

Karma 2

Saturday, 24 August 2019

Operation Hydrant

After the failure of Surrey Police's attempt to put an innocent man (me) into prison for crimes that never took place, HHJ Taylor, in Southwark Crown Court a year ago, August 2018, described Operation Ravine as a "debacle". Not only was I declared Not Guilty of the three main claims but the trial was stopped and, giving her Abuse of Process ruling, Judge Deborah Taylor castigated the police for numerous Failures To Disclose vital evidence of my innocence but, far worse, for "persistent misleading of the Court". In blunt, non legal terms, that means lying on oath to a judge.

She said I could not be tried again; I already had been tried and wrongly convicted in 2001 of similar and equally false claims; the CCRC are currently examining fresh evidence to see whether my past conviction should now be returned to the Court of Appeal.

Under normal circumstances the prosecution, given 24 hours to decide whether to appeal her ruling, nearly always do so - they have nothing to lose. The CPS in my 2018 case took 20 minutes to throw in the towel. They knew a disaster area when they saw one.

As a result Surrey Police gave a mealy mouthed apology, implying that "victims" had been let down. Yes, this "victim" had been badly let down by incompetent, or worse, Surrey Police. And they immediately asked Norfolk Police to conduct an examination of the way Ravine had been handled.

Operation Hydrant took months and, in July this year, submitted their report, which I have not yet seen.

But on August 13th Surrey Chief Constable Stephens and Police and Crime Commissioner Munro announced in a public meeting that the review had not yet been completed but that, in the year April 2018 to 2019, convictions of sex abusers had dropped from over 20% to just under 4% in the Surrey Police area.

Munro said this was a deeply troubling situation - again, implying for "victims" of abuse. He is, for once, right but it is deeply troubling for him, for Surrey residents, for Surrey Police and, most of all, for the innocent accused if, like I was, they were innocent and had not committed the crimes. In fact, in my cases, the crimes had never even happened.

Rather like the Carl Beech "Nick" case, they were total inventions.

In my case, however, it was far worse than in the cases of Lord Bramall, Harvey Proctor and Lord Brittan, Cliff Richard, Jim Davidson, Paul Gambaccini and the dozens of other falsely accused minor celebrities, because Surrey Police had provoked and constructed the majority of the false claims against me.

I fear this is frequently the pattern; feeling they require better "evidence" (there rarely is any), police "assist" the coroner. I use the word carefully and intentionally. It is often far more accurate and honest than the alternative "victim" so beloved of police. Indeed, in a pre hearing of my case in 2017 at Westminster Magistrates Court the equally excellent Judge Emma Arbuthnot told off the police and CPS for using the word "victim". As Sir Richard Henriques had done in his 2016 report.

But Surrey Police, as all British police tend to do these days, sniggered like schoolgirls and ignored her. My bail form

used the word "victims" several times.

Before my trial my excellent team uncovered some extraordinary and horrifying facts. In Legal Argument we requested permission to question one of my false accusers about our suspicion that he had been a rent boy. HHJ Taylor denied us that, as we had no firm evidence. Fortunately, in a moment of honesty during cross examination, the man, now in his 60s, snapped at my QC, the fantastic Henry Blaxland, "Why do you keep going on about money? I don't need money. When I was 14 I was making Â£500 a week at Claridges". That's around Â£2000 a week in today's money. I saw HHJ Taylor blink. And two jurors smiled at me. One winked. As I later said, perhaps he was doing overtime, in his job as a Junior Waiter, at Room Service.

But police knew far more than that; they had found out that his sister had accused him of raping her several times when she was 10 and he was 20. Yet Surrey Police, knowing all this yet being dreadfully short of accusers, concealed it. Or, as HHJ Taylor put it, persistently misled the court.

There were numerous other serious flaws and errors in the "victim" accounts which would have emerged had the trial continued.

But far more serious were "mistakes" I had uncovered in 2016 and 2017 and reported to both then Chief Constable Ephgrave and PCC Munro. These indicated possibly forging search warrants or, at least, "misleading" magistrates - described by Sir Richard Henriques as serious. It was reading his report, leaked to me in advance of publication, that had caused me to examine Surrey Police behaviour in detail. And, worst of all, "contributing" to the deaths of three innocent men during Operation Ravine. These deaths all fitted the CPS Guidelines (still available online) of Deaths In Custody, all of which should have been reported to the (then) IPCC, none of which were. These included a man falsely accused of being a "victim" of one of the other men in the case, something he, a quadriplegic, strongly denied and the stress of which he later told me was "the worst thing that has ever happened to me, Jonathan". Indeed, a few weeks later he died, aged 56.

Both Ephgrave and Munro ignored my official complaints. Ephgrave admitted his officers had lied to Magistrates but excused their behaviour by saying the search warrants would have been granted anyway. I was speechless. When, later, I complained to the IPCC, Surrey Police stated they had investigated the three Deaths In Custody and there had been no breaches of police behaviour. Surrey Coroners, likewise, declared a post mortem on another of the dead men was not required and that he'd died of natural causes, despite my producing copies of two suicide notes from him that Surrey Police seemed to have failed to show Surrey Coroners.

I was starting to lose faith in the system and faced my trial fairly certain I'd be spending the rest of my life in prison for crimes that had never taken place. Thank God (which I do every day) for a decent, honest Judge. Rare as hen's teeth, I suspect.

Despite my raging on at everybody regarding Ephgrave and Munro's lack of interest in investigating possibly very serious crimes by serving Surrey officers, I could get no support from Surrey County Council. They merely reprimanded Munro. I discovered PCC Munro had previously been Chairman of that august body. And I came across a speech by Ephgrave stating that he always supported officers and had once rejected decisions of gross misconduct, against two of his staff, by the IPCC who had crumbled in the face of his opposition.

After my "debacle" ended I continued my fight, telling both Ephgrave and Munro they should resign. Ephgrave did so; jumping ship across to the Met where he now holds a senior position. Munro refused but was deselected by local Surrey Conservatives. You should see some of the letters I got supporting me from local councillors.

Ephgraveâ€™s Deputy, Gavin Stephens, is the current Chief Constable of Surrey. He has blamed the fall in convictions on the increased numbers of cases reported by â€œvictimsâ€•. Officers find this â€œstressfulâ€•. Poor diddums. It must be â€œes attempting to pervert the course of justice.

I suggest that Carl Beech was merely the tip of the iceberg and that there is an army of false accusers these days, knowing that invention or exaggeration can earn them thousands in compensation and that police will assist their crimes. They will be believed and considered â€œcredible and trueâ€• before any investigation takes place. It is â€œstressfulâ€• to be accused of a sex crime.

And worse than that, I have since discovered all kinds of devious, cunning and predatory behaviour in associated areas, such as the legal firms who make fortunes representing and encouraging false accusers, especially if the alleged perpetrators are dead, and media outlets who, like Exaro, love a â€œgood storyâ€• above all else - I believe these days they are described as â€œclick baitâ€•. And there are politicians who see a nice bandwagon.

Even charities seem to house predators established as credible, honest supporters of the tragically abused (and letâ€™s be clear - abuse DOES happen). I look at Inquiries like the current IICSA one, costing us tax payers millions, and wonder whether they are honey pots attracting as many abusers, hiding in plain sight, as they do honest examiners. â€œCome and reveal all to us. You can feel quite safe. And then weâ€™ll go for a private drink afterwardsâ€•.

Methinks the lady doth protest too much, somebody once said. And â€œGet thee behind meâ€•.

Ooh Matron.

And what about the hundreds of innocent men currently in prison, possibly included in the 20% a year from Surrey, before my â€œdebacleâ€• lowered the conviction rate to â€œunder 4%â€•?? Perhaps some of those successful past convictions be re-examined?

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