

A Brief Report on a
VISIT TO THE FORCE FIREARMS TRAINING ESTABLISHMENT
of the Metropolitan Police Service

Because of the way Derek Bennett was shot, it seemed to me that we should know more about the selection and training of officers for the Firearms Unit. My aim was to be able to observe the selection process and at least some aspects of the training, and I spoke to many people as I tried to arrange this. After several months I was told that the Firearms Unit was holding open days for people from different Consultative Groups and, as it seemed a good way to start, it was arranged for a small group of us to visit the Firearms Training Centre which is at present at Lippitts Hill in Epping Forest.

So four members of our Group visited Lippitts Hill on 21 February 2002 and, with members of a Group from Hounslow, had a very interesting day.

The morning started with a brief history of the use of firearms by the police. Police have been armed since 1829. In October 1883, revolvers were issued to officers on night duty. To start with, many officers were ex-army and had only rudimentary training. Training was improved after the incident in 1967 known as Foxtrot One One; negotiation was introduced in 1975 after the Spaghetti House robbery; in 1986 the police patrol at Heathrow Airport was overtly armed; Armed Response Vehicles were introduced in 1991.

All applicants to join the Firearms Unit are volunteers; they must have served for at least 2 years and be recommended by their CO. They are assessed, for example, on their ability to assimilate information; on adrenalin control; and they have to sit an exam and pass a fitness test each year.

Officers are not trained to shoot to kill but to cause the suspect to stop, so they shoot at the largest area which is, of course, the body.

Officers are trained to challenge a suspect first, whenever possible, and to take the background and surroundings into account,

Every officer has subsequently to justify each shot, because the decision to shoot rests with the individual officer in face of the perceived threat. No CO can order an individual marksman to open fire.

Every weapon is automatically removed after being fired and only returned after an enquiry.

If an officer kills a suspect, he/she is suspended from firearms duty pending the outcome of an internal investigation which can take from 1 to 4 years but usually takes about 18 months.

During training, much emphasis is placed on being able to talk properly to people.

The initial training is for 2 weeks, which is followed by a further 5 weeks, 4 of which are residential.

Armed Response Vehicles are deployed for the 24 hours of every day and cover every Borough. The number of vehicles is increased between the hours of 8pm and 11pm, They are called upon to prevent injury to members of the public.

In 2001 there were 1269 ARV calls in Lambeth; 108 vehicles were deployed; 6 shots were fired by police; 337 arrests were made; 96 firearms were recovered.

The guns (MP5s) are kept in a safe in the ARV, have low velocity fire power, and fire a single shot only, not a burst. Shotguns are only used for animals and CS gas, never on people.

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For the last part of the morning we were shown a fearsome array of the weapons that the police frequently face, mainly knives and guns. We were allowed to handle the guns and invited to judge whether they were replicas or the real thing. We were eventually told that they had all been replicas.

After lunch we were taken to the firing range and, wearing protective goggles, ear plugs and ear muffs, were given a demonstration of the power of different weapons. We saw bullets shattering concrete posts and going easily through 6-inch steel plates and car doors.

Finally, we were shown an inter-active video of a series of different incidents. Volunteers from among the visitors were given a gun and had to decide whether to shoot or not, and at what stage to shoot. Oddly enough, most of the volunteers were women; no one from our group volunteered.

This exercise was also interesting because the discussion after each incident showed how difficult it is to be an accurate witness and therefore how difficult it must be to collect accurate evidence from statements,

We were able to ask questions at any point but were, of course, unable to discuss the Derek Bennett situation because it is still *sub judice*.

However, I think we all felt that it had been a valuable day and that it would be helpful for another group from Lambeth to pay a similar visit, perhaps especially young people,

I am still hoping to be able to spend some time at the Training Establishment as an observer later this year.

Pauline Bower
June 2002

REPORT ON A VISIT TO THE PEEL CENTRE

You may remember that I was hoping to be able to visit the Metropolitan Police Training School at Hendon to observe Diversity Training of recruits. Inspector David Musker arranged for me to go there on 4 March 2003.

Because there has been a big recruitment drive, each new intake at present has approximately 300-330 recruits in it., and there is a new intake every five weeks. They are divided into classes of about 25-30, distinguished by green, red, blue or purple shoulder tags. This means that all together there are about 1200 recruits there, at different stages of their training, during a day , so they are trained in two shifts, the first starting at 7am. The two shifts do, of course, overlap in the middle of the day, but I was impressed with the organisation - it all seemed to run remarkably smoothly.

The Diversity Training Strategy Unit was set up about four years ago. I was told that the "diversity angle" now forms part of every aspect of training but that they focus on specific aspects at various stages in the training: during week 7 it is the turn of the South-Asian perspective; in week 12 they concentrate on the Lesbian and Gay, and the Afro-Caribbean, perspectives; in week 16 the focus is the religious perspective.

I took part in discussions with two different groups of the green intake. There were about 30 people in each group, with a wide age range but only a small percentage of women and people from an ethnic minority - a lack of which the two excellent instructors were very aware. The Community Contributor was Eyvonne Black from Stonebridge Housing Action Trust in Tottenham, who is well experienced and expert at her role in this situation. She took part in two role plays during the day and was able to point out the difference in attitude and behaviour of the people who had dealt with her.

I had expected just to listen and observe., but I was asked if I would reply to questions and so became part of the discussions. My fear was that, because I am an elderly, white, middle-class, disabled woman, any input from me would be irrelevant - I had also been warned that I could be inhibiting. However, none of these fears was realised and I was greatly relieved when Eyvonne told me that she had found it helpful that we were saying the same things from different perspectives.

Most of the questions asked were fairly routine explorations of the subject. Two stood out for me: one person asked if the police were seen locally as part of die community or not; the other questioned our use of the word "tolerant". He felt that it implied hatred of the thing we were to tolerate. People suggested understand or appreciate as alternatives. What do you think?

The initial training lasts for 18 weeks. To be accepted, before starting each recruit has had to pass tests in mathematics, English, observation, and a physical fitness test which includes a grip test, pull and push, sprinting, and a bleep test.

While training, each recruit is given course notes which they have to study and learn before taking part in the discussion and role play which aim to reinforce the learning and ensure full understanding. (I have a copy of some of these notes and they seem to be good basic material.) Fitness training also continues.

The recruits are continually assessed and they have tests on, for example, stereotyping, race, nationality, religion. There is a re-course system which allows recruits who get below 70% in the tests to repeat five weeks of the course. During the course they take 13 written exams and 10 role plays are assessed. There is 11-14% wastage for a variety of reasons.

In spite of the current large intake, it will take time for the effect of the training to permeate the whole MPS, but I felt that a real effort is being made and that the basics are in place but not set in stone, so they should be able to evolve as necessary.

This was my second visit to The Peel Centre. My first was several years ago and, while it had been interesting and I and the other visitors had been well looked after, I had felt that the general attitude had been complacent. This time I felt there was much more energy, efficiency, and concern to get things right.

It has been suggested that I should attend all the stages of diversity training and I look forward to following that up during the year.

Pauline Bower
Churches Together in Clapham

REPORT ON A VISIT TO THE PEEL CENTRE, HENDON, on 3 November 2003, to observe Diversity Training on Gay/Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender issues.

On my second visit to Hendon to observe diversity training, I joined some of the Purple group of recruits. These recruits were in their twelfth week of training.

Apparently The Peel Centre is short of about 50 staff. I didn't see any Black or Asian staff but there were many women. I met two Community Contributors - both gay men. I did not see any Community Contributors from the Lesbian, Bi-sexual or Transgender sections of the community, and there was no mention of their specific problems in the four sessions I attended. There was also no mention of Transvestites.

I watched four different instructors with groups of about 30 recruits each; however, one session had to accommodate an extra 30 recruits because another of the instructors was ill. One instructor was being observed by a senior instructor.

The difference in approach of each instructor was interesting. Two of them gave a brief introduction, each quite different, and then invited the Contributors to speak about their experiences; one started by showing a scene from a film played by Tom Hanks and Denzi! Washington; another asked two of the recruits to describe what they had done at the weekend without revealing the gender of the people they had been with.

During the subsequent discussions, it was made clear that there is considerable under-reporting of hate crime (as with domestic crime, including same-sex domestic crime) and it was felt that third-party reporting places were essential. Apparently the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea produces self-reporting packs.

In some Community Safety Groups there are dedicated Gay/Lesbian safety officers.

It was stressed that the majority of child abusers are homophobic, and that most paedophiles are straight men.

When Section 28 was introduced it apparently provoked a lot of homophobic bullying, also fear of sexuality, especially for those unsure of themselves.

It was commented that some forces have allowed serving officers to take part in Mardi Gras parades wearing their uniforms, but some recruits questioned if it was fair that that was the only march in which police could take part in their uniforms when not on duty.

The recruits were told that there are a number of support groups and that Victim Support has lists of them

The recruits were also told that it was very important that they should not "out" people accidentally - for example to their families in cases of accidents or sudden death.

It seemed to me that the recruits were accepting of at any rate Gay and Lesbian sexuality, and several recruits said that they were gay, I think all die recruits said that they knew at least one gay or lesbian person, even if it was only among their current colleagues,

I wondered if there was any training in recognition of people with bi-sexual and transgender identities. This led me on to wonder about diversity training on medical or disabling problems which can lead to behavioural or public order difficulties. I haven't heard so far of any training in this area and am aware, from having worked for a medical charity., that injustices can occur because of lack of awareness of, for example, the possible effects of a stroke or diabetes, anaphylactic shock, etc, quite apart from any mental illness.

It seems to me that it would be useful to have a very public drive to recruit more Community Contributors - and also, of course, for more instructors, if the Boroughs are prepared to release them or do without them, however the system works.

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REPORT ON A VISIT TO THE PEEL CENTRE, HENDON, on 5 December 2003 to observe Diversity Training on Religion.

Because my visit took place on the Friday of their first week, the first recruits I saw were asked what they had learnt about diversity during that time.

They talked about stereotyping and breaking the pattern; about the effects of power and the need for appropriate and necessary action; about awareness, when and how to withdraw from or to oppose what is happening, also awareness of language that is offensive; about the danger of acquiescence, eg, don't laugh at, for example, racist or sexist jokes. They were reminded that anything derogatory is "not on" even if (in response to a question from a blonde recruit) a blonde recipient doesn't find a blonde joke offensive - personal feelings can *not* be used as a guide to what is right. They had been made aware of the problems of e-mail groups.

It was interesting to hear how much the previous days' training had made the recruits think about their own responses and how surprised they had been by themselves - surely a good sign.

There was a big notice on the wall of the class room with a list of words: Communication, Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination, Racism - concept/institutional. Managing change, Support groups.

They then moved on to the specific theme of **religious diversity**. For this session the recruits had been divided into six smaller groups and each small group had to give a presentation on a different religion.

(There was a short interruption while someone from the Parks Department - equal to a Borough or the Transport Police - asked recruits to consider signing on for work in that area.)

As an introduction to the presentations, awareness and the need for respect were stressed.

First came a rather lame presentation on Christianity. The recruits seemed to find it quite difficult to point out anything in particular about the religion apart from a brief, slightly muddled, description of the different denominations and some behavioural requirements for Roman Catholics. It seemed to be assumed that the police would be unlikely to offend Christians because Christians have no particular sensitivities.

In the presentation about Islam there was a good section on policing in and around a mosque - how there must be no dogs; that no shoes should be worn; that men and women must have no contact, even eye contact; that legs and forearms must be covered. It was explained that the word "halal" referred not only to food but also to observation of the religious laws; there was some discussion about the method of slaughter so that meat can be properly halal or kosher. It was explained that Imams are appointed by their communities, and that some of the problems in mosques can stem from continued village and regional rivalry. It was stressed that Muslims must be allowed to pray when in custody, and be given the correct food.

The presentation on Judaism started with a brief historical survey and an indication of the number of Jews in different countries. A slightly suspect joke was told - perhaps in order to test the reaction of the rest of the group? It was explained that Jewish communities are often very closed and therefore difficult to police; that they are subject to hate crime; that because of their burial rights and customs it is not easy to carry out autopsies; that it is not easy to gain entry into synagogues; that there are frequently delays in reporting crime because strictly speaking nothing is done on the Sabbath (Sabat) which lasts from dusk on Friday to dusk on Saturday. It is important that when in custody Jews should be given the correct food. I had the feeling that there were no Jewish recruits in this group.

It was interesting to note that one of the recruits felt that a source of accurate information concerning different sections of the community (in this case identified by religion) should be the membership of the local C-PCG.

Presentations were given at a later session on Sikhism, Hinduism and Buddhism, which unfortunately I did not hear.

I was transferred to be with a group of recruits who were very near the end of their training. I felt that they were tired and unfortunately the session was not very stimulating. I gathered that the subject should have been about burial customs but that the main information session about it had been perhaps two weeks earlier and the Community Contributors had not been able to attend. During this session the two nice Somali men were simply asked questions about how they sustained their own customs in this country and about their experiences with the police which, I am happy to say, were positive. But on the whole this final session was disappointing.

Once again I was very well looked after and met some very helpful people, both staff and recruits.

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REPORT ON A VISIT TO THE PEEL CENTRE 7 April 2004 to observe Diversity training

There was a slight administrative hitch to start with, which meant that I arrived late during the first session I attended. However, I found an interesting discussion with the Community Contributor in progress and no one seemed disturbed by my arrival.

This was the seventh week of the training of this group of recruits, and the main theme for the day was burglary, in particular as it affects the Asian community. The Community Contributors were delightful and talented young people who were enthusiastically taking part in the sessions, doing role plays if required or answering questions, etc. It was good to know that none of them had had a bad experience with the police.

In one of the discussions there were interesting comments about the Irish as one of the less visible ethnic minorities. One of the female recruits said that she had been worried not only about the reaction of sections of the public to a woman police officer, but also about the reaction of some male police officers to working with her, and had been relieved to discover quite quickly that these latter fears seemed to be groundless. One of the male recruits said he felt that women brought to situations a different set of tools which could be just as effective as any other.

I was twice able to bring up the question of PC Knight and the way our C-PCG meeting on 6.4.04 had felt about that situation. The recruits were very troubled, and worried about how they would be seen by the communities when they arrived - quite a few of them are apparently coming to Lambeth. (A new system of training together recruits who are heading for the same Borough is currently being explored.)

In conversation with one of the officers I was a bit surprised that he had not heard of the PC Knight situation. When I explained it he became quite defensive and was sure it must have been an accident, but in the end seemed reluctantly to agree that it was a dreadful tiling that had happened and that it had been badly handled.

I understand that because of the number of recruits some of them can't live on the estate but live in barracks some way off. There they have to share rooms with several others and don't have the same facilities for study as those on the estate. They are taken by bus to and from the Peel Centre. This was not told to me as a complaint but as a fact, but it seems to me that they could be at a disadvantage, which is tough on them.

One of the Community Contributors told me that he had been to some of our C-PCG meetings and said he hoped he might start up a similar Group locally. When I said I thought that every Borough had one he said that his didn't seem to be very active and that although they had IAGs and Gold Groups, etc, he didn't feel that they were representative of the community because they had been chosen. I do so agree!

Once again I had an interesting and on the whole encouraging day, and I am grateful to all those who welcomed and looked after me.

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Report of a visit to The Peel Centre, Hendon, on 13 May 2004, to observe training on

STOP and SEARCH

I was with two groups of the red intake for the recruits' first session on the subject.

They were told that the Stop and Search procedure is used when the police suspect that a person is in possession of (a) stolen goods; (b) guns or other offensive weapons such as knives; (c) drugs; (d) articles to cause harm. It was emphasised that no arrest can be made unless articles are found on the suspect - he or she has to be in possession of the goods. Children from the age of 10 can be stopped, but once back at the station an appropriate adult is needed to be with them.

A police officer has to have reasonable Grounds for stopping and searching anyone - for example, if sniffer dogs indicate that a person is in possession of drugs; if someone reports having seen someone put a knife in his or her pocket, or has seen someone steal something; if the police officer him or her self has seen someone behaving strangely, eg, at 3 am in a car park; if the police officer has smelt drugs; if the police officer has noticed suspicious items in a car - but it is emphasised that reasonable belief is essential.

Stop and Search Powers can be used:

- (a) in a public place - which means places such as streets, pavements, parks and gardens (even personal gardens), sports grounds, shops and cinemas, stairwells and corridors. Rooms and private members* clubs are not public places, therefore Stop & Search powers can not be used there.
- (b) in vehicles (cars, coaches, buses, trains), including unattended vehicles, for example if it is suspected that an unattended car has been involved in a burglary. (Camper vans are vehicles, caravans are dwellings. Boats and barges are also homes if stationary and being used as such, *but* are vehicles if travelling; they are basically the responsibility of the Thames police.)

Recruits were then referred to section 78 of PACE and given a mnemonic, GO WISELY, to help them to remember the things they are Required to carry out before any action: G - explain the Grounds for the Stop, which will be unique to every situation O - explain the Object of the Stop

W - show your Warrant card, especially if you are in plain clothes I

- indicate your Identification

S - give the Station to which you are attached, in case there is a complaint E -

explain that the suspect is Entitled to a record of the Stop and Search L -

explain the Legislation, under which power the Stop has been made Y - "You are detained for the purpose of..."

Searches should be carried out if possible by an officer of the same sex as the suspect. A suspect can be detained, even handcuffed, until a same-sex officer arrives. A search should be carried out preferably out of public view. Removal of, for example, a knife is allowed on grounds of personal safety.

Start with a pat-down; then with the jacket, being careful in pockets (it's worth asking if he or she has any needles) and then the rest of the outer clothes, including gloves and footwear. Removal of garments can cause problems - especially, for example, turbans - and shoes can *cause* retching!

Strip searching needs to be justified and should not take place in custody suites but in separate search rooms. (I was told later that anything other than a search of a Jacket, Outer coat and Gloves (JOG) is counted as a strip search. This can be carried out in a police van,

but only if intimate body parts are not exposed. An intimate search has to be carried out by a doctor and not on police premises, eg, in a surgery.)

If a person has been suspected of drug dealing but only money is found on him or her, no arrest should be made. For drugs, a warrant is needed to search premises.

The form to record the Stop should be filled in in front of the person stopped. For people in a vehicle, each person gets a form and the driver has the car's details on his/her form. An accurate description of the suspect should be recorded, including his or her clothes and especially trainers.

I was invited several times to take part in the discussion and to ask questions. One of my questions (because of one of Professor Marian Fitzgerald's papers) was about the use of Stop and Search in the assessment of an officer's performance, and the instructor said that he would expect a good officer to have initiated several Stops.

As on previous occasions, I enjoyed meeting the recruits and found the sessions interesting and informative.

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