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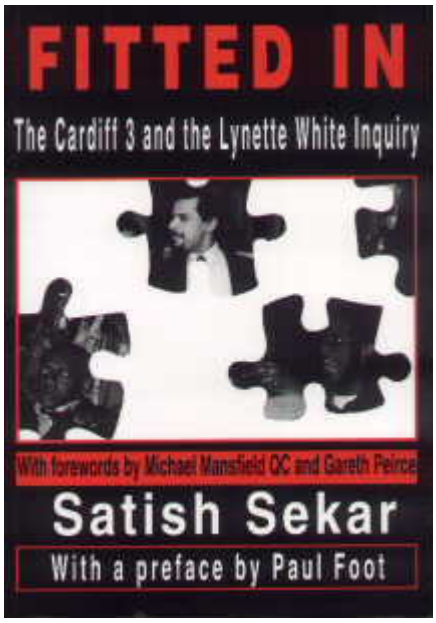
A MANDATORY ADDITION TO POLICE ACADEMY LIBRARIES



[Further developments in Lynette White Enquiry]

Fitted in: The Cardiff 3 and The Lynette White Inquiry *by* Satish Sekar (co-editors: Andy Soutter and Michele Bailey)
The fitted In Project, c/o Satish Sekar, 8 Ridding Lane, Greenford, Middlesex, UB6 0JY, UK: 294 Pages: Publication Date - 1997, ISBN 0 - 9527325 - 0 - 5. Price: £10.99

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On Valentine's Day, February 14, 1988, at about 1.45 to 1.50 a.m., a 20 year old white prostitute was brutally murdered in a run-down flat at 7 James Street, in the Butetown district of Cardiff, Wales. She was stabbed fifty times and her throat had been violently slashed. There were also injuries to her breasts and several other parts of her body. The renowned forensic pathologist, Professor Bernard Knight, conducted the autopsy. Even for Butetown "a nocturnal, upside down, topsy-turvy world where people carry knives as part of their clothing," it was a horrific crime. Butetown (formerly known as Tiger Bay) is one of Britain's oldest black communities, which was involved in the first Race Riot in British history in 1919. Lynette's body was discovered only at 9.17 p.m., by a friend (also a prostitute), Learnne Vilday. In fact the flat in which the murder had been committed belonged to her, and she had given the keys, as she often did, to Lynette to "entertain" a client.

...Yusef Abdullahi, John Actie, Ronnie Actie, Steve Miller, and Tony Paris were tried for the murder, amidst allegations of intimidatory tactics employed by the police during interrogations. They came to be called the " Cardiff 5."...

South Wales Police immediately got into action and established an incident room at Central Police Station, Cardiff. From an initial cast of thousands of potential suspects, they painstakingly narrowed down the investigation to eleven individuals, of whom six were eliminated on the basis of what would later appear to be dubious scientific evidence. The remaining five, Yusef Abdullahi, John Actie, Ronnie Actie, Steve Miller, and Tony Paris were tried for the murder, amidst allegations of intimidatory tactics employed by the police during interrogations. They came to be called the " Cardiff 5." Magistrates committed the Cardiff 5 for trial in February 1989, despite the fact that none of the forensic evidence found in the murder flat related them to the flat or the victim. The trial takes place only on the basis of coerced "confessional statements" on the part of one of the accused (Steve Miller), and confusing statements made by unreliable, biased, prosecution witnesses. The longest murder trial in British history ends (despite lack of credible evidence), with three men being convicted. They come to be known as the "Cardiff 3," and comprise Steve Miller, Yusef Abdullahi, and Tony Paris. They go on appeal to a higher court amidst rising public concerns about the fairness of the investigation. On December 10th 1992, their convictions are quashed. Police however announce that they would not re-open the case unless new evidence was obtained.

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It is left to the author of this remarkable book, Satish Sekar, an investigative journalist, to meticulously probe into this highly controversial case and come up with compelling new evidence, which finally culminated in the re-opening of the case on 14th January 1996. This book is a monument to his untiring efforts and dedication to serve the cause of justice, though the sad anticlimax is that the re-opened inquiry made little progress up until the time of publication, with the real killer still remaining to be apprehended. However, Satish Sekar succeeds in exposing several shocking flaws in the British judicial system which can cause terrible miscarriages of justice, as happened in the case of the Cardiff 3. In fact, Britain had seen a spate of wrongful convictions in high-profile murder and terrorism cases even earlier, beginning with the conviction of six innocent men in the Birmingham pub bombings of 1975. The Cardiff 3 case however went one step further in the dispensation of injustice, by way of addition of a new ingredient: racial prejudice. All the five accused by prosecution to have committed the murder were "coloured."

...This book has all the makings of a classic, containing as it does explicit information for a definitive indictment of the so-called adversarial system of justice practiced in several countries of the world. It should be a mandatory addition to Police Academy libraries, and must find a prominent place in all lawyer's offices, so that it may serve as a grim reminder of what can go wrong when shortcuts are taken, or personal bias is allowed to creep in, while pursuing the investigation of a serious crime...

Miscarriages of justice such as the one highlighted by the Cardiff 3 case, arise because of a judicial process which prefers to convict an accused rather than take the trouble of examining the truth about the crime. The police are not infrequently guilty of pressurizing potential witnesses until they give an account that helps them towards a solution of the crime. Often, on the basis of an unreliable and deeply flawed series of contentious allegations, individuals are detained and interrogated in an intimidatory manner to "fit in" to the police's concept of the commission of the crime. Locking up a suspect sounds innocuous, but the purpose more often is to "break" a suspect's resistance, and coerce him to say something that he would not otherwise voluntarily do. Police lock-up is in reality an oppressive nightmare, in which the only relief from isolation and total lack of stimulation in a dark and dirty place is the time when the suspect is brought out for interrogation. The Cardiff 3 case is a classical example of such coercive tactics employed by police in most parts of the world in order to secure a conviction. In fact, in countries such as India, the situation is much worse than in countries like the UK or USA, where there are considerable safeguards against maltreatment of suspects. One shudders at the methods of interrogation commonly employed in many police stations of this country, which are often little more than rituals of physical torture. One wishes there were investigative journalists of the caliber of Satish Sekar to expose such inhuman methods of "criminal investigation" in India, while at the same time acknowledging the irony of his Indian origins!

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Dr.V.V.Pillay has been in the vanguard of the movement among medical professionals in India to develop the neglected field of Toxicology. He has published extensively in both the scientific and lay press on matters relating to Toxicology, as well as his chosen discipline - Forensic Medicine. Dr.Pillay has authored 6 books on Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, and has received an award for one of them (Modern Medical Toxicology), generally considered to be a trend setter among books on the subject in India. He has reviewed several books on Toxicology for the Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology. Dr.Pillay received a scroll of honour in appreciation of work done in the field of Toxicology from the Medicolegal Society, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi. He has established a state-of-the-art Poison Control Centre, recognized by the World Health Organization at the institute where he is currently employed (AIMS, Cochin). Among his most sought-after publications is a 700 page reference work on Toxicology.

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There have been many Developments in the Lynette White Inquiry, since Sekar wrote his book. Readers wanting to read about them may want to click here.

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