

TVP - 1

Evidence of Dc Coe

1. Dc Coe was the first police officer on the scene. He provided a witness statement and gave oral evidence at the inquiry.
2. Concerns were raised following a Mail on Sunday article in which he stated that he had been accompanied by two officers when his evidence at the Inquiry was that he had only been with one other officer. Further doubt was cast on his account when the words of Paul Chapman and Louise Holmes, the two civilian search officers, were examined in detail and implied that Dc Coe and several other officers all went to the scene of the body. This is incorrect.
3. Dc Coe's Police statement is very short, not particularly descriptive but factually correct:

At 0940 am on Friday 18th July 2003 together with a Mr. Paul Chapman a volunteer search person, I went to Harrow Down Hill, Longworth where a Mr. Chapman took me into a wooded area for about approximately 75 yards where I was shown the body of a male person who was lying on his back. I could see that his left wrist had blood on it. Close to the wrist was a small knife similar to a pruning knife together with a wrist watch.

There was a small bottle with a label Evian thereon. The male was wearing striped shirt blue jeans that had a stain on the right knee Barbour type jacket. There was also a peaked cap close to this male person.

At 1007 am ambulance crew attended the scene where death was pronounced.

4. Dc Coe's oral evidence to the inquiry was:

On the route to Harrowdown Hill I met the two people from the volunteer search team, a female and Mr Chapman.

Q. And what did they say to you?

A. Mr Chapman told me that they had found a body in the woods.

Q. Who were you with at this time?

A. Detective Constable Shields.

Q. It is just the two of you?

A. Yes.

Q. What did you then do, once you had met Mr Chapman?

A. I went with Mr Chapman to Harrowdown Hill to the woods where approximately 75 yards into the set of woods he showed me a body.

Paul Chapman's statement:

After a couple of minutes the dog indicated a find by returning to the owner / handler. Lou the dog's handler followed the dog. Lou said "OH HE'S FOUND SOMETHING".

I continued to walk up the hill until I saw a body from about 15 metres. It was the body of a male wearing a light coloured shirt and dark jacket. He was lying on his back with his feet towards me with blood covering his left arm. He was flat on the ground.

He was found about 30 meters into the centre of the wood. I did not see any further details as I was too far away.

The time that we found the body was 09.15 hrs. I then tried to contact my manager but his phone was on answer machine so I called the police on 999. Once police arrived they then were shown where the body was and they took overall charge. I wish to further that I showed the body to DC2368 COE at 09.40 hrs.

5. During his evidence to the Hutton Inquiry Paul Chapman clarified that he had initially gone with all three police officers but only Dc Coe went to the actual scene with him.

Q. Did you show them the body?

*A. Yes. We walked back up the hill with the three of them and then they decided as they got a bit closer to the edge of the wood that I needed **only to take one of the officers in, so I took DC Coe in to show him where the body was.***

Louise Holmes' statement:

At the base of this tree I saw the body of a male person.....At this point Paul CHAPMAN was about 30 metres behind me, but he could see the location of the tree and the body. I returned to him using the same route I had taken to the tree, so that I did not disturb any other areas of the scene.

When I reached Paul CHAPMAN, he then tried to phone the leader of the volunteer search group. He was unable to contact him. He then made a 999 call to report to the Police Control Room at Abingdon that we had some information. We were then called back on his mobile phone and we advised the caller that a body had been found and the location where we were positioned.

Shortly afterwards we left the wooded area 'C' and returned to the track 'B' using the previous entry point into the wooded area. Nobody else was in sight and in order to meet up and show Police Officers where the body had been found, we walked south along the track 'B' towards Common Lane.

We met 3 Police Officers in plain clothes who identified themselves and we showed them our identity cards. We advised them that we had found a body in Harrowdown Hill 'C'. Paul then went with the 3 Police Officers to show them the location of the body and I returned to my vehicle parked in Common Lane at 'A'.

6. During her oral evidence to the Hutton Inquiry Louise Holmes stated:

Q. And what did you then do?

A. We walked back towards the car. On the way to the car we met three police officers and Paul took them back to show them where the body was, and I went back to the car.

Q. Did you meet the police officers in the woods or after you got out of the woods?

A. No, on the track, just between the woods and the car.

Dc Coe's account 2010

7. Dc Coe was interviewed on the 25th August 2010 in response to the Mail story.

8. He stated that on the 18th July 2003 he was on duty with Dc Colin Shields and a probationer attachment, Pc A. (Pc A has now left the Police and FOI requests for his identity have been refused under Sect. 40.)

9. They spoke to the witness Ruth Absalom who was the last person to see Dr. Kelly alive as he went on his walk. Having spoken to her they decided to head down towards the river in case he had gone that way.

10. As the officers went towards the river they came across the two civilian searchers (Paul Chapman & Louise Holmes) who had found the body and radioed for help. This was a chance occurrence. At this time they were at the foot of Harrowdown Hill, a considerable distance from the body location.
11. Dc Coe went with Paul Chapman leaving Dc Shields and Pc A and Louise Holmes behind. Dc Shields and Pc A did not go to the scene at all and did not see the body.
12. Once Paul Chapman had shown Dc Coe the body he returned to the bottom of the track where Dc Coe thinks that either Pc A or Dc Shields took the search team to the Police Station to make their statements. Dc Coe stayed with the body until the arrival of the ambulance team and other officers.
13. The inaccuracies were put to Dc Coe regarding the number of officers who were with him and said that this could not be right. He agreed and said that Pc A's presence had not come to his mind when he gave his oral evidence.
14. Experienced Detectives are often accompanied by trainees or others who are temporarily attached to them. It is perhaps not surprising that since Pc A did not attend the scene or play any major part in the events of that morning his presence was forgotten by Dc Coe.
15. In a similar vein to the alleged moving of the body one must consider a common sense view with regard to this issue. What possible purpose would Dc Coe have in deliberately lying to the Hutton Inquiry about the presence of a third officer? It is common ground that Dc Coe was the only police officer that was taken anywhere near the scene. Dc Coe's evidence to the Hutton Inquiry was factually incorrect but it would appear to have been a lapse in memory rather than an intention to mislead.