

Court told of battle between inmates as prison was torched

INMATES battled each other as buildings at an open prison were damaged and torched, a court was told.

While some prisoners smashed windows at Ford Open Prison, near Arundel, with fire extinguishers before setting light to the buildings, other inmates were trying to save their "home" and put out the fires.

But their efforts were thwarted by prisoners who were seen spraying fire extinguishers into the air and throw-

ing them into burning buildings, a jury at Hove Crown Court was told yesterday.

The mutiny, during the early hours of January 1, 2011, caused millions of pounds of damage and lasted for 12 hours before the authorities regained control of the prison.

Lee Roberts, 41, Thomas Regan, 23, Ryan Martin, 25, Lennie Franklin, 23, Roche Allen, 25, Paul Hadcroft, 25, and Carniel Francis, 25, all deny a charge

of prison mutiny.

Six of the men have also pleaded not guilty to a charge of violent disorder. Regan has pleaded guilty to the charge.

Roberts, Regan, Martin, Franklin, Allen and Hadcroft also deny a further charge of arson, being reckless as to whether life was endangered.

Roberts has pleaded guilty to a charge of arson.

Prosecutor Ian Acheson said

inmates at the prison could sense the tension in the air over breathalyser tests for alcohol which had taken place in the run-up to the new year.

He said one of the inmates described seeing Allen and Martin, whom he knew as Shoulders and Lee, shouting and threatening to burn down the prison. He added that Allen was hitting the window of the B Wing office with a fire extinguisher, and Martin and Franklin, were trying to

lever the window away from the frame with a metal bar.

He said one inmate picked up a fire extinguisher and joined others in trying to put out the blaze, receiving abuse from some prisoners as they did so.

Mr Acheson said people who were trying to save their "home" were called "screws" by the prisoners causing the damage.

The trial continues.

Man guilty of killing 'love rival'

A MAN has been convicted of stabbing his "love rival" to death.

Mark Watson was found covered in blood after knifing his "friend" Alexandre Sokolnikov, known as Alex, through the heart.

Yesterday a jury at Lewes Crown Court found the 49-year-old guilty of Mr Sokolnikov's murder.

The verdict was returned following a ten-day trial.

Speaking after the verdict, Detective Chief Inspector Nick May said: "I am pleased that justice has been served against this dangerous man. He has shown no remorse or concern for the consequences of his actions throughout his trial and refused to take responsibility for the death of Alexandre Sokolnikov."

"Although originally from Russia, Sokolnikov came to the UK more than ten years ago and worked on and off in Eastbourne but sadly it would appear his life took a turn for the worse and he found himself living on the streets of Eastbourne, where he met Watson."

During the trial the court heard Watson feared Mr Sokolnikov wanted to "get with" his ex-partner Lea Gar.

The court was told that Watson stabbed Sokolnikov after a fracas on February 21 last year in which Watson was punched.

Sokolnikov was found on the pavement of Ceylon Place, Eastbourne, and was given emergency treatment before being taken to Eastbourne District General. He died shortly afterwards.

Police found the murder weapon – a large knife – in a nearby bush and Watson was arrested on suspicion of murder. However, he denied killing his "friend", claiming he had acted in self-defence and had "no reason to kill" – a claim the jury did not believe.

Watson will be sentenced on February 3.

King's speech

MORE than 400 business leaders will be briefed on the state of the economy by Britain's top banker.

The Governor of the Bank of England, Mervyn King, will speak at a special dinner at The Grand Hotel in Kings Road, Brighton on Tuesday.

All journalists – including The Argus – have been barred from the event.

A full report will be published in The Argus on Wednesday.

£3,500 fine is slammed as being meek

Football star drove while serving ban

by BEN PARSONS

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FINED: Gonzalo Reyes outside Brighton Magistrates' Court

A BRIGHTON and Hove Albion ace who was banned for drink-driving got behind the wheel because he did not want to miss a team meeting.

Gonzalo Jara Reyes was on loan with the Seagulls when he was arrested in Brighton for driving while serving a ban.

And as the Chilean international was being questioned by police, his Albion teammates were backing a campaign against drink- or drug-driving.

Yesterday he was given a £3,500 fine and told he could not drive for 12 months after admitting driving while disqualified and driving without insurance.

But safety campaigners condemned the sentence as "meek".

The 26-year-old had been banned for drink-driving in the Midlands in May. In October he came to Brighton on a 13-match loan from Premier League club West Bromwich Albion.

Brighton Magistrates' Court was told yesterday that Jara had arranged to be driven everywhere while he was serving his ban.

He was arrested in an Audi Q7 car in Richmond Terrace, Brighton, on December 17.

Catherine Junor, defending, said: "On that Saturday morning the taxi scheduled for 10.50am to take him to the stadium for a pre-match meeting did not materialise."

Dangers

"He stupidly decided to drive to the stadium."

The arrest meant Jara missed Albion's match against Burnley, which they lost 1-0.

During the warm-up for the match the Seagulls wore T-shirts warning of the dangers of driving whilst under the influence of drink and drugs, as part of a campaign with Sussex firefighters.

Jara moved to the UK in 2009, joining West Bromwich Albion for £1.4 million in 2009.

He went back to West Brom in December. He gave his address in court as Catherine Drive, Sutton Coldfield.

Miss Junor told District Judge Stephen Nicholls that Jara wanted to apologise to the court, the club, his wife and his children.

She said: "It has been a matter of great concern, remorse, regret and humiliation."

He was described as a hard-working, dedicated professional.

As well as the fine, Judge Nicholls disqualified Jara for 12 months, starting yesterday. He told him he would have to reapply for a provisional licence when he had served his ban.

Tony Dring, of the Campaign Against Drinking and Driving, said he was disappointed by the sentence.

He said: "It is too meek and gives entirely the wrong message not only to the footballer but also to any other person who is banned from the roads. The courts should have come down on him like a ton of bricks."

Jewellery raid gunman jailed

A GUNMAN who attempted to rob a jeweller's – but was thwarted by a have-a-go-hero – has been jailed for three-and-a-half years.

Masked Simon Stanton, from Albourne Close, Whitehawk, Brighton, burst into Wheelers Jewellers, in Bath Place, Worthing, on Saturday, July 16 last year.

The 21-year-old pointed the gun at shop owner Nicky Wheeler, who was there with her husband Tim, son Christopher and a female customer.

Mr Wheeler – who was behind the counter – turned on Stanton and chased him down the street.

A retired police officer who witnessed what had happened joined in and the pair raced after Stanton, who was eventually caught and rugby-tackled to the ground.

The duo held him down until he was arrested.

At Chichester Crown Court on Monday, Stanton admitted a count of attempted armed robbery.



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