

Witness: Jerry Kirkby
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The Leveson Inquiry into the Culture Practices and Ethics of the Press

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1. I am currently the Assistant Chief Constable of Surrey Police and have held this position since 2008.
2. I began my policing service with Surrey Police in 1983 before transferring to the Metropolitan Police in 1998 on promotion to Chief Inspector.
3. In 2001, I returned to Surrey Police on promotion to Superintendent.
4. Between 2005 to 2008, I was seconded to ACPO and then the National Policing Improvement Agency as the National Programme Director for the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing Programme before returning to Surrey Police as Assistant Chief Constable.
5. In July 2011, following the conviction of Levi Bellfield for Milly Dowler's kidnap and murder, I was instructed by then Chief Constable Mark Rowley to commence an internal investigation into Surrey Police's handling of information obtained from the *News of the World* in April 2002 that it had accessed Milly's mobile phone voicemail. This

investigation is called Operation Baronet. The investigation is in an advanced stage and my investigation team continues to secure all of the relevant documents from 2002 (which has been supplied to the MPS and some of which have been submitted to the Inquiry) and to take witness statements. As the Inquiry is aware, Surrey Police has been working closely with the MPS. In January 2012 the MPS decided to conduct further investigations into whether, to what extent and by whom Milly's mobile phone voicemail message(s) may have been deleted. Once the findings of the MPS's further investigations are known, I will be in a position to complete the Operation Baronet report. Once I have done so, I will submit a second witness statement to the Inquiry explaining my findings and exhibiting the Operation Baronet report. I have referred to a number of the statements taken by Operation Baronet below. These statements can be made available to the Inquiry once Operation Baronet has concluded.

Introduction

6. The police service, rightly, receives a greater degree of scrutiny from the press than most other organisations, and Surrey Police is keen to engage with the media in order to provide an open and transparent account of its work to the public. The challenges faced in doing so, however, should not be underestimated, and it is worth exploring the experience that Surrey Police has had in its relationship with the media over the last decade. I am aware that Ian Marratt, Surrey Police's Interim Fast-time Communications Manager has answered the questions posed by the Inquiry in its s.21(2) Notice. I have endeavoured not to duplicate the information about Surrey Police's media relations already provided by Mr Marratt. I am also aware that the Inquiry has received responses to s.21(2) Notices from Lord Blair, Sir Denis O'Connor, Mr Bob Quick and Chief Constable Lynne Owens which deal with their time as senior officers at Surrey Police. In this statement I aim to give a broad overview of Surrey Police's experience

of the media over the last decade or so, rather than experiences of one senior officer.

The turn of the century 2000 – 2002

7. In 2000, Surrey Police took responsibility for large areas of Spelthorne, Epsom and Ewell, and Elmbridge boroughs from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), taking the population of the area that it policed from approximately 775,000 to 1,050,000. At the same time, Surrey Police began to lose officers to the MPS, which had just secured an enhanced London weighting for salaries and therefore became a very attractive force for which to work, for many officers. The combination of rapid growth and poor retention of staff meant that the organisation experienced exceptional turnover and employed a relatively inexperienced workforce at constable and sergeant ranks.

8. The Media Relations Team at the time was split between seven geographically located divisional teams and one central HQ team, with staff from a variety of professional backgrounds and with a mixture of experience; some had been local journalists, while some came from other backgrounds, outside of press or publicity work. While Surrey Police dealt with the national media in relation to major incidents, the majority of the team's work was in relation to smaller-scale enquiries from local newspapers and radio. Staff have described, in statements given to Operation Baronet, enjoying a good working relationship with local media but having limited exposure to national media¹. Some staff were more experienced², but these staff tended to be from the HQ team, and their most recent experience of a significant incident attracting national interest related to the investigation of the then Deputy Chief Constable (DCC) for alleged indecent assault. Media interest in this case began following his suspension in January 1999, ran throughout the period that he was charged and acquitted

¹ Statements of Nicola Burress, Emma-Jane Kelly and Ruth Marshall provided to Operation Baronet

² Statement of Sue Dawkins provided to Operation Baronet

(September 1999 to September 2000) and did not ultimately cease until his retirement in May 2001. While attracting national media attention, however, the allegations related to historic incidents, meaning that the incident was not as fast-paced, in terms of either the police investigation or the demands of the media, as would be the case in a live missing person or murder enquiry.

9. Until early 2003 there was no task management system for major incidents, and no single, electronic system for recording contact between Media Relations Officers (MRO's) and journalists, with any contact being recorded by each officer in their own, individual notebook. In most cases these were later archived but there was no central repository of knowledge regarding media contact since, in general, each team would deal with their local journalists, generally by telephone and fax rather than by e-mail. Similarly, while there were shared computer folders used by the team for storing electronic documents, many MRO's stored documents that they created on their own individual computer accounts, and often such documents would be stored in hard copy in ring-binders. In March 2003, a detailed set of policy and procedures (the *A-Z of Media Guidelines*) were created and published internally by the Media Relations Team, and media awareness training was delivered to operational staff in certain roles. Put simply, Surrey Police's Media Relations Team was experienced and proficient in dealing with local media in a professional and timely way, having built solid professional relationships, but was used to dealing with national media only on an infrequent basis and handling short-term requests for information. The team was not, however, either experienced or prepared for a major incident attracting sustained or intense national media attention.
10. The year 2000 also saw the appointment of a new Chief Constable, Denis O'Connor (now Sir Denis O'Connor, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary), who identified the need for restructuring of both the senior management and the force. In response to both pressed

finances and staff inexperience, the force made a number of radical changes to the way that policing was delivered, moving from omnicompetent officers to streamed units of Investigation, Response and Neighbourhoods, and reducing the number of Basic Command Units (BCUs) to four. The redesigned force went live in January 2002 and included other changes such as a dedicated Major Crime Investigation Team. While certainly effective in the long term, this re-engineering of business processes caused some uncertainty and dislocation for staff in the short term.

11. During his career (and notably while serving with the MPS), Sir Denis had gathered considerable experience of the media, and he brought a new approach to media management³, evidenced by greater proactive engagement with bodies such as the Crime Reporters' Association (CRA) referred to below. While initially a cause for apprehension by some colleagues, this more proactive approach to engagement with the CRA was accepted practice elsewhere in the police service and was quickly recognised by senior detectives in Surrey as a valuable tool in managing the demands of the media in complex major investigations⁴. The fresh approach to management of media relations was also evidenced by Surrey Police's recruitment of an increasing number of ex-journalists over subsequent years, including Tim Morris as Press and Publicity Manager in July 2002. These staff brought with them an understanding of what the media required, and how best to manage media contacts in order to further the aims of an investigation and maximise community engagement.

12. What national media attention Surrey Police did receive at this time often related to celebrities who lived within the county, and this type of interest remained a constant theme throughout the decade. Media enquiries regarding such celebrities usually created additional work for the Media Relations Team for a relatively short period of time,

³ Statement of Alan Sharp provided to Operation Baronet

⁴ Statements of Craig Denholm and Stuart Gibson provided to Operation Baronet

necessitating the writing and dissemination of press statements, but limited ongoing contact. Relations with national media outlets and their journalists at this time have been described by a variety of staff, both from the Media Relations Team and other departments, as professional and productive. The general sense is that Surrey Police adopted a very open attitude towards the media, and generated a good working relationship but, without regular contact, the staff did not know or work with any one journalist more than another. In 2001 the Media Relations Team were also involved in national publicity around the arrest and conviction of Brian Field, who murdered 14 year old schoolboy Roy Tutill in April 1968. Coming as a result of a cold case review, there was little spontaneous or fast-time demand placed upon the Media Relations Team, which was able to plan statements and press strategies ahead of time. The success of the "cold case review", resulting in a successful conviction for the murder of a young boy more than thirty years after the offence, resulted in a great deal of positive publicity for the force.

A year of challenges – 2002

13. On the afternoon of Thursday 21st March 2002 Amanda Dowler, known as "Milly" to friends and family, went missing on her way home from school. The details of the ensuing investigation, which was not successfully concluded until 2011 with the conviction for murder of Levi Bellfield, will be dealt with in more detail in my second statement. However, the scale of the investigation, and the general opinions of Media Relations Officers and senior detectives with respect to relations with the media at this time are worthy of note.
14. In the six months after Milly disappeared, Surrey Police carried out more than 3,500 house-to-house enquiries in the Walton area and searched over 350 sites including 40 underwater sites and 35 miles of waterways. The investigation team followed up reported sightings of Milly from around the country and beyond (including reported sightings

of her in Fiji and on a ferry from Portsmouth to Bilbao), and identified 256 people of potential interest to the investigation, including sex offenders and people recently released from prison and who lived in a five mile radius of Walton. All were traced and interviewed to either eliminate or implicate them.

15. In addition to these operational pressures, Media Relations Officers involved in the early stage of the investigation have described the initial media demands made upon them variously as "alien" and "a steep learning curve"⁵, "just immense" and "relentless"⁶ and "overwhelming"⁷. Similarly, senior officers involved in the case have described elements of the press as "extremely demanding, and in some respects mischievous"⁸, and the level of interest as "unprecedented and immense"⁹. The Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) for the first phase of the investigation, Stuart Gibson, has stated "I think the enquiry was too consumed by the Press and Media", while Detective Superintendent Maria Woodall, the final SIO for the case (Maria was a Detective Sergeant in the early stages of the investigation) recalls that "there were always last minute requests, often on a Friday afternoon with demands for information... around a story that the media wanted or intended to run at the weekend. This was huge pressure that diverted considerable amounts of our time"¹⁰.
16. While Surrey Police actively sought to engage and maintain this interest in order to obtain as much information as possible from the public, this alone cannot account for such remarkably intense media activity.
17. The Media Relations Team was unprepared for this level of demand from the media, and one of the MRO's working at the time stated that

⁵ Statement of Nicola Burress provided to Operation Baronet

⁶ Statement of Sue Dawkins provided to Operation Baronet

⁷ Statement of Ruth Marshall provided to Operation Baronet

⁸ Statement of Carl Crathern provided to Operation Baronet

⁹ Statement of Maria Woodall provided to Operation Baronet

¹⁰ Ibid

“most of the time we did not have the resources in the Press Office to get back to the original caller due to the volume of calls we were receiving”¹¹. Another MRO stated that “[Monday 25th March] later came to be known to us (Press Officers) as ‘Black Monday’... We were totally unprepared for the level of interest and volume of calls that came into the office that day and I cannot describe it as anything other than complete chaos”¹². This is not to say that these staff were anything other than professional and fully committed to finding Milly. They were seeking to sustain the greatest possible media interest to maximise the opportunity for information from the public and the Media Relations Team was obviously critical to achieving this aim. Tim Morris, who joined Surrey Police in July 2002 as Press and Publicity Manager with previous experience from the MPS, summed up the position thus; “[Surrey Police] devoted considerable attention to satisfying and generating media interest to find ‘Milly’ but then found they had started something that ran out of control, they had generated a media storm and they found it difficult to control that level of interest”.

18. The unprecedented demands meant that some parts of the media felt that they were not being given the information that they required, and this led to some tensions. An area of particular tension became the practice of pooling interviews and information so that all media outlets were treated equally, with the same information available to each, but also so that victims, family and friends would only have to give an interview once that was then available to all outlets¹³. This approach was used for family and friends of Milly Dowler, and also with a victim from a crime linked to Operation Orb, the investigation into a series of linked rape offences committed in the south east of England. In one case, journalists attempted to call Chief Constable O'Connor to complain that the Media Relations Team was not receptive to their ideas, but this was dealt with by his Staff Officer and the Head of Media

¹¹ Statement of Nicola Burress provided to Operation Baronet

¹² Statement of Emma-Jane Kelly provided to Operation Baronet

¹³ Statement of Sarah McGregor provided to Operation Baronet

Relations¹⁴. On another occasion, *The Sunday Mirror* published an article describing the investigation under DCI Gibson as "rudderless"¹⁵, and this media coverage has since been described by (then DCC) Peter Fahy as "a factor in replacing the SIO for [the investigation]". The attitude of *The News of the World* and *The Sun* was also somewhat confrontational in terms of their approach to the issue of a reward. When a reward was first offered from *The News of the World / The Sun*, the SIO initially declined the offer of a reward for information relating to the whereabouts of Milly, considering it unnecessary given the already high levels of public awareness, and fearing that it would generate large numbers of spurious calls that would distract from the core police investigation. However, he felt that he had little choice but to cooperate with them, despite these reservations, when the newspapers indicated that they would offer a reward with or without the cooperation of Surrey Police.

19. The experience of managing the media within a frenzied environment became a turning point for Surrey Police and its engagement with the media. Chief Constable O'Connor brought with him experience from the MPS, an organisation more used to dealing with the national media, and where engagement with members of the Crime Reporters' Association (CRA) had been developed. CRA briefings aimed to manage press interest in such a way that journalists could be briefed on sensitive issues if necessary; for example, to help explain the impact of an inaccurate story, or to help explain apparently confusing police activity. In order to develop the necessary relationships with the media, and to enable senior detectives to brief key journalists confidentially on sensitive aspects of an investigation that might otherwise be inadvertently prejudiced by uninformed reporting, Surrey Police held confidential CRA briefings, starting in July 2002. These briefings were given by a senior detective (usually the SIO or Officer in Overall Command) to members of the CRA, with a list taken of those

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

attending. Notes were prepared for the officer giving the briefing and clear direction was given as to what could and could not be released, with timescales. Although regularly used during the investigation of certain serious crime, the use of CRA briefings are not common practice and a process is required to determine its purpose and aim.

20. While many senior detectives at the time, and since, have stated that they initially felt hesitant with this approach, they recognised the benefit of such engagement. Craig Denholm, then Detective Chief Superintendent and now Deputy Chief Constable, has stated that:

“Despite my initial apprehension of the CRA briefings, having engaged in them I found the CRA briefing useful and now have significantly more confidence with them. Indeed after it the press were less intense and demanding on the investigation. It also forged improved police and press relations and put those relationships on a more professional footing”.

Maria Woodall, the SIO at the time of the conviction of Levi Bellfield, has also given an example, outside of the CRA process, where she felt forced to provide sensitive information to a CRA member in order to dissuade her from running another story that might be prejudicial to the investigation.

“Without going into detail, I recall that this [information known to the journalist] at the time could have been extremely damaging and I needed to divert her attention from this. I gave her a different angle to concentrate on, I think concerning an arrest plan. I did not feel comfortable doing this but felt that my hands were tied. My decision to follow this path was simply to protect the investigation, prevent damage to the case and prevent any further distress being caused to the family. I felt that if I had not have given her anything that there was a risk of the newspaper ‘doing their own thing’ and reporting inaccurately.”

This engagement with members of the CRA during 2002 built positive professional relationships with its members, whilst providing an opportunity to shift media attention away from Milly's family and friends and refocus it back onto the identification of witnesses and evidence. The latter consideration was important, not only out of concern for the family, but also because there were very real concerns that if the public were led to believe that the police already had suspects or leads, then further witnesses might be less likely to come forwards¹⁶.

21. In addition to CRA briefings, the experience of managing the media interest generated by Milly's disappearance led to a number of other changes within the Media Relation Team at Surrey Police. Starting with the recruitment of Tim Morris as Press and Publicity Manager, who had experience of the Rachel Nickell and Stephen Lawrence enquiries in the MPS, an increasing number of ex-journalists were recruited as Media Relations Officers to the point that in 2012 all MRO's have previous experience of either local or national journalism. These staff have brought with them a better understanding of the demands placed upon journalists and how to build an effective and professional relationship that meets the needs of both parties. Other changes directly attributable to this experience have included the introduction of professional and experienced external trainers to run training sessions for key staff such as senior detectives and Neighbourhood Inspectors, the introduction of a single database to record contact between the Media Relations Team and journalists, and systems for managing major incidents within the Media Relations Team such as the creation of work rotas and task allocation. As a result, Surrey Police is in a far stronger position to manage large scale media interest in investigations and major incidents. In late 2002 the Media Relations Team gave a presentation to an Association of Police Public Relations Officers

¹⁶ Statement of Peter Fahy provided to Operation Baronet

(APPRO) conference detailing the lessons to be learnt from their experience of managing the media in the Milly Dowler case.

22. The body of Amanda 'Milly' Dowler was found in September 2002, and the enquiry changed from that of locating a missing person to that of investigating a murder. Although the intensity of media interest diminished over time, each significant event or anniversary of Milly's disappearance gave rise to a brief period of renewed intensity and this continued until the conviction of Levi Bellfield in 2011. In 2002 Surrey Police also experienced intense media scrutiny over two other investigations; the Deepcut investigations and Operation Orb.
23. Between 1995 and 2002, four soldiers died at Deepcut Army Barracks, a training barracks for the Royal Logistics Corp, with the initial investigations of each determining that the deaths were the result of suicide. Publicity in March 2002 around the fourth death led members of the families of the three soldiers who had died previously to come forward and demand a reinvestigation, generating significant media interest in the thoroughness of the earlier investigations. This media interest began in April 2002, shortly after the disappearance of Milly Dowler and, although not a fast-time investigation in the same way as the search for Milly, it was obviously a significant additional demand upon the Media Relations Team.
24. Finally, the summer of 2002 saw a series of rapes committed across the South East of England that were linked during August and September under the operational name of Operation Orb, and which came to be known in the media as the "M25 Rapist". Chief Constable Dennis O'Connor was the lead ACPO officer for the five regional forces involved and was responsible for the agreement of investigative, media and support resources, had the investigation or subsequent prosecution been jeopardised. The Officer in Overall Command was ACC David Kelly from Kent Constabulary, but Surrey Media Relations Team had to manage press interest in the Surrey crimes, while liaising

closely with the other forces. There were a number of speculative reports at the time, including one that incorrectly linked another Surrey crime to the series, despite the reporter being given firm direction by the Media Relations Team that the crime was not linked on the evidence available. Chief Constable Denis O'Connor wrote to the journalist's editor to complain about this report, making it clear that such irresponsible reporting had caused distress to the families involved, and that the incident room had been inundated with calls that were not relevant to the Op Orb enquiry, but each of which required resources to eliminate.

25. As a result of this high level of media activity throughout 2002, the Surrey Police Media Relations Team asked neighbouring forces for mutual aid, and staff were provided by Hampshire and Sussex police forces for a number of weeks. Despite this assistance, and despite the best efforts and commitment of the Media Relations Officers involved, it is recognised by a number of staff that relations with the national and local media suffered due to the team being unable to fully service all of the requests made upon them.

Lessons Learnt – 2003 to present

26. The *Solcara* database, used to record and track contact between the Media Relations Team and journalists, was introduced in 2003 and in key investigations detailed logs of conversations were kept and disseminated between staff. Close engagement was maintained with members of the CRA throughout 2003, primarily around the investigation of Milly Dowler's murder and that of the Op Orb series of crimes, using briefings as appropriate. Guidance from the Association of Chief Police Officers' Media Advisory Group was followed in force policy and procedures, and also in arranging a pre-verdict briefing around the trial of Antoni Imiela for the Op Orb crimes. In addition to briefings, the first CRA event was held, where Surrey Police provided buffet snacks at a local Guildford bar and restaurant, and senior

officers and CRA members would attend to better understand the demands of each others' work, and discuss how best to facilitate the aims of each, without discussing the details of any investigations (which would be handled at a formal briefing). At a time when Surrey Police was dealing with the national media more often and in a greater volume than ever before, these events were seen as a good way of developing professional relationships and forging a better understanding of each others' professional environment. Towards the end of the decade, however, the way in which Surrey Police engaged with the CRA greatly reduced as the foundations of a professional working relationship between both parties had been established. Together with a desire to respond to an increased awareness of public perception towards corporate entertaining during times of austerity and mounting scrutiny towards public spending. The last event was held in August 2010.

27. A significant new issue for the Media Relations Team in 2003 was the arrest of celebrity Matthew Kelly in connection with historic allegations of sexual abuse which followed, but was entirely unconnected to, an international internet paedophile investigation called Operation Ore that had received widespread media attention. Surrey Police had been approached by journalists who had heard rumours circulating within the entertainment industry that a number of celebrities were under investigation, one of whom was Matthew Kelly, and this followed rumours surrounding the arrest in 2001 of Jonathan King and others linked to the entertainment industry. In the case of Matthew Kelly, this media interest forced Surrey Police to take action to arrest him sooner than might otherwise have been the case in order to prevent loss of evidence, preclude jeopardy to any future proceedings, and to minimise any distress to alleged victims or witnesses. Officers attended the theatre where Kelly was performing and arrested him there. Although Surrey Police never released Kelly's name and efforts were made to protect his privacy (by arresting him after his performance and releasing him through a non-public exit from Guildford police station

after bail) the force's actions attracted criticism from national media. As a result, Craig Denholm (then Detective Chief Superintendent) wrote to Piers Morgan (then editor of the *Mirror*) to complain with regard to his editorial of 17th January 2003, and what DCS Denholm considered unfounded criticism of Surrey Police. Mr Morgan replied via e-mail on 21st January:

Dear DCS Denholm

Thanks for the note. These stories are hideously difficult for both you guys and us. Fame and crime sends most of the usual rules out of the window. I hear what you say, and I will bear it in mind when we revisit this story.

Yours

Piers Morgan

28. The remainder of 2003 and 2004 held few significant events for Surrey Police's relationship with the media, but on 20th April 2005, Abigail Witchalls was stabbed by an unknown attacker while walking near her home, leaving her paralysed from the neck down. This unprovoked and unusual attack created significant media interest, with all of the major media operations making significant demands upon the Media Relations Team. The investigation team were left with limited investigative opportunities, and so made use of the media interest in an attempt to maximise the opportunities for witness appeals and information from the public. The Media Relations Team had recently been joined by another member of staff who had specific television experience, and assisted the SIO in that regard. In one example of assistance from the media, an appeal for information about a blue car seen in the area was broadcast very quickly by all sections of the media, and led to two people presenting themselves to a police station the same day. Those people were unconnected to the assault, and the speed of the media appeal allowed the investigators to very quickly eliminate the vehicle from their enquiries.

29. On the other hand, however, Lord Justice Leveson has already heard, from Abigail's mother, Baroness Hollins, of the distress caused to Abigail's family by the activity of the media; for example 'camping out' in the garden outside the family home and the hospital in which Abigail was treated. Media tactics could also have easily hindered the investigation. For instance, when a male suspect was identified and arrested, a media organisation made contact with the investigation team to make them aware of their possession his photograph and their intention to publish it. In order to avoid the risk of prejudicing any identification evidence that would have been required to secure any subsequent conviction, the SIO had to make direct contact with the editor of the newspaper in order to , explain the potential impact of the photograph's publication. Following this conversation the newspaper agreed to delay the publication of the photograph pending the completion of the identification procedure.
30. Throughout 2006 and much of 2007, there were few significant incidents to attract national media attention to Surrey, although a number of crime reporters continued their keen interest in the investigation into the murder of Milly Dowler. In 2008 the death of Georgian billionaire Badri Patarkatsishvili attracted a level of national media attention, while at the same time the force dealt with a number of other incidents, such as the murder of Charles Davies, a 23 year old male who was set alight and later died in hospital, which could have generated significant national media attention, but which tended to be picked up primarily by the local press. The death of Badri Patarkatsishvili followed very shortly after the murder by poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko in London, which attracted enormous media interest because of the unusual nature of the poisoning (using polonium-210) and the allegations of links to Russian government agencies. The link between Litvinenko and Patarkatsishvili, via Boris Berezovsky (a Russian billionaire and mutual acquaintance), as well as Patarkatsishvili's relatively young age and lack of previous health problems, led to a thorough investigation of his death by Surrey Police.

It also led to media interest from national media but this was relatively short-lived compared to other investigations mentioned above, once the post mortem was completed and showed the cause of death as a heart attack.

31. 2009 again saw issues that came to the attention of the national media, with the investigation into the murder of Milly Dowler reaching a key stage. Also in 2009, Surrey Police received further national media attention when a male threatening officers with a firearm (which was subsequently revealed to be a blank-firing pistol) was shot and killed by armed officers. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) investigated the incident, deciding that there were no criminal offences for any officers to answer, and an inquest jury decided that the death was one of lawful killing. The incident attracted national media attention, however, at least in part because the male had gone to Guildford Cathedral, and had threatened officers from the steps of the Cathedral. The management of the media with regard to this incident was made more complex than usual for Surrey Police because of the involvement of the IPCC who manage all media enquiries in cases that they are investigating. As a result, Surrey Police was limited in its ability to provide information that might have affected public confidence in the actions of the police.
32. In June 2010, Surrey Police dealt with an armed siege at a Barclay's Bank in Ashford. The incident occurred around 4pm on a weekday within a very busy shopping area and, although lasting only three hours, it attracted national and international media attention, as well as an unusually high degree of "citizen journalism" with videos taken by local people used by national media organisations on television and websites. The Media Relations Office was deluged with requests for information from journalists and, having learnt lessons from some of the incidents already described, the team instigated their major incident plan. One staff member was deployed to the scene, with a support cell at HQ led by the media manager and staffed by four staff, each with a

specific role; call-handler, writer, monitor and pivot (to feed information between the scene and HQ).

33. The siege also prompted the force's first continuous use of Twitter in covering an unfolding incident, providing the force with an additional opportunity to engage directly with the public, thereby offering reassurance during and after a particularly sensitive event. More than 70 media calls were answered within a three hour period, in addition to proactive statements released, regular web updates, interviews provided at the scene and regular tweets to media and the public throughout. This incident alone shows the media environment within which police operations must now take place, the potential pressures placed upon police commanders, and the need for a well-trained and experienced media relations office to manage media demands.
34. In 2010 and 2011, national media attention was again focussed on the investigation into the murder of Milly Dowler, when Levi Bellfield was charged (2010) and convicted (2011) of her murder. Members of the CRA maintained a keen interest in the case as it came to completion, and the Media Relations Team continued to engage with them. Potential prejudicial reporting of Bellfield's past by sections of the media, however, meant that charges relating to the alleged abduction of Rachel Cowles shortly before Milly Dowler was kidnapped and murdered now lie on file following the trial judge's determination that Bellfield would be unable to receive a fair trial [Is this case being re-prosecuted?]. Contempt of court prosecutions are currently ongoing.
35. Finally the murder in 2011 of Heather Cooper, a serving Surrey police officer, generated further national media coverage, much of it focussing on possible suspects, and some of it wrongly naming an unconnected individual. Heather's partner, a former Surrey Police officer, has been arrested and charged, and this has created a difficult situation for the force to manage from a communications point of view given the need to balance the absolute requirement not to provide information into the

public domain that might prejudice a prosecution, while also managing internal communications to ensure that Heather's colleagues and friends are kept informed and supported.

Summary and Conclusion

36. Surrey Police's relationship with the media has changed significantly over the past decade. As a force responsible for a relatively small county with a low crime rate, it might be expected that Surrey Police would receive relatively little national media attention, and this is generally the case. However, the county's proximity to London and the majority of national media organisations, together with its affluence and thus the number of celebrity residents, has meant that the force has experienced a number of short-term but intense periods of national media attention.

37. Prior to 2002, Surrey Police's Media Relations Team was experienced and competent at engaging with local media, and had dealings with national media for short periods of time, but was not engaging with national journalists on a regular basis. In 2002, however, the Media Relations Team had to drastically change the way that it approached media engagement and its internal processes. The complexity of the investigations and the sustained intensity of media interest that year forced the Media Relations Team to take a more proactive approach towards media engagement in order to maximise the information gained from the public, protect victims and witnesses from unwarranted media intrusion and prevent inaccurate information adversely affecting the investigations. Continued engagement with key journalists over a longer period of time, in addition to improved processes and training, meant that over the long term Surrey Police's relationship with the media was improved, even after challenging circumstances when journalists were desperate for information and the Media Relations Team was stretched to – and sometimes beyond – capacity.

Recognised good practice from other forces, such as the use of CRA briefings, was adopted.

38. Since 2002 the Media Relations Team has built upon that work, and developed their own practices to try to enhance Surrey Police's relationship with the media. CRA briefings have been used in key situations, such as critical stages of the investigation into the murder of Milly Dowler, and the Media Relations Team has used the relationships that it formed to attempt to minimise media impact upon victims and their families as well as people suspected of, but not charged with, a crime. All of the Media Relations Team now have previous experience working as journalists, with some having worked for national organisations, and the relationship with the media is now considered to be good at both local and national levels. Surrey Police now has greater confidence that it would have the capacity and capabilities within the Media Relations Team and senior officers to be able to engage with media far more successfully if presented with a major enquiry, and that these changes would significantly improve the force's service to victims, witnesses and the wider community.

I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true

Signed.

Dated.....

5th March 2012