

WITNESS STATEMENT OF TONY FARRELL THE OWL & THE FUZZY COP - AN INSIDE STORY ABOUT HILLSBOROUGH

I am a former employee of South Yorkshire Police. I joined that organisation in September 1993 as the Force Statistics Officer and left it in September 2010 as the Principal Intelligence Analyst - I was sacked for my beliefs. I was dismissed for making a stance for the truth about the attacks of 9/11 and the London bombings of 7/7. In Police State UK 2010, standing for truth could easily cost you your job. No allegation of any misconduct by me exists, whatsoever. My case currently resides in an employment tribunal where the case from South Yorkshire Police seems to be arguing that it is not a requirement for me to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Towards the end of my career in South Yorkshire Police - most probably in 2009, I was told a truly disturbing story about the Hillsborough tragedy by a well-respected staff-member, who was present and working in the stadium on that fateful day. The one who informed me was not a police officer but a civilian, or, to use the correct term - a member of the Support-Staff. The individual in question held a Senior position in the organisation. This was to be the only time I heard this story. I don't believe that this Support-Staff member meant me ever to share it this way, but I feel compelled to do the right thing. Hearing the tale unfold gave me a profound sense of sadness and disappointment. That said - it was short-lived.

In South Yorkshire Police, as in so many other forces, it seems increasingly the norm to turn a blind eye, when misdemeanours by those of high rank occur. In my own defence, the significance of this story at the time was totally lost on me. After all I was one of them and felt the need to be loyal, to a certain degree. I did not always think like them and I never quite felt institutionalised like I think some are. There were many times in my career when I felt compelled to go against the flow.

Nevertheless: I must have been sufficiently well-programmed to fail to appreciate the potential significance of the grim account. All too soon - and we are talking only perhaps a few hours - recollections of the wretched tale slid to the back of my memory.

MY OWN POSITION ON THE HILLSBOROUGH DISASTER IN CONTEXT

Back in 1989, I was living in Sheffield and working for Sheffield City Council as a middle manager. Not a single person, or family, directly

affected on that day was known to me. Prior to joining SYP in 1993, I saw the scale of the disaster as being just one of those terrible tragic accidents that occur from time to time, somewhere in the country, on average, about once a decade. My insight and knowledge on that day was nothing more than superficial, and my viewpoint was non-judgmental. Why does one side or other have to be blamed? That was the limit of my thinking.

As a young lad, I had been a Liverpool supporter, but coming from a “woolyback” town like Widnes, and save for all the finals the great teams were to win, I cared not that much for the round ball – much preferring the oval one. So it was fair to say that I was neutral on “Hillsborough”.

Later as an employee of South Yorkshire Police, the subject of “Hillsborough” occasionally cropped-up in conversation, within my circles. I had nothing much to say on the matter. I was not there in the stadium and so felt I had no authority to speak, but I always took time to listen and reflect.

Whenever officers spoke of their own personal “Hillsborough” experiences, they always did so with great reverence and sadness. Once they started talking, I would notice that they often found it hard to stop. Absent was the usual bravado and usual humour that would so often be a healthy feature of cultural police banter, when recollecting bold, daring and amusing tales from days gone by.

Never once did “Hillsborough” come onto my own personal radar as an analyst. There was nothing untoward with that. It was perfectly natural for that to be so. I often thought to myself how fortunate I was not to be in the stadium at that time. In a sense it made me feel grateful to be a Principal Intelligence Analyst, rather than a Police Officer. Perhaps my deepest thought was to occasionally ponder why Liverpool families and supporters still seemed to be carrying grievances. At a subliminal-level, I could not really understand why affected-families and so many supporters could not let issues just rest, and try to move on, in a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation. At one extreme, I used to think: isn't it sad that society always feels the need to have scapegoats!

On one occasion, I had the pleasure of visiting Merseyside Police, as part of a bench-marking team from my own force in South Yorkshire. The interaction was entirely friendly and businesslike, and I can say with confidence, that, at my middle management level, I had no sense whatsoever that Hillsborough was still an issue between the respective police forces.

Such was the general background in which I set the following story.

THE STORY OF THE STORYTELLER

As previously mentioned, it was towards the end of my career, sometime most probably in 2009 that the story was imparted to me, about something that had happened inside Hillsborough Stadium, on that day. I received the account from the second most Senior member of the HQ Communications Department. He mentioned what had happened at Hillsborough, over lunch, as we sat alone in the staff canteen at Police Headquarters, on Snig Hill, in Sheffield. I knew the storyteller well-enough to say hello to and occasionally enjoy a chat together, but our paths did not cross that often – perhaps once a quarter.

As we ate, he must have mentioned the Hillsborough subject, because it was once again being dealt-with earlier that morning by the Chief Constable.

In reflecting, the storyteller told me that he had been present in the stadium on the fateful day, as a Press-Officer representing South Yorkshire Police. Over our lunch, the storyteller was in a pensive mood and somehow seemed to want to offload. I listened sympathetically as he told me his first-hand experiences in connection with a Command and Control issue, that concerned an Assistant Chief Constable.

The best recollection I have of this noteworthy-story as it was related to me is as follows:

At some stage this Support Staff member was in the stadium while the tragic events were unfolding. Soon after it was apparent, that something was going dreadfully wrong in the crowd, the storyteller had been given a specific instruction from a Senior Officer to get to the Control Room in the stadium, and find out and report back upon what was happening. Thus he made his way to the Control Room and attempted to enter, in his capacity as a SYP Press-Officer. He found the door locked and those inside unwilling, at first, to let him in. The storyteller insisted that he be let in. After some resistance by those inside, it is my recollection that the storyteller said he was either eventually let in, or he forced his way into the Control Room. I can't recall for certain which way he said entry occurred. Either way, upon gaining entry into the Control Room, this press-officer soon discovered why it was that his entry had been blocked. He said that upon entering the doorway, he saw the Assistant Chief Constable Walter W. Jackson crouched like a gibbering wreck hiding underneath a table. Making it clear that he was in a totally unfit state to be in the

Control Room, particularly as he was the most Senior Officer present on the day and in over-all command of policing the event. I was told that officers inside the Control Room had been trying to prevent entry, in an effort to cover-up the Assistant Chief Constable's compromised position.

As the story unfolded, I recall our reflections in 2009. In my opinion, the storyteller seemed sad and forlorn and somehow keen to offload. I myself had listened sympathetically and uncritically. I tried to imagine how I would have handled myself, if I had been in command when all hell was breaking loose. Would I have crumbled similarly, I asked myself? In feeling pity for Walter Jackson, I recall saying to the storyteller, "There but for the Grace of God, go most of us"

Between us there seemed to be an unspoken sense of shame. Shame for what? Walter Jackson was still the Assistant Chief Constable when I first joined the organisation in 1993, four years after the event. It crossed my mind that he therefore had held this position with his reputation seemingly left fully-intact for several years after the event, and after his retirement in the mid 90's and still up to today.

Upon hearing the story for the first and only time, I remember thinking that by rights Walter Jackson's operational command should have been curtailed in the aftermath of this Hillsborough incident. Momentarily, I wondered why that had not happened. At that time I chose not to think too deeply about the implications of what I was thinking. With an uneasy feeling about things, I refrained from commenting and distanced the tale, so that I could refocus on my assignments for the afternoon. Work was always interesting, so I soon put the issue to one side.

Looking back to our conversation, I recall thinking that this was clearly not one of South Yorkshire Police's proudest moments. My dominant emotions were sadness, rather than outrage. I was not attuned-enough, as an analyst, to see it from the perspective of the families and friends who had lost their loved one. I can only surmise that they needed to hear the truth, before they could start to heal. Sadly, their plight did not come into my thought processes at the time.

And so to move forward to the more recent past. In August 2010, while no longer working for South Yorkshire Police, I received a phone-call from a relatively newly found friend - David Pidcock. Specifically, David called me to say that Chief Constable Meredydd Hughes was once again being criticised in the press, over Hillsborough. As I am currently in an employment tribunal case with South Yorkshire Police, I could not resist checking this news out on the

Internet.

It wasn't long before I came across an article on the subject in the Liverpool Echo. The article concerned Margaret Aspinall, the Chief Constable Meredydd Hughes and the Sheffield Coroner Chris Dorries. After reading the article, I watched a moving YouTube video, in which Margaret Aspinall gave a speech, where she addressed a crowd of supporters and officials from Liverpool FC, earlier this year. I listened to her speak about truth and justice. I was touched and brought to tears, as, perhaps for the first time, I was looking at Hillsborough from the perspective of the victims' families and not from the perspective of the police. Twenty-two years after the event, amidst all sorts of squabbles over disclosure, and still the truth has not come out. That much is obvious to me, if this story is anything to go by.

The Senior Press Officer's story - as told to me in 2009 - highlighted a stark picture of human frailty in the form of ACC Walter W. Jackson allegedly losing his faculties when confronted with CCTV pictures showing utter horror of an almost unimaginable kind.

When I reflected on this in August 2011, I had an entirely fresh and different perspective. I saw things differently - I had a paradigm shift. Instead of looking back and feeling pity for Walter W. Jackson in the way I did back in 2009, I felt outrage, not so much with ACC Walter W. Jackson, but with the Chief Constable Meredydd Hughes, as it suddenly becomes all too clear to me, that potential monstrous cover-up of the truth continues to be being perpetuated by the police service, and in this instance my former employers South Yorkshire Police. For twenty-two years ACPO officers, and, I dare say others besides, must have been complicit in the cover-up. I find that disgraceful.

The storyteller would have had no reason to lie or fabricate such a story. He had merely been offloading on to me, as a trusted source whom he would have felt was entirely loyal to the organisation. Doubtless, when he told me this story, he thought that I would keep it secret to the grave. Loyalty is wrong when it perpetuates injustice. Furthermore it cuts across South Yorkshire Police's very own mantra - "Justice with Courage" - a mantra so prevalent in the Force at the time I joined the force. This statement identifies the storyteller and implores him to finally blow that whistle on this shameful cover-up. Otherwise he might have to be subpoenaed to attend any subsequent hearings that may arise, once the official documents are finally made public.

My plea to the storyteller is this. Clear your conscience **Andy!** Declare what you know! Do it honestly and openly, not just for your own sake,

but for the sake of the families of the 96 dead, and for the sake of exposing Britain's police-state and judicial corruption, and another of its monstrous cover-ups, like the London Bombings of 7/7/2005. Don't be scared! Let them do their worst, but you my friend do your best!

Let me repeat and be quite clear what I am saying here. The shame of this story rests not so much with ACC Walter W. Jackson's breakdown in a dreadful moment of crisis - for that could happen to anyone - but the subsequent and persistent cover-up of that dismal incident by Senior Officers in South Yorkshire Police.

I have no reason to doubt the general truthfulness behind the storyteller's story. It is inconceivable to me that ACC Walter W. Jackson would have remained in office, if that story had been revealed, as it should.

I spoke to Trevor Hicks last week. He was not aware of this story, so clearly it seems safe to assume that this incident has not been disclosed. Certain Senior Officers serving in South Yorkshire Police must know of this massive cover-up. Doubtless there will be senior officials, past and present, who are hiding behind the undisclosed facts of Hillsborough.

In times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.

It is high time the truth came out. Are you listening Andy Hymas? There, again, I feel compelled to name you, as the one who blew the whistle, however inadvertently. Andy, you can help the Police Service by standing for the truth. Ultimately, it might cost you your job, but be assured that South Yorkshire Police will not be able to keep sacking people, for going against the flow and telling the truth, for too much longer. I urge you! No, I implore you, please come clean, act with integrity and become a press-officer who has cleared his conscience! People will respect you if you do.

In the process, you will not just do the police service a great favour, but you will help your profession start to think about their putrid ways. You owe it to the families of those who lost their loved ones on that strange and mournful day.

Tony Farrell

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