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Verdict reached in trial

By LYNN McQUEEN

A jury deliberated about 20 minutes Wednesday before issuing a not guilty verdict in the trial of a Marlboro County man accused of murder.

Elliott Hepburn, Jr., 34, had been charged with murder in connection with the shooting death of Quincy Graham, 25, outside a home on Family Farm Road on July 24, 2004.

Hepburn also was injured in the shootout.

Assistant Solicitors Kevin Hales of Bennettsville and J.R. Joyner of Cheraw prosecuted the case. Doug Jennings represented Hepburn in the trial with Judge Howard P. King presiding.

"We thought all along that it was a case of self-defense," Jennings said after the verdict was delivered. "The Hepburn family is very grateful that the jury agreed."

The trial was short, with the defense electing not to put up any witnesses after the state rested its case on Tuesday afternoon.

Jennings said in his closing statement that this was because the state had failed to meet its burden of proof against the defendant.

The state's witnesses included several people who were at the residence when the shootings occurred, a Marlboro County Sheriff's deputy who responded to the scene, a pathologist and a SLED crime scene expert.

On the evening of July 24, 2004, Hepburn allegedly went to 1604 Family Farm Road with a rifle. But the prosecution and defense disagreed about what happened next, with Jennings saying Hepburn laid down his weapon and only picked it up again when Graham obtained a weapon of his own.