

RESTRICTED - INVESTIGATIONS

who started or stopped any investigations prior to 1969, or if ROSS was involved in any way. Therefore, aside from being aware of the allegations and the lack of any recorded investigation, there is no evidence that ROSS made any attempts to 'cover up' SMITH's alleged offences. It should be noted that the circumstances of it being reported to ROSS during 1965 were;

- a) There was no complaint being made.
- b) He was being informed for information only.

4.1.2 Two 'unknown' officers that former Detective Jack TASKER stated arrived in his office and demanded all of the files in relation to Cyril SMITH.

"It looked like a straightforward case but he hadn't reckoned on the network of spies and obstructive forces Cyril had at local and national level to protect him....TASKER explained that on the Monday he got in about 08:30 and two men were waiting in his office. They were Chief Superintendents from the Lancashire Constabulary headquarters in Hutton. The two officers spoke to TASKER and after confirming that he was doing an inquiry in relation to SMITH, TASKER was asked for the statements and asked to open a locked drawer where the statements were stored... "they took everything". TASKER said "they said they were handling the case and as far as I was concerned the inquiry was over" TASKER contacted his boss chief inspector WHEATER and went to see him. He looked deflated. "If it's from the chief constable", he sighed, "then that's the end of it. There's nothing we can do. You'd better accept it." The files, say's TASKER, went to Hutton and were buried."

('Smile for the Camera: The Double Life of Cyril Smith' Pages 217 to 220)

In reconstructing a timeline of the events relating to Lancashire Constabulary's investigation into SMITH it appears that the two officers who 'took everything' in fact appear to have then progressed the investigation to a conclusion by sending the file of evidence to the DPP in 1970. A full timeline is presented as **Appendix C**.

DC'S COURTNEY and TASKER appear to have been handed this investigation in either late 1969 or early 1970. They take 12 witness statements between 19th January 1970 and 18th February 1970 (two lack the names of the interviewing officer but the dates are consistent with it being COURTNEY and TASKER).

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A further twelve statements were taken between the 19th February 1970 and the 9th March 1970 and the name that features on all but three of these further twelve statements is DCI WHEATER himself. It therefore appears, for whatever reason, that the files were removed from TASKER and COURTNEY but that the investigation was actually continued by senior officer's WHEATER and LEACH. It is possible that WHEATER or LEACH arranged for these two unknown officers to take all the files in order to protect the two Detectives from any pressure or influence from elsewhere in the organisation. It is feasible the two officers 'seizing' the documents in this manner were instructed to ensure that TASKER and COURTNEY were genuinely unaware that any further enquiries were being made and for the documents to make it to the CPS without being 'blocked'. Given the amount of time that has now passed since this event and a lack of evidence, it is not possible to say with any certainty whether this course of action was taken due to prior issues of interference or cover up by senior officers.

The chronology indicates that there is not a single day's delay between COURTNEY'S last statement taken on the 18th February, and WHEATER'S first statement dated the 19th February suggesting this investigation was not delayed at all. On 14th October 2014 DS MAHMOOD and ISO SOUTHWELL visited Jack TASKER at his home address and asked him to run through his recollection of the events of this 'seizure' of the documents. He confirmed that the two officers were unknown to him, as he knew WHEATER and LEACH personally it could not have been them. He confirmed they were wearing plain clothes and introduced themselves as a 'Supt and a Chief Supt from Hutton'. TASKER confirmed they did show their identity cards but he could not recall their names. He estimated this date as being 'late 1969'. TASKER stated that when they were originally tasked with the investigation they were asked to do so in an 'under the radar' manner and he surmised that LEACH and WHEATER may have taken this 'seizure' course of action in order to continue the investigation in a similar manner. He remembers asking WHEATER about the documents being seized, and WHEATER saying words to the effect of 'that's what happened the last time we tried'.

It therefore appears that despite the confusion and rumour surrounding this investigation it progressed uninterrupted in less than two months, from COURTNEY and TASKER being given the investigation in January 1970, to a response being received back from the DPP in March 1970. There are still unanswered questions in this area however, for example TASKER reiterated to DS MAHMOOD that he interviewed SMITH along with COURTNEY