



Freedom of Information request 01/FOI/24/2341
We received your request on the 05/01/2024.

Request

You asked us:

This is a Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('FOIA') request relating to the discredited former British Transport Police ('BTP') officer DS Derek Ridgwell, who is recognised to have been responsible for several wrongful convictions.

In a 6 July 2021 Guardian article entitled 'Three members of Stockwell Six cleared after nearly 50 years', British Transport Police ('BTP') Deputy Chief Constable Adrian Hanstock is quoted as stating:

"We have examined all available records which suggest that (Derek) Ridgwell was the principal officer in other investigations and have not identified any additional matters that we feel should be referred for external review."

Pursuant to FOIA, I am writing to request the following information held by the BTP:

A copy of the findings of the BTP's review of the cases of DS Derek Ridgwell, referred to by Deputy Chief Constable Hanstock above, including any associated reports or memoranda, as well as any information regarding the methodology of the review.

We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

Our response:

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at Section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at Section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held. Where exemptions are relied upon Section 17 of the FOIA requires that we provide the applicant with a notice which:

- a) states that fact
- b) specifies the exemption(s) in question and
- c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

British Transport Police holds information within scope of this request in the form of a report written in January 2021 entitled "Review of Derek RIDGEWELL – Miscarriages of Justice". A copy of the report is attached.

The report identifies a number of individuals (some of whom are still living and some of whom are deceased) in a number of different contexts relating to historical cases. Many of these details are already in the public domain by virtue of previous public records or disclosures about the cases. Others relate to persons acting in line with public facing roles and it is therefore reasonable to consider that these would be publicly disclosed. No details

of serving or former British Transport Police officers or members of staff have been redacted from the document.

Minimal redactions have been applied to the document by virtue of the following exemptions.

Section 38(1) – Health and Safety

Section 40(2) — Personal Information

Section 40 is a class based absolute exemption and there is no requirement to consider the public interest in disclosure.

This exemption has been applied where the information constitutes personal data of which you are not the subject, and the information falls within the definition of 'personal data' under the Data Protection Act. Disclosure of the document to a member of the public otherwise than under this Act would contravene data protection principles.

Personal data means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified-

(a) from those data, or

(b) from those data and other information, which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.

Information will "relate to" a person if it is about them, linked to them, has some biographical significance for them, is used to inform decisions affecting them, has them as its main focus or impacts on them in any way.

Section 38 has been applied to the disclosure of details of two persons convicted with Stephen Simmons in 1976. These details have not been previously disclosed in public reporting. Section 38 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption and therefore the legislators accept that there may be harm if released. The authority has to consider and describe the harm that would occur if the information were released and carry out a Public Interest Test.

Public Interest Considerations

Factors favouring disclosure

Disclosure of these details would add to public knowledge about historical cases where miscarriages of justice have resulted.

Factors favouring non-disclosure

Any disclosure under freedom of information is a disclosure to the world not just the individual applicant. Once released in the public domain British Transport Police would be outside of the force's control.

The information considered for disclosure relates to the historical convictions of persons where this information has not previously been circulated in previous reporting on the cases and is not widely known to friends or relatives of the subjects.

Harm Test

To release these details could cause unnecessary and disproportionate attention to the subjects and/or persons connected to them.

Balancing Test

Whilst there is a strong public interest in understanding the details of the cases and the extent of miscarriages of justice that took place, these details are already in the public domain following the quashing of Mr Simmons' conviction at the Court of Appeal in 2018. There would be no additional benefit to the public interest by disclosing the additional information and therefore the balance is in favour of withholding it in view of the potential harm in disclosure.

In accordance with the Act, this letter acts as a refusal notice for this part of your request.

In addition to the document disclosed, British Transport Police has released a number of statements on the issues highlighted, including the following statement from Chief Constable D'Orsi which was published on the 18th January 2024:

Chief Constable Lucy D'Orsi, said: "As I have commented previously on behalf of the British Transport Police (BTP), I am sincerely sorry for the trauma suffered due to the criminal actions of former police officer DS Derek Ridgewell who worked in BTP during the 1960s and 70s. In particular, it is of regret that we did not act sooner to end his criminalisation of British Africans, which led to the conviction of innocent people, including Mr Peterkin and Mr Mehmet.

"This is simply inexcusable and is something that my colleagues and I are appalled by. The actions of DS Ridgewell do not define the BTP of today which is enriched by highly professional, kind and committed officers and staff who are passionate about protecting the public. I have also met retired officers who are equally appalled by the criminal actions of DS Derek Ridgewell. I acknowledge that, during those times, systemic racism played a role in the culture of the Force, as it did across many parts of society.

"We cannot undo the past, but we can learn from it. This is an important and sombre point of reflection in our history. BTP is committed to combatting racism, which includes Afrophobia, which led to these historic cases that targeted African youths and destroyed lives.

"My colleagues and I are profoundly sorry to all those affected by DS Ridgewell's atrocious actions and the trauma that victims and their families suffered as a result. I would like to reiterate my sincere apology for the trauma caused to the British African community by a corrupt BTP officer, whose misuse of his powers caused harm not only to the innocent young people criminalised, but also to their families and community.

"The identification of DS Ridgewell's victims has always been important to us and we are thankful that the Criminal Cases Review Commission identified and successfully appealed for justice for Mr Peterkin and Mr Mehmet. We continue to encourage any possible victim or their family to reach out if they feel they have been subject to a miscarriage of justice."

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Date 27th January 2021
From Detective Chief Inspector Steve May
To Detective Superintendent Gary Richardson
Subject Review of Derek RIDGEWELL – Miscarriages of Justice

Sir

I commenced a review of any material BTP hold in relation to the activities of the below named, who was an ex-detective sergeant with BTP, and this is the final update:

Derek RIDGEWELL (deceased)
DOB 09/05/1945 @ Glasgow
N/T PNC (archived)
DOD 31/12/1982
LKA HMP Ford (West Sussex)

Background

On 24th March 2020, BTP received an e-mail from [REDACTED] who is a reporter with the Press Association [REDACTED]. He had been reporting upon a hearing at the Court of Appeal that morning, at which the 1972 conviction of Constantine "Omar" BOUCHER for attempted theft and assaulting police was quashed, following a referral by the Criminal Case Review Commission (CCRC), as a result of the corruption of DS **Derek RIDGEWELL**, a former BTP officer who was reported to have led a BTP unit called the "mugging squad" in the early 1970's.

In December 2019, at the Court of Appeal Mr BOUCHER'S co-accused, Winston TREW, Sterling CHRISTIE and George GRIFFITHS, had had their convictions quashed.

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██████ also highlighted a further case linked to **RIDGEWELL** which had been overturned in January 2018 when **Stephen SIMMONS**, who had been convicted in 1976 of stealing mailbags, discovered that **RIDGEWELL** had himself been jailed for stealing mailbags – it was reported that **RIDGEWELL** had been posted to head a team investigating thefts at the Bricklayer's Arms Railway Depot, following the collapse of a previous criminal case brought against two young Jesuits who became known as "the Tottenham Court Road Two".

Following the hearing on 24th March, 2020, Jenny Wiltshire from Hickman & Rose – who represented Mr **BOUCHER**, as well as Mr TREW and Mr CHRISTIE, and Mr SIMMONS – called for the BTP to "conduct a wholesale review of all **RIDGEWELL'S** cases", saying: "*It seems to me very likely that there may be many other victims of his corruption.*" Mr TREW added: "*I hope that the British Transport Police will now make a public statement about these wrongful convictions for which **RIDGEWELL** has been responsible.*"

BTP Media Relations had prepared a comment in response to the previous acquittals in December 2019 as follows:

"In the last 40 years, there has been a considerable change in how British Transport Police identifies and investigates police misconduct. Our dedicated and impartial Professional Standards Department meticulously investigate all allegations of misconduct and ensures that any wrongdoing is identified and dealt with. "Gross misconduct hearings are brought before an independent panel and held in public. "Likewise, where necessary, cases are referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct who conduct (sic) their own investigations."

Terms of reference (TOR) to the review

The below TOR were established following consultation with Chief Officers and Detective Superintendent RICHARDSON:

1. PNC check and research on **Derek RIDGEWELL**. (Confirm his conviction and death in prison post-conviction).
2. Meet with DCC obtain knowledge of case(s)
3. Identify via HMP what records may still exist regarding **RIDGEWELL**.
4. Identify via Court of Appeal all cases logged where **RIDGEWELL** was involved.
5. Contact Solicitor named in press reports and obtain relevant information regarding **RIDGEWELL** and others where appropriate.

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6. Contact Criminal Records Office to establish if it is possible to identify historical Form 74 A/B where **RIDGEWELL** or other relevant Police Officers are shown as the OIC.
7. Contact Mr SIMMONS – Conviction quashed re theft of mail bag. Original case 1976.
8. BTP records available re service of **RIDGEWELL**.
9. Purchase Book written by Mr TREW (conviction now quashed).
10. Identify historical complaints against **RIDGEWELL** listed by PSD.

Investigation to date

I was appointed to review the background, history and service history of **RIDGEWELL** and early intelligence trawls revealed that **RIDGEWELL** was linked to a number of arrests of young black youths, which resulted in a number of acquittals as well as high-profile miscarriages of justice, which led to the CCRC taking up the case of the 'Oval 4' as reported below.

These include:

- 'The Waterloo Four' – **R-v-FREEMAN, GORDON, MORGAN and MORRIS** which was heard at Southwark Juvenile Court in 1972. This was dismissed by the Magistrates who drew attention to the conflicting police evidence and referred the case to the BTP for further investigation. However, that internal enquiry found no evidence to support any allegation against any officer of wrongdoing.
- 'The Tottenham Court Road Two' – **R-v-CHIKURI and SWELAH** which was heard at Central Criminal Court in April 1973. The trial Judge, HHJ Gwyn MORRIS QC halted the trial and dismissed the trial. He made reference to the contradictory evidence from the police accusing them of 'pouncing' upon two innocent black youths.
- 'The Stockwell Six' – **R-v-MULLINS, DAVISON, DE SOUZA, GREEN, HARRIOTT and JOHNSON** (Central Criminal Court September 1972). Five defendants were found guilty, with one (MULLINS) being acquitted due to issues regarding the validity of his signed 'confession' as he was illiterate. This is subject of a CCRC Review.
- **R-v-HASAN, PETERKIN, CAMPBELL and OGUNSHOLA** heard in January 1978 and convicted of conspiracy to steal in relation to thefts at the British Railways Bricklayers Arms Depot. While these defendants admitted minor offences, they claimed the bulk of the evidence against them had been fabricated or obtained under duress.

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RIDGEWELL was also the OIC for an investigation into theft of mailbags in 1976 when a man, **Stephen SIMMONS** and 2 others were convicted, but the convictions were subsequently quashed in 2017.

On reviewing the CCRC website, the Chair, Helen PITCHER stated that there was almost no material left as all had been destroyed due to normal retention policies. However, the CCRC were able to obtain the original paperwork from a Court of Appeal judgement which had reduced the sentences of the Oval 4 but not quashed their convictions, as well as the diaries of defence counsel, John Platts-Mills QC, to Hull History Centre but he had not mentioned this trial. The CCRC eventually found a copy of the trial transcript in the possession of the BTP History Group, which proved helpful as it contained sufficient detail as to what had happened in the trial.

The material used by the CCRC to pursue their appeals against the relevant convictions has now been returned to BTP Force Records who have now forwarded said items to me. These include 7 volumes (800+ pages) of evidence in chief and cross examination relating to the trial at the Old Bailey from 9th October to 1st November 1972 of **R-v- TREW, BOUCHER, GRIFFITHS and CHRISTIE**. The contents provide insight as to the conduct of the trial Judge as well as **RIDGEWELL**, the defendants and Counsel. All four defendants had been pressurised, threatened and assaulted until they admitted further offences. Mr TREW, fearing for his safety, admitted offences only on days when he had a cast-iron alibi although the trial Judge attempted to rule this evidence inadmissible. However, Defence Counsel had introduced it in his cross examination of **RIDGEWELL** (without the need for prior disclosure which was not a legal requisite at the time) and the alibi evidence was heard which cast doubt on the veracity of **RIDGEWELL** and his team and all of these confessions were rejected by the Jury who found all four not guilty of these offences. However, perversely, they went on to convict Mr TREW et al of the robbery despite there being no evidence other than police testimony.

On 30th July 1973, the appeal against the sentences of all four was heard before HHJ JAMES at the Court of Appeal. Justice JAMES quashed the 2-year sentences imposed upon the men and all were released. That same evening, BBC broadcast on their BBC Nationwide a programme entitled 'Cause for Concern', where the reporters highlighted the cases of the 16 young black men (Oval 4, Stockwell 6, Waterloo 4 and the Tottenham Court Road 2), who had been arrested and prosecuted by **RIDGEWELL** and his team. The programme identified the identical police tactics in each, the accusations of all 16 defendants that they had been wrongly arrested, and the evidence fabricated against them.

The reporters continued that 7 of the 16 were acquitted, and the fact that in two of the cases, the trial judges had cast serious doubts regarding the

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honesty and propriety of the police behaviour (Waterloo 4 and Tottenham Court Road 2). They also highlighted **RIDGEWELL'S** involvement in all 4 cases, as were a number of his team. They also emphasised that in all the cases no complainants were ever identified and there were no independent witnesses; and that in all the cases, the police failed to identify themselves (this is also a factor in the case against Stephen SIMMONS). When asked for a comment at the time, BTP refused (page 15 of the BBC transcript).

As a result of this programme, questions were raised by the then Shadow spokesperson for Home Affairs, John FRASER MP for Norwood, who in turn highlighted the cases to the then Home Secretary as well as BTP Senior Officers. Unfortunately the BTP response was utterly inadequate with no acknowledgement of the potential that **RIDGEWELL** was engaged in the fabrication of evidence, stating that no complaints had been made against him. However, due to the mounting dissatisfaction and political pressure, it appears that **RIDGEWELL** was removed from the 'mugging squad' within months which was then disbanded, and he was initially transferred to duties away from the public. No apology was ever made.

In 1976, it would appear that BTP gave **RIDGEWELL** a new role – in charge of a team investigating the large-scale theft of goods from Waterloo Goods Depot where his team detained two members of the criminal gang who were subsequently charged and prosecuted but received a fine and suspended sentence for their criminal activities, possibly influenced by intervention by **RIDGEWELL** to the court. Instead of the expected decrease in thefts, the incidence significantly increased, raising the interest of the Regional Crime squad which resulted in the arrest of **RIDGEWELL** and others in May 1978, and the subsequent charge and committal for trial.

My enquiry identified **RIDGEWELL'S** co-accused in the theft of mailbags from the British Railways Bricklayers Arms Parcel Depot in the late 1970s: DC Alan John KEELING and DC Douglas ELLIS. KEELING received 2 years' imprisonment (reduced on appeal) and ELLIS 6 years' imprisonment. Their criminality in company with a number of others lasted from 1977 until 1978 and is believed to have amounted to in excess of £350,000.00. **RIDGEWELL** was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment.

On 31st December 1982, **RIDGEWELL** died as the result of a heart attack while incarcerated at HMP Ford while serving this sentence.

In terms of the agreed actions with COG, the following was discovered:

1. No trace PNC or PND. No court extracts are available to confirm conviction due to passage of time (22/04/2020); (complete)

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2. Completed and TOR agreed (26/03/2020); **(complete)**
3. Prison records are no longer available due to Ministry of Justice retention policy. However, his death certificate has been obtained - see below for details (received 11/05/2020); **(complete)**
4. This is ongoing, with the CCRC currently reviewing the convictions of the 'Stockwell Six' **(ongoing)**
5. All my contact has been with Ms Anona Bisping (CCRC) who is overseeing all the identified cases. **(ongoing)**
6. The Home Office Live Services, Digital, Data and Technology Department have confirmed they are unable to obtain case files for RIDGEWELL's investigations as they have no ability to search by OIC – they can only search by Crime reference and suspect name, and there is no trace on their microfiche archive systems (response received 13/05/2020); **(complete)**
7. Please see below; **(complete)**
8. BTP Personnel Records – No Trace due to retention period expired (22/04/2020); **(complete)**
9. Book purchased. **(complete)**
10. There is no trace on Centurion and all paper records have now been destroyed in line with retention policies and MOPI, given the passage of time since he was last a serving officer. **(complete)**

The trial transcript contains details of the other officers who were engaged with **RIDGEWELL** in the case against Mr TREW et al, and there are significant claims that they colluded with **RIDGEWELL**, both within the court papers and Mr TREW'S book. The officers are outlined below:

- DS K. NORTH
- DC A. CLIFT
- DC M. MOONEY
- DC R. BATES
- WDC S. WOOD

Also included are two Metropolitan Police Officers:

DC C. ABERDEEN

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DC M. THOMPSON

BTP Information Management Unit has searched all BTP records in relation to the aforementioned officers and each of the named defendants, with a negative result. Similar enquiries at BTP HR and PSD have yielded no information. All officers will have been retired for a significant period.

I have been in contact with Mrs Anona BISPING, the Case Review Manager from CCRC who has provided me with various documents. Mrs BISPING confirmed that CCRC were currently reviewing the convictions of the 'Stockwell Six' and BTP have been served with Section 17 notice to reveal any material we hold in relation to the named individuals.

On the evening of Thursday 3rd December 2020, I spoke with Mr SIMMONS, after I had left a message on his mobile phone on 27/11/2020. He informed me that on the evening of 04/06/1975 he had been with two friends [REDACTED] while stationary in their car listening to music. This appeared to have attracted the attention of RIDGEWELL and two other officers who were introduced as 'DC LEWIS' and 'DC MAYER'. All three were in plain clothes and none produced their warrant cards to identify themselves as police. After what Mr SIMMONS described to me as a civil conversation, they were physically restrained and informed they were being arrested for theft of mail bags. He was subsequently convicted of theft in 1976 and sentenced to borstal for 8 months.

Mr SIMMONS has provided me with copies of his court case. According to the CCRC Referral to the Court of Appeal, the BTP officers involved were DS RIDGEWELL, DC Adrian LEWIS and DC Roger MAYERS. DS RIDGEWELL, in a mirror of the above cases, claimed all three made confessions (six in total) but at no time was there any forensic evidence or independent witness testimony to the alleged criminal activity; no stolen property was recovered from any of the suspects. None of the 'confessions' were signed by the suspects and all three young men denied categorically at court they were involved in criminality, although they conceded they did have previous

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criminal records. Surprisingly, the prosecution only called DS RIDGEWELL in the subsequent trial. It is clear from the papers available that the Jury found **RIDGEWELL'S** evidence more compelling and credible and convicted Mr SIMMONS and his co-accused.

In August 2013, Mr SIMMONS contacted CCRC asking for a review of his case, following an internet search (prompted by a conversation with a legal advisor on LBC radio programme). This search had revealed that RIDGEWELL had been arrested for theft of mail bags in the late 1970's, as well as the ongoing appeals by Mr TREW et al.

All the material was presented to the Court of Appeal in 2018, where the Crown did not contest the application and Mr SIMMONS' conviction was considered unsafe by the Justices and it was subsequently quashed.

In relation to his co-accused, Mr SIMMONS : 


In relation to DCs MAYERS and LEWIS, BTP Information Management Unit has searched all BTP records and each of the named defendants, with a negative result. Similar enquiries at BTP HR and PSD have yielded no information. All officers will have been retired for a significant period.

Conclusion

The question remains as to whether all the aforementioned were wrongly convicted or victims of gross miscarriages of justice. M. Naughton (2006:2) concludes that

"a miscarriage of justice cannot be said to have occurred unless and until an applicant has been successful in an appeal against conviction, and until that time s/he remains an alleged victim of a miscarriage of justice"

While I accept that the highlighted arrests by **RIDGEWELL** and his team, the prosecutions and subsequent convictions (where obtained) occurred in a very

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different policing world and before the divers safeguards now afforded to detained persons, suspects and defendants through legislation, Codes of Practice and procedures, I opine in the above cases that those arrested, charged and in the cases of Messrs. SIMMONS, BOUCHER, TREW, CHRISTIE, GRIFFITHS and the Stockwell Six convictions they have been victims of gross miscarriages of justice and should be afforded full and unreserved public apologies from BTP. I recommend that such apology should be made by a Chief Officer, and supported in writing.

Another obvious fact was the reluctance of trial judges and then at the Courts of Appeal to find against RIDGEWELL and his team, preferring to accept their evidence against a mass of compelling and incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. However, this falls outside of the scope of my review.

It is unfortunate that the relevant records are no longer available as I have been unable to identify any further cases RIDGEWELL and his colleagues were involved in due to the passage of time and the various retention policies of the day. However, the publication of the apologies may result in further cases being revealed, which I opine should be afforded the same amount of contrition on behalf of BTP.

Steve May
Detective Chief Inspector 1527
British Transport Police
Pennines CID