

As a manager within the Police when taking up a new role in a new location you soon learn that your biggest concern is not will happen once in post, but more so what has happened in the past and what has been left behind for you to sort out.

As a Detective Inspector I transferred from one Police Division to another but before doing so I met with the person whose place I was taking, both for an insight into the CID Office and personnel but also for a handover of any legacy issues. In this instance I was given assurances in the strongest possible term that everything had been dealt with and there was no need to worry. So taking him at his word I started in my new role and by midweek once I had my feet under the desk I made the mistake of prising open a cupboard in my office, in the absence of a key, only to find it stacked with files and a plethora of outstanding issues. These were on examination those matters that my predecessor had decided to put in the 'too difficult cupboard' and forget they existed.

My mistake, in the first instance, was taking my predecessor at his word and thereafter opening the cupboard. It took me the best part of a couple of months to go through everything and either resolve the resolvable or find some way to conclude the unresolvable issue and file everything away.

It would have been nice to think this would have been a one off situation but as I went through my Police career and different locations, I found it to be a consistent event. The problem with some of my colleagues was that they loved being a Detective (manager) but hated the paperwork that went with the role hence the term 'being put in the too difficult cupboard or drawer' thus making it somebody else's problem.

When I took over the Homicide Command as a Detective Chief Superintendent, I found that the only thing that had changed was both the location and size of the cupboard. By this time in my career I had learned not to jump head first into the cupboards, but instead, got my feet under the desk and in the first instance get to know my day job. Only once I was comfortable in my role did I pluck up the courage to open the cupboard doors.

There was, as anticipated quite a few outstanding issues, some easy to deal with, some with an element of grief attached and some unresolved but interesting to get your head into. One of those tucked away and gathering dust in the bottom two shelves of one the cupboards was the 'Lord Lucan' file.

In most murder cases, while an operational name was normally assigned to the investigation, the file would normally adopt the name of the victim, which in this case was Sandra Rivett, Lady Lucan's children's nanny. In this instance the murder suspect took prominence.

The file was handed to one of the Detective Superintendents and his support Officer to go through it and get it into some form of order. The file consisted of a number of parts, which had grown over the years. In any murder file, the most important document is the minute sheet which acts as an index as to the content and events relating to the file. As best it could it was put into some order.

They then conducted a review of the file to determine if there was any investigative opportunities. Over the years there had been a number of alleged sightings of Lucan all of which turned out to be dead ends. The majority tended to point towards Africa and/or Australia, which to be honest, in the 1970's would be the best choice for someone to disappear in.

In the main though when an alleged sighting had been reported, it fell to the responsibility of disparate units within the Met Police to look at and bottom out meaning that for many years there was no one unit or department that held responsibility for the investigation or could be held accountable for it.

It is nearly always said that unsolved cases were never closed and new leads were always followed up, but in this instance, personally, most were given a half hearted response it that. This after all was one of these cold cases that could easily have required officers to fly around the globe bottoming out leads, which in turn would have put a large dent in the Metropolitan Police budget.

It was also a case which was unique, in that, upon reading the file the case had actually been solved, for during the inquest into the murder of Sandra Rivett, Lord Lucan was named as the person responsible for the crime. The last person ever to have been done so, for it was deemed to have been prejudicial to any potential trial, should he have been caught, therefore the law was changed to prevent this from happening again.

So in the eyes of many, including the budget holders of the Metropolitan Police, this case was now solved, there simply was not anyone in custody for it.

It was also clear from reading the file that the predominant argument in recent years was not about taking anything forward as an investigation, but instead, why should the Metropolitan Police be investigating and trying to trace someone who is officially dead. The family had successfully managed, through the probate Court, to obtain a certificate of death in 1999 which allowed his estate and title to be transferred to his son and there was correspondence from lawyers questioning the worth of this case being pursued.

The warrant for his arrest was still in existence, but like many things the original had been lost over time and only a copy remained. Representations were being made that this warrant should, in light of the certification of his death, be withdrawn. Someone on behalf of the family was looking to judicially review the decision not to, but for once there was a Met Police solicitor with some gumption to disagree, so the warrant remained, or at least it did.

The reviewing officer prepared a summary of the events and highlighted some ways forward which I had to give consideration to although there were more cons in what had to be considered than pros.

The big challenge would have been trying to find Lucan, if he was still alive, in the first instance, which was in itself a massive mountain to climb. The big and perhaps insurmountable challenge would be having found who we may have believed to be Lord Lucan, would be proving it was him.

His fingerprints were not on file and although some prints were found at the scene and the corsair car he drove away in, which were believed to be his, in the end this was all supposition. DNA in 1974 was not even a distant pipe dream and the only route available to us to get a DNA sample for comparison, would have been to ask one of his children to supply theirs, which they were unlikely to agree to or to try and obtain a covert sample from them, which would not doubt have been heavily argued against in litigation were a match obtained.

Identification was not the only issue. In the mid 90's another officer had conducted a review and found the murder weapon to be missing. It had at some point made its way to the Police Crime museum and thereafter disappeared. Equally some other exhibits in the Police property store had not been maintained in a good condition and had to be re-wrapped and sealed. The continuity of these exhibits and the fact the murder weapon was missing would potentially cause some considerable evidential problems if the case ever went to Court, unless of course the man identified made a full and frank confession.

Furthermore, when Sandra Rivett was murdered, the standard of investigation was relevant to what

went on at the time but I had to seriously question whether, with disclosure and the fact quite a few of the witnesses were dead or close to it whether there was a realistic prospect of ever pursuing a prosecution or obtaining a conviction. Thankfully that was so far down the road and it would have been someone else's decision, i.e the CPS, it could be pushed from our mind for the time being.

The big question was, whether he was still alive or whether, as the story goes, he killed himself shortly after making good his escape to save the prospect of a trial and imprisonment.

The only way to answer the question was to ask it in the first place, to the public but not Lucan's family for I firmly believed had they known we were starting to look at the case again we would soon have been swamped with Solicitors letters and the powers that be would soon put paid to our efforts.

In 1974, I was still at school so totally oblivious as to what was happening in Belgravia on the 7th November 1974. I had therefore to rely on the reports and notes of the original SIO Roy Ranson and his deputy Dave Gerring. They were both convinced that Lucan made good his escape aided by some powerful people of the time and I got the clear impression that they firmly believed 'The Establishment' were hampering their quest to find his whereabouts. So with the firm belief there was a good prospect that he was alive and living comfortably somewhere warm and sunny the decision was taken to move forward.

We decided therefore to concentrate on what we could do and that was to try and find out where he was, if he was still alive. We had of course things available to us now that previous investigations did not, namely the internet. That gave us the ability to make appeals to a worldwide audience and appeal for help.

The challenge was what our point of appeal would be, for we did not know which part of the world he could be in or what he was doing now. Our thoughts in going forward were therefore limited but we needed a hook to hang our investigation on and any appeal we made.

We firmly believed that if he were still alive he would have changed his appearance, either through surgery or through the natural ageing process. We therefore submitted a number of photographs we had of him from around the period of 1974, to a company who would digitally forensically age him. While I appreciate some of this is guesswork this was a science that was developing all the time and if Professor Black from Dundee could attach a face to a skull, we had found some experts that could attach some wrinkles and grey hair to some old photographs.

The nice thing about being the DCS of a Homicide Command was having my own budget to spend and these digital enhancements were not cheap, coming in around £2,500 - £3,000.

The whole process took about 6 weeks before we were shown the results and they were impressive. Next was what to do with them and how to do the appeal. The command was busy and we had a number of high profile cases on the go so we saw it as an opportune time to have a press liaison function. This was where we invited the crime reporters from a variety of newspapers and media to come to the Command and we would brief them on what we were doing in respect of some ongoing investigations and some we intended to do, one of which was Lucan.

When we presented the digitally enhanced photographs it sparked a lot of interest but we were not at a stage where we could ask them to appeal on our behalf just yet so we gave them a timeframe for the future and they were happy with that.

Unfortunately it was not only the reporters interest that was sparked for within days of having the

briefing I was contacted by one of the Scotland Yard Commanders. One of the things he wanted to know more about was Lucan and when I explained the plan I was told to stop and hold off. No explanation was given but the work we had completed was transferred over to him.

As discussed we were busy and all had a lot on our plate so I gave it no more thought at the time but believed he would launch the appeal from Scotland Yard at some point. That sadly never happened and I can offer no reasonable explanation as to why not.

Was it the 'Establishment' at play once again, or was there another reason. I will never know

Within a few months I moved on from the Homicide Command and my next posting took up my time and effort so I gave it no more thought, but I do look back from time to time and wondered if, we had launched a campaign to find Lord Lucan, would we have been successful. Lucan would, by this time have been approaching seventy years of age, which is not old by today's standards.

If he was or is still alive, I certainly believe the apathy shown to proactively searching the globe for him using modern technology and communication has allowed him to live out his life peacefully