

The Hungerford massacre

Classification: **Spree killer**

Characteristics: **Motive unknown - A loner, a man without friends other than his mother and who lived in part in a world of fantasy that he weaved and his mother perpetuated**

Number of victims: **16**

Date of murder: **August 19, 1987**

Date of birth: **May 18, 1960**

Victims profile: **11 men and 5 women** (including his mother)

Method of murder: **Shooting** (two semi-automatic rifles and a handgun) Location: **Hungerford, Berkshire, England, United Kingdom**

Status: **Committed suicide by shooting himself the same day**

SHOOTING INCIDENTS AT HUNGERFORD ON 19 AUGUST 1987

REPORT OF MR COLIN SMITH CVO QPM. CHIEF CONSTABLE THAMES VALLEY POLICE TO THE RT HON DOUGLAS HURD CBE, MP. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. On Wednesday 19 August 1987, a series of shootings occurred at two locations in Wiltshire and at Hungerford, Berkshire, resulting in the deaths of seventeen people and in injuries further fifteen persons. This report has been prepared with agreement of the Chief Constable of Wiltshire to cover all events on 19 August, and progresses the preliminary report of 20 August

HUNGERFORD GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

2. Hungerford is a picturesque market town with a population of 5,000 situated in the Kennet valley midway between Newbury and Marlborough. It straddles the A4, which is now a quieter road since the construction of the M4 which runs close by. It has a stable, closely-knit community with a low crime rate and living conditions of a high standard. As an indication of its law-abiding tradition Hungerford has not witnessed the act of murder for 111 years; the last was in 1876 when two Police Officers, an Inspector and a Constable, were shot and killed by poachers. Its annual crime now is less per annum than the total for two days in the Force as a whole.

3. Only 2 miles from the Wiltshire border, Hungerford is situated at the furthest most south-western part of the Thames Valley Police area. The nearest sizeable towns, apart from Newbury 10 miles away, are Swindon (Wiltshire) and Andover (Hampshire), each approximately 15 miles away. As a further indication of its situation within Thames Valley, Hungerford is 34 miles from the Thames valley Police Headquarters at Kidlington and 69 and 50 miles respectively from Milton Keynes and Slough at the other extremities of the Force area.

POLICING OF HUNGERFORD

4. Hungerford is policed by two Sergeants and twelve Constables. Within the 140 square miles of Hungerford sector this establishment of fourteen Officers is distributed between Hungerford town (two Sergeants, one Station Duty Officer, two Patrol Constables and four area car Constables), Lambourn (two Constables), and Great Shefford, Stockcross and Kintbury Villages (one Constable each) to provide 24-hour cover, seven days a week. On the morning of Wednesday 19 August 1987, the duty cover for the sector consisted of one Sergeant, one Patrol

Constable and one Station Duty Officer at Hungerford, and one Patrol Constable at Lambourn.

5. Hungerford Police Station is a 123-year-old building incorporating two semi-detached houses, which used to combine a Police house in three-quarters of the accommodation with inadequate Police Station facilities in the remaining quarter. Work to transform this into a modern Police Station started in Spring 1987, but on 19 August this was still incomplete and the Police Station was operating out of a single large room in one of the two houses, equipped with two internal Police telephone extensions linked into the Thames Valley Police telephone network.

6. Radio communication at Hungerford is by way of personal UHF radios operated from Newbury via a newly installed base station at John O'Gaunt School in the town. Although the site at the school enables the best transmissions possible in Hungerford, signals cannot always be relied upon to reach every part of the town.

7. Hungerford is part of the Newbury Sub-Division, and its personal UHF radios are controlled by the Newbury Control Room at which point '999' calls from the Hungerford area are also received. Radio control at both the Force Control Room and at Newbury Sub-Divisional Control are seriously outdated and are scheduled for replacement by the early 1990s. The UHF channel for Hungerford operates from the same MASCOT system as the Newbury scheme (2 channels normally, plus 2 for operations at RAF Greenham Common).

RYAN BACKGROUND

8. Michael Robert RYAN, aged 27, was an only child and brought up in Hungerford. His father died of cancer two years ago, aged 78, after which RYAN lived alone with his mother, aged 63, at 4 Southview, Hungerford.

9. RYAN left school at Hungerford aged 16 years with a very poor academic record, and commenced a number of short-term jobs as a gardener-handyman. For most of 1986 RYAN was unemployed. From 7 April to 9 July 1987, he worked for Newbury Council on a Government Environmental Scheme. It is not known how he spent his time between 9 July and 19 August, although he did visit the two shooting clubs referred to at paragraphs 16-18.

10. RYAN had no previous criminal record and no known record of medical/mental problems.

11. RYAN is described by those who knew him all his life as a loner, a man without friends other than his mother and who lived in part in a world of fantasy that he weaved and his mother perpetuated. None of the fantasies were ever regarded as harmful. To the casual acquaintance, he was always well dressed, polite and courteous.

12. It is known that his mother bought him a new car every two years despite both he and his mother being overdrawn at their banks. RYAN's most recent fantasy was that he had been befriended by an Army Colonel who was giving him flying lessons and was buying him a Ferrari sports car. His mother told friends the same story and added that she had stayed in "the Colonel's" home and that he was purchasing a house for her as a gift. There are no parts of this story that are believed to be true.

13. The media have perpetuated these fantasies, adding new dimensions by reporting that RYAN was an international firearms dealer, had a homosexual relationship, had contracted AIDS' and was dominated by his involvement in a group who played games in the 'Fantasy' series. Police enquiries have shown these stories to be without any foundation.

FIREARMS

14. On 19 August 1987 RYAN was lawfully entitled to possess three shotguns and five firearms

purchased between December 1986 and August 1987, as detailed below: -

<u>Date of Purchase</u>	<u>Weapon</u>
17.12.86	Beretta 9mm Pistol
20. 1.87	Zabala Shotgun
29. 1.87	Browning Shotgun
2. 5.87	Bernadelli .22 Pistol
13. 5.87	CZ ORSO self-loading .32mm Pistol
6. 8.87	Kalashnikov 7.62mm semi-automatic Rifle
8. 8.87	Underwood Carbine .30 Rifle

15. The shotguns were acquired following the issue of a Shotgun Certificate in 1978. Police enquiries at that time showed the absence of any previous convictions or any information casting doubt on his suitability to possess shotguns. His application had been countersigned by his own Doctor, and this was verified by the Police. He was known by local Police Officers and regarded as always well dressed, of good behavior, courteous and quiet, but a bit of a loner. This remained so throughout the currency of his possession of the Shotgun Certificate, which was renewed in 1984 and 1987.

16. On 10 December 1986 an application was received from RYAN for a Firearm Certificate for two pistols. Enquiries revealed that he had served his probationary period and was a full member of the Dunmore Shooting Centre, a Home Office registered club at Abingdon. Nothing was found to RYAN's detriment and he had already installed a gun cabinet, suitable for the security of the weapons he sought, in his bedroom at home. The application was granted on 11 December 1986, with the condition that the firearms could only be used on approved ranges. Notification was subsequently received that RYAN had acquired a Beretta 9mm pistol and a Smith & Wesson .38 pistol, and his certificate was endorsed accordingly.

17. On 2 April 1987, a further application was received seeking to increase the number of pistols he was entitled to hold to three. He wanted to acquire .22 and .32 pistols and to dispose of his Smith & Wesson .38. He again satisfied the necessary criteria and his security arrangements were inspected by a Crime Prevention Officer, in accordance with Force policy when three or more weapons are to be held, with a favorable result. His firearms cabinet had two separately keyed locks, an internal ammunition section using a third key and it was fixed by four bolts to an exterior wall. The variation was granted on 30 April and subsequently notification was received that RYAN had disposed of the Smith & Wesson .38 pistol and acquired a Bernadelli .22 and a CZ .32 pistol. His certificate was called in for amendment.

18. On 14 July 1987 RYAN applied to vary his certificate so as to acquire additionally, a 7.62 rifle and a .30 Carbine. He had by now also become a member of the Wiltshire Shooting Centre, a Home Office approved Club at Station Road, Devizes (with facilities for shooting full bore rifles) and as his application complied with all the criteria it was granted on 30 July 1987. Notification was received on 13 August that RYAN had acquired a Kalashnikov 7.62 rifle and on 14 August that he had acquired an Underwood Carbine .30 rifle. Enquiries have revealed that he practiced with these weapons at the Wiltshire Shooting Centre prior to 19 August.

19. It is now known that shortly before the Hungerford incident, RYAN sold the Bernadelli .22 pistol and sent the .32 pistol for repair with a firearms dealer. Thus, on 19 August RYAN had in his legal possession the three shotguns, the Beretta 9mm pistol and the two rifles.

20. No adverse information about RYAN's suitability to hold shotgun or Firearms Certificates ever came to police notice, although enquiries since 19 August have indicated that at one-time RYAN regularly carried one or more of his pistols around with him in his car and that he occasionally 'took potshots' at road signs with them. Damage to a road sign in Hungerford, consistent with the discharge of pistols, has since been found.

21. Full details of RYAN's shotgun and firearms applications are shown at Appendix 'A'. **RYAN'S**

ACTIVITIES ON 19 AUGUST

SHOOTING INCIDENTS IN WILTSHIRE

22. In order of probable occurrence rather than notification to Police, RYAN's activities started at the Savernake Forest, approximately seven miles west of Hungerford (see map at Appendix 'B') at about 12.30pm with the shooting of Mrs Susan GODFREY, aged 33, of Reading. Mrs GODFREY had just finished picnicking with her two children aged 4 and $\frac{12}{12}$ years, when she was abducted by RYAN at gun-point. RYAN took with her from the car a groundsheet which was subsequently found spread out on the grass about 75 yards away. Mrs GODFREY was found some 10 yards away from the groundsheet having been shot 13 times in the back with the Beretta pistol. It is possible that RYAN intended to rape Mrs GODFREY and that he shot her when 'she tried to run away, but this has to be speculation- Mrs GODFREY had not been sexually interfered with and the only source of any other evidence is that of the only witnesses - her two very young children.

23. From Savernake Forest, RYAN is thought to have driven eastwards along the A4 back towards Hungerford, stopping at the Golden Arrow Service Station, 3 miles short, at about 12.35pm. RYAN was driving his silver Vauxhall Astra car and at the Service Station he was seen to fill a petrol can with petrol before discharging a weapon (subsequently identified as the M1 Carbine) through a glass screen at the cashier. Remarkably unhurt, the cashier took cover beneath the counter only to be pursued by RYAN who tried unsuccessfully to fire at her at point-blank range. He then drove off towards Hungerford.

SHOOTING INCIDENTS IN HUNGERFORD

24. At around 12.45pm RYAN was seen to return to his home address and go inside the house, slamming the door behind him. His intentions then are open to conjecture because of a lack of eyewitnesses, but it is thought that he then set the house alight with the petrol he had just bought and that he intended to drive off somewhere having ensured his survival kit and three firearms (the two rifles and the Beretta) were in his car. It is of note that his three shotguns were left in the house. It is believed, from the fact that he subsequently shot at his car and from what he later said to Police before he killed himself, that the car would not start. It seems that RYAN then removed the three firearms from his car and almost immediately shot his first two victims, Mr Roland MASON and Mrs Sheila MASON at the rear of their home at 6 Southview. Mr MASON was killed by the Kalashnikov and his wife by the Beretta.

25. Thus, started RYAN's trail of shootings in Hungerford, which are described in the following paragraphs. For ease of reference maps of Hungerford showing his probable route, together with a schedule of dead and injured persons, are attached at Appendix 'C'.

26. RYAN, having murdered Mr and Mrs MASON, first ran eastwards up Southview towards the footpath leading to the Common, shooting and injuring Mrs Marjorie JACKSON and Lisa MILDENHALL. Mrs JACKSON telephoned a colleague of her husband, Mr George WHITE, and asked him to contact her husband, Ivor JACKSON, both of them being nearby, to let him know what had happened. This was to lead to both people being shot subsequently.

27. RYAN then moved on to the footpath leading to the Common. Mr Kenneth CLEMENTS was walking with his family along the footpath and was confronted by RYAN who shot and killed him. Mr CLEMENTS had previously been warned of a gunman, but had disregarded this advice. This death and the following six were all believed to be carried out with the Kalashnikov.

28. RYAN then returned back down Southview, shooting and killing PC Roger BRERETON who had just arrived on the scene and was still seated in his Police car. Whilst PC BRERETON was murdered with the Kalashnikov, it is believed he was first shot with the Beretta.

29. RYAN next shot at Mrs Linda CHAPMAN and her daughter Alison who had just driven into Southview, seriously injuring both of them. Mrs CHAPMAN was able however, to drive out of Southview without further injury.
30. RYAN continued walking down Southview and shot and killed Mr Abdur KHAN, aged 84, who was in the back garden of his home at 24 Fairview Road, Hungerford. He then shot and injured Mr Alan LEPETIT who was walking along Fairview Road, having been previously warned of the shooting in that area.
31. An ambulance which had been summoned to the scene, had stopped in Fairview Road, before reversing into Southview Road. RYAN shot at the ambulance slightly injuring the attendant, Hazel HASLETT. The ambulance then drove off.
32. At this stage Mr WHITE who had previously been telephoned by Mrs JACKSON, drove into Southview in his Toyota car with Mr Ivor JACKSON as passenger. RYAN killed Mr WHITE and seriously injured Mr JACKSON who feigned death. As a result of the shooting Mr WHITE's Toyota crashed into PC BRERETON's Police car.
33. Mrs RYAN who had been shopping, then drove into Southview and parked her vehicle behind the Toyota. She walked passed both the Toyota and PC BRERETON's Police car, and was shot dead as she attempted to reason with her son.
34. RYAN left Southview by the footpath at the east end of Southview having by this stage killed seven people and injured a further seven in Hungerford.
35. He made his way across the playing fields where he shot and injured Mrs Betty TOLLADAY who was in her home in Clarks Gardens. He continued into the Memorial Gardens where he encountered and killed Mr Francis BUTLER who was walking his dog.
36. RYAN discarded the Underwood Carbine at this point and left the Memorial Gardens, shooting dead Mr Marcus BARNARD who was driving his taxi towards Bulpit Lane. At this point, RYAN initially discarded his Kalashnikov, but then recovered it. It is possible it was by then empty. All subsequent deaths were caused by the Beretta.
37. After walking to the junction of Bulpit Lane and Priory Avenue, RYAN shot Mrs Ann HONEYBONE who was driving along Priory Avenue, slightly injuring her. RYAN then walked up Priory Avenue back in the direction of Southview. At the junction of Hillside Road, Mr John STORMS was stationary in his Renault and he was shot and seriously injured by RYAN. At the same time Mr Douglas WAINWRIGHT and his wife Mrs Kathleen WAINWRIGHT, parents of PC Trevor WAINWRIGHT of Hungerford Police Station, were driving their car in Fairview Road. As they drew alongside RYAN, he shot into the car killing Mr WAINWRIGHT and seriously injuring Mrs WAINWRIGHT.
38. After continuing along the road towards Tarrants Hill, RYAN shot and slightly injured Mr Kevin LANCE who was driving a Ford Transit towards him. He then went to the junction of Tarrants Hill and Priory Avenue shooting dead Mr Eric VARDY who was driving a Ford Transit along Priory Avenue.
39. After leaving Tarrants Hill, RYAN walked via Orchard Park Close into Priory Road where he shot and killed Sandra HILL who was driving her Renault car. He then walked down Priory Road towards the John O'Gaunt School. On reaching number 60 Priory Road RYAN broke into the house and shot dead Mr Victor GIBBS and seriously injured Mrs Myrtle GIBBS, both of whom live at 60 Priory Road. Mrs GIBBS subsequently died from her injuries in hospital.
40. After emerging from 60 Priory Road, RYAN shot at the houses opposite, injuring Mr Michael JENNINGS at 62 Priory Road and Mrs Myra GEATER at 71 Priory Road.

41. At this time Mr Ian PLAYLE was driving with his family in his Ford Sierra motor-car. He had earlier been prevented from entering Hungerford from the Common because the gunman was thought to be in Southview. As he rounded a sharp right-hand bend northwards in Priory Road, RYAN fired a single shot and seriously injured him. Mr PLAYLE later died of his injuries. He was the last person to receive fatal injuries.

42. RYAN then made his way towards the John O'Gaunt School shooting and injuring Mr George NOON who was in the back porch of 109 Priory Road. Mr NOON was the last person to be shot by RYAN, at about 1.45pm. RYAN was then seen walking towards the rear of John O'Gaunt School, although his subsequent detailed movements until he was actually seen there by Police at 5.26pm were unknown at the time and even now must be speculative.

43. RYAN used all three of his firearms during his violent acts, firing at least 119 shots in Hungerford - 84 from the Kalashnikov, 34 from the Beretta and one from the carbine. The Carbine was used in Southview without hurting anyone, and it had also been used at the filling station in Wiltshire when again one shot was fired without causing injury. The Beretta was used to kill Mrs GODFREY in the Forest, to kill Mrs MASON (the second death in Hungerford), to injure PC BRERETON (killed by the Kalashnikov), for the last six deaths in Hungerford and the suicide of RYAN, a total of nine deaths. The Kalashnikov was used for the other eight deaths. It is now also known that RYAN was wearing a bullet resistant waistcoat which would have protected him against all but our most powerful weapons, whereas some of his bullets had the capacity to pierce armour.

POLICE RESPONSE INITIAL RESPONSE

44. The first notification to the Police of RYAN's activities came from a '999' call at 12.40pm to Newbury Police Station reporting the shooting incident at the Golden Arrow Service Station. This was confirmed by a telephone call from Swindon Police five minutes later. Two Traffic cars, one driven by PC Roger BRERETON, and a Panda car from Hungerford containing Sergeant RYAN and PC MAGGS were directed to the A4 to keep observation for the silver Vauxhall Astra involved in the filling station shooting. At this stage Police had no knowledge of the shooting at Savernake Forest.

45. The second Traffic car driven by PC WOODS contained a personal radio, via which at 12.47pm he heard the transmission from Newbury of details of the first of the '999' calls relating to the shootings in Southview, Hungerford, and he relayed this information to PC BRERETON via VHF. The Officers agreed directions of approach. PC BRERETON was more familiar with Hungerford than PC WOODS. As PC BRERETON drove towards Southview he fell in behind the local Police Panda car containing the Hungerford Sergeant and Constable. The Sergeant indicated by hand signals his intention to approach one way, and that PC BRERETON should go in from the other direction. This would have achieved two mobiles with three Officers on one side of the reported shootings in Southview, and a mobile with PC BRERETON on the other, effectively containing the scene. At this stage it should be stated that two separate prime local witnesses, Miss HALL (an Air Hostess) and L/Cpl HARRIES, have both said that they were not initially surprised at hearing gunfire, as this was not unusual from the Common.

46. The Officers had no means of knowing that RYAN was moving around the area, nor even that he was killing people. All they knew was of a report of 'a shooting'. PC BRERETON entered Southview, a narrow lane leading to Hungerford Common. RYAN emerged suddenly and shot the Officer four times (a total of twenty-four bullets entered his car). Just prior to Police Constable BRERETON's radio call that he had been Shot, the controller in the Force Control Room had issued a clear and authoritative warning to all mobiles about firearms and to

exercise maximum care.

47. Recordings at Newbury public telephone exchange show that in the 98 minutes between 12.40pm when the exchange recorded the first emergency call of the shootings, and 2.18pm, a total of 83 '999' calls were routed to Newbury Police Station and 22 calls to the Ambulance and Fire Services. Indeed, in the 24-hour period from noon on Wednesday, the Newbury Telephone Exchange, which normally handles 300,000 calls each day, recorded that a further 12 million calls were attempted. The '999' and normal telephone systems were totally swamped and unable to cope.

48. It is now known that RYAN's first victim in Hungerford was shot at about 12.47pm and the last at 1.45pm, a period of 58 minutes. It is clear that some '999' callers, when able to enter the '999' system, were reporting RYAN's shootings to Police up to 40 minutes after they had ceased, but reporting them as if current at that time. Other calls referred to incorrect locations.

49. The first Officers to arrive, those from Hungerford and the two Traffic Department mobiles, were in the Southview and Hungerford Common areas at about 12.55pm. Their immediate intentions were to attempt to locate the gunman whose identity then was unknown, and then as it proved necessary to obtain medical assistance for the injured, and to urge members of the public to take shelter. These aims were achieved with considerable success, in spite of the fact that many Police Officers came under fire from RYAN before he moved rapidly on. (Apart from BRERETON, Sergeant RYAN and Police Constables WOODS and MAGGS were positively fired at, and a further six were in areas at which shots were being fired). However, without reliable information on sightings, the few Police Officers available in such an isolated and rural area were unable to prevent any of the subsequent deaths in the 58 minutes of the shootings as the gunman moved rapidly and randomly over a relatively wide area. It was not until about 1.25pm that Police received positive indications of RYAN moving away from the Southview area, and subsequent conflicting reports made the task of plotting his movements and redeploying personnel extremely difficult.

50. By 1.10pm uniformed Officers from Newbury, including an Inspector, were in Hungerford. Many dead and injured were already visible in the streets around the Southview area. Reports of bursts of fire were continuing. The first Police Officers were deployed to set up road blocks to prevent further public entry into the danger zone, to try to contain or at least monitor the gunman and to clear the public from the streets. The local Police response continued with the arrival of the Sub Divisional Superintendent and more Officers.

51. The local response was backed up with an intense build-up of resources directed from Headquarters. By 1.08pm personnel of the Operations Department and their equipment were en route to Hungerford, where 48 armed Officers were eventually deployed. The first armed Officer arrived at about 1.20pm and was deployed on foot. He was followed by a second armed Officer at 1.28pm who was deployed to the same point. By 1.45pm the Force helicopter, temporarily grounded for repair, was airborne over Hungerford having picked up the first armed Officer to provide a better observation platform. The helicopter was of invaluable assistance in directing Officers on the ground and members of the public to safety through its loudspeaker system. It is believed, but cannot be proved, that it was the activity of the helicopter which caused RYAN to seek refuge in the school, as opposed to further killings in the town or making his way into open country. By 2pm five other armed Officers were deployed on foot and by 2.15pm

the remainder of the Support Group had arrived. Command resources, including the Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Constable, (Operations) and Senior Operations Department and CID Officers, supported by communication facilities, arrived before 2pm. Officers of Divisional Police Support Units totaling 67 in number were directed to Hungerford by 2.25pm and this build-up continued in the following hours.

POLICE RESPONSE FOLLOWING SHOOTINGS AND PRIOR TO RYAN'S CONTAINMENT

52. The problems facing the Police - and indeed, all the emergency services - continued to be immense despite the steady build-up of resources. Since 19 August it has become known how many shootings occurred and over what period of time they took place: this information took a team of 44 Detectives over a week to assemble and even now everything is not clear. Of course, the most needed information at the time was the immediate location of the gunman and his apparent intentions, but inaccurate and misleading sightings continued throughout the afternoon. From 2.15pm onwards nine reports were received in respect of several different locations now known to be incorrect, including the possibility that he was still in one of the houses at Southview. Examples of other 'sightings' were in relation to Hungerford Common at 2.17pm ('man with rifle' -turned out to be the Press with a video camera), Mackim Close at 3.15pm ('man with rifle'), the canal bank of the Kennet and Avon canal north-west of Hungerford at 3.20pm ('man running along bank') and Upper Eddington Road, A338 north of Hungerford at 4.18pm ('two shots heard'). These 'reports' conflicted with one of no greater credibility (at the time) that he had been seen in the vicinity of the John O'Gaunt School.

53. The Thames Valley Police facilities available to receive the massive amount of information coming in, to manage that information and to enable action to be taken consisted of the following:

- a. A one room Police Station at Hungerford, with two telephone lines on an internal Force network and a local personal radio network operated from Newbury. (As mentioned above, this Station is currently being rebuilt and should be completed this year.)
- b. A small Sub-Divisional Control Room at Newbury Police Station, at which two Officers (with a third assisting) working under a Senior Officer had the problem of receiving all emergency and other calls from Hungerford. Transmission of signals between this Control Room and Divisional personnel is via three base stations (at Greenham Common, Newbury Hospital and John O'Gaunt School, Hungerford), each necessary to provide UHF radio cover for the Sub-Division, albeit incomplete due to the 'dead' areas that still exist. Whilst the controller can transmit on all three channels simultaneously or separately by operating the appropriate 'select' button, all incoming messages are received by the one controller through one loudspeaker, allowing only one incoming transmission to receive attention. VHF communication could only be used as an alternative to - not together with - UHF communication. To add to the controller's problems of selective attention, the room is also the reception point for exchange telephone lines, and is the site of the message switch. (A new Divisional Control Room is due to be built at Wantage, starting this year).
- c. An outdated Headquarters Control Room at Kidlington, with inadequate equipment and accommodation to take effective command required of an incident of this magnitude in a relatively isolated area. (A new Force Control Room is due to be built, starting April 1988.)

54. The communications difficulties were exacerbated by the unprecedented demands being made on that day on the public telephone network in Hungerford. It became so swamped that it was completely unable to cope, and this of course influenced the Police ability to use lines additional to the internal Police network. At 6.45pm British Telecom - who gave valuable

support to Police in providing extra facilities - took the decision to 'blank out' significant parts of the Hungerford telephone exchange so that Police telephone numbers faced less competition for the remaining exchange facilities. This remained so until 10pm.

55. Of crucial assistance to Senior Officers were thirteen Vodaphone cellular telephones; seven came from the Force's holding, the remaining six were lent to Police by Racal Vodaphone for use at the incident. One of these subsequently became the only permanent telephone link between Hungerford and the Force Control Room when the command pod arrived. However, just like the overloaded telephone exchange, so it rapidly became impossible to make or receive calls on the Vodaphone sets because of over-demand on the cellular system by the Press. When the extent of the over-demand was appreciated by Racal Vodaphone, and of the importance of the system to Police command, at 7.05pm Racal 'blanked out' the numbers of Vodaphone subscribers in the area other than the 'blocks' of numbers within which the Police numbers were located. This had the effect of significantly reducing pressure on the cellular system in the area, but of course also deprived the Police of the use of their own cellular telephones. This remained so until 9.30pm.

56. It was decided at an early stage that the Headquarters Control Room would have primacy in controlling the incident and all information coming into Newbury was passed by means of an open internal Police line to Kidlington. The Control Room then managed the incident through its VHF channel, HU, covering the south of the Force area. There is no force wide channel (the Force only has three operational channels) and it was only possible to dedicate a unique channel to the event by diverting all other routine radio messages on to the southern channel HT which is kept for PNC checks. This resulted in all routine messages in the southern part of the Force coming into competition with PNC checks and routine motorway radio traffic on the one HT channel.

57. At Hungerford Police Station contact with either Newbury or Headquarters Control Rooms was extremely difficult, with the two telephone lines being totally inadequate for the mass of traffic required. Radio communication by VHF channel HU was possible but such was the pressure on the air-time there was no opportunity without another channel for command discussions or for decisions to be effectively co-ordinated- Eventually it became possible to dedicate one of the two Force internal telephone lines as a permanent link with Headquarters Control Room.

58. Difficulties were also encountered with getting a Mobile Communications Vehicle to the scene, as the Immediate Response Vehicle had just become defective. This was an unusual and most unlucky misfortune; the Force communications vehicle is excellent and normally instantly available. After a short delay, an older replacement vehicle was despatched and this was quickly followed by a Command Pod to provide full base station facilities later on. The significance of these delays was highlighted by a second factor, namely that the number of radios with the National Firearms Channel 76 issued to the Force proved insufficient for an emergency of this magnitude. Thus, some of the Firearms Officers deployed did not have a channel 76 set and this caused communication problems during the 'searching' and 'containment' phases.

59. With this lack of technological support, the Officers at the scene continued very effectively with their tasks of ensuring members of the public took cover, providing medical assistance to the injured and trying to locate RYAN. Roads were physically blocked to ensure RYAN could not leave the area in a vehicle. Cordons were maintained to ensure that the area south of Park Street and west of the High Street was kept as 'sterile' as possible, although as stated above some calls suggested that the gunman was outside that area and indeed, for some long time

there was no knowing whether RYAN was still in Hungerford at all.

60. Members of the Support Group, the Force's Tactical Firearms Team, were deployed to various locations within the sterile area to observe and watch for any movements of the gunman. It was at this time impossible without the facility of armoured vehicles, which Thames Valley Police do not possess, to allow a sweep search for injured and dead persons because of the risks involved. Such a vehicle would also have been invaluable in reconnoitring the area. At 2.20pm the Metropolitan Police were approached for the loan of two armoured Land Rovers (a loan rapidly agreed to and gratefully received) and these arrived at 4.10pm. They were immediately used under Thames Valley Police command to bring the only known remaining injured member of the public to safety. It later transpired that there was one other injured person who, unknown to Police, was uncared for and she was subsequently removed by ambulance to hospital when RYAN had been located.

61. As the afternoon continued information suggesting that the gunman was at the school was firmed up, although it was still far from clear how reliable this was. At 4.40pm shots were heard from the vicinity of the school, and at 5.15pm a shot was heard which had definitely come from the school. It is thought that several shots were fired during the afternoon by the gunman at the Police helicopter, and possibly other Press helicopters flying over Hungerford: the shots heard at 4.40pm and 5.15pm may have been some of them. The Police Firearms Team moved in to contain the school.

POLICE RESPONSE DURING CONTAINMENT PHASE

62. As soon as it was confirmed that the gunman was at the school, a team of Police Officers with the Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service personnel attended Southview to extinguish fire at 1-4 Southview - the fire started by RYAN had spread during the early afternoon to all four houses in the terrace. Police also secured the area for Police forensic purposes.

63. Back at John O'Gaunt School a rifle, subsequently identified as the Kalashnikov, was thrown out of a third-floor window at 5.25pm, and one minute later a man was seen inside the window. A dialogue with the man began. By 6pm containment around the school by armed Officers was complete, and an outer cordon had also been established.

64. A Sergeant from the Support Group kept up the dialogue with the man, who confirmed that he was RYAN and started to talk about himself. He stated that he had an Israeli fragmentation grenade and a handgun. He appeared rational, and gave the impression initially that he was thinking of giving himself up. He shouted that "none of this would have happened" but for the Policeman (meaning PC BRERETON) coming on the scene, although by then he had already killed three in Southview, and his (RYAN'S) car not starting. He expressed regret about the death of his mother and his dog and said of having killed all the others, "It's funny, I've killed all those people but I haven't the guts to blow my own brains out".

65. At 6.52pm a single shot was heard coming from the school and subsequently RYAN failed to respond to questions. Because of the uncertainties about RYAN's weapons, whether in fact he had killed himself, the possibility of traps, or even if others were with him, an armed operation involving the two armoured Land Rovers was carefully planned and finally at 8pm it was executed. At 8.10pm Police entered the third-floor room where RYAN had been seen, and he was found slumped against a wall by a window. dead, having shot himself through the head with his Beretta pistol.

THE AFTERMATH

66. The emergency response now gave way to the twin tasks of supporting the people of

Hungerford and the massive task of investigating the incident. Control of the immediate areas of the shootings was secured so as to exclude all activity, notably the Press, and enquiries were carried out to locate next of kin and witnesses. A sweep search of a large part of Hungerford was carried out to ensure that everyone was accounted for and that no injured or dead person had been overlooked. The Casualty Bureau, which had been opened at Kidlington from 3pm received the many incoming calls from anxious members of the public and operated continuously for 48 hours, receiving 904 enquiries.

67. Activity continued for several days as the Police investigation uncovered the full implications of the tragedy. A CID Major Incident Room was set up at the Force Training Centre, Sulhamstead, utilising the AUTOINDEX computerised crime investigation system (HOLMES is still in the process of being acquired by the Force). A massive stressful task faced the Scenes of Crime and Coroner's Officers in covering the many bloody scenes, dealing with the bodies of the deceased and recovering the many items of evidence. Fifteen vehicles were removed for examination - in which approximately 78 bullet holes were found - and a large number of other exhibits were recovered from the various scenes. Enquiry teams visited all the injured persons and known witnesses and house-to-house enquiries were carried out to seek further evidence of what had occurred. Overall a total of 55 CID and other specialised Officers were involved for two and a half weeks in bringing the investigation to a satisfactory conclusion.

68. The Press were much in evidence and three full press conferences were held. Both the Prime Minister and Home Secretary visited the scene, and the situation was explained to them by Officers who had been involved. Funerals of all the deceased were subsequently held, each one being attended by a Chief Officer of the Thames Valley Police.

69. A substantial Police responsibility following the incident has been the handling of stress in respect of many Officers connected with the events. Stress has manifested itself not only in those close to the shootings in Hungerford, but also in other Officers (such as those in Control Rooms) who had an awesome responsibility during the early stages. Outdated equipment and the overall shortage of manpower within the Force were no doubt factors which made the task much harder for all Officers on the day, factors which have now heightened their stress level through the sadness that some of them feel at the appalling death toll revealed. Stress Counselling has been made available by the Force to all of those involved, through the offices of the Force Welfare Officers and involving the services of a professional counsellor, Dr Peter AGULNIK, a Consultant Psychiatrist of Littlemore Hospital, Oxford. This will be a long-term problem, but it is well in hand.

70. An Inquest was held by HM Coroner for West Berkshire, Mr Charles HOILE, at Hungerford on 24, 25 and 28, 29 September. In his summing up, before the Jury retired, he said:

"I would think there may be two areas where your minds might well be moving towards - if there is anything you can suggest to prevent similar fatalities. Clearly the response of the Police is an important matter and how quickly that came about. I would like to say this, that we as a nation, community, cannot have it both ways, by that I mean we cannot insist upon an unarmed Police Force and at the same time expect that Police in an emergency of that sort to become armed and become available at 'the drop of a hat'. We have got to accept the fact that we have got to pay for the privilege of having a Police Force which is -if you like - on our side, not threatening us, an important part of our liberty. Most people would be very reluctant to say do away with that.

So far as the Police response, leaving aside the armed branch of the Force or that part of the Force which can become armed, the response of the Police obviously is pretty prompt because

quite clearly one of the first people to be killed was PC BRERETON answering the call and he was not alone he was with another Officer in another vehicle and two other Officers who were local Policemen called to the emergency. Looking at it from that view their response would be difficult to fault. There is then a gap because the whole character of the occurrence changes from being that of a domestic quarrel, the whole thing changes to something which is absolutely unprecedented, something which we in this county and in the whole country - a man going beserk and killing.

The other thing that you may be thinking about is the question of firearms and you will remember that this is a matter which has already exercised the mind of the Home Secretary."

The Jury returned the predictable verdicts and commended various people, including PCs BRERETON, WOODS, MAGGS and Sergeant RYAN. They made only one recommendation to the Coroner, which he accepted, namely:

"The Jury felt that semi-automatic weapons should not generally be available and that an individual should not be allowed to own an unlimited quantity of arms and ammunition. However, knowing that this subject is under review by the Government, the Jury makes no detailed recommendations."

71. One complaint against Police has been received in respect of the incident. Mrs Elizabeth PLAYLE, the wife of the deceased Mr Ian PLAYLE (who was the Clerk of the Justices for West Berkshire) has complained that whilst approaching Hungerford with her husband and two children in their car, they were stopped by plain clothes Officers at Hungerford Common and turned back. The basis of her complaint is that because they were given inadequate information about what was happening, they then made their way to Hungerford via another route, entering via Priory Road, where her husband was shot. She has also complained that she was given inadequate assistance by the Police in relocating her two children after they became separated at the scene of the shooting. The complaint has been recorded under Section 85 Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and Chief Superintendent M HARLAND, Hampshire Constabulary, has been appointed the Investigating Officer. It is being supervised by Mrs VICKERS of the Police Complaints Authority.

CONCLUSIONS

72. The Hungerford incident is quite unprecedented in the British experience and we can but hope no similar incident will ever occur again. Not only was it more violent and unpredictable than anything previously encountered, but it also occurred at a location which could hardly be more remote. Given these circumstances the Police operation went well.

73. The limitations imposed on the Force by the lack of manpower and equipment could certainly have become a relevant factor had RYAN not been traced and contained rapidly. No Force, even with the most up-to-date equipment, would have been able to handle the vast flood of varied and sometimes contradictory information coming in during the early stages. However, as the incident continued on into the early evening the lack of good communications equipment and accommodation started to become significant and this might have had serious consequences had the operation become protracted. Much of the success of the operation is due to the proficiency and initiative showed by many individual Officers, some of whom showed great courage.

74. Force communications are due to be upgraded in the early 1990s by the introduction of a Command and Control system which will comprise a computerised incident logging facility, new radio and telephone control equipment, an integrated communications network, properly designed and provided Control Rooms and additional VHF radio channels. Had this planned system been in operation on 19 August, co-ordination of the Police response would have been far easier to manage. Each Division is to have its own dedicated VHF channel which, together with all the local UHF schemes, will be controlled from a Divisional Control Room. All requests for Police action and the deployment of local resources will be dealt with in one place. Controllers at the Force Headquarters Control Room, at present provided with obsolete equipment and lacking access to any of the many Force UHF radio schemes, will have the ability to control any radio channel within the Force. This, together with the management information

available from the Command and Control computer, will enable the Chief Constable and his senior management team to deal more effectively with any incident. A necessary prerequisite to these plans is the provision of 8 VHF radio channels (3 more than at present): one for each Division; one for motorway control and one for major incident and emergency use. The need for more personal radios channelled to the firearms channel 76 is already being dealt with.

75. The following three issues, which have not been covered in any depth above, also need to be addressed:

(a) **Private Helicopters**

Whilst the invaluable benefits of the deployment of the Force helicopter have been mentioned, it must be said that its use was significantly impeded on occasions by the use of other helicopters hired by the Press. The first was sighted at 3.30pm. It was not only a distraction for the Pilot of the Police helicopter, but it was necessary that its Pilot was advised that he was flying within firearm range. It is thought that RYAN did fire a number of shots at helicopters. Transmission of a warning by Air Traffic Control, RAF Benson, to the Press helicopter produced no response. It flew within an estimated 75 metres of the Force helicopter. The Press helicopter finally moved away, only to be replaced by another. Radio contact was not possible with the Pilot of that machine either. By 4.10pm four further helicopters were flying over Hungerford at heights between 800 and 1,500ft despite a ban by then imposed by the Civil Aviation Authority on flying below 3,000ft within a 2.5-mile radius of Hungerford for aircraft other than the Force helicopter.

The noise from all these helicopters seriously disrupted Police operations on the ground. Armed Officers placed in containment around John O'Gaunt were unable to hear radio transmissions and their progress was slowed. Later negotiation between Police and RYAN was frequently interrupted.

It may be appropriate for representations to be made to the Civil Aviation Authority to review regulations governing methods of operation with a view to Police Aviation Units having air space priority in such circumstances, and the provision of a wavelength for air to air communications with a Police aircraft in the absence of Air Traffic Control communication.

(b) **Armoured Police Vehicles**

The facility to effect the rescue of a seriously injured man from 109 Priory Road, Hungerford, and later to deploy armed Officers within range of RYAN's firearms was invaluable, but could not have been achieved without the aid provided by the armoured Land Rovers of the Metropolitan Police.

As stated earlier, if a Senior Officer had been able to enter the area to assess the situation, the Police task would have been immeasurably easier.

Such vehicles - two for a Force of the size of Thames Valley Police with its level of deployment of armed Officers in response to protection and firearms incident duties - are clearly needed. Protected vehicles will need to be equipped to carry out a number of functions:

- i. Casualty evacuations.
- ii. Accommodation for armed Officers being deployed within range of firearms.
- iii. Reconnoitring an area where firearms are being used.
- iv. Public Order duties when the Police response is to a disorder that contains elements discharging firearms or other lethal missiles.

(c) **Firearms Legislation**

Little that occurred during these events or contributed to their cause indicates the need for any specific change in the legislation or procedures relating to firearms. However, the public are not only amenable to, but will demand, that this tragic event is used as a catalyst for changes in both the law and administrative procedures which have long been thought desirable and well overdue.

i. There is no legitimate sporting or leisure interest that would be seriously damaged or even significantly impeded if the more lethal firearms were prohibited from normal sale and could not be kept by the private person in his own home. I refer to self-loading full-bore rifles, carbines and shotguns.

(Footnote: The case of ex-soldier J A G HAIG in Suffolk on 13 May 1987, when he took his father's self-loading full-bore rifle and fired freely in Lowestoft is relevant).

ii. Accepting some firearms enthusiasts like to produce their own ammunition and some ammunition needs to be held at home for killing vermin etc, there is an essential need to prevent wherever possible, the storage of ammunition at the home of a private person. It would be relatively easy not to permit every person who justifies a firearm merely for target practice, to keep ammunition at home. For this or any other use for which a case can be made to keep ammunition at home should be the subject of greater scrutiny to acquire storage justification.

iii. The suitability of any person to own any firearm, Part I or shotgun, needs to be the subject of much stricter rules. The local Police Officer is the best person to undertake any such enquiries; and as the Chief Constable has to deal with any subsequent offence or incident, he should be given greater authority to judge suitability. The task of the Police would be made more effective if an applicant was required to put up referees of standing who were willing to support the applicant. The Police should be entitled to consult whomsoever they thought useful, and rules of confidentiality should not be a barrier. Of significant importance, the court (to whom appeals must be possible, if perhaps only to the High Court) should be more supportive if the Police refuse a request. Historically, Judges come from a sports shooting background, and tend to be liberal, without appreciating the consequences of guns in less responsible hands.

iv. A shotgun which falls into the wrong hands has the same lethal power as Part I Firearms, and should be subject to exactly the same restrictions and laws.

v. Authority to purchase or acquire ammunition should be explicit to prevent armour piercing ammunition falling into the hands of any private citizen.

Colin SMITH CVO QPM Chief Constable

Appendix 'A'

DETAILED BACKGROUND TO RYAN'S POSSESSION OF FIREARMS

Shotgun Certificate

RYAN was first granted a Thames Valley Shotgun Certificate on 2 February 1978. His application was countersigned by his Doctor, and verified as such by Police enquiry that also showed the absence of any previous conviction or any information to RYAN's detriment casting doubt on his suitability to possess a shotgun. He was known by local Police Officers and regarded as always well dressed, of good behavior, courteous and quiet, but a bit of a loner. This remained so throughout the currency of his possession of the Shotgun Certificate, which was renewed in 1984 and 1987.

Firearms Certificate

On 10 December 1986, an application was received from RYAN for a Firearms Certificate. He sought authority to acquire a 9mm Browning Pistol and a .38 Colt Revolver for the purpose of target shooting at the Dunmore Shooting Centre Club, Wootton Road, Abingdon. He also sought permission to possess a maximum of 500 rounds for each weapon at any one time, by purchase of up to 200 rounds at a time.

In any application to possess Section 1 Firearms for target shooting purposes it has long been the policy of this Force only to grant the authority where it is shown that the applicant is a full member of a bona fide club. There are some exceptions to this rule but these are rare and have only been granted after very careful consideration and on an individual basis. For example, members of the British Pentathlete Team are not individual members of a club, but they meet the necessary overall criteria of a good reason to possess firearms.

Enquiries into RYAN's application revealed that he had served his probationary period and was a full member of the Dunmore Shooting Centre Club.

The Dunmore Shooting Centre is a Home Office Registered Club and was first granted a Club Certificate in September 1986. One of the Club rules reads as follows:-

'A minimum period of 12 weeks and maximum of 6 months probation including a minimum of 12 x $\frac{1}{2}$ hours details shall normally be served by all Probationary Members. On completion of the above period the secretary shall review the applicant's number of attendances, depth of interest, apparent character and conduct, and if in the Company's opinion these are satisfactory, confirm Full Membership and issue a Membership Card to this effect. The Company may refuse Full Membership without giving any reason whatsoever.'

Enquiries by Police again revealed nothing to RYAN's detriment. He had already installed a gun cabinet in his bedroom, which was adequate for the weapons he sought to acquire. It had two separately keyed locks and a separately keyed internal compartment for ammunition. It was fixed by four bolts to an external wall within the house.

RYAN's application for a Firearms Certificate was granted on 11 December 1986, but was so conditioned that the firearms could only be used on approved ranges.

On 23 December 1987, the Dunmore Shooting Centre, which is also a Registered Dealer in Firearms, notified Thames Valley Police Firearms Department that they had sold a Beretta 9mm Pistol to RYAN.

Similar notification was received that RYAN had acquired from them a Smith & Wesson .38 Pistol on 8 January 1987.

RYAN's Certificate was called in for the acquisitions to be formally endorsed on his Certificate. This follows the practice of calling in certificates for inclusion of all acquisitions and disposals of weapons.

On 2 April 1987 a further application was received from RYAN seeking to acquire a .32 pistol and a .22 pistol and stating his intention of disposing of the .38 Smith & Wesson. The additional firearms were for use at the Dunmore Shooting Centre where he was still a member. He again satisfied the criterion of a 'good reason to possess'.

Whenever any applicant seeks to acquire three or more firearms the premises where it is proposed to store them are inspected by a Crime prevention Officer. This was done and a favorable report was received.

On 30 April 1987, he was granted a variation to his Certificate so as to enable him to purchase the two pistols and relevant ammunition. He was authorised with the issue of a Temporary Permit to dispose of the .38 Smith & Wesson Pistol to ensure that it was in fact sold and not retained by him. On 6 May 1987 RYAN notified the sale of the .38 Smith & Wesson to the Dunmore Shooting Centre and he returned the Temporary Permit. The same day the Dunmore Shooting Centre notified Police that they had sold RYAN a .22 Bernadelli Pistol.

On 15 May 1987, notification was received from 'SPORTIQUE' Sporting Firearms of Cheshire, that they had sold RYAN a .32 CZ pistol. RYAN'S Certificate was again called in for amendment.

On 14 July 1987, RYAN submitted an application to vary his Certificate so as to acquire additionally a 7.62 rifle and a .30 carbine. As well as being a member of the Dunmore Shooting Centre, he was by now also a member of the Wiltshire Shooting Centre, Station Road, Devizes. This Home Office approved Club is also known as the 'Tunnel Rifle and Pistol Club' and has facilities for shooting full bore rifles. RYAN'S application met all the criteria and his application was granted, to acquire the two firearms and requisite ammunition, on 30 July 1987.

On 13 August 1987, notification was received that RYAN had purchased a 7.62 calibre Kalashnikov from Westbury Guns, Westbury, Wiltshire, on 6 August 1987. On 14 August 1987, notification was received that on 8 August 1987 he had acquired a .30 Underwood Rifle from the Wiltshire Shooting Centre. It is now known that RYAN sold the Bernadelli .22 Pistol shortly before the Hungerford incident and the CZ .32 Pistol was undergoing repair with a Firearms Dealer.

THAMES VALLEY FIREARMS GENERALLY

It is perhaps relevant at this point to describe briefly the position of firearms possessed by the general public in the Thames Valley Police area.

There are 34,188 people who hold a shotgun certificate, and of course each can legally possess an unlimited and unspecified number of firearms and ammunition and without any Police supervision of their security arrangements.

There are 6,301 people who hold a firearms certificate authorising a total of 15,268 firearms. Of these people, 451 possess 6 to 10 firearms each, and 91 own more than 10 each. The firearms include 498 7.62 caliber rifles and 53 carbines. 2,587, or 41% possess their firearms 'for range use' only. 133 of these rifles and carbines are known to be semi-automatic; in addition, a further 280 full bore weapons are imprecisely described in earlier recording Systems and a proportion are almost certainly also semi-automatic weapons. (Our Firearms records are still maintained manually, although they are to be computerised within the coming year). Needless to say, any one of these firearms in the wrong hands, through theft or mental illness could cause the same destruction as RYAN did on 19 August.