

**(c) Sutcliffe's Arrest and Subsequent Events**

410. As anticipated by many people including police officers of all ranks, Sutcliffe's eventual arrest for his heinous crimes resulted from basic patrol policing by uniformed officers, in much the same way as happened a few years previously in the notorious "Black Panther" case.

411. It was at 10.50 p.m. on Friday 2nd January 1981, that Police Sergeant Ring and Police Constable Hydes were on motor patrol duty in Melbourne Avenue, Sheffield, when they noticed a Rover saloon car, with the registered number HVY 679N, parked in a driveway just off the road. They decided to check the vehicle and Police Constable Hydes found Peter William Sutcliffe in the driving seat and a woman named Olivia St. Elmo Reivers, in the front passenger seat. Constable Hydes asked Sutcliffe if he owned the car and he said that he did. When asked for his name and address, he replied "John Williams, 65 Dorchester Road, Canklow." Sergeant Ring then joined Constable Hydes and he questioned Sutcliffe about the lady passenger. Initially, Sutcliffe claimed that she was his girl friend but it subsequently transpired that he had only met her that evening and did not know her name. On being questioned by the Sergeant, the woman gave her correct name.

412. Both officers then went to the police car and put through a radio call to the local Divisional Police Headquarters giving details of Sutcliffe and Reivers and they also asked for the registered number of Sutcliffe's vehicle to be checked with the Police National Computer. By chance, Police Sergeant Armitage and Constable Tune were in the control room when the call was received and, as both were on anti-vice duties, they were able to immediately identify Reivers as being a convicted prostitute and the subject of a suspended sentence. Information then came from the PNC that the registered number on Sutcliffe's Rover saloon car had in fact been allocated to a Skoda motor car. This information, together with that relating to Reivers' previous convictions, was passed to the two officers at the scene and they decided to arrest both Sutcliffe and Reivers on suspicion of theft. At the same time Constable Hydes examined and took possession of a vehicle excise licence displayed on the vehicle and which related to a Rover motor car, registered number FHY 400K.

413. Surprisingly, Sutcliffe was allowed to walk away from his car towards an oil tank situated a few feet away whilst Reivers was being taken to the police car. It was then that Sergeant Ring's attention was attracted by a noise which he later described as a "scuffle" coming from the direction of the oil tank. He saw Sutcliffe walking from the tank towards the police car and on being questioned as to why he had not accompanied Reivers towards the vehicle, Sutcliffe said that he had been looking for somewhere to urinate. This particular incident was to become of great significance later.

414. Upon arrival at the police station, Sergeant Ring and the two prisoners were seen by Sergeant Armitage, who was about to leave on another assignment with Constable Tune. These two officers were obviously intrigued by the circumstances surrounding the arrest of Sutcliffe and Reivers and they decided to visit the scene of the arrest which was in an area well known to be frequented by local prostitutes and their clients. On arrival there they were surprised to see the Rover car parked facing the road, as the usual practice in that vicinity is for cars to face the opposite direction so as to give more privacy to the occupants.

415. Upon examining the vehicle, Sergeant Armitage saw that the registration plates numbered HVY 679N had been taped over the original registration plates with black adhesive tape and were obviously false to the car. The original plates bore the registered number FHY 400K.

416. Meanwhile, at the police station, Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes had established Sutcliffe's correct name and address and also the fact that he was the registered owner of Rover motor car FHY 400K. He readily admitted having stolen the registration plates HVY 679N from a Skoda motor car in a scrap yard near to Brighouse in West Yorkshire. Consequently Sergeant Ring telephoned the Divisional Police Headquarters at Dewsbury which covers Brighouse and he told an officer there of the facts. Sometime later, at about 1 a.m. on Saturday 3rd January, he also telephoned the Ripper Incident Room at Millgarth in Leeds and spoke to Detective Sergeant Bennett, relating to him the circumstances of Sutcliffe's arrest with the known prostitute and the fact that he had been in his own car which had been displaying false number plates stolen from the scrap yard near Dewsbury. He asked Sergeant Bennett if he was interested in Sutcliffe in relation to the Ripper inquiry. Bennett said that he would search the Incident Room records and would telephone him back. Bennett found that Sutcliffe's index card showed that he had been interviewed in connection with the £5 note inquiry and also as a "Cross Area Sighting". Additionally, there was a reference to his handwriting and also that his shoe size was 8½ and that he had a gap in the centre of his upper teeth.

417. Sergeant Bennett saw that Sutcliffe had previously been eliminated from the inquiry solely on handwriting, but thankfully and to his credit, he regarded this as being an inconclusive elimination and therefore decided to check the other papers relating to him within the system. Perusing the relevant papers he noticed that in a written statement Sutcliffe had previously made to the police, he had said that he was a long distance lorry driver (which had always been a suspect occupation in the Ripper series) and that he had denied ever going with prostitutes. He also saw from the records that Sutcliffe had never been satisfactorily alibied for the series of murders apart from a generalised alibi from time to time by his wife. There was also a further telling factor in that certain officers who had interviewed Sutcliffe had not been satisfied with him and said so in their reports. Reading the papers as a whole therefore, Sergeant Bennett came to the conclusion that Sutcliffe should be classed as a suspect worthy of re-interview for the Ripper murders and that he should be kept in custody during the interim. He telephoned the South Yorkshire Police to that effect and in so doing spoke to Constable Hydes, as Sergeant Ring had returned to outside patrol.

418. Subsequently Sutcliffe was taken in custody to Dewsbury Police Station and during the course of Saturday the 3rd January he was interviewed by Detective Sergeant O'Boyle of the West Yorkshire Police about his possible implication in the Ripper murders but to no avail.

419. When Sergeant Ring resumed duty at 10 p.m. on Saturday 3rd January, he was told by the duty Inspector that Sutcliffe was still in custody at Dewsbury. There followed speculation as to whether Sutcliffe could be classed as a strong suspect for the Yorkshire Ripper murders and this prompted Sergeant Ring to return to the scene of the arrest of Sutcliffe and Reivers the night before and search the immediate area. Sergeant Ring, whilst searching under some leaves near to the oil tank, found a ball pein hammer and a knife. This was a mammoth development, of course, and the information was relayed to Detective Inspector Boyle of the West Yorkshire Police at about 1 a.m. on Sunday 4th January. In possession of such important evidence, and with photostat copies of the documents relating to Sutcliffe as filed in the Major Incident Room, Inspector Boyle went to Dewsbury Police Station. Throughout that day Sutcliffe was then interviewed by Detective Inspector Boyle and Sergeant O'Boyle. Eventually he admitted all the offences for which he was later to be convicted.

420. Naturally, the events in the 48 hours following Sutcliffe's arrest were a hectic period in the life of the arresting officers and especially Sergeant Ring. According to him it was not until the 8th January, some four days after Sutcliffe's admissions, that he had sufficient time to fully reflect on the detailed happenings surrounding the arrest. Among other things, he no doubt realised that the actual police action at the scene of Sutcliffe's arrest had not been in strict accord with recognised police practice in that he and Constable Hydes had allowed Sutcliffe, on alighting from his car, to walk across towards the vicinity of the oil tank and so have the opportunity to hide the hammer and knife beneath the leaves. This obviously prompted him to think about other events surrounding Sutcliffe's arrest and detention and he then recalled, so he says, that Sutcliffe had been allowed to use a lavatory at the police station, before being searched, and without close police supervision. He reported this to Detective Inspector Slack who, accompanied by Sergeant Ring, searched the water cistern in the lavatory and found a wooden handled knife. During his lengthy interview at Dewsbury, Sutcliffe admitted to the police that he had concealed this knife in the lavatory cistern and also the ball pein hammer and the knife near the scene of his earlier arrest.

421. In so far as the concealment of the knife in the police station is concerned, it should be said, in fairness to Sergeant Ring, that when the two officers arrived at the police station with Sutcliffe and Reivers after their arrest, it was buzzing with activity. It had been an exceptionally busy night following a raid on an unlicensed drinking club which had resulted in several arrests. In addition the prison officers' dispute current at the time had resulted in many extra prisoners being held at the police station. Due to these many pressures every room in the building was in use and it is perhaps not surprising that Sutcliffe was allowed to use the toilet without close supervision. He was not, of course, a strong suspect for the Ripper murders at that particular time.

422. Further, and whatever limitations there were in the actual police action at the time of Sutcliffe's arrest and immediately thereafter, it is to the credit of Sergeant Ring that he went back to the scene the following night to find the hammer and the knife and also that he was open enough to record his suspicions to Detective Inspector Slack about Sutcliffe's unsupervised visit to the toilet when in custody at the police station.

423. Following Sutcliffe's admission of liability whilst in custody at Dewsbury, the news media, as was usually the case in West Yorkshire during the Ripper investigation, quickly came to know of the developments and by the late afternoon there was increasing activity outside the police station at Dewsbury with crowds of reporters and photographers. There was also similar activity in the vicinity of Sheffield Police Headquarters. Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Hobson was in charge of the Ripper investigation at that time, of course, but due to old loyalties within the force, (as will be referred to later) Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield was told of Sutcliffe's admission before Hobson and it was Oldfield who issued a press statement at 5 p.m. saying a press conference would be held at Dewsbury Police Station at 8.30 p.m. that day.

424. The civilian press officer to the force, Mr. Baxter, was called at about 6 p.m. to arrange the conference but Superintendent Morrith, who had been placed in charge of Police/Press liaison a few weeks before, was not officially notified and he was to learn of the developments from a press contact. When Mr. Morrith went to Dewsbury, of his own volition, at about 8 p.m., he found the police station besieged with press men and camera crews. He eventually saw the Chief Constable in the Divisional Commander's office and was told to assist with the conference that was to be held at 8.30 p.m.

425. Subsequently, the media representatives were ushered into a large room at the police station. It was decided by the police to tape record the proceedings and to read out a prepared statement. Photographs would also be allowed and a few non-contentious questions would be answered.

426. Looking back at the highly adverse publicity that followed this conference it is all too clear that what the police might have had in mind was soon thwarted once the conference had started. The tape recording of the press conference was later transcribed and in view of the recommendations I shall be making later, the transcript is worth quoting in full.

The transcript reads as follows:—

Chief Constable: *On Friday evening last, a man was detained in Sheffield by the Sheffield Police (South Yorkshire Police) in connection with a matter which was identified as theft of number plates of a motor car and the number plates had been stolen from the West Yorkshire area.*

*He was brought to West Yorkshire and as a result of discussions between the South Yorkshire Police and the West Yorkshire Police further inquiries were made and this man is now detained here in West Yorkshire and he is being questioned in relation to the Yorkshire Ripper murders.*

*It is anticipated that he will appear before the Court in Dewsbury tomorrow. I cannot say where he is at the moment because a lot of inquiries have to be made. Mr. Oldfield and Mr. Hobson and other senior investigating officers have to make a number of inquiries tonight, but I can tell you that we are absolutely delighted with developments at this stage.*

Photographer: Can you all smile, please? Can you move in together, please, and keep smiling? Smile everybody please.

Chief Constable: *I said at Dewsbury, but it may not be at Dewsbury, it may be at another Court, but he will appear in West Yorkshire some time later tomorrow.*

Question: Can you give us any details at all about the man?

Chief Constable: *No, not at this stage because the man is being interviewed at this very moment in time, but indications are that there will be a charge later tomorrow.*

Question: Can you tell us whether he has a Geordie accent?

Chief Constable: *I cannot tell you that because I have not heard him speak.*

Question: Can you give us any details of the arrest, Mr. Gregory? The circumstances of it, not actual details.

Chief Constable: *All I can say is that he was detained in Sheffield. He was with a lady. He was detained in relation to an incident in Sheffield and he was detained, let me tell you, by a Sergeant — two outstanding police officers — Sergeant Ring, of the South Yorkshire Police, Robert Ring, and Constable Robert John Hydes, H.Y.D.E.S., of the South Yorkshire Police. They are uniformed officers who have my heartfelt thanks, who made this original detection and as a result of questioning later on by West Yorkshire Police we have reached the present stage. It is just the initial stages and I thought you should know now before we go any further.*

Question: Are you scaling down the operation, the general hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper from this moment on?

Chief Constable: Yes, right.

Question: Do you know yet what he will be charged with in the morning? Will it be the motoring offence probably?

Chief Constable: *I can't tell you what the charge will be at this moment, but it may be a serious charge.*

Question: Can you say if these two officers were on foot or in a vehicle?

Chief Constable: The South Yorkshire officers? I think they were on an anti-vice patrol.

Question: Would that be on foot or in a vehicle?

Chief Constable: *Vehicle.*

Question: Could you say what time?

Chief Constable: *About eleven o'clock on Friday evening.*

Question: PM?

Chief Constable: *P.M.*

Question: Can you tell us where?

Chief Constable: *In Sheffield. I'm sorry I'm not just certain of the area.*

Question: Was it near the motorway?

Chief Constable: *Near the centre of Sheffield.*

Question: Could you say if there was any violence of any sort?

Chief Constable: *None at all.*

Question: Can you tell us whether it was a red light district?

Chief Constable: *I cannot tell you that, I don't know.*

Question: What's happening to the lady he was with? You mentioned a lady.

Chief Constable: *She has not come to any harm.*

Question: Is she helping with your inquiries?

Chief Constable: *She is, yes.*

Question: Does that mean she is under arrest?

Chief Constable: *No, she is not under arrest. No.*

Question: Was it a woman he was with?

Chief Constable: *He was with a lady, yes.*

Question: Was she an acquaintance of long standing?

Chief Constable: *No.*

Question: Was this car being sought because there had been any sort of incident earlier?

Chief Constable: *No.*

Question: Did the officers first stop him because of the false ..... because of the questionable number plates or because of the lady?

Chief Constable: *They came upon him in a certain position and they looked at the car, checked on the number plates, found they were false.*

Question: Would it be fair to say it was an indelicate position?

Chief Constable: *I cannot say what it was. I don't know what the position was at all.*

Question: At that stage was the lady with him injured in any way?

Chief Constable: *None at all.*

Question: Was he injured?

Chief Constable: *Not at all. No. No.*

Question: Were they in a state of undress?

Chief Constable: *I don't think so. I can't say. I don't know. I have not seen ..... you see, all the statements have not come through yet.*

Question: The car was at a standstill, it wasn't flagged down?

Chief Constable: *No. Standstill.*

Question: Can you tell us what sort of car, Mr. Gregory?

Chief Constable: *It was a Rover motor car.*

Question: Was that the old style or the new style?

Chief Constable: *Bearing false plates. I don't know what syle.*

Question: What colour was it?

Chief Constable: *Dark coloured V.8 George says.*

Question: Getting down to the really important things, are you able to tell us the man's, without giving the man's name, well presumably, will you be giving his name tonight?

Chief Constable: *His name will be disclosed tomorrow.*

Question: What about his age?

Chief Constable: *His age will be disclosed tomorrow. He's about 30 odd and he comes from Bradford.*

Question: And is he a bachelor?

Chief Constable: *I think he's a married man.*

Question: Has he got a North East accent at all?

Chief Constable: *I don't know about that, I don't know yet, I've not spoken to him.*

Question: Is he a married man?

Chief Constable: *He is a married man.*

Question: Is he a family man?

Chief Constable: *I don't know.*

Question: As far as you know, Sir, is he or has he been, until the arrest, been living with his wife?

Chief Constable: *I don't know.*

Question: Do you know his occupation?

Chief Constable: *It's too early to go into much detail and if I could I would tell you, but he is helping police with their inquiries at this very moment in time.*

Question: Do we have an occupation for him, Sir?

Chief Constable: *I don't know his occupation. No.*

Photographer: Can we just have you all smiling again, please, gentlemen. Can you all smile, please, Sir?

427. I will now comment specifically about the passages underlined

(a) *Absolutely delighted with developments.*

This inferred at least that the Chief Constable considered Sutcliffe was the Ripper.

Whether or not this was so, it should not have been commented on in such terms to the media.

- (b) *He was detained in Sheffield. He was with a lady.*  
The first part about the location of arrest was fairly innocuous but the reference to the "lady" was unnecessary.
- (c) *Two outstanding police officers ..... who have my heartfelt thanks.*  
Such words were clearly unnecessary at that stage and were bound to stimulate follow-up inquiries by the media.
- (d) In answer to the question — "Are you scaling down the operation, the general hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper from this moment on?" the Chief Constable replied "Yes right." This was a difficult question to field and shows the inherent danger of becoming too involved in a question and answer session with reporters following an arrest for crime. In such circumstances it is very difficult indeed to pave a way through a minefield of likely questions and this confirms the view that a prepared press statement is the best way of dealing with such a situation involving as it does the constraints flowing from the sub-judice doctrine. Having said that and in fairness to the police it is also essential to consider the very real fear of females living in northern cities at the time of the Ripper crimes. Certainly the brief comment made by the Chief Constable under this heading prompted a feeling of relief to over 1 million women in West Yorkshire alone. Some would say, especially those well versed in legal principles, that it would have been better not to have said what was said but many others would maintain that the public had a right to be reassured if possible and especially if the comment made was not unduly prejudicial to the accused.
- (e) *The South Yorkshire Officers? I think they were on anti-vice patrol.*  
Obviously this statement should not have been made.
- (f) *They came upon him in a certain position and they looked at the car, checked on the number plates, found they were false.*  
There was absolutely no excuse for saying that.
- (g) In answer to the question — "Are you scaling down the operation, the general hunt for the Yorkshire Ripper from this moment on?" the Chief Constable replied, "Yes, right."  
This was a repeat of the question and answer at (d) above and therefore my previous comment under that heading applies.
- (h) In answer to further questions the Chief Constable said, as before, "*The South Yorkshire Officers? I think they were on anti-vice patrol.*"  
Again, and as related under (e) above such a statement should not have been made.

428. In the newspaper photographs published later, a group picture taken at the press conference and showing the Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield and Assistant Chief Constable Hobson laughing together prompted a great deal of criticism. Examination of the transcript shows that this particular photograph was prompted by the photographers in the room with such requests as, "Can you all smile please?" "Can you move together please?", and "Keep smiling, smile everyone please." In the euphoria which by that time was clearly to the fore at the conference these were not unnatural requests and as such would have been difficult to resist but even so, the senior officers involved should have anticipated that such a photograph when published would be likely to prompt criticism bearing in mind the established constraints imposed by sub-judice practice. As is already well known the photograph appeared in almost all the daily newspapers and on both television channels with captions ranging from "junketing by the police" to "police absolutely delighted". Both the police and the press came in for a great deal of criticism arising from the Dewsbury Press Conference including statements in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

429. In addition to the intense media activity at Dewsbury from late afternoon on Sunday, 4th January 1981, similar pressure began to mount at the Sheffield Headquarters of the South Yorkshire Police. Between 6 p.m. and 7 p.m. about 150 telephone calls were received from journalists including calls from Australia, Germany, Norway, Sweden and the United States. By 7 p.m. there were also at least 40 journalists at the station including radio and television reporters.

430. At 8 p.m. that evening a telex message was received at the Sheffield Headquarters from the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire to Mr. Brownlow, the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire. The message read:—

*“Will you please convey to your Sergeant Robert Ring and PC Robert John Hydes my sincere personal thanks for their outstanding policing on Friday evening the 2nd January 1981. They are a credit to the Police Service, and in West Yorkshire we appreciate their efforts very much indeed, Well done.”*

431. Later in the evening Mr. Brownlow became aware of the press conference at Dewsbury and after discussing the matter with his senior officers he decided to mount a press conference at Sheffield. His reasons for so doing were as follows:

- (a) The intense media interest aroused by the arrest
- (b) The press conference already given by the West Yorkshire Police
- (c) The arresting officers were being pestered by reporters who had even secured the ex-directory home telephone number of Sergeant Ring and were telephoning his home continuously
- (d) In addition to the media presence at the force headquarters the officers' sub-divisional station at Hammerton Road was also crowded by reporters
- (e) It had become necessary in order to avoid journalists to take Miss Reivers, the prostitute arrested with Sutcliffe, to a secluded hotel and it was thought that a conference might dissuade reporters from searching for her
- (f) As it was not intended to reveal any more information than had already been given by the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police there would be no harm done and at the same time the media interest might then be likely to wane

432. Prior to the arrival of the two arresting officers, Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes, the assembled journalists were told by the Superintendent in charge of the press conference that the two officers would be available to be photographed and interviewed under highly controlled conditions and that the format would follow this pattern:

- (a) Upon arrival the two police officers would be available to be photographed
- (b) At the end of the photographic sessions the officers would be withdrawn to be briefed by a senior officer and upon completion of that brief the press would be invited to question the officers.
- (c) Within the terms of the briefing given to the two officers they would subsequently be available for interview by the press, radio and television.

433. At about 11.30 p.m. that evening Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes arrived at Police Headquarters and were photographed both inside and outside the building. They were then briefed privately by the Superintendent who emphasised to them that they could give brief details of the arrest in line with what had been said earlier at the West Yorkshire press conference. They would also be allowed to refer to the congratulatory telex message sent earlier by Mr. Gregory and if asked, also give brief details of their previous police service.

434. At the outset of the press conference the Superintendent emphasised to the reporters that they would be restricted to asking the two officers for comments in relation to the following information and no more:

*“The two officers on Friday night were on duty in uniform, in a Panda car near the city centre, when they came across a Rover car bearing false plates. That was enough to make both officers suspicious.*

*They checked with the Police National Computer and things were not all they seemed to be.*

*They subsequently arrested the man. There was also a lady in the car. The man alleged he was the owner of the car. The man was taken to Hammerton Road Police Station where he was questioned and eventually handed over to the West Yorkshire Police.”*



435. The Superintendent then gave details of the congratulatory telex message previously received from Mr. Gregory. Undoubtedly, the press conference at Sheffield was more controlled by the Police than the earlier one at Dewsbury. However, I have not had the benefit of reading a transcript of the Sheffield conference as the proceedings were not recorded by the police as in West Yorkshire. It has been possible to scrutinise part of it which was recorded by BBC television

~~There were two BBC TV reporters namely, Mike Smartt and Ken Cooper involved with Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes in the news item as follows:—~~

- M. Smartt: The arrest on Friday night near the centre of Sheffield had started as routine police work, two officers, Sergeant Robert Ring and PC Hydes were on patrol in a Panda car. About 11 o'clock the officers drove on Wellbourne Avenue near Sheffield University and not far from the city's red light district. It is a quiet tree-lined road and the officers became suspicious of an old Rover car parked there with a man and a woman inside. The police were alerted by the car's number plates.
- Sgt. Robert Ring *I drove up to that car and Police Constable Hydes had a conversation with the driver. I took down the registration number which was being displayed on an old Rover car and it came back that they were allocated to a different vehicle. I did two more checks, until I was quite sure about the old Rover. PC Hydes and myself then questioned the driver further and, as a result, he and the lady he was with, accompanied us to the Police Station.*
- K. Cooper What was his reaction to being questioned?
- Sgt. Robert Ring *The driver, he was anxious that I should deal with it there and he produced documents and gave some reason for being in possession of the licence plates. He was anxious we should not arrest him, however, he was taken down to the Police Station.*
- K. Cooper Now, PC Hydes, you actually questioned him about the car, what impression did you form of him?
- PC Hydes *Well, like Bob says, he seemed very anxious, he wanted it squared there and then.*
- K. Cooper You have only been in the force for 11 months, how do you feel about subsequent developments?
- PC Hydes *Well, obviously it looks good on the force and it looks good on Hammerton Road Police Station and I am only too pleased to be part of it.*
- K. Cooper Was it a matter of luck, do you think?
- PC Hydes *I think it is a question of being in the right place at the right time and obviously luck does play a big part in it.*

436. My specific comments arising from the passages underlined by the Director of Public Prosecutions are:

- (a) "officers drove on Wellbourne Avenue ..... not far from the city's red light district" Smartt, the reporter, had already gleaned the information of the whereabouts of Sutcliffe's arrest and his emotive reference to the "city's red light district" should not have been said although such an expression is very much in keeping with the usual form of preface to an interview of this nature which is obviously designed to capture the attention of the viewer. I would not have thought the phrase was particularly damaging to Sutcliffe's interests.

- (b) *"I took down the registration number .... came back that they were allocated to a different vehicle*

A statement of evidence which clearly should not have been given, having said that, it had already been released to the media by the West Yorkshire Police at the earlier conference at Dewsbury.

437. One further press conference was arranged prior to Sutcliffe's first appearance at court on Monday 6th January 1981. It was conducted by Superintendent Morritt at Dewsbury Police Station at 2 p.m. that day some 2½ hours prior to the court hearing. The transcript of this particular conference has also been seen by the Director of Public Prosecutions and again, he has underlined the passages which he considers should not have been said. The transcript reads as follows:

Supt. Morritt

*Can I first of all confirm information that I have no doubt many of you already possess and that is that the man who is currently helping us with our inquiries is Mr. Peter William Sutcliffe aged 35 years, a lorry driver of 6 Garden Lane, Heaton, Bradford. If our current arrangements materialise, it is intended that Mr. Sutcliffe will be charged with offences and he will appear before Dewsbury Magistrates' Court, hopefully at 4.30 p.m. this afternoon. Can I also please take this opportunity of reminding various members of the media, that the lady who was with Mr. Sutcliffe at Sheffield and various other people who not unnaturally you are trying to interview; can I remind you please that those people are material witnesses to a prosecution which is now being launched, and I would ask you to bear that in mind when you seek interviews etc.*

*Can I also please make one other point, I am given to understand and I believe I am right in saying, that again not unnaturally you have gained possession of photographs of the accused man.*

*Can I take this opportunity of saying to you again, that that man's facial features will form part of the prosecution case, and therefore any publications in that respect that you may or may not consider, I ask you to bear that aspect in mind when that decision is made by you and your editors.*

Question:

Are you asking us not use these pictures?

Supt. Morritt

*From my point of view, it would be helpful if they were not used. Far be it from me even to try to suggest or dictate what you should or shouldn't do. From my point of view, it would be helpful to the inquiry if they were not published.*

Question:

What would be the nature of the charges?

Supt. Morritt

*The precise nature of the charges have not yet ..... in fact at this moment in time a discussion is taking place upstairs to arrive at the exact nature of those charges. My information is that one charge will relate to the suspected stolen vehicle registration plates, and I think it's fair for me to say that one charge will be a charge relating to the "Ripper" series of incidents.*

Question:

Is the interviewing complete?

Supt. Morritt

*Not prepared to discuss that aspect anymore.*

Question:

How long do you think it will be before charges are made?

Supt. Morritt

*Again, I can't be certain. That discussion is now taking place upstairs and its an area that I don't want to enter into in this sort of situation.*

Question:

Where's he being questioned?

Supt. Morritt

*Not prepared to answer those sort of questions.*

Question: Can you tell us whether the incident that you are talking about, the “Ripper” are they likely to be one of the murder cases, as opposed to one of the others?

Supt. Morrill *That I can't say. That I can't say. Probably yes, but I can't say for definite.*

Supt. Morrill *Okay?*

Question: Mrs. Sutcliffe helping with inquiries?

Supt. Morrill *Mrs. Sutcliffe has been seen and is being spoken to by ourselves, yes.*

Question: Will she face any charges?

Supt. Morrill *I can't discuss Mrs. Sutcliffe's involvement in it, other than to say that at this moment in time, from our point of view, the probability is that she will be a material witness. And on that basis .....*

Question: Is she in protective custody?

Supt. Morrill *She is not in custody, in any shape or form.*

Question: Not in protective custody

Supt. Morrill *She is not in custody in any shape or form.*

Question: Is she in the same police station as her husband?

Supt Morrill *I am not prepared to answer where people are at this moment in time, and on that basis, ladies and gentlemen, can I say thank you very much. It will be Dewsbury Court at 4.30 p.m., unless there is a hiccup in our arrangements.*

438. As will be seen, Sutcliffe's name and address were given and the fact that he would be charged with offences. As most of the reporters present had already acquired such details by then that part of Morrill's statement was not very important in that instance. What was vitally important, however, was the plea made to the journalists not to publish photographs of Sutcliffe which they had acquired — an infinitely more relevant point in safeguarding Sutcliffe's right to a fair trial.

439. Superintendent Morrill's comment about one charge being a charge relating to the “Ripper series of incidents” should not have been said, although in fairness to him, by that time such information was common knowledge. The later reference pertaining to Mrs. Sutcliffe's involvement and the probability of her being a material witness is much more open to criticism than what had gone before.

440. Quite clearly there were errors of judgement by the police in connection with the press conferences held following Sutcliffe's arrest and before the first appearance at court.

441. Before leaving this theme, however, I believe it only right that I should also briefly refer at this point to the limitations of the press following Sutcliffe's arrest. There is abundant evidence to show that many reporters and their editors blatantly ignored the well established constraints

arising from the then legal principles governing contempt. Such conduct prompted the Solicitor General on the 6th January 1981 to give a timely reminder to newspaper editors and the controllers of radio and television programmes about their responsibilities under the law in reporting the Sutcliffe case. He also thought fit to emphasise "the vital principle, embodied in English law, that a man accused of a crime, however serious, is presumed to be innocent and is entitled to a fair trial".

442. I could give many instances of media malpractice that I have identified during my review but in view of the fact that the Press Council is already conducting an inquiry into the press coverage of the Sutcliffe case I think it will suffice if I give just one example in my report as embodied on the front page of the "U.K. Press Gazette" of 1st June 1981 (Fig 22). The details given are self-explanatory and typify the cowboy tactics employed by so many journalists at the time.

443. Following Sutcliffe's conviction at the Old Bailey, the Judge, Mr. Justice Boreham commended Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes in these terms:

*"I think too that the public would wish me to mention Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes. They were engaged in, what I suspect from what I hear sitting in these Courts is very often a very humdrum routine duty. They must be very gratified, and the public in general, and Miss Reivers in particular must be very relieved that those police tasks which they performed were carried out assiduously and with such attention to detail. I cannot help recalling the expression of the Sergeant. He had not fallen off a Christmas tree. We are very grateful he had not. I commend them too to their Chief Officer of Police. I hope that that commendation may be sent to him and may be kept for their records for as long as they serve."*

444. The professional purist might say that Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes were fortunate to be given this recognition in the light of the elementary mistakes they made in allowing Sutcliffe to hide the ball pein hammer and the knife at the scene and also the knife in the water cistern at the police station. I think that such a conclusion would be misplaced because the elementary mistakes were, in fact, remedied by Sergeant Ring himself in an open manner and the overall action of both officers did, after all, lead to the capture of the most wanted man in this country for many years. It came as no surprise when both the South Yorkshire and later the West Yorkshire Police Authority commended both officers for what they termed, inter alia, "their exceptional diligence".

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As Editor of the newspaper that secured and published the world exclusive interview with Mrs. Sonia Sutcliffe, I can offer one or two matters for general thought.

While preparing the article in London for publication, various members of my staff were offered, by various journalists:

- \* £10,000 and a job if the writer concerned would turn his article over
- \* £ 5,000 in banknotes in a suitcase if the reporter would reveal the whereabouts of Mrs. Sonia Sutcliffe
- \* £ 50 if the reporter concerned would speak to the writer of the article

I am proud to say that my staff remained loyal to their newspaper and upheld the traditions of honest journalism in an exemplary manner.

Yours faithfully,

DAVID FLYNN  
 Editor

To U.K Press Gazette from the editor of *The Star*, Sheffield

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