrick (39) have also been charged with affray while Fitzpatrick faces an additional charge of assaulting Ed Gowdy who was also drinking with Mr McCartney in the bar before the killing. All three deny the charges.

Mr Devine said that despite not knowing who Davison or the other defendants were before the murder, he was "100% sure" Davison was the man he saw gouging at his friend's eyes in the entry.

Telling the court he was "crystal clear" about this friend's attacker, Mr Devine said: "I picked the guy (Davison) out of a line up.

"All I know is that he was the one that started the argument in the bar and he was the one that was gouging Bert's face."

Under cross-examination by Davison's defence barrister Orlando Pownall QC, Mr Devine was asked about

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inconsistencies he gave regarding his friend's attacker's features.

The witness told the court he was "confused at the time" and was "traumatised by what I saw, watching Bert die". He also said he was dealing with "rumours and accusations" and had his own serious injuries to deal with.

McCormick was initially charged with attempted to murder Mr Devine but the charges were dropped and he now faces a single charge of causing an affray.

When he was asked by Mr Pownell about "the man you say who stabbed you getting away with it", Mr Devine said: "Touch wood somebody else will come forward or there will be a retrial but at the minute he is getting away free — apart from a silly affray charge." At hearing

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[July](#)
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[Animal Olympics](#)

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[Live Earth](#)
[Razorlight](#)

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