

PART V — SUMMARY OF MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Police Investigation (Part III)

Limitations

542. My review of the case has substantiated some of the criticisms which have already been levelled against the police for having failed to arrest Sutcliffe earlier. Other important limitations in the various aspects of the police investigation have also been identified during this review. (para 85)

The Major Incident Room

543. Many of the limitations stemmed from the failings of the Major Incident Room. (para 86)

544. With the advent of larger police forces there is no longer dependence upon assistance from New Scotland Yard in local murder investigations. This local independence has resulted in varying Major Incident Room systems being implemented, few of which are capable of being interfaced. This factor had a considerably adverse influence on the Ripper Inquiry. (paras 90 to 92 and paras 109 to 113)

545. The conventional Major Incident Room systems of all 43 police forces in England and Wales currently depend upon manual card indexes. Computer based experimental systems for Major Incident Rooms are in the course of development. At the onset of the Ripper case in 1975 there was no experience in this country of a working computer system for Major Incident Rooms and the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire cannot be criticised for declining the offer by the Police Scientific Development Branch of an untested system. (paras 93 to 100)

546. Whilst the West Yorkshire Police Major Incident Room procedure is well documented and had been used successfully in the past, the complexity of the protracted Ripper investigation created many problems. (paras 101 to 106)

547. Commander Nevill of the Metropolitan Police made certain recommendations in November 1979 in connection with the accelerating problems of the Major Incident Room but no decisive action was taken by the police until the murder of Jacqueline Hill in November 1980. (paras 107 to 108)

548. For most of the time during the Ripper investigation the Police National Computer facility for searching criminal names was not available. This had a tragic consequence in that the national conviction card showed Sutcliffe as having a previous conviction for "going equipped with a hammer" whereas the local conviction card, upon which the West Yorkshire Police relied, did not. This gives a clear indication of the value of the "Single Centre Reporting System", now established. (paras 115 to 116)

549. Sutcliffe was never regarded as "suspect" under the 'D'62 index system of the Major Incident Room because of undue reliance on the "Sunderland" letters and tape which served to eliminate him. (para 118)

550. In essence, the basic limitation of the Major Incident Room in the Ripper investigation was the inherent rigidity of the system which was incapable of being adapted to deal effectively with the continuing murders and assaults. (para 119)

551. The Major Incident Room was persistently overwhelmed by work loads without commensurate staffing levels. Instead of being the nerve centre of the most important detective effort in history it frustrated the work of senior investigating officers and junior detectives alike. (paras 120 to 125)

The Cross Area Sighting Inquiry

552. Prior to the murder of Josephine Whitaker, in April 1979, Sutcliffe's victims were predominantly prostitutes and therefore it was reasonably assumed that the murderer was a "punter" (a prostitutes client). This resulted in the police recording vehicle registration numbers

in "red-light" districts of certain Northern cities. This surveillance data was recorded on the Police National Computer and became known as the "Punters Index". (paras 126 to 129)

553. There were certain limitations in the PNC computer facility and had a senior police officer with computer experience been appointed, in line with a recommendation contained in a joint study conducted by PSDB, PNCU and PRSU, there would have been a better understanding of what could have been achieved. (paras 130 to 131 and 147)

554. The system began on 19th June 1978. By March 1979 20,000 "Cross Area Sightings" (a vehicle seen in the "red light" areas of two different cities) had been recorded but only one quarter of the vehicle owners had been seen. Due to pressure of work the police decided to change to a "Triple Area Sightings" project (vehicle recorded in three different cities). In all there were 5.4 million sightings recorded before Sutcliffe's arrest including 20,000 "Cross Area Sightings" and 1,200 "Triple Area Sightings". (paras 132 to 135 and 137)

555. Sutcliffe was interviewed by the police as a consequence of his vehicle being recorded in both the "Cross Area Sighting" and the "Triple Area Sighting" projects but due to poor index searching and the failure to locate previous papers within the Major Incident Room the officers conducting the interviews were inadequately briefed. (paras 136 and 141)

556. The covert "Sightings" operations were restricted by the policy on computer privacy including the storage of non-criminal information. These constraints, together with limitations in the information from the Police National Computer, inhibited police officers conducting inquiries and to some extent in their interviews with Sutcliffe. (para 138)

557. The Major Incident Room procedures in relation to the "Sightings" inquiries were complex and with the addition of incompetent staff to meet new demands the error rates increased. There were also general problems on data handling. Even so, Sutcliffe was identified for interview in both the "Sightings" projects. (paras 139 to 140, and 142 to 143)

558. Following an attack on _____ in March 1979, Detective Inspector Sidebottom obtained a computer print-out of 850 suspect vehicles from the "Punters Index". Sutcliffe's vehicle was included in the list of 850 and he was one of three owners within the list previously recorded as a "Triple Area Sighting". He should have been regarded as a prime suspect for the attack on _____ but was not interviewed due to a lack of appreciation of the information contained in the computer print-out. (paras 144 and 147)

559. Whilst the recording of vehicles seen in "red light" areas was sensible and the PNC involvement was commendable, the police can be faulted for not having allocated sufficient resources to meet the new demands stemming from the project. (para 145)

560. Even taking into account the sensitivity of police inquiries arising from the "Punters Index" there is good reason to think that officers should have been briefed to take a more positive line during the resultant interviews. (para 146)

The Tyre Marks and Vehicle Tracking Inquiry

561. Tyre marks found at the scenes of three of the Ripper crimes were a prominent feature of the investigation. The tread patterns of the tyres were cast at the scenes and measured to yield "tracking data" so as to gain some indication of the vehicle used in each case. (para 148 to 149)

562. In the Richardson murder the tracking data yielded a list of 100 vehicle types but was subsequently reduced to 51 by a more refined selection process. In turn this second list gave a total of 53,000 vehicles and registered owners. By the 10th July 1977 (following the attempted murder of Long) 20,000 of these vehicles remained to be examined, including Sutcliffe's, but the project was then suspended. (paras 150 to 151)

563. Unfortunately the index cards made out in the vehicle "Tracking Inquiry" recorded vehicle registration numbers only and not owners' names otherwise Sutcliffe's name would have been in the system for the first time and available thereafter for interviewing officers (para 152)

564. Following the Long case in July 1977 5,000 owners of Mark II Ford Cortinas living in Yorkshire were set to be interviewed but the project was abandoned after 3,000 owners had been seen. Then came the notable "Farina" inquiry. Both the Mark II Ford Cortina and "Farina" projects were based on a false premise and doomed to failure. (paras 153 to 155)

565. The Greater Manchester Police initially supported the "Farina" inquiry but following an analytical report by Detective Inspector Fletcher decided that the vehicle to be traced was confined to Ford Cortina Mark I and Ford Corsair models from 1964 onwards. Detective Inspector Sidebottom of West Yorkshire concluded that a range of five vehicles only, including the Ford Cortina Mark I and Ford Corsair needed to be considered. Both these assessments were discounted by the West Yorkshire Police and the false "Farina" inquiry was allowed to continue as highlighted in the "Special Notice" of 13th September 1979. (paras 156 to 157 and 161)

566. Sutcliffe was interviewed on the 2nd and 8th November 1977 in connection with the Jordan £5 note inquiry and had the wheels and tyres of his red Ford Corsair been closely examined by the interviewing officers he might have been associated with the Richardson murder the previous February and therefore, viewed with a great deal more suspicion. (paras 158 to 160)

567. The vehicle tracks found at the Richardson, Moore and Millward scenes provided investigating officers with factual evidence which, whilst difficult and time consuming to process, might well have led them to view Sutcliffe as a strong suspect. It failed to do so for the reasons given. (paras 161 to 169)

Description of Suspects, Photofits and Other Assaults

568. The recognition of the Ripper crimes as being a connected series came with the murder of Emily Jackson in January 1976 and established a criteria of recognition to be followed subsequently. (paras 170 to 174)

569. In March 1978 an internal review team was set up "to examine all reported attacks on women.....to find any common link or pattern". Fourteen such cases were linked and included in the "Special Notice" of June 1978. It was a valuable exercise but the criteria applied were too narrow so that a number of assaults with good descriptions or photofit pictures of suspects were not included. (paras 175 to 180)

570. It is unfortunate that a similar review was not mounted later in the series since further attacks, in several cases with a hammer, were committed by a man with a dark beard and/or moustache. (para 181)

571. The appraisal report of 10th December 1980, by Superintendent Charlesworth gave criteria which if followed, would have included five other cases in the Ripper series and prompted useful clues from some of the victims. (paras 182 to 184)

572. With the additional benefit of hindsight it can now be clearly established that had senior detectives of West Yorkshire assembled the photofit impressions from surviving victims of all hammer attacks or assaults involving serious head injuries on unaccompanied women, they would have been left with the inescapable conclusion that the man involved was dark haired with a beard and moustache. Three such victims would also have emphasised that he did not have a "Geordie" accent. (paras 185 to 189 and Fig. 10)

573. Such information would have been invaluable to investigating officers especially before the "Sunderland" letters and tape were used as eliminators in 1979 and as a possible guide to the crimes in the series. (paras 190 to 193)

574. It is my firm conclusion that between 1969 and 1980 Sutcliffe was probably responsible for many attacks on unaccompanied women, which he has not yet admitted, not only in the West Yorkshire and Manchester areas but also in other parts of the country. I have arranged for senior operational officers in the forces concerned to ensure that my findings are taken into account in the further interrogation of Sutcliffe after his appeal has been finalised. (paras 195 to 196)

The Letters and Tape Inquiry

575. Between March 1978 and June 1979 two anonymous letters and a tape recording were received by the West Yorkshire Police and a further letter was received by the Chief Editor of the "Daily Mirror" from a man claiming responsibility for the crimes and signing himself "Jack the Ripper". As a consequence, major police resources were allocated to trace the author; the police and the public were conditioned to believe they came from the killer who was a native of Sunderland; the letters and tape were used to eliminate suspects (paras 197 to 198)

576. I find no fault with the application of significant resources in this way which was a matter for the professional judgement of the investigating officer. However, the complete acceptance 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 as was done very competently by Detective Inspector Zackrisson of Northumbria. (paras 199 to 205, 213, 222 to 224, 226 to 227 and Fig. 15)

577. The public response to the publicity given to the letters and the tape had a significant impact on the Major Incident Room and overwhelmed the available manpower. This stopped the processing of actions from the Incident Room for a period and eventually the additional burdens imposed on the staff employed there proved an important contributory factor in the specific mistakes which allowed Sutcliffe to remain free. (paras 206 to 207)

578. Sutcliffe might still have been arrested, however, despite the problems arising from the failure of the Major Incident Room had the letters and the tape not been used as factors for elimination of suspects. (paras 208 to 216)

579. Commander Nevill of the Metropolitan Police expressed certain reservations about using the letters and the tape as a positive sieve and the external Advisory Team appointed in November 1980 expressed grave doubts about the authenticity placed upon them by the West Yorkshire Police. The latter prompted an in-force review of the different aspects of the inquiry which was not completed before Sutcliffe's arrest. (paras 217 to 220)

580. Without wishing to minimise the error of judgement by the police in relation to the letters and the tape sieves, it should be said, in fairness, that once details of the eliminating factors had been passed to police forces and the massive publicity campaign mounted on similar lines, the die had been well and truly cast. On the resources available it would have been an almost impossible task to reverse the earlier decision. (para 225)

The Police Interviews Involving Sutcliffe

581. Sutcliffe was interviewed by the police on twelve occasions between 5th July 1975 and following his arrest for the Ripper crimes. Of these, nine of the interviews can be regarded as part of the actual police investigation of the Ripper series before Sutcliffe's arrest for them. (paras 228 to 229)

582. The first interview on 15th October 1975 was in connection with the theft of tyres by Sutcliffe from his employers and had no significance so far as the series of murders and assaults were concerned. (para 230)

583. The second interview was in connection with a new £5 note found in a secret compartment of Jean Jordan's handbag near to the scene of her murder in Manchester in November 1977. Jordan was a prostitute and it was believed that the note had been paid to her by the murderer for her services. It was also thought to have been passed through the Midland Bank at Shipley in West Yorkshire as part of a wages consignment. A joint inquiry was mounted by Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire Police to interview employees of all the local firms involved. Consequently, Sutcliffe was interviewed on 2nd November 1977 at his home. Sonia Sutcliffe supported the alibi he gave. In the light of the information available to the inquiry officers there can be no criticism of them. (paras 231 to 243)

584. The third interview was a follow-up to the second and involved D.Cs Rayne and Smith. The reports from both interviews two and three were then submitted to the senior investigating officers and they were marked "File" in the belief that the alibis from Sutcliffe's wife and later his mother, were genuine. In so far as the third interview was concerned it was not the in-depth probe intended

and the interviewing officers clearly failed to comply with instructions given to them at an earlier briefing that the house, garage and motor car of any interviewee were to be searched. Inquiry officers were not told to record the details of car tyres, however, and therefore could be excused for not having taken this particular step on their own initiative. They were also not in a position to know that any hacksaw blade should be seized for scientific examination as certain information had been with-held on the instructions of Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway of Greater Manchester Police. (paras 244 to 250)

585. The fourth interview was prompted by the "Cross Area Sighting" inquiry which was intended to identify vehicle owners seen in "red light" areas. Sutcliffe's car had been seen in both the Leeds and Bradford areas. The interviewing officer, D.C. Smith, (not the D.C. Smith in the previous interview) was not allowed to mention that observations were being kept in "red light" areas or make any reference to ball-pein hammers. He knew of Sutcliffe's connection with the earlier £5 note inquiry and that the "Farina" style car was a suspect vehicle. Sutcliffe's wife alibied her husband for the Millward murder date of the 16/17th May 1978. The officer did not check the tyres on Sutcliffe's car, neither did he carry out any search of the house or garage. On balance, he took too much for granted including the denial by Sutcliffe of his visit to Leeds on the evening of the sighting. (paras 251 to 255)

586. The fifth interview arose because of Detective Superintendent Holland's dissatisfaction with the fourth interview. A memo went to D.C. Smith on 29th August 1978 but as he had been directed to the "Farina" inquiry by then, Sutcliffe was not interviewed until 23rd November 1978. This interview was treated as a matter of simple routine and the papers were resubmitted with the further information. Thereafter the papers were missing from the filing system for a period of eleven months. (paras 256 to 260)

587. The sixth interview arose from the latest "Cross Area" and "Triple Area Sightings" of Sutcliffe's vehicles. These sightings totalled 44 in all and occurred between 26th June 1978 and 22nd February 1979. Such information should have been of the utmost significance especially if it had been related to the earlier sightings and also the £5 note inquiry, but unfortunately these three important factors were not connected with obviously grave consequences for the future of the investigation. Due to increasing pressures, Sutcliffe's sixth interview did not take place until 29th July 1979, some five months after a Manchester sighting which Sutcliffe denied, D.Cs Laptew and Greenwood were not aware of the previous police interviews with Sutcliffe, neither did they know that he had been involved in the earlier £5 note inquiry. (This was due to errors in the Major Incident Room). Even so, after further inquiries, they were not satisfied with the outcome of their interview with Sutcliffe and even considered arresting him on suspicion but decided against it mainly due to an instruction from ACC (Crime) issued in July 1977. Instead they submitted a comprehensive report which included their general impression that there was "something not quite right" about Sutcliffe. Unfortunately, the report was subsequently endorsed "File" by Detective Superintendent Holland, a decision which was based on the handwriting of Sutcliffe. By that time handwriting had become an eliminating factor which tended to over-ride any other information. (paras 261 to 275)

588. The seventh interview was called for following a re-examination of completed actions for the fourth and fifth interviews relating to "Cross Area Sightings". D.Cs Vickerman and Eland were told to eliminate Sutcliffe once and for all. Copies of the papers relating to the fourth and fifth interviews were attached to the inquiry action but the papers relating to the vital sixth interview were missing due to the increasing inefficiency of the Major Incident Room. Mrs. Sutcliffe was present at the interview. Neither officer considered Sutcliffe to be a strong suspect but they described the couple as "strange" and were unhappy at being unable to positively eliminate them. Even so Sutcliffe was, in fact, eliminated on this occasion by Detective Superintendent Stainthorpe, again due to his handwriting sample and lack of a North East connection. (paras 276 to 282)

589. The eighth interview resulted from some painstaking research in late 1979 by the Greater Manchester Police, the Bank of England and the Midland Bank. After practical tests, the team brilliantly concluded that the Jordan £5 note had been drawn as part of a payroll by one of eleven firms in the Shipley area collectively employing 241 people. Sutcliffe's employers had 49 employees on this list and Sutcliffe was number 76 in the full list of 241. A joint operation to

interview these people was mounted prior to which the list of 241 was searched against the West Yorkshire Major Incident Room records. When the list was returned it showed only 7 persons who were the subject of additional information. Due to a disastrous error in the Incident Room Sutcliffe was not included neither were a further 10 who had been previously recorded. It must be concluded that had Sutcliffe's previous involvement in the various facets of the Ripper investigation been identified he must have been regarded as a high priority suspect. Of the 18 in the list previously recorded in the Incident Room, he was the only one who had featured in both the "Cross Area" and "Triple Area Sighting" projects and as an owner of a vehicle within the original "Tracking Inquiry" list. This particular interview was conducted by Detective Sergeant Boot and Detective Constable Bell on the 13th January 1980. Sergeant Boot recorded in his pocket book that Sutcliffe was "a strange runner". However, he did not report his unease about Sutcliffe to his supervisory officers. Other weaknesses were apparent in connection with the issues surrounding the eighth interview which resulted in Sutcliffe being allowed to remain at liberty when he clearly should have been arrested. (paras 283 to 291)

590. Detective Sergeant McAlister and Detective Constable McCrone conducted the ninth interview which again arose through the "Cross Area Sighting" programme. They were in possession of the previous papers apart from those relating to the sixth interview (as commented upon previously) which were missing due to the limitations of the Major Incident Room. Of all the police interviews this was the least efficient. It took place in a police car at Sutcliffe's place of employment and quite clearly the inquiry officers failed to comply with instructions on the searching of interviewees' houses and cars. (paras 292 to 294)

591. Detective Inspector Fletcher, being dissatisfied with the completed action sheet for the ninth interview, immediately arranged for Sutcliffe to be seen again. For this tenth interview D.Cs Jackson and Harrison saw Sutcliffe at his place of work after being briefed by Mr Fletcher. Again, these officers were not aware of the sixth interview in relation to the Manchester sighting of Sutcliffe's vehicle. Following the submission of their report Mr Fletcher wrote a summary of inquiries involving Sutcliffe and highlighted the alibi (now known to be wrong) relating to the Jordan murder. At his recommendation the papers were filed. This particular interview was intended to eliminate Sutcliffe from the inquiry altogether or bring him fully into the category of a suspect. It failed through a lack of preparation, communication, the venue for the interview and the rank and expertise of those conducting it. (paras 295 to 298)

592. The eleventh interview of Sutcliffe took place on the 25th June 1980. Constables Doran and Melia, whilst keeping observations in the "red light" area of Bradford took up a high speed chase after seeing Sutcliffe driving erratically in a Rover 3.5 car. He was subsequently arrested for a drink and driving offence. Before he was released his details were checked with the Ripper Major Incident Room records and the officers were told he had been "eliminated from the inquiry on handwriting". (para 299)

593. Sutcliffe's twelfth and final interview followed his arrest in Sheffield when he admitted all the murders and assaults for which he was subsequently convicted at the Central Criminal Court. (para 300)

594. There is little doubt that Sutcliffe should have been arrested much earlier on the facts associated with his various police interviews. In my view he was not identified as a suspect and more importantly identified as a murderer because of a number of factors. Often, the interviewing officers did not take a sufficiently positive line for a variety of reasons; their attitudes were wrongly conditioned by the policy decisions in relation to the "Sunderland" letters and the tape; on occasions insufficient regard was paid to the welfare of the investigating officers; the Major Incident Room failed to provide a proper service for the inquiry and, in particular, the failure of the nominal index search in connection with the re-activated £5 note inquiry was inexcusable; there was a clear management failure to forecast the personnel requirements arising from each new line of inquiry; the senior officers directing the investigation were bogged down with routine paper work which should have been dealt with at a much lower level. The final irony is that immediately before the tenth interview of Sutcliffe, seven of the eight officers who took part in interviews 6, 7, 8 and 9 were working at the same Police Station. Several of these officers had reservations about Sutcliffe but the overall information against him was never pieced together due primarily to the lack of effective briefings. (paras 301 to 305)

Media Relations

595. Following the formation of a Community Affairs Department in 1974, the first commander, Chief Superintendent Domaille conducted a comprehensive review of arrangements for liaison with the news media and consequently Mr. Baxter, a civilian press officer with previous journalistic experience, was appointed. No police officer was appointed to work with him as is often the case in other forces. Because Mr Baxter lacked the professional status of a senior police officer there was a tendency for reporters to bypass him and make direct contact with senior investigating officers in important cases. Some of these officers enjoyed their contact with the media representatives and therefore, there was no strong pressure from them for the appointment of a police officer to work in conjunction with Mr Baxter as a press relations officer. (paras 306 to 309)

596. The Ripper investigation excited the interest of local, national and international press to an extent never before experienced in a murder investigation in the United Kingdom. Initially relations between the police and the media were quite good and were reasonably well maintained until the murder of Josephine Whitaker at Halifax in April 1979. Thereafter there was an obvious decline prompted by an increasing mistrust between the two agencies. The receipt of the third "Sunderland" letter in March 1979 and the tape recording two months later also caused disharmony because it was clearly established that a "mole" within the West Yorkshire Force was leaking important information to the media. With the murder of Barbara Leach in Bradford in September 1979 the criticism of the police increased and there were calls to "bring in the Yard". (paras 310 to 321)

597. In spite of deteriorating relationships a sponsored publicity campaign on the "Sunderland" letters and the tape which commenced in October, 1979 was given full support by the media so much so that the public response swamped the Major Incident Room with low grade information and accelerated the decline in efficiency. Thereafter the West Yorkshire Police adopted a campaign of relative silence and this caused relationships with the media to become even more strained. The denial by the local police that the attempted murder of Teresa Sykes in Huddersfield on the 5th November 1980 was connected to the Ripper series may well have been prompted so as to reduce the public, media and Parliamentary pressure to which the force was being increasingly exposed. (paras 322 to 327)

598. The limitations in the initial police action at the scene of Jacqueline Hill's murder in Leeds in November 1980 prompted a crescendo of media criticism, some of which was clearly justified. The conduct of many journalists in the hysteria of the period also left a great deal to be desired. Spurious calls were made to the police to test the promptness of response and on occasions outdated photofit pictures were resurrected and republished as current information. (paras 328 to 330)

599. The breakdown in relationships between the police and the media clearly called for urgent action and with the arrival of the external Advisory Team in November 1980, Superintendent Morritt was appointed as permanent liaison officer for the Ripper investigation. Thereafter the relationships showed marked improvement until the arrest of Sutcliffe on the 2nd January, 1981. (para 331)

600. When it became apparent on Sunday 4th January 1981 that a break-through had occurred in the inquiry, media activity became frantic with cheque book journalism developing on a wide scale. With the disclosure of further aspects of police inefficiency there were increasing calls for a Public Inquiry into the Ripper police investigation. (paras 332 to 333)

601. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn from the jaundiced relationships between the police and media representatives, especially in the latter stages of the Ripper investigation, is that a senior police officer, such as Superintendent Morritt, should have been appointed as the official police spokesman much earlier. (paras 334 to 336)

Lack of Computerisation of Records

602. An increased use of computers could have been of invaluable assistance to investigating officers in the Ripper case but it should be borne in mind that such computer usage would inevitably have led to an increase in the storage of information about people and their lawful

activities. As early as 1977 the West Yorkshire Police made inquiries into the possibility of using computers to assist in the investigation. Following meetings involving PSDB and PRSU an offer was made to the Force which envisaged using a main frame computer based at Harwell with a telephone input from West Yorkshire and the use of cassette tapes. The initial cost would have been £25,000 (which Home Office was prepared to fund) plus ongoing costs of £3,000 per week. The Chief Constable declined the offer on the grounds of cost for what in effect was an untested scheme in the operational sense. In my view, he was right to do so. (paras 337 to 342)

603. In May 1978 PSDB and PRSU were again consulted and a further Study Report was produced with recommendations. This led to the "Cross" and "Triple Area Sighting" programmes being run on the Police National Computer. This initiative in the use of computer technology, particularly by the PNC agency, reflects great credit on all those involved. (para 343)

604. In addition to the consultations with Home Office agencies, the West Yorkshire Police made other searching inquiries elsewhere with a view to having the Ripper investigation records computerised, but to no avail. (para 344)

605. The PNC application to deal with vehicle sightings was an excellent example of what was achieved using existing equipment and expertise. However, in relation to Major Incident Room records there were two main problems which were not to any degree resolved. One was the back record conversion problem and the other the lack of computer technology available at the time and to some extent even now. (para 345)

606. Claims have been made in the press and technical journals that the Ripper inquiry could have been run on a computer costing £3,000. This is untrue and indeed, the costs falling as a result of PNC being utilised for the "Sightings" programme with existing hardware, amounted to more than £240,000. (para 346)

607. It was the use of technology in the form of a personal radio and the PNC that led to Sutcliffe's ultimate arrest. Furthermore, had Sutcliffe not been identified in the computerised "Punters Index" previously the Ripper squad officers might not have shown such interest in him following his arrest. (para 347)

608. The only criticisms I would make in relation to West Yorkshire's ongoing computer problem in the Ripper case is that a police officer with computer knowledge should have been appointed to the Ripper investigation as recommended by the Joint Study Team in 1978; the "Punters Index" should have been more sophisticated so as to assist the investigating officers even more than it did; and since 1974, when clear terms of reference were given to PSDB, a greater priority should have been given to achieving a computerised system for Major Incident Rooms. (paras 348 to 352)

The murder of Jacqueline Hill

609. The last murder in the Ripper series, that of Jacqueline Hill on the 17th November, 1980, prompted an avalanche of media criticism against the police because of the initial investigative limitations revealed. I decided, therefore, to deal with the particular murder investigation as a separate issue. Much of the criticism was justified and in retrospect it must be said that as a consequence the public confidence in the police action generally was seriously damaged. However, at least it led to the setting up of the external Advisory Team and a new command structure in the investigating team which, in turn, gave a much needed impetus to the inquiry in the few weeks prior to Sutcliffe's ultimate arrest. (paras 353 to 370)

Command Control and Resources

610. The control of a series type major investigation such as the Ripper case, the "Black Panther" case or the Cambridge Rapist series calls for a range of skills which are otherwise not frequently required and which consequently are not always adequately developed in the senior investigating officer. In the Ripper investigation it is now patently obvious that the senior detectives were not well equipped in management terms to control an inquiry of that size and scale. In particular they lacked the flexibility of mind required to remedy system failures, such as the ongoing problems of the Major Incident Room and also to strengthen sectors of the management structure so obviously necessary in the light of changing developments. (paras 371 to 378)

611. No proper arrangements were made for appropriate delegation of responsibility to subordinate commanders and this led to the overburdening of senior officers with mundane matters which clearly had an adverse effect on overall efficiency. Motivation and the maintenance of morale in junior officers were also lacking from time to time by reason of wrong priorities set by the management team. (paras 379 to 380)

612. There was often a failure to adequately plan the introduction of each new line of inquiry. For example, the vehicle "Tracking Inquiry" was launched without a detailed analysis having been made of the manpower implications arising from the need to trace 53,000 vehicle owners. An even more striking example was the start of the letters and tape campaign at a time when all the outside inquiry teams attached to the Major Incident Room had already been withdrawn to deal with the public response to the Whitaker murder. (para 381)

613. The decision to mount major lines of inquiry calls for proper planning, assessment of impact, reporting and control and when commenced should then be delegated to a competent officer to deal with. In a protracted inquiry the welfare of all officers involved is also an important consideration. (paras 382 to 383)

614. In the Ripper investigation the vast majority of officers worked diligently and conscientiously. What was lacking was not individual application but competent management. (para 384).

Sutcliffe's Immediate Associates

Trevor Birdsall

615. At Sutcliffe's trial the witness who attracted the greatest attention was Trevor Birdsall. He has also been the subject of much speculation by the media and I decided therefore that the facts surrounding him warranted a separate heading in my report. On the basis of my review I have concluded that it is most unlikely that Birdsall was involved as an accomplice in any of Sutcliffe's crimes. (para 385 and 392)

616. His prominence in the case was principally due to an anonymous letter he sent to the West Yorkshire Police on the 29th November, 1980 followed by a visit he made to Bradford Police Station the following day. In both instances he expressed misgivings about Sutcliffe and indeed in his letter he said that he had good reason to think Sutcliffe was the man the police were looking for in the Ripper case. The anonymous letter was sent to the Major Incident Room and was made the subject of an action form in relation to Sutcliffe no later than the 9th December 1980. Although, in view of the contents, it was given "Priority No 1", it remained in a filing tray in the Incident Room until Sutcliffe's arrest in Sheffield on the 2nd January, 1981. The report compiled in relation to Birdsall's visit to Bradford Police Station probably arrived at the Major Incident Room by the 4th December 1980 but despite a comprehensive search for it since Sutcliffe's arrest it has not been traced. (paras 386 to 402)

617. In essence, the failure to take advantage of Birdsall's anonymous letter and his visit to the Police Station was yet again a stark illustration of the progressive decline in the overall efficiency of the Major Incident Room. It resulted in Sutcliffe being at liberty for more than a month when he might conceivably have been in custody. Thankfully, there is no reason to think he committed any further murderous assaults within that period. (paras 397 and 403).

Sutcliffe's Arrest and Subsequent Events

620. Sutcliffe's eventual arrest for his heinous crimes resulted from basic patrol policing by uniformed officers as happened similarly in the "Black Panther" case previously. He was arrested for suspected theft on 2nd January 1981 in Sheffield with a prostitute named Olivia St. Elmo Reivers. There were false number plates on his car and it transpired these had been stolen from a scrap yard at Brighouse, West Yorkshire. The arresting officers were Sergeant Ring and Constable Hydes but it was additional good work by Sergeant Armitage and Sergeant Bennett (of the West Yorkshire Police) that resulted in Sutcliffe being kept in custody first at Sheffield, then at Dewsbury as a possible Ripper suspect. (paras 410 to 418)

621. The night following the arrest Sergeant Ring went back to the scene of the arrest and recovered a ball-pein hammer and a knife which Sutcliffe had been able to secrete under some leaves. With the discovery of such damning evidence, coupled with the information on record about Sutcliffe in the Major Incident Room, he had a lengthy interrogation on Sunday, 4th January, 1981 and eventually admitted all the murders and assaults for which he was subsequently convicted. (para 419)

622. Four days later at Sergeant Ring's initiative a further knife was found which Sutcliffe had been able to hide in a lavatory water cistern whilst in custody at Sheffield. (para 420)

623. There were limitations in the actual police action at the time of Sutcliffe's arrest because he was allowed to hide from the officers the ball-pein hammer and the knife. He was also able to conceal the further knife in the water cistern at the police station. But it is to Sergeant Ring's credit that on his own initiative, he found the hammer and the knife at the scene later and was also instrumental in discovering the second knife in the water cistern. Both he and Constable Hydes were commended by the trial judge, Mr Justice Boreham, and also by both the South Yorkshire and the West Yorkshire Police Authorities, respectively. (paras 421 to 422 and 443 to 444)

624. Following Sutcliffe's admission of the offences whilst in custody at Dewsbury the conduct of both the police and the media, in relation to the publicity that was to follow, left a great deal to be desired. In particular there was the notorious Press Conference at Dewsbury and to a lesser extent the later one at Sheffield. As described, both police officers and journalists clearly contravened the contempt laws and recognised sub judice practice. (paras 423 to 439 and 441)

626. During the review I have identified many instances of malpractice by journalists but as the Press Council is already conducting an inquiry into the press coverage of the Ripper case I have concluded that one prominent example would suffice. (para 442 and Fig 22)

Lessons for the future (Part IV)

627. It is easy to be wise with hindsight and I have been mindful of this when identifying the limitations of the police investigation and have reached my conclusions following a carefully balanced and professional consideration of all the factors involved. The lessons for the future come as a natural follow-up. (paras 445 to 446)

Major Incident Rooms

628. The single most important lesson for Major Incident Rooms is that standardisation of the procedures must be achieved so that compatible systems, capable of being interfaced in appropriate cases, are introduced in all police forces. (para 447)

629. Standardisation is even more important when the use of computers in Major Incident Rooms is contemplated. Unless methods of indexing, recording and filing are common to all police forces, the computerisation of multi-force records in a series type investigation is likely to prove impossible to mount. (para 448)