

Guardian 26th July 2010

Footballer Gavin Grant jailed for life for gun murder



Bradford City midfielder receives minimum 25-year sentence along with two other men for 2004 shooting on London estate

Footballer Gavin Grant has been found guilty of gunning down 21-year-old Leon Labastide on a north-west London estate in 2004. Photograph: Metropolitan Police/PA

A footballer began life imprisonment today for his part in a wave of "tit-for-tat" shootings on the Stonebridge Park estate in north-west London, where "the law of the jungle" had held sway, a court heard.

Gavin Grant, 26, who was still listed as a midfield player on Bradford City's website today, was one of three men given minimum 25-year terms for their involvement in the death of Leon Labastide, 21, who was gunned down outside his parents' home in January 2004. Detectives believe the murder led to up to 30 further shootings.

Grant also played as a striker during a career which took in three other Football League clubs, Gillingham, Millwall and Wycombe Wanderers. He

was cleared in 2007 of another murder during the violence which followed the death of Labastide.

A charge that Grant, of Kenton, north London, had committed perjury at his trial for murdering Jahmall Moore, 22, in January 2005 was allowed to lie on file.

Gareth Downie, 25, from Birmingham, received a similar term for murder, as did Damien Williams, 32, of Southwark, south London, for conspiracy to murder. Grant was said by Bradford to be playing on a non-contractual, unsalaried basis "as he looks to work his way back into football". As he was sentenced at the Old Bailey, London, a woman shouted from the public gallery: "It's all fixed" and "You are coming out".

The recorder of London, Judge Peter Beaumont, said Labastide's murder had been revenge for a series of "tit-for-tat" shootings and that he had been "executed".

During the trial, prosecutor Stephen Batten QC told the jury that many people involved in the case had been linked to shootings and drug dealing on the estate. "Attitudes and standards are different," he said. "It is more the law of the jungle than the law of civilised England. You will hear about and see people whose behaviour will probably disgust you and make you wonder if there is any hope for the human race."

The court was told Labastide's killing led to the second murder. Grant denied involvement, saying Labastide was a friend.

Detectives with Operation Trident, the unit set up to deal with gun crime in London's black communities, believe that the fallout included up to 30 connected shooting incidents in the area. Following the arrests of Grant and others, shootings in the area fell by almost half. Detective inspector Steve Horsley said Grant had thought he "had got away with murder", adding: "He carried on his footballing career while, all along, he had blood on his hands."

Roberto Parchment, 24, originally convicted of Moore's murder, was found guilty again following a retrial in December brought about by the involvement of a supergrass, Darren Mathurin, the first used by Operation Trident. He was jailed for life again and ordered to serve the remainder of

his 28-year sentence. However, Romain Whyte, 25, who had previously been convicted of conspiracy to murder, was cleared by a 10-2 majority verdict. In the same trial, the jury failed to reach verdicts on Grant, Williams and Downie for the Labastide shooting.

Mathurin, 28, a former drugs dealer who made £1,500 a week, was not called to give evidence during the three men's retrial.

Mathurin's life sentence with a minimum term of 16 years for conspiring to murder Moore was reduced to a straight eight-year sentence in 2008. He admitted conspiracy to murder another man, Sean Cephane, and other offences, and was given a concurrent sentence. He will be eligible for parole after serving four years.

The jury in the retrial of Grant, Downie and Williams heard that trouble started with a burglary at the home of Whyte when three women were terrorised and it was suspected that £20,000 in drug money was taken. A 16-year-old girl, who had been in the house, gave evidence under an assumed name. It was rumoured that Labastide was behind the burglary, and Williams arranged for Grant and Downie to shoot him, it was alleged.

In the spate of shooting incidents which followed, Moore was gunned down by Parchment in mistake for Cephane. Grant told the court he was not involved in the shooting and said he had been set up.

Labastide's mother, Diane Havill, said in a statement: "His senseless killing by so-called friends who grew up with him has left it hard for me to understand the futility of snatching Leon's future whilst, in the same breath, destroying their own."

BBC News 26th July 2010

Professional footballer Gavin Grant jailed for murder

A professional footballer who shot dead a man on a north-west London housing estate has been jailed for life.

Former striker Gavin Grant was found guilty at the Old Bailey on Friday of murdering Leon Labastide, 21, on Harlesden's Stonebridge Park Estate.

His killing in 2004 was part of a series of "tit-for-tat" shootings, the Old Bailey heard.

Grant, 26, who played for Millwall, Wycombe Wanderers and Bradford City, must serve at least 25 years.

Gareth Downie, 25, and Damian Williams, 32, were also jailed for life and given 25-year minimum terms over the killing.

Victim 'executed'

Downie, from Markby Road, Birmingham, was found guilty of Mr Labastide's murder and Williams, from Tower Bridge Road in Southwark, was convicted of conspiring to murder him.

Sentencing the men the Recorder of London, Judge Peter Beaumont, said Mr Labastide "was executed by shooting".



Leon Labastide's mother said he was shot by so-called friends

In 2007 Grant, from Kenton, north London, was cleared of killing Jahmall Moore, 22, who was shot two years earlier.

But he was charged with Mr Labastide's murder when new witnesses came forward.

Speaking for Grant - who was playing for Bradford as recently as May - Nigel Rumfitt QC said: "Whatever he did in the past, he had turned his life around by the time it [the murder case] was resurrected."

During the trial jurors heard trouble flared after a burglary in which three women were terrorised and it was suspected that £20,000 in drug money was taken.

'Senseless killing'

A 16-year-old girl, who had been in the house, gave evidence under an assumed name.

Mr Labastide was rumoured to have been behind the burglary and Williams arranged for Grant and Downie to shoot him, the court was told.

In a series of shootings that followed Mr Moore was shot by Roberto Parchment in a case of mistaken identity.



Gareth Downie (L) and Damian Williams were also given life sentences at the Old Bailey

Parchment, 24, who was originally convicted of Mr Moore's murder, was found guilty again following a retrial in December as a result of information provided by "supergrass" Darren Mathurin.

Speaking after Grant's conviction last week, Det Insp Steve Horsley said: "Gavin Grant thought he had got away with murder.

"He carried on his footballing career while, all along, he had blood on his hands."

In a statement Mr Labastide's mother, Diane Havill, said: "Leon was a keen footballer who shared his passion for the game with all who knew him. He loved life.

"His senseless killing by so-called friends who grew up with him has left it hard for me to understand the futility of snatching Leon's future whilst, in the same breath, destroying their own."

Grant also played for Gillingham, Stevenage, Tooting and Grays during his football career.

Brent & Kilburn Times 27th October 2010

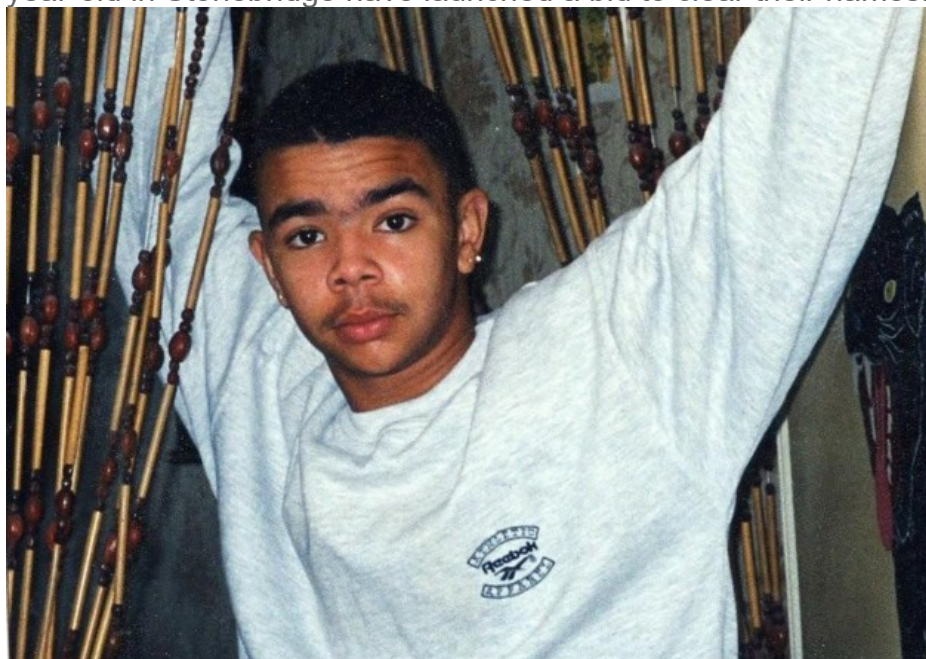
Trio jailed for Leon Labastide murder in Stonebridge launch appeal bid

17:02 27 October 2015



Left to right: Gavin Grant, Gareth Downie and Damian Martin Williams

Three men, including a professional footballer, who were jailed for murdering a 21-year-old in Stonebridge have launched a bid to clear their names.



Leon Labastide was shot dead in June 2004

Gavin Grant, 31, a former striker who played for Millwall, Wycombe Wanderers and Bradford City, Damian Martin Williams, 38, and 32-year-old Gareth Downie were all convicted for their role in the death of Leon Labastide.

The 21-year-old was shot dead on his doorstep in Mordaunt Road on the Stonebridge Estate in June in 2004.

Grant and Downie were found guilty of murder and Williams was convicted of conspiracy to murder at the Old Bailey in July 2010.

All three were sentenced to life with a minimum tariff of 25 years each.

Today at London's Criminal Appeal Court their lawyers challenged their convictions arguing they were 'unsafe'.

Their legal team said the jury's verdicts were 'undermined' because prosecutors failed to disclose crucial evidence ahead of their trial.

The prosecution case was that Mr Labastide's murder was one of a series of "tit-for-tat" shootings on the estate.

Judge Peter Beaumont, who sentenced the trio, said the victim had been 'executed'.

Crown lawyers alleged Williams arranged for Grant and Downie to shoot the victim in retaliation for a burglary he was rumoured to be behind.

Grant was cleared, in 2007, of killing 22-year-old Jahmall Moore two years earlier.

But he was prosecuted for Mr Labastide's murder in 2010 after new information came to light.

Lady Justice Macur, sitting with Mr Justice Cooke and Judge Joanna Cutts QC, said the appeal raised an 'interesting question' for the court.

She reserved giving judgment on the trio's conviction challenges until a later date.