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Still questions despite verdict

Pro fide et patria

Editorial

04/03/2009

The murders of Andrew Robb and David McIlwaine undoubtedly rank among the most gruesome and disturbing of the past 30 years.

Yet these were not historical crimes but

a demonstration of the utmost depravity which took place at the beginning of the new millennium.

While people everywhere were looking forward to more positive times, a small group of vicious thugs were determined to continue an evil reign based on a sadistic adherence to brutality.

It was the appalling misfortune of two teenage friends that they came up against these representatives of evil in Tandragee in February 2000.

The suggestion is that 19-year-old Andrew Robb made derogatory remarks about Richard Jameson, the UVF leader who had been shot dead by the LVF two weeks earlier, and that these comments sealed the fate of the two youths.

Yesterday Steven Brown, also known as Steven Revels, was convicted of murdering Andrew and his 18-year-old friend in the most horrific manner. The teenagers were butchered in a frenzied and merciless knife attack, then dumped at the side of a road.

Brown was convicted after another accused, Mark Burcombe, turned evidence in return for a reduced charge. Another of those involved, Noel Dillon, killed himself.

This conviction and, hopefully, an appropriate sentence, will provide a level of justice for the families of the dead youths.

However, there is a lingering sense of disquiet about this case, including questions over the original investigation when charges against Revels were dropped.

Paul McIlwaine has spent the past nine years attempting to discover the truth about his son's death and believes the state is protecting some of those involved in this double murder.

This is a serious charge which cannot be left unanswered.

And while there will be relief that a barbaric killer is behind bars, this remains a troubling case.

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