

It was a good day to spend in the garden - hot and sunny. Trevor Wainwright, Hungerford's usual bobby on the beat, was on a day off.

He was making his way to a part-time gardening job in the nearby village of **Inkpen**. As he drove the three-and-a-half miles a news report came on the radio about a suspected armed robbery at a petrol station in Froxfield.

Someone had shot at the cashier, Kakoub Dean. Luckily she hadn't been injured.



The young policeman wondered whether he should see if he could do anything to help. After all, he was in the area and knew Mrs Dean.

But, he reasoned, it was his day off. Later that day, his parents were driving up from their home in Kent to visit him.

And strictly speaking, it was not his responsibility; Froxfield, though just outside Hungerford, was in Wiltshire rather than Berkshire and beyond the jurisdiction of Thames Valley Police.

So he continued to Inkpen and Mrs Roland-Clarke's garden.

I could smell cordite in the air."

About half an hour later, Mrs Roland-Clarke called him to the telephone. It was Jane, PC Wainwright's then-wife. She told him someone was shooting across the back gardens of their road.

"I put two and two together and assumed that the armed robbers from Froxfield had been cornered in Hungerford," he said.

"I rushed back to check on Jane and on the way I saw smoke coming up from South View [a nearby street]. People were sheltering in doorways and I pulled up and asked what was going on.

"'Some bloke's gone mad with a gun', they said. I hurried home and got out of the car. I could smell cordite in the air. Sharp, acrid and smoky."

He told his wife to stay indoors with the little girl she was babysitting and headed off to Hungerford town centre, first to a newsagent to buy some maps and then to the police station.



"The station was locked, so I let myself in with a key. It was absolute panic stations.

"I effectively put myself on duty and thought because of my local knowledge I could show the armed response team the back routes around the town. Ambulances lined the main street.

"Members of the public were in the station with the police. I saw Robert Clements – he'd been walking the dog with his dad, Ken, and just witnessed him shot dead in South View. I knew I had to help."

When PC Wainwright, wearing his off-duty clothes of shorts and a Fred Perry polo shirt, was called into his superior's office, he thought he was going to be told to put his uniform on.

Instead, Sgt Ryan said: "I don't know how to tell you this. Your dad's been shot. He's dead."



Trevor Wainwright still lives in Hungerford

The elder Mr and Mrs Wainwright had been about 300 yards from their son's house when Douglas Wainwright was shot in the head and Kathleen Wainwright in the chest and the hand.

Mrs Wainwright had the presence of mind to get out of the car and cower behind it. She knew her husband was dead.

The gunman was reloading his weapon and Mrs Wainwright thought he would shoot at her again. This time, close-up. There was no way he would miss.

Maybe he was distracted; maybe he enjoyed the power of sparing Mrs Wainwright's life.

Either way, he turned away. Two more vehicles driving along the road were shot at. One man was injured. Another, Eric Vardy, was killed.

Back at the police station, PC Wainwright was told his mother had been taken to hospital in Swindon.

He headed straight there and was greeted by a nurse who said Kathleen was fine and Douglas was in the operating theatre.

Over the moon at the news of his father's survival, PC Wainwright telephoned his brothers and sister. Then the nurse came back.

"She asked me what my dad looked like," he says.



"I told her he had tattoos, was about 6ft 1in and had grey hair. And she said 'I'm really sorry. That's not him'.

"He was dead after all. That was possibly even worse than hearing it the first time."

By now, the name of the gunman was circulating. When PC Wainwright heard it was Michael Ryan from South View, he couldn't put a face to the name.

"In fact, I first thought it was another lad who lived there. A right little sod. Michael Ryan was just so, so insignificant.

"And then I remembered the name. I had been the one to carry out the checks for Ryan's firearms licence."

The primary school where Marjorie Jackson was a caretaker had broken up for the summer holidays.

She had been to check on the building, which was just the other side of the street from her South View home, and was returning to her house for lunch when a springer spaniel ran past.

It was being chased up the road by Michael Ryan. The dog and its pursuer rounded a bend before disappearing from view.

Mrs Jackson had known Ryan all of his life. They lived a few doors from each other and their families were friends.

He was as good as gold."

Dorothy Ryan, Michael's mother, was a lunchtime supervisor at the primary school where Mrs Jackson worked.

Michael used to play at Mrs Jackson's home with one of her sons. She remembers Michael as quiet and polite.

"He was as good as gold. Wouldn't hurt a fly."

Having chased the spaniel away, Ryan returned. Mrs Jackson noticed he was holding a gun in each hand. He looked at her. His face, she says, was expressionless.

"I just started to run. I've never run so fast. He was shooting at me. The dust was flying up from the ground around my feet as the bullets hit.

"I was desperate to get into the house. He chased me all the way.

"I got into the house and slammed the door. I thought I was safe."

I didn't want to worry anyone."

But she wasn't. Ryan looked in through the kitchen window and pointed his gun at her.

"I turned to move away and he shot me. He got me in my lower back.

"I knew I'd been hit. There was a terrible burning pain. I couldn't walk. I couldn't move my legs. I was on the floor. All I could think of was the dogs. I thought he'd come in and kill them."

Mrs Jackson, a bullet lodged in the base of her spine, crawled through the blood and glass on her linoleum and managed to lock Katie and Raffles, a Pekingese and a Tibetan spaniel, into a kitchen cupboard.

Then she phoned the building firm where her husband Ivor was a bricklayer, and asked for a message to be passed on.

"I said I needed a bit of help at home but I didn't say what had happened. I should have said but I didn't want to worry anyone.

"I didn't know the Masons at No. 6 were already dead."

Their friend George White, who worked with Ivor, said he'd drive him home.

"I didn't know by doing that, by asking him to come home, I was just leading them both into danger."

While Ryan roamed Hungerford, murdering and maiming people he'd known for years, a woman lay dead in Savernake Forest.

The beauty spot near Marlborough is a popular place with dog walkers, picnickers and ramblers.

It was one of the young Ryan's favourite places, where he enjoyed tracking wildlife through the undergrowth and practising survival skills.



He also had a more sinister motivation for visiting the woodland. A former school friend remembers a teenage Ryan boasting of spying on and stalking people there.

"He used to say he could follow anyone and they wouldn't notice," said the friend.



"I think he used to do it quite often, but then with him... he used to say lots of things. But this did actually ring true.

"He used to wear camouflage gear, that sort of thing. He took it seriously."

Prof Craig Jackson, a psychologist who specialises in spree killers, thinks there was also a sexual motive.

He believes Ryan would get an illicit sexual thrill during his woodland trips and obtain pleasure and a sense of accomplishment from following and watching people unseen.

It's not known whether Ryan spent a long time watching Sue Godfrey, a 35-year-old

nurse who had stopped with her two young children for a picnic lunch.

It is known that he made her put her son and daughter, aged two and four, in her car. He then shot her in the back with a Beretta pistol.



Susan Godfrey was shot dead in Savernake Forest

Pathologists determined she was killed by the first three bullets. Ryan hadn't stopped there, though. He carried on, shooting Mrs Godfrey 13 times until he ran out of ammunition.

Her children, who were 85 yards away from where her body was found, were later reunited with their father.

The investigation into Mrs Godfrey's death found she had not been raped. However, Prof Jackson said it was likely Ryan had intended to do so.

A groundsheet was found nearby, which could have been laid by Ryan in order to contain DNA evidence.

"I think she either refused to [have sex] or resisted," he said.

"Perhaps he killed her in panic when she attempted to run away."

Prof Jackson's colleague at Birmingham City University, Dr Elizabeth Yardley, has a different theory.



Prof Craig Jackson believes Ryan had a sexual motive

She thinks he saw Mrs Godfrey and her children having a picnic and enjoying themselves. "It was a happy occasion and I think he felt resentful and victimised and wanted to seize control.

"If he did have a sexual crime in mind, then that would have been about control too."

What happened in the woods is the clue to why the shootings happened, Prof Jackson believes.

"I don't think he fully intended to commit a killing spree that day. I believe Ryan had probably been fantasising about it on a low level, but the events that day - and his personality type - led to it.

"He certainly had no 'manifesto' or message to the world."

Prof Jackson also considers Ryan was heavily influenced by a mass shooting occurring 10 days earlier in Melbourne, Australia, that was reported on television in the UK.



Julian Knight killed seven people in Melbourne

The Hoddle Street massacre was committed by a former soldier who wore combat fatigues.

Having murdered Mrs Godfrey, Ryan headed back to Hungerford in his Vauxhall Astra GTE, stopping at Froxfield filling station. He put some petrol in his car and some in a canister.

Then he shot at Mrs Dean and sped back to South View where he set fire to his home and shot dead his dog, Blackie.

"I think he fully intended to fake his own death at home and disappear at that point," says Prof Jackson.

"He was going to set fire to his mother's house and drive away, leaving the police to believe he'd died in the fire."

If this was his plan, it fell to pieces when his car would not restart. Prof Jackson says it was at this point Ryan changed his plans.

"He was trapped and didn't have a viable way out of his situation."

He left his shotguns in his broken-down car, grabbed a pistol and two automatic rifles and almost immediately shot dead Roland and Sheila Mason, who were in their garden at the back of 6 South View.

What had led Ryan to this point?

He had what appeared to be a normal upbringing, although he was perhaps overindulged by his mother.



Ryan was a shy child with a keen interest in the military

An investigation after the shootings found both Dorothy and Michael Ryan had been overdrawn on their bank accounts - in Dorothy's case largely because she bought her only child a new car every two years.

Not academically gifted nor particularly driven, Ryan was unremarkable at school. Classmates remember he was quiet, seemed shy, "kept himself to himself" and was keen on the military.

Leaving school he embarked on a series of casual labouring jobs and was often unemployed. His real passions were cars and guns.



Semi-automatic rifles Ryan used during his rampage

When he was 13 his mother bought him an air rifle. The boy enjoyed pointing his weapon at cows, birds and even other children, says Dr Yardley.

He became a skilled shooter and member of two gun clubs.

He legally owned several semi-automatic weapons and told people he had been in the SAS - just one strand of a fantasy life woven by him and apparently perpetuated by his mother.

Mrs Jackson can remember Mrs Ryan telling her about a mysterious "friend" Michael had made. He claimed he had been taken under the wing of a retired colonel who was going to buy him a house and a Ferrari.

There was also a made-up girlfriend - a delusion which went far enough for Mrs Ryan to invite people to the wedding.

She'd just say she'd fallen over."

Whether Mrs Ryan truly believed her son's imaginings is impossible to tell. But it appears she never contradicted him in public.

Alfred Ryan, Michael's father, had become a parent in his mid-50s and was about 20 years older than Dorothy.

The Jacksons remember him as being a model-railway enthusiast and "a lovely man who would help you with anything".

Although many neighbours described Mr Ryan as a pleasant man, there were rumours he was especially strict with his son.

Ryan's school friend remembers his mother would buy the boy whatever he wanted, but his father "couldn't be played" and "wore the trousers" in the house.

It was following Alfred's death in 1985 that Mrs Ryan began appearing at work with visible bruises, Mrs Jackson says.

"She'd just say she'd fallen over or something. It just seemed to happen quite a lot."



Dr Liz Yardley says Ryan felt victimised

Dr Yardley says Ryan would have learned how to treat women from how his father treated his mother.

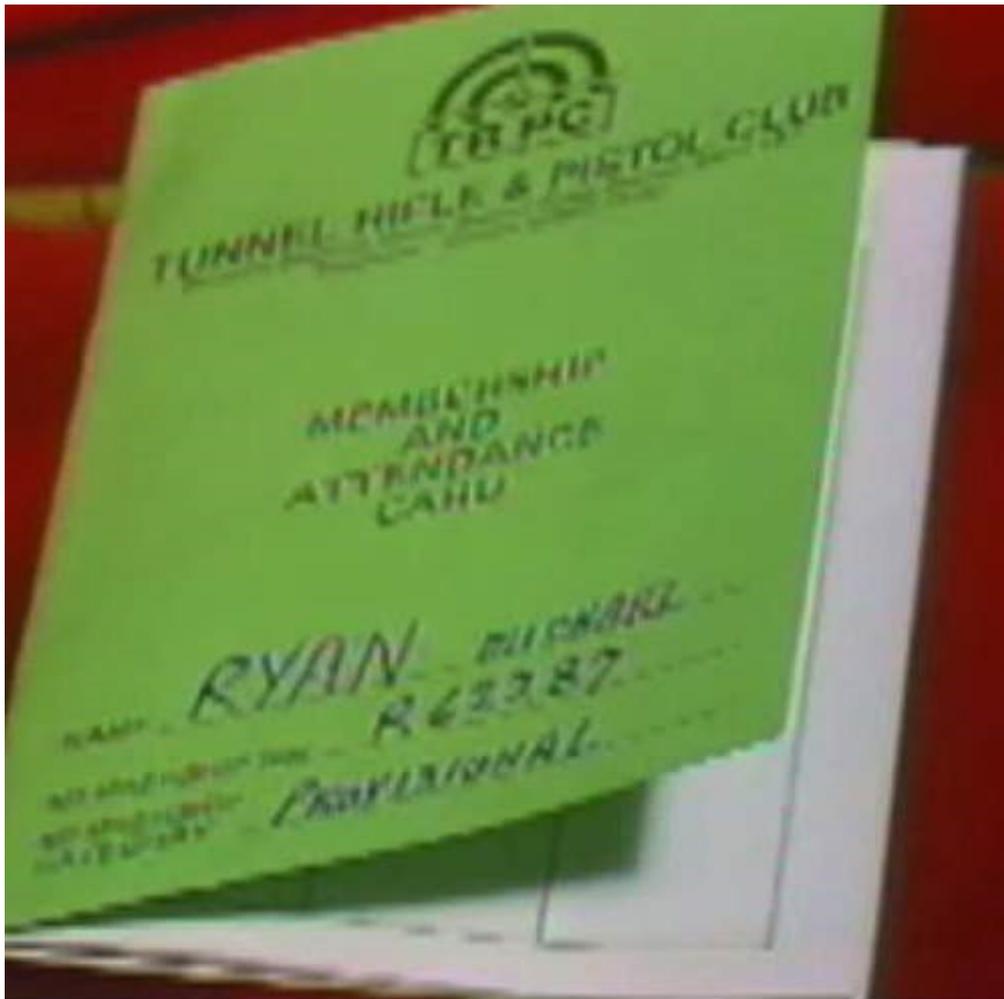
"[Mr Ryan] was quite the bully. Ryan's mother consistently pandered to her husband and son so Michael saw her as someone who was there to do things for him and essentially serve him - so he felt a sense of entitlement to treat her however he wanted."

Prof Jackson says violence towards his mother would fit in with Ryan's psychological profile as a narcissist who could not cope with being disobeyed, disagreed with or challenged.

He adds that an overindulgent mother could also have led to Ryan never taking responsibility for his actions - a personality trait common to many spree killers.

Despite his elaborate fantasies, however, Ryan was not mentally ill.

Medical reports show he had no history of mental illness - in fact, his doctor had countersigned Ryan's gun applications.



Ryan was a member of two gun clubs

On 19 August 1987, the 27-year-old loner was in licensed possession of two shotguns, three pistols and two semi-automatic rifles.

Dr Yardley and Prof Jackson both believe that Ryan did not "snap" and carry out the killings.

Dr Yardley thinks he planned them well in advance. The speed with which he carried out his agenda indicates an element of forethought.

Mrs Godfrey was killed at about 12:30 BST and Mrs Dean was shot at just five minutes later at the petrol station.



Ryan was well-known for driving "like a bat out of hell" - the only time he had been in trouble with the police was for breaking the speed limit.

He arrived back in South View in time to set fire to his home, shoot his dog, chase another dog, and take three guns from his car before killing Mr and Mrs Mason at 12:47. The final shooting took place at about 13:45.

"It's difficult to ascertain exactly how much he planned it, but I think it was well in advance and right down to minor details," says Dr Yardley.

"If it had happened today, there would probably be some sort of trail on a computer as perpetrators tend to do a lot of research."

Because Ryan burned down his home, any evidence of planning was destroyed.

Dr Yardley believes Ryan was attempting to wrest some sort of control from society.

A single man, unemployed and living with his mother, with no evidence of a romantic or sexual relationship in his life, he perhaps had precious little to be happy about.

"What he did was the ultimate taking back of control. He also knew the day would end in the loss of his own life, so in effect he was choosing when to die."

George White was driving Ivor Jackson back from work. It was about 10 minutes since Mrs Jackson had asked her husband to return home and the two men had no idea of the danger into which they were heading.

Ryan was on the loose in South View.

Armed with three guns, he had already murdered six people and seriously injured seven more.

As Mr White turned his Toyota Crown into South View, he was shot in the head and died instantly.

Next to him, in the passenger seat, Ivor Jackson was also shot in his arm, chest and head.

Their car smashed into the back of another car. It was a police vehicle which had its blue lights flashing.

Mr Jackson decided to play dead.

Oh no Ivor, not you."

With blood running down his face, he could only watch through half-closed eyes as Dorothy Ryan, Michael's mother, arrived home from the Wednesday market.

"Dorothy came past me, and she looked into the car and I remember it as clear as day. She said: 'Oh no Ivor, not you.'"

Ryan was holding one of his most prized possessions - a Chinese copy of a Kalashnikov semi-automatic rifle.

Could she talk some sense into her son?



Dorothy Ryan tried to reason with her son

"She tried to tell Michael to stop and he shot her at close range," Mr Jackson adds.

"She was dead on the ground, on her front just by the drive of our house.

"Then he shot her again, twice, in the back, from about four inches away."

As smoke filled the air from Ryan's burning house, more people were hiding inside their homes.

A few doors down, a 14-year-old girl was staring at her legs. She had started the day wearing yellow trousers, borrowed from her sister.

They were turning red with blood.

Lisa Mildenhall had been in the garden with her sister and two children from another house. The other three ducked down on the floor but Ryan fired at Lisa. She was hit in the legs and the hips.

One of the boys she was with went to fetch his mother, Sylvia Pascoe, a qualified first-aider who lived at No 14.



Sylvia Pascoe still lives in South View

"I assumed it had been some sort of accident with glass and that Lisa had been cut," she says.

"I went to help and she said Michael Ryan had shot her.

"I just thought she was delirious from blood loss."

Her training with St John Ambulance had led her to believe she could not have been shot, as bullets typically leave a large exit wound.

"There were no big wounds at the back of Lisa's legs. I later realised that was because the bullets were still in her. I could see her hip bone."

The teenager was still standing up when Mrs Pascoe arrived to help her.

She seemed more concerned about her trousers than her wounds. Mrs Pascoe stemmed the bleeding and stayed with the girl until an ambulance arrived.

Ambulance driver Hazel Haslett arrived minutes later. Ryan shot at her, making a hole in the side window.



Hazel Haslett escaped with minor injuries

Ms Haslett reversed rapidly and she and her partner escaped with only minor injuries.

Still shooting, Ryan then walked to the end of the road, went along a footpath and made his way across some playing fields.

He wasn't finished yet.

Map Key: Michael Ryan's victims in Hungerford

- 1 - Roland Mason
- 2 - Sheila Mason
- 3 - Kenneth Clements
- 4 - PC Roger Brereton
- 5 - Abdul Khan
- 6 - George White
- 7 - Dorothy Ryan
- 8 - Francis Butler
- 9 - Marcus Barnard

- 10 - Douglas Wainwright
- 11 - Eric Vardy
- 12 - Sandra Hill
- 13 - Victor Gibbs
- 14 - Myrtle Gibbs
- 15 - Ian Playle

- Susan Godfrey was shot and killed in Savernake Forest

Shortly after Ms Haslett escaped South View, her colleague Derek Whiting arrived in a second ambulance, completely unaware that a gunman was at large.

He noticed the blue flashing light on the police car and decided to stroll up to ask the officer what was going on.



Moving closer, he noticed the rear window of the police car had been shot out.

Inside, PC Roger Brereton, a traffic officer who had volunteered to investigate, was slumped against the steering wheel, clearly dead.

Mr Whiting did not understand. He was still labouring under the impression that there might have been a shooting accident.

Gunshots were often heard from Hungerford Common, at one end of South View.

Both recreational and agricultural shooting were normal occurrences in the area.

Then he realised the policeman's wounds had not been caused by a shotgun but by a semi-automatic rifle.

Shell cases were littering the ground.

He saw Mrs Ryan lying dead on the road.

He saw the Masons, dead in their garden.

He saw Mr White and Mr Jackson in the car and Mr Clements - who had been walking his dog with his family - lying dead on the footpath.



George White and PC Roger Brereton were in their cars when they were shot

Rather than getting away from the carnage in South View, he started to check the houses to find and help the injured.

"When you work for the ambulance service, you do your best to help people," Mr Whiting says.

Because the road was blocked by PC Brereton and Mr White's car, he and his partner could not drive their ambulance up, so he went on foot.

He pulled the wheeled stretcher with him and managed to load both Mr and Mrs Jackson and Lisa Mildenhall into the ambulance.

But what he did not realise was he was personally affected by the shootings.

As his wife, Mary, says: "So many of our family were shot that day."



Several of Derek and Mary Whiting's relatives were shot

She had been at work in Hungerford when the news about the shootings came on the radio.

"We were all told to lie down and not move. Then the radio announced the names of some of the people who'd been shot, but didn't say if they were dead or alive.

"My brother and sister-in-law were on the list."

Alan Lepetit, Mrs Whiting's brother, was a neighbour of Ryan's, living in South View.

The week before the shootings he had helped Ryan bring a heavy cabinet down the stairs. It was his gun cupboard.

Mr Lepetit said: "I gave him a hand one week, and the next he shot me and set fire to my house."

Linda Chapman and her teenage daughter Alison - Mr Whiting's sister and niece - were hit. They survived, although Alison still has a bullet inside her.

Then Ryan had shot and killed Abdul Khan, a hard-of-hearing 84-year-old who was gardening. It is thought he might not have heard the commotion.

Ryan headed across the playing fields, still shooting.

As he approached a playground near Bulpit Lane he shot and killed dog walker Francis Butler.



The Whitings' son Matthew, who was 11 at the time, was with his childminder in the playground and saw Mr Butler being shot.

Mrs Whiting remembers: "He was very upset for weeks afterwards. He would insist on lying down on the back seat of the car if we ever went out, so he couldn't be seen.

"I always encouraged him to talk about what happened, and one day he whispered to me and asked if he could use a rude word.

"I said he could, and he said: 'When that man shot that man, all of the birds flew out of the trees and shat themselves'.

"You know, it's funny. Everyone remembers the silence. The birds didn't sing again for five days."

Helicopters were hovering over Hungerford. Ryan had murdered 16 people and seriously injured 15 more, but his whereabouts were unknown.

The phone lines were inundated with people trying to call police - journalists were taking up many of the lines - and the police radio system, which only had three channels, was similarly overloaded.

Typically, by the time people got through to the 999 system, Ryan had gone elsewhere. Some reports were inaccurate, giving the wrong location.

The result was police were often up to 40 minutes behind his movements.



Marcus Barnard, a local taxi driver, had been a father for just five weeks when he was shot dead.

Sandra Hill, who'd moved away from the town, was visiting former school friends. With her window open and radio on in her Renault 5, she became Ryan's 13th murder victim, dying from a single shot.



Ryan had been targeting people he happened across in streets and gardens. Now, he added a new dimension.

As he went along Priory Road, Ryan stopped at the home of Myrtle and Victor Gibbs, whose door was, as usual, locked.

He used his semi-automatic rifle to strafe the front door and open it.



Ryan broke into the Gibbs' house on Priory Road

Mr Gibbs tried to protect his wife, who was a wheelchair user. He died instantly from chest wounds. Mrs Gibbs died several days later, in hospital.

"Breaking in or shooting into a house and killing the inhabitants and then holding the position for a while before moving on, would have appealed to his military ideals and fantasies," says Prof Jackson.

Ian Playle, the last victim to be fatally shot, had in fact been warned of the danger in South View by police.

Knowing his way around the streets, he had tried to drive home by another route. But Ryan had moved. As Mr Playle rounded a bend in Priory Street, Ryan fired a single shot.

Two days later, Mr Playle died from his injuries.



Mr Playle's blue Ford Sierra crashed after he was shot by Ryan

His wife and children had been in the car but were unhurt.

Police were still hunting for the gunman in their midst.

Eventually, shots were heard coming from John O'Gaunt School.

Ryan had holed himself up in a second-floor classroom and was shooting through the window at both police and press helicopters.



Ryan fired at helicopters from this window

At about 16:45, police entered the playground. Ryan was finally cornered and an armed officer trained his sights on him.

At 17:25, Ryan threw a semi-automatic rifle from the classroom window.

A police negotiator managed to engage him in conversation.

Ryan intimated he might be prepared to give himself up. He expressed sorrow over shooting his mother and his dog, and then said: "Hungerford must be a bit of a mess.

"It's funny, I've killed all those people but I don't have the guts to blow my own brains out."

Seven minutes after saying this, at 18:52, he shot himself in the head.

For Michael Ryan, it was over.

Later that night, the clear-up began. Fifteen vehicles were taken away for forensic examination. Seventy-eight bullet holes were found.

Mrs Pascoe, safe with her neighbours in a community centre, was playing cards with the children to distract them from the horror outside.

At about 02:00 she looked out of the window and saw the bodies from South View being collected and driven away.

Later, police told her they believed her life had been saved by the fact she'd kept her curtains drawn as she pottered about, doing her housework in her nightgown.

She was still wearing it, soaked now with Lisa Mildenhall's blood, when she was finally allowed back home.



Four houses, including Ryan's home at the far right, were later demolished

In the ambulance on the way to hospital in Swindon, Ivor Jackson's heart had twice stopped beating.

He had lost lots of blood, had bullets in his head and chest, his lung had been shot through and his arm was barely attached to his body.

He needed numerous operations and still suffers, both physically and mentally.

His wife, who had a bullet in her spine, was not expected to walk again.

It's testament to her own strength of mind that she did.



Marjorie Jackson recuperating in hospital in 1987

"I just thought to myself, I'm a mother. I need to get better and I will walk again. I knew I had to be the strong one of the family, I knew Ivor wouldn't cope."

Even now Mr Jackson has not been back to South View. He cannot even pass the end of the road.

He can barely speak about his friend, George White.

"He was a good man. We were good friends," he says.

"I'll never forget what I saw that day, what happened to him, but I can't tell you.

"Nothing's been right since."



South View became a popular haunt for tourists

The Jacksons had loved their home on South View, with its large garden, and were in the process of buying it.

But, although the house was cleaned and modernised and made available for them, they could not bear to return.

The couple and their two grown-up sons now live in a two-bedroom council house a few streets away.

"After what happened, lots of people split up," says Ivor Jackson. "They couldn't cope. But we've stuck by each other."

The couple have been married for 60 years and celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary in January.

"We got a letter from the Queen," Mr Jackson adds. "My daughter arranged it."



PC Roger Brereton's funeral was held near Newbury

The letter, complete with golden tassel, is still in its recorded delivery envelope and is kept in a basket in the Jacksons' kitchen.

They keep meaning to frame it and put it up on the wall.

Their younger son Trevor, who had been 18 in 1987, is being treated for PTSD while his older brother Peter, who was in the same year as Ryan at school, refuses to talk about that day.

If it comes up, he leaves the room or goes to sit in the greenhouse.



Large crowds attended the funerals of Ryan's victims

Trevor Jackson had first heard of the shootings when a colleague asked: "What's happened to your parents?"

He returned to South View to find bodies on the ground and was asked by police to identify them.

Then he and his brother Peter went into their home, released the dogs from the cupboard, and started to clean the blood and glass from their kitchen.

As the brothers were cleaning up, a reporter burst in. There was a police guard on the front door so he had sneaked through the garden and into the house through the back door.

Another reporter followed their sister home from the hospital.

I just broke down in tears."

Press intrusion is something the Jacksons continue to feel very strongly about. They usually hang up if a journalist approaches them and refuse to have their photograph taken in connection with the shooting.

Similarly the Whitings, for years, simply drew their curtains and refused to answer the door.

When, in March 1996 Thomas Hamilton shot dead 16 schoolchildren and their teacher in the Stirling town of Dunblane, Trevor Wainwright decided to write to the Scottish police.



Thomas Hamilton murdered 17 people in Dunblane in 1996

He explained who he was and his experience, and offered sympathy. Then he tore his heartfelt letter up.

"I just thought: 'They don't want outsiders. They'll do what we did. The help will come from within the community'.

"Writing the letter did me good, but I don't think it would have helped the people of Dunblane."

A few days after the murders, Mr Wainwright - who had carried out the routine checks for Ryan's firearms licence - was astonished to see the Today newspaper's front page splash.

"PC Signs Own Father's Death Warrant".



Trevor Wainwright says he is "haunted" by his father's death

"I just broke down in tears," Mr Wainwright says.

"It hit at the heart of my professionalism, of everything I'd ever done for the town. I probably did three or four of these checks a week.

"It was just routine. Hungerford is a big shooting area, farmers and gun clubs and that sort of thing. I mean, there's no legitimate reason anyone would need to have a Kalashnikov - but it was legal.



"There was a picture of my dad, dead in a car with a blanket over him.

"And I kept thinking, if it was true that I'd signed my dad's death warrant, it meant I'd also signed all those other people's too. At the time, the idea crucified me.

"At the hospital, where my mum was, everyone who'd been shot had been put into the same ward. I was due to go and visit her, but I thought I couldn't.

"I thought: 'How the hell can I go and see her if they're all blaming me?'

"She told me to get my arse straight down there. No-one blamed me."

Kathleen Wainwright later moved to Hungerford to be near her son

He says he was helped by a discovery made at the post-mortem examination - that his father had developed lung cancer.

"If he had the choice - to die from a horrible disease like that, or be shot, I know he'd choose the bullet. Every single time."

He is still haunted, he says, by the photograph of his father dead in his car. If there is a shooting elsewhere in the world, he braces himself for his phone to ring.

"As soon as there's been a shooting, some journalist will call.

"And I hear the arguments of the gun lobby, who want to preserve the right to bear arms, and I think: 'You should come here and see what guns did to Hungerford.'"



Chief Inspector Laurie Fray and PC Colin Lilley hold Ryan's murder weapons

The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 was passed in the wake of the massacre. It banned the ownership of semi-automatic firearms and pump-action weapons and made registration mandatory for shotgun owners.

A Thames Valley Police report to the Home Office found that - given the limitations imposed by the remote location and the difficulties in radio and telephone communication - the force's response "went well".

The local police station had only two working phone lines that day and the police helicopter was being repaired, delaying its deployment.

Further delays were caused by the firearms squad being in training about 40 miles away.

The report also said the operation was hampered by press helicopters making so much noise it was difficult for police on the ground to hear or relay instructions.



Hungerford is a pretty canalside town famous for its antiques shops and upmarket boutiques.

Its inhabitants refer to the shooting as "The Tragedy", almost as if it were a natural disaster.

The names of the 16 people who were killed are listed on a stone set into the wall of the town's war memorial garden, with no mention of how they died.

The town had long been a tourist destination. After the murders, though, visitors were less satisfied by remaining in the attractive main street.



"The tourist buses would just park where they usually did and then people used to come up here on foot," Trevor Jackson says.

"They were looking for bullet holes and spent shell cases to collect. Whenever they asked me where it all happened I'd say it was down the A4. Sent them away."

The description of the shootings as a "tragedy" doesn't sit well with Mrs Jackson.

"It was a massacre," she says. "There's no two ways about it.

"We cope by taking every day as it comes. It's difficult. Healthwise, we're struggling.

"Ivor has very limited mobility, and his lungs are damaged from the bullet. I still get dreadful pain in my back. Trevor can't move out to his own place.

"It hasn't got any easier. We're just waiting until life gets back to normal.

"It hasn't happened yet."

Link: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/hungerford_massacre

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