

(v.) The Letters and Tape Inquiry

197. Between March 1978 and June 1979, during the second half of the Yorkshire Ripper inquiry, three anonymous letters and a tape recording were received by the police in West Yorkshire from a man who claimed responsibility for the crimes and signed himself, "Jack the Ripper". The individual items were:

- (a) A letter postmarked 8th March 1978 and addressed to Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield
- (b) A letter postmarked 13th March 1978 addressed to the Editor of the "Daily Mirror" Newspaper in Manchester
- (c) A letter postmarked 23rd March 1979 addressed to Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield
- (d) An envelope believed to have been posted on 16/17th June 1979 addressed to Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield containing a cassette tape recording.

198. The consequences of the receipt of these letters and tape recording were:

- (a) Major police resources were applied in an attempt to trace the author of the letters and tape who was believed to be the killer.
- (b) The police and the public were conditioned to believe that the author of the letters and tape was the killer and was a native of Sunderland.
- (c) Information derived from the letters and tape (handwriting, accent and blood group) was used to eliminate suspects.

199. The application of significant resources to tracing the author of the letters and tape was a matter for the professional judgement of the chief investigating officer and I find no fault with his decision in this respect. The complete acceptance, however, that the author was the killer, was not justified by the evidence available at the time and should, in any case, have been tested by rigorous analysis. The decision to use factors from the letters and tape as a basis for the elimination of suspects was indefensible. As I have mentioned elsewhere in my report the elimination of a person interviewed in connection with serious crime should only be undertaken where factual information proves that it would have been impossible for the person to have been involved. e.g. a person serving a term of imprisonment in a closed prison can often be eliminated from an inquiry about a crime committed outside the prison. Elimination conducted on the basis of probability is inherently dangerous as is clearly indicated by Sutcliffe's elimination on handwriting based on the probability that the "Sunderland" letter writer was the killer.

200. Although the complete text of the three letters and transcript of the tape recording are shown in figure 12, their contents can be summarised as follows:

1. Postmarked "Sunderland" on the 8th March 1978 and addressed to Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield. The writer confessed to the killings which had occurred up to that time including the murder of Joan Harrison at Preston on the 20th November 1975.
2. Postmarked "Sunderland" on the 13th March 1978 and addressed to the Chief Editor of the "Daily Mirror" at Manchester. The writer referred to the letter to Mr. Oldfield and reiterated his claim to have murdered Joan Harrison. He also predicted that his next victim would be older and that he might choose to commit the crime in Liverpool or Manchester.

FIGURE 12

TRANSCRIPTS OF LETTERS AND TAPE

1st Letter

Dear Sir

I am sorry I cannot give my name for obvious reasons. I am the Ripper, I've been dubbed a maniac by the press but not by you, you call me clever and I am. You and your mates haven't a clue that photo in the paper gave me fits and that bit about killing myself, no chance. I've got things to do. My purpose to rid the streets of them sluts. My one regret his that young lassie McDonald, did not know cause changed routine that night (nite) Up to number 8 now you say 7 but remember Preston 75, get about you know. You were right I travel a bit. You probably look for me in Sunderland, don't bother, I am not daft, just posted letter there on one of my trips. Not a bad place compared with Chapeltown and Manningham and other places. Warn whores to keep off streets cause I feel it coming on again. Sorry about young lassie.

Yours respectfully

Jack the Ripper

Might write again later I not sure last one really deserved it. Whores getting younger each time. Old slut next time I hope, Huddersfield never again, too small, close call last one.

2nd Letter

Dear Sir,

I have already written to Chief constable. George Oldfield a "man I respect" concerning the recent Ripper murders. I told him and I am telling you to warn them whores I'll strike again and soon when heat cools off. About the McDonald lassie I didnt know that she was decent and I am sorry I changed my routine that night. Up to number 8 now you say 7 but remember Preston 75. Easy picking them up don't even have to try, you think they re learn but they don't Most are young lassies, next time try older one I hope. Police have'nt a clue yet and I don't leave any I am very clever and don't think of looking for any fingerprints cause there arent any and don't look for me up there in Sunderland cause I not stupid just passed through the place. Not a bad place compared with Chapeltown and Manningham can't walk the streets for them whore. Dont't forget warn them I feel it coming on again if I get chance. Sorry about lassie I did nt know

Yours respectfully

Jack the Ripper

Might write again after another one s' gone maybe Liverpool or even Manchester again. To hit here in Yorkshire. Bye.

I have given advance warning so its yours and their fault.

3rd Letter

Dear Officer

Sorry I havn't written, about a year to be exact, but I hav'nt been up North for quite a while. I was'nt kidding last time I wrote saying the whore would be older this time and maybe I'd strike in Manchester for a change, you should have took heed. That bit about her being in hospital, funny the lady mentioned something about being in the same hospital before I stopped her whoring ways. The lady won't worry about hospitals now will she. I bet you be wondering how come I hav'nt been to work for ages, well I would have been if it hadnt been for your cursered coppers I had the lady just where I wanted her and was about to strike when one of your cursing (cruising) police cars stopped right outside the lane, he must have been a dumb copper cause he didnt say

anything, he didnt know how close he was to catching me. Tell you the truth I thought I was collared, the lady said dont worry about the coppers, little did she know that bloody copper saved her neck. That was last month, so I don't know when I will get back on the job but I know it wont be Chapeltown too bloody hot there maybe Bradfords Manningham. Might write again if up North.

Jack the Ripper

PS Did you get letter I sent to Daily Mirror in Manchester.

Tape Transcript

I'm Jack

I see you are still having no luck catching me.

I have the greatest respect for you George, but Lord, you are no nearer catching me now than four years ago when I started. I reckon your boys are letting you down George. You (They) can't be much good can you (they)?

The only time they came near catching me was a few months back in Chapeltown when I was disturbed, even then it was a uniform copper, not a detective.

I warned you in March that I'd strike again. Sorry it wasn't Bradford. I did promise you that but I couldn't get there. I'm not quite sure when I'll strike again, but it will be definitely sometime this year, maybe September, October, even sooner if I get the chance. I am not sure where, maybe Manchester, I like it there, there's plenty of them knocking about. They never learn do they George? I bet you've warned them, but they never listen.

At the rate I'm going I should be in the book of records. I think it's eleven up to now isn't it? Well, I'll keep on going for quite a while yet, I can't see meself being nicked just yet. Even if you do get near I'll probably top myself first.

Well it's been nice chatting to you George.

Yours,

Jack the Ripper

No good looking for fingerprints. You should know by now it's clean as a whistle. See you soon. Bye. Hope you like the catchy tune at the end. Ha. ha.

... Thank you for being a friend

3. Postmarked "Sunderland" on the 23rd March 1979 and addressed to Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield. The writer apologised for the delay since his last letter and made particular reference to the murder of Vera Millward in Manchester on the 16th May 1978. He also referred to the Manchester Hospital where Millward had previously had treatment. The writer predicted that he would strike again probably in Bradford.
4. The tape recording — believed to have been posted in Sunderland on the 16th or 17th June 1979 and received by the West Yorkshire Police on the 18th June. The envelope containing the tape recording was addressed to Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield and the tape itself was also addressed to Mr Oldfield personally and chided him for his failure to detect the crimes. The person who recorded the message on the tape had a distinctive North Eastern accent. He apologised for the killing of Josephine Whitaker in Halifax and not in Bradford as promised and predicted that he would kill again in September or October 1979 probably in Manchester.

201. Although the first two letters aroused interest amongst investigating officers in West Yorkshire they were not thought to be particularly significant and the inquiries which were set in motion to trace the author were regarded as having comparatively low priority. After the receipt of the third letter, however, an analysis of the saliva on the flap on the envelope showed that the person who had licked it was of the 'B' secretor blood group. This fact was considered to be particularly significant since the author of the letters claimed that he had murdered Joan Harrison in Preston and it was already known that the person responsible for that crime was also a 'B' secretor and thus within 6% of the adult male population. Once the blood group evidence became available the three letters which had by then been received were examined more carefully and a number of factors were identified which led the West Yorkshire Police to believe that some of the information in the letters could only be known to the murderer. The principal factors were:

- (a) The writer's claim to the murder of Joan Harrison at Preston. Until this time the murder had not been considered to be part of the series and there had been no known press reference to any link between the crimes in Preston and West Yorkshire.
- (b) The reference in the second letter to the writer's intention to strike in Manchester and to kill "an old slut next time" appeared to have been borne out when Vera Millward a 41 year old prostitute was murdered in Manchester.
- (c) In the third letter the writer referred to Millward having been a patient at the hospital near to where she was killed. It was believed in West Yorkshire that this information had not been published in the press nor broadcast by radio or television.
- (d) The murder of Josephine Whitaker on the 4th/5th April 1979 shortly after the receipt of the third letter appeared to confirm the prediction that the writer would strike again although he had said that he would commit his next crime in Bradford. There was a suggestion that a possible bite mark on one of Josephine Whitaker's breasts was similar to a mark found on the body of Joan Harrison at Preston. In the tape recording the author apologised for killing Whitaker in Halifax and not in Bradford as he had promised.

202. Of the evidence which tended to support the writer's claim to be the author of the crimes his reference to the murder of Joan Harrison at Preston was probably the most significant. Although the murder of Joan Harrison did not match the standard modus operandi of the crimes in West Yorkshire there were significant similarities in that she was a prostitute, she suffered serious head injuries, her clothing was disarranged in the distinctive Ripper style, and her boots had been placed over her legs in the same way as those of Irene Richardson, following her murder in Leeds. Above all, the murderer of Harrison was of the 'B' secretor blood group as was the person who licked the stamp and the envelope flap on the third letter and the envelope containing the tape recording.

203. The combined weight of these factors was sufficient to influence the senior investigating officers to attach the maximum priority to the detection of the crimes through the identification of the letter writer.

204. The only cautionary note which was sounded at that stage was an inconsistency between the first two and the third letters so far as the murder of Yvonne Pearson was concerned. Yvonne

Pearson was reported as missing on the 21st January 1978 and it is now accepted that she was murdered on or about that date. Her body was not, however, discovered until the 26th March 1978 by which time the first two letters in the series had been written and received. The writer made no claim to the murder of Pearson about which there had, by that time, been no reference in the news media. In his third letter, however, written more than a year after the discovery of Pearson's body the writer included this crime in the total number of killings for which he alleged he was responsible.

205. At the time the decision was taken to use the letters and tape as the key factors in the inquiry there were strong psychological reasons which made the decision attractive. There had, at that time, been eleven murders (including Joan Harrison) and four serious assaults which were regarded as being linked in the series. The only certain evidence about a suspect was that he was white and wore wellington or industrial boots of size 7 (industrial boots of this size had been identified by marks at the Whitaker scene but the makers had indicated that their size 7 could be worn by a person who normally took sizes between 7 and 8½). Although some information was available about car tyres it was regarded as inconclusive and the initial £5 note inquiry had also failed to narrow the field in which investigating officers were searching. The possession of positive factual clues such as handwriting, accent and blood group were thus seen as highly desirable means of reducing the very large number of separate lines of inquiry then being undertaken and of simplifying the task of the Major Incident Room.

206. In practice, the result was almost exactly opposite to what had been intended. Whilst the main thrust of the letters and tape inquiry was centred on the North East of England and serviced from a separate Major Incident Room in Sunderland, the public response to publicity given to the letters and tape in West Yorkshire had a very significant impact on the work of the Centralised Incident Room in Leeds. In addition a whole range of subordinate inquiries became necessary with a view to tracing a person living in the North East of England who travelled to Yorkshire to work or for other reasons or was a native of the North East who had taken up residence in the Yorkshire area.

207. The main impact of the public response to publicity about the letters and tape and of the letters and tape inquiries mounted in West Yorkshire fell on the Major Incident Room and the West Yorkshire force as a whole during the inquiries into the murders of Josephine Whitaker, Barbara Leach and Jacqueline Hill. As I have mentioned elsewhere public response to the murder of Josephine Whitaker overwhelmed the available manpower so that the processing of actions from the Millgarth Major Incident Room first stopped completely and then moved only slowly during the remainder of the life of the inquiry. The impact of the public response to what were at the time thought to be the last three murders was compounded by the public response to the letters and tape inquiry. It is thus the case that although the letters and tape were seen as the means by which the inquiry might be simplified and given new impetus they were to prove an important contributory factor in the breakdown of the Major Incident Room and thus of the specific mistakes which allowed Sutcliffe to remain free.

208. However, Sutcliffe might still have been arrested in spite of the problems deriving from the failure of the Major Incident Room system had the letters and tape not been used as factors for elimination.

209. In the all-important "Special Notice" dated 13th September 1979 and circulated to police forces throughout the United Kingdom the points for elimination included, inter alia: "A person can be eliminated from these inquiries if:

(d) His blood group is other than 'B'

(e) His accent is dissimilar to a North Eastern (Geordie) accent".

210. The publication and use of these eliminating factors together with the use of handwriting samples were the main causes of Sutcliffe's elimination from the inquiry at a time when he might otherwise have been regarded as a definite suspect.

211. As early as the 10th July 1979 a handwriting expert (Dr Richard Totty) from the Home Office Forensic Science Laboratory at Birmingham was installed in an office at Wakefield where he began to check handwriting samples obtained by detectives involved in the series. The sample

of Sutcliffe's handwriting acquired by Detective Constable Laptew during his interview on the 29th July 1979 was examined and was used by Detective Superintendent Holland to eliminate Sutcliffe from the inquiry.

212. Equally important was the fact that Sutcliffe was quietly spoken and had a Yorkshire rather than a North Eastern accent, a factor which had some significance not only for police officers interviewing him but also for his friend, Trevor Birdsall, whose suspicions of Sutcliffe were allayed by the fact that he was not from the North East of England. The distinctive North Eastern accent also played a prominent part later in the inquiry in that controversy developed about whether the author of the tape had a stammer and whether he had received speech therapy. The police were already aware of these points of dispute as a result of the scientific examination of the tape and their discussions with linguistic experts but they were unable to capitalise on the information because speech therapists who were consulted refused to release information about their patients. The only consequence of press revelations about this issue was an increase in publicity and public controversy at a time when a period of quiet would have been beneficial; otherwise it had no direct bearing on the outcome of events. The only unanswered problem that this particular issue raises is the continuing conflict between medical ethics and police inquiries that arises from time to time in the investigation of serious crimes.

213. As has been mentioned earlier the West Yorkshire Police did not undertake any systematic analysis of the letters and tape in an attempt to prove or disprove the possibility that the author could have derived all of his information from media sources. The Domaille Review Team was active during the period when the letters and tape were received but was not invited, and did not consider it desirable, to widen its study to include the tape and letters. When, however, forces in the North East of England became deeply involved in the inquiry, Detective Inspector Zackrisson of the Northumbria Police conducted an independent analysis of the letters and tape in an attempt to test the validity of the inquiry. Inspector Zackrisson felt that there was a resemblance in style and content between the West Yorkshire letters and those from the original "Jack the Ripper" (the Whitechapel murders of 1888). He conducted a review of media information which was available at the time the letters were written and came to the conclusion that all of the allegedly factual information contained in the letters and in the tape would have been available to a member of the public who carried out a reasonably diligent media search. He noted particularly that press speculation had linked the murder of Joan Harrison in Preston with the murders of prostitutes in Leeds. The most telling factor in Inspector Zackrisson's view, however, was the letter writer's failure to claim the murder of Yvonne Pearson in the first and second letters but to claim it subsequently in the third letter of the series. Inspector Zackrisson reasoned that the letter writer who was clearly making a considerable effort to establish his credibility, could have had no better opportunity than to tantalise the police by referring to a crime of which only he was aware and of a corpse which they did not know existed. Senior officers of the Northumbria Police accepted Inspector Zackrisson's compelling analysis and although they continued their very considerable inquiry effort in support of the West Yorkshire Police, they did so with a view to detecting the perpetrator of a hoax rather than a murderer. The difference in attitude is reflected in posters prepared in the two forces (Figs. 13 and 14). That of West Yorkshire stated the tape was made by a person, "*believed* to be the killer", whereas that of Northumbria stated only, "*he claims* to be the killer".

214. In Lancashire too there were reservations about the letters and the tape and strict instructions were given that no information derived from them should be used as eliminating factors in the inquiry into the murder of Joan Harrison. Senior detectives in Greater Manchester apparently shared this view although their desire to conform with West Yorkshire's position led them to support the letters and tape inquiry, at any rate, in public or at any meetings involving both forces. They did not, however, dissociate themselves from the letters and tape, which undoubtedly influenced the Greater Manchester detectives who interviewed Sutcliffe during the £5 note inquiry.

215. The official policy that the tape and letters could be used as a basis for elimination of suspects was included in the "Special Notice" of 13th September 1979 which was prepared in the Millgarth Incident Room by Detective Sergeant Dodsworth under the direction of Detective Superintendent Holland. This was during the period when Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield was absent from duty as a result of illness and shortly after the murder of Barbara Leach of which Detective Chief Superintendent Gilrain was the investigating officer. Chief Superintendent

FIGURE 13

POSTER PREPARED BY WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

THE RIPPER WOULD LIKE YOU TO IGNORE THIS.

The last thing that the vicious, cowardly killer and mutilator of twelve defenceless women wants is for you to read this and act on it.

Because if every single one of us starts looking, listening and thinking hard, the Ripper's days are numbered.

Here's what you can do to help.

LOOK CLOSELY AT THE HANDWRITING.

It's the writing of a sadistic killer.

And if you think you recognise it from a note, letter, envelope, signature, cheque, anything, report it to your local police.

LISTEN TO THE KILLER'S VOICE.

By phoning LEEDS (STD 0532) 464111 you can hear probably the most important clue to the killer's identity. His voice.

It won't be a pleasant experience, but it could lead to the end of these brutal murders.

If you think you recognise the voice, tell the police.

THINK ABOUT THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU.

Their voices (North Eastern accent?)

Their handwriting (is it like the sample?)

I have already written concerning the recent Ripper murders. I told him and I was telling you to warn them I'll strike again and soon when he's out off.

20-21 Jan. 1976: Leeds

5-6 Feb. 1977: Leeds

23-24 April 1977: Bradford

26-27 June 1977: Leeds

31-1 Jan/Feb 1978: Huddersfield

16-17 May 1978: Manchester

4-5 April 1979: Halifax

1-2 Sept 1979: Bradford

A WORD OF WARNING.

It is now believed that the Ripper draws no distinction between ordinary women and prostitutes.

So, please, if you're a woman, think twice about going out alone at night.

Especially in the type of areas the Ripper favours.

£30,000 REWARD.

Money is the last reason for putting away this monster. But if it helps you think hard and helps us stop the killing, it's yours for information leading to the arrest of the murderer.

Their travels to and from the North East.

To and from the Bradford, Leeds, Preston, Huddersfield, Manchester or Halifax areas. Or northwards from anywhere south of any of these areas.

Their attitudes towards women, especially prostitutes.

If it adds up to reasonable grounds for suspicion, however slight, report it to the police.

Their attitudes towards women, especially prostitutes.

If it adds up to reasonable grounds for suspicion, however slight, report it to the police.

DO THESE DATES AND PLACES MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU?

Think very carefully about these dates and places.

What were you doing? What do you remember?

Anything odd or out of place. The slightest detail could help.

30-31 Oct. 1975: Leeds

1-2 Oct. 1977: Manchester

20-21 Nov. 1975: Preston

21-22 Jan. 1978: Bradford



**WEST YORKSHIRE
METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

Help us put away the Ripper.

POSTER PREPARED BY NORTHUMBRIA POLICE



NORTHUMBRIA POLICE IMPORTANT NOTICE

Do you recognise this Handwriting?

Below is an extract of a letter received by Mr. G. A. Oldfield, Asst. Chief Constable (Crime) of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police, who is leading the investigation into the murders of several women in the West Yorkshire area.

The letter was posted in the Sunderland district on the 23rd March, 1979, and the writer, who signed it "Jack the Ripper," claimed to be connected with the murders.

The writer has also sent the Police a tape recorded message spoken by a male with a Wearside accent.

Dear Officer. March 23rd 79
 Sorry I haven't written, about a year to be
 exact, but I haven't been up North for quite a while.
 I was at holiday last time I wrote

was last month, so I don't know when I will
 get back on the job but I know it won't be
 Chapeltown too bloody hot there maybe
 Bradford, Marningham. Might write again
 if up North.

Jack the Ripper
 P.S. Did you get letter I sent to Daily Mirror
 in Manchester.

Study the handwriting carefully and if you feel you have any information which may assist the Police in tracing this person, or, you wish to hear the tape recording, please ring Sunderland 43146, or contact any Police Officer.

Gilrain did not support the policy of elimination based solely on factors from the letters and tape and on the 25th September 1979 there was a change of policy when he decided that elimination on accent alone was insufficient and that some other factor was required. The following day the same conditions were attached to the use of the specific blood group for elimination purposes. Whilst the change of policy was no doubt promulgated to senior detectives and well known to senior officers who were actually eliminating suspects, the letters and tape continued to exert a substantial influence on the inquiry. No less important was the influence which the "Special Notice" of September 1979 and the massively sponsored publicity campaign which was initiated on the 2nd October 1979 had on ordinary detectives making inquiries amongst people brought to notice by the "Cross Area Sightings" and the £5 note inquiries previously referred to. Officers interviewing in connection with these issues were conditioned to believe that the man they were looking for had a distinctive North Eastern accent so that anyone who did not match this single criterion was regarded as relatively unimportant in the inquiry. The lack of persistence in interview and the willingness to accept unsupported stories demonstrated by some of the officers who interviewed Sutcliffe may well have stemmed from this premise.

216. Although the policy of eliminating suspects on the basis of the tape and letters became suspect, at any rate in the mind of Chief Superintendent Gilrain, the official policy remained that the letters and tape were the most important evidence pointing to the identity of the Ripper. As late as the end of 1980 (after the murder of Jacqueline Hill) senior officers of the West Yorkshire force were still saying publicly that they were 99% sure that the letters and tape were from the killer. This attitude persisted in spite of Detective Inspector Zackrisson's Northumbria analysis, the results of which were discussed with senior officers of the West Yorkshire force on several occasions. As I have mentioned earlier, the Northumbria Police and other forces in the North East of England demonstrated undivided loyalty to the West Yorkshire force in that, although they did not believe the work they were doing would help to identify the killer, they were concerned to identify the hoaxer whom they believed lived within their area, so that the existence of the hoax could be demonstrated, if for no other reason. The cost of these inquiries to the Northumbria Police Authority alone was in excess of £600,000.

217. The next opportunity which the West Yorkshire Police had to profit from independent professional advice was the visit which Commander Nevill and Detective Superintendent Bolton paid to the force in November 1979. As is mentioned in Part II of my report the two Metropolitan officers agreed with the desirability of pursuing the North Eastern inquiry although they did not go as far as approving the conclusion that the letter writer was the killer. Commander Nevill in his report to the Chief Constable also referred to the process of elimination and said that, "for instance, many have been cleared purely on dialect or handwriting. Whilst it is agreed that the author of the letters and tape is probably the murderer it is not a complete certainty". This note of caution does not appear to have had any profound effect on the thinking of West Yorkshire's senior officers.

218. The final external reference to the letters and tape inquiry came in the report to the Chief Constable by the external Advisory Team appointed in November 1980. The report said, inter alia, "having considered the factors ourselves we find some difficulty in understanding why the West Yorkshire Police have attached such weight to the letters and the tape being authentic we recommend that the aim of the inquiry should now be to foster an opinion both within and outside the Police Service that the killer does not necessarily originate from the North East of England".

219. Following discussions between members of the external Advisory Team and senior officers of the West Yorkshire force a number of officers were seconded to the Major Incident Room from the Force Training School to undertake a series of reviews of different aspects of the inquiry. One of these was a review of the letters and tape inquiry which was conducted by Superintendent Bass and Chief Inspector Pickover. This thorough analysis, mounted during the controversy about possible speech defects of the author of the tape and about the identification of the accent, followed similar lines to the earlier analysis conducted by Inspector Zackrisson in Northumbria. The review was intended to establish whether the letters and tape contained any facts which could not have been gleaned from the media. The results of the West Yorkshire analysis as contained in a report submitted on the 7th January 1981 (after Sutcliffe's arrest) concluded that:

"(a) A substantial proportion of the contents of the communications could have been

obtained by reference to press cuttings and the media.

- (b) Reference in the letters to the Preston connection is dependent on newspaper reports published eleven and thirteen months before the posting of the letters.
- (c) The writer of the letters could have obtained information from press reports of Millward visiting Manchester Royal Infirmary as an out-patient but could not have obtained information of her having been an in-patient of the Hospital from such sources.
- (d) The writer, if the murderer, could have given positive indication of being the culprit by making specific reference to the body of Pearson who had met her death prior to the letter being received.
- (e) The combination of predictions, as fulfilled contained in the communications, when balanced against other considerations could not be ignored.
- (f) Taking into account forensic evidence in the Harrison murder and the similarity between the murders of Harrison and Pearson the possibility still exists of there being some connection between Sutcliffe and the communications.
- (g) There are sufficient factors to justify previous action taken.”

220. These conclusions, though appearing perhaps for internal political reasons to support the priority which had been accorded to the letters and tape in the past could not, if viewed objectively, support an investigation in which “all of the eggs were in the same basket”.

221. Since Sutcliffe’s arrest inquiries have continued at relatively low level both in Northumbria and in West Yorkshire in an attempt to trace the author of the letters and tape. The West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police are currently carrying out an evaluation exercise on material already in their possession with a view to pursuing rigorous inquiries by a small dedicated team to trace the person who diverted investigating officers from their most promising lines of inquiry over a period during which three women were murdered and two severely injured. Undoubtedly, members of the public are still disturbed at the prospect that the author of the letters and tape might never be required to account publicly for his atrocious conduct.

222. The hoaxer gained credibility with certain police officers because:

- (a) His claim to responsibility for the Harrison murder and his emergence as a ‘B’ secretor tended to confirm the link between this crime and the letters and tape and so support the theory of a connection with the series cases.
- (b) The suspect bite mark on the breast of Whitaker (a previous murder victim) was believed to be similar to a mark on Harrison’s body which indicated that the person responsible had a gap between his upper front teeth. Expert examination of the tape recording also tended to indicate that the speaker in all probability had a gap between his teeth.
- (c) The murder of 41 year old Vera Millward in Manchester appeared to confirm the prophecy in the first letter.
- (d) The failure of the letter writer initially to claim Pearson as one of his victims did not appear significant because the police at that time were not certain the murder of Pearson was within the series of crimes.

223. On a balanced consideration of all the factors involved I have concluded that the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police did not go far enough in analysing the content of the letters and tape with a view to establishing whether or not they could have been part of an elaborate hoax. Had such an analysis been done on the lines conducted by Detective Inspector Zackrisson of the Northumbria Police then it is most unlikely that they would have been utilised in the subsequent investigation as eliminating sieves based on the North East accent and the handwriting.

224. The decision to mount inquiries to identify the author of the tape and the letters was amply justified but had a more objective analysis of the contents of the tape and letters been made it might well have militated against the large scale use of resources in Northumbria and elsewhere over a prolonged period which, especially in West Yorkshire, hindered other lines of inquiry. The

principal failings arising from the incorrect decision about the author of the letters and tape are all too clear. Both the police and the public were conditioned to think that the Ripper had a Geordie accent and could be eliminated from the inquiries by a check being made of his handwriting. As will be seen in various parts of my report this decision resulted in disastrous consequences and especially insofar as it prompted the wrongful elimination of Sutcliffe as a major suspect.

225. Without wishing to minimise the error of judgement on the part of the officers concerned it should be said in fairness that once the "Special Notice" about the tape and the letters had been issued to police forces throughout the country and once the massive publicity campaign had been mounted on the same theme then the die had been well and truly cast. By the time Commander Nevill and others had advised against the positive elimination of suspects by reason of the tape and letters it would have been a mammoth task to search the records in the overloaded Incident Room with a view to rechecking all those previously eliminated from the inquiry. It would have been an even greater task for the outside inquiry teams to have followed through, and certainly could not have been done by the resources then available. It would also have meant admitting publicly, with potentially dire consequences, that the earlier decision to use the tape and letters as eliminating sieves had not been justified.

226. In my view the reluctance to follow the advice proffered by the discerning Detective Inspector Zackrisson of Northumbria, Commander Nevill of New Scotland Yard and the external Advisory Team can be attributed to this latter factor more than any other.

227. For ease of reference the principal events affecting the letters and tape inquiry are summarised in schedule form in Fig. 15.

(vi.) The Police Interviews involving Sutcliffe

228. When it was learned, following Sutcliffe's arrest, that he had been interviewed by police officers on nine separate occasions in connection with the Ripper series of crimes there was intense speculation about the failure of the interviews to lead to his earlier arrest. Naturally, therefore, this aspect became a focal point of my review of the Ripper crimes.

229. Sutcliffe was, in fact, interviewed by the police on twelve occasions between the 5th July 1975 (the date on which his admitted series of crimes commenced) and the date when he was charged with the 20 crimes for which he was subsequently convicted. Only nine of the interviews can be regarded as part of the actual police investigation of the Ripper series before Sutcliffe's arrest for them and of the remaining three, one related to a theft of car tyres from his employer and one to a drinking and driving offence. The final interview followed Sutcliffe's arrest in Sheffield and led to his admission of the various Ripper crimes. I will now deal with each of the interviews in some detail and then give my conclusions about their failure to produce a conclusive result. For ease of reference the twelve specific interviews during the inquiry are also shown in the table at Fig. 16

15th October 1975 — FIRST INTERVIEW

230. On the 15th October 1975 whilst Sutcliffe was employed as a tyre fitter at Common Road Tyres Ltd., his employers reported him to the police for the alleged theft of second hand tyres. Coincidentally, his namesake, Constable Sutcliffe of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police was asked to deal with this crime. He arrested Sutcliffe who immediately admitted the offence and produced the stolen tyres from the boot of his car. This was a simple case of theft and on pleading guilty to it at Dewsbury Magistrates Court on the 9th February 1976 Sutcliffe was fined £25. Fifteen days after this interview Sutcliffe murdered Wilma McCann in Leeds but at the time he was arrested by Constable Sutcliffe there was no evidence to connect him with the assaults on Rogulsky and Smelt earlier in the year and this particular event is not seen as having any significance so far as the series of crimes is concerned.

2nd November 1977 — SECOND INTERVIEW

231. On the 15th October 1977 Jean Jordan's handbag was found 189 feet away from the point where her body had been discovered five days earlier. When the handbag was searched a new £5 Bank of England note No. HW51 121565 was found in a secret compartment. Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway of the Greater Manchester Police came to the reasonable conclusion that Jordan had received the £5 note as payment for prostitution shortly before her death. Because the