

Teenager played dead after beating by sectarian mob

Marie Louise McCrory
m.mccrory@irishnews.com

A CATHOLIC teenager has told of how he played dead after being savagely beaten by a sectarian mob.

James Turley (18) was treated for an eye wound and suffered bruising all over his body after he was chased and beaten by a gang in the Village area of south Belfast.

In scenes reminiscent of the darkest days of the Troubles the student said he was forced to play dead after being bundled into a wheelie bin and taken to an alleyway where he was assaulted.

Recalling the chilling words of one of the gang as they backed off he revealed that one said: "That's enough. I think he's dead."

The Short Strand teenager eventually flagged down a motorist who drove him to the hospital where he was treated for his injuries.

Police say they are investigating a sectarian motive for the attack on five men as well as criminal damage to a car.

The trainee chef and his friends were targeted on Friday afternoon as they filmed scenes for a new movie *The Good Man* starring *The Wire*'s Aidan Gillen.

The friends, who were extras on the set, had just filmed a scene when a mob gathered and began making sectarian remarks.

"When we were packing up to go, that's when they started getting closer," Mr Turley said.

"They just surrounded us."

He said some of his friends attempted to flee in a car but the mob smashed the windows with their fists, forcing him and two other friends to run.

"I ran into a house," he said.

"I said: 'Please help me. They're going to kill me'. The man went out to the door as if he was going to help me."

Mr Turley said that as he tried to escape through the back of the house he heard one of the gang shouting: 'There's a Taig in there.'

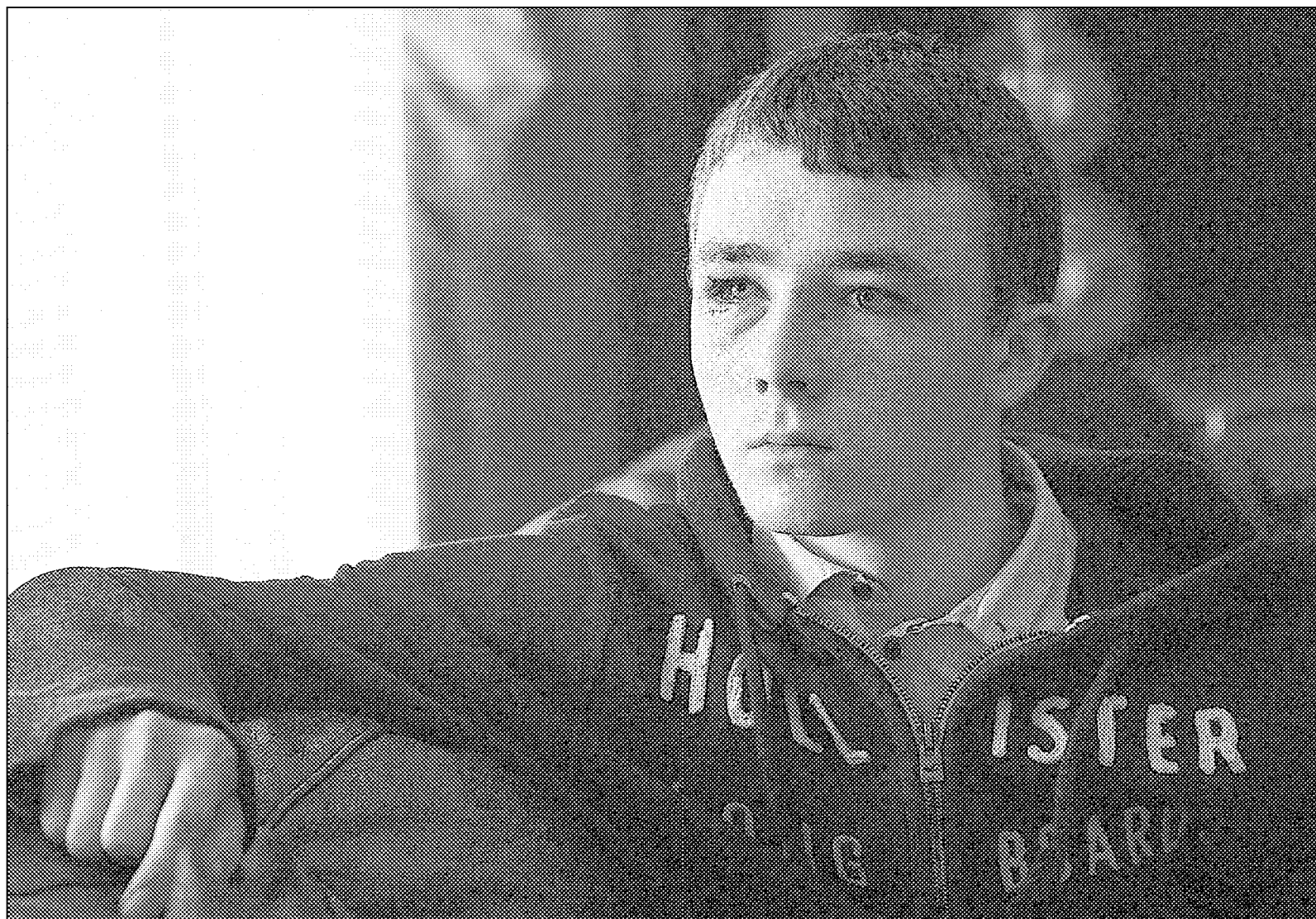
"They all just came in and started beating me," he said.

"They stamped on my head and everywhere. The woman [the householder] said: 'Get him out of my garden' and they dragged me out into the alley."

"They just started beating me again. They put me into a bin and were pushing me somewhere. I didn't know where I was going."

"I think they realised they couldn't beat me when I was in the bin. They kicked or pushed it over and dragged me out of it."

Mr Turley said at one stage he was knocked out, but "I started to come around and I heard them saying: 'That's enough. I think he's dead'."



■ CHILLING: James Turley recovers from his injuries following an attack in the loyalist Village area of south Belfast during which his attackers left him for dead

PICTURE: Hugh Russell

Echoes of 1994 loyalist murder



THE sectarian attack on 18-year-old James Turley has disturbing echoes of the murder of Margaret Wright, beaten and shot dead by loyalists in 1994. Ms Wright (31), pictured, a Protestant, was killed in one of the most brutal attacks ever carried out during the Troubles. She was battered in an illegal drinking club off Meridi Street, in the Donegall Road area, in the mistaken belief she was a Catholic.

Her killers beat her with pool cues and brush shafts, shot her in the head four times, dumped her body in a wheelie bin and left it behind a derelict house in Donegall Avenue. Ms Wright, said to have suffered from bouts of alcoholism and depression, had been drinking with friends in Belfast city centre on the night of her murder on April 5 1994. Her friends last saw her

waiting for a taxi at Shaftesbury Square. It was reported she went to the drinking den with a woman she met in the taxi queue. She was taken to a side room in the club and questioned. One man told a bail hearing that he saw her seated with a hood over her head. Two men were later sentenced to life for her murder. **Claire Simpson**

The teenager said he ran as soon as the gang fled and was picked up by a passing motorist who drove him to

the Royal Victoria Hospital.

Mr Turley's mother Donna – whose husband Frank was murdered in 1998

– said when she received a phone call about the attack she thought that her son had been killed.

"It's like deja vu," she said.

"My husband was murdered. That's what it was like. I can't remember getting from here to the hospital. I was just thinking please, please, just let him hang on for me. I really did think he was dead on me. I'm just glad he's alive."

Mr Turley said he thought he was going to be killed.

"When I got put in the bin I thought that was it," he said.

A producer for Manifesto Films said all involved with the movie were "extremely upset" by the incident.

Susan Picken said: "We take the safety of all our cast and crew extremely seriously and we are extremely upset that James was injured during the making of the film."

"We are all absolutely devastated that James was hurt and we will continue to stay in touch with him and his family and offer them our full and continuing support for now and the future."

**A WORD OF CAREER ADVICE:
THURSDAY.**

Job hunt? Job done.
Jobs on Thursday.



www.irishnews.com