

8/11 3 xi

FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



Mr Jones
Earl and person
of 2003

SELBORNE HOUSE
54-60 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1E 6QW

DX 117000

TEL. 0171-210 8562
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GARY STREETER M.P.
Parliamentary Secretary
LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

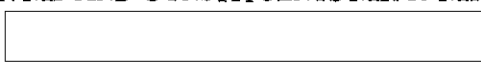
Ken Sutton Esq
Principal Private Secretary
to the Home Secretary
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT

Mr Bradley

Does your Division have
the information ^{18 November 1996} requested
at A? It seems so
straightforward - someone

Dear Ken

JOE BENTON MP AND CONSTITUENTS MR & MRS CHURCH



must have
it.

DS 11
29/11

I am writing with regard to the attached correspondence from Joe Benton. Given the protracted history of the case, it might be helpful to let you have a potted version.

Officials here concluded that there was nothing for us in Mr Benton's letter of 30 July, and we faxed the papers to the Department of National Heritage asking if they would accept a transfer. They declined and advised that, as DNH did not exist when the matter was under consideration, the Home Office should answer. We faxed the papers that day to your ministerial correspondence unit who refused to accept the correspondence on 9 August, saying it was for DNH.

We went back to DNH, who were unmoved, and thought that the Home Office still held the relevant papers. One of our correspondence clerks, David Ruyoka, then contacted your correspondence unit and asked them to reconsider the matter. I believe the correspondence was then referred to your Disasters and Inquest Inquiry Group and then to your Operational Policing Policy Unit for consideration.

Mr Benton wrote to the Lord Chancellor on 20 September seeking an update. I replied on 25 September explaining the position, and after several calls to your Operational Policing Policy Unit, David was informed that Mr Benton had written directly to your Ministerial Correspondence Unit on 21 October, requesting the same information. I understand that it was at that stage that your officials decided to liaise directly with DNH to resolve the matter.

On 31 October, your correspondence unit told David that DNH believed we were best placed to answer, as we had general policy responsibility for steering groups. We have no

592/12/SJB

FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

such responsibility (Cabinet Office do, but they do not hold the sort of information requested here). DNH therefore concluded that your department should respond, and your Operational Policing Policy Unit agreed to investigate the matter further. On 5 November OPPU contacted David reiterating the claim that the issue was for DNH.

Mr Benton has now requested (in his letter of 11 November) a meeting with the Lord Chancellor, but, as LCD had no involvement in the Hillsborough Steering Group, I fear there is little more we can do, and a meeting with the Lord Chancellor or the Parliamentary Secretary would be inappropriate. I am sorry to have to trouble you with this, but the Parliamentary Secretary is now concerned about the length of time it is taking to resolve the disagreement, and as we have done as much as we can here without any success, I wonder if I can pass this over to you to take forward? If that is acceptable, I will let Mr Benton know.

I am copying this letter and enclosures to David Fawcett at DNH.

Yours ever

Alastair.

Alastair Clegg
Private Secretary



JOE BENTON, J.P., M.P.
LABOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, BOOTLE CONSTITUENCY

Personal Assistant: Mrs. Ann McCartney
Agent: Kevin E. Cluskey



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House of Commons,
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Constituency Office:
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BOOTLE, L20 9HJ.
Tel: 0151 933 8432
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Our Ref: 0867/1.11

Your Ref:

The Rt. Hon. Lord MacKay of Clashfern
The Lord Chancellor
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

11 November 1996

Dear Lord MacKay

Mr & Mrs Church

I write to you further to my letter of 20 September and your reply via your Private Secretary Alastair Clegg of 25 September.

The position regarding my constituents after four years of representation following the death of their son in the Hillsborough Disaster is now intolerable. I still await the list of names of the Steering Group Members without which my constituents are unable to proceed with their legal action.

Furthermore, having been granted Legal Aid, they are unable to obtain the legal representation they require.

I am disturbed by so many aspects of this case I feel obliged to request a meeting with you, myself and Mr & Mrs Church. If you are unable to accommodate such a meeting, would you arrange for one of your senior Ministers to attend?

I trust you will give this matter your urgent attention.

Yours sincerely

Joe Benton JP MP
Bootle

Representing:

Derby, Ford, Linacre, Litherland, Netherton, Orrell and St. Oswald's Wards.

A

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GARY STREETER M.P.
Parliamentary Secretary
LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Joe Benton Esq, JP MP
23a Oxford Road
Bootle
L20 9HJ

25 September 1996

Dear Mr Benton

Mr and Mrs Church,

I write with reference to your letters of 30 July and 20 September 1996. I have also spoken to your secretary about this matter.

As I mentioned to your secretary, we have had considerable problems in discovering where responsibility lies for taking forward the matters raised in your letters. I can confirm that the Lord Chancellor's Department has no responsibility for matters relating to the security of football stadia, and was not to my knowledge represented on the Hillsborough Disaster Steering Group. Our difficulty in locating those responsible for the matter has been exacerbated by the transfer of responsibility for the issue from the Home Office to the Department of National Heritage in 1992. We are in touch with colleagues in each department, however, and are attempting to track down the information for you.

I am very sorry not to be able to be more helpful at this stage, and that it is taking such a long time to provide the information. I am copying this letter to the correspondence sections at the Home Office and the Department of National Heritage.

Yours sincerely,

Alastair Clegg

Alastair Clegg
Private Secretary



JOE BENTON, J.P., M.P.
LABOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, BOOTLE CONSTITUENCY

Personal Assistant: Mrs. Ann McCartney
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AAK



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Our Ref: 0867/1.11

Your Ref:

The Rt. Hon. Lord MacKay of Clashfern,
 The Lord Chancellor,
 House of Lords,
 London.
SW1A 0PW

20 September 1996.

Dear Lord MacKay,

Mr. & Mrs. Church



I wrote to you on 30 July requesting your assistance in gaining the names on then list of people who formed the Hillsborough Disaster Steering Group.

A.

One of your officers did phone my office several weeks ago stating that the details I request were not held by your department but that he would try his best to locate the list.

Time is getting on and myself and my constituents desperately need the list of names.

I am surprised that your department doesn't hold information relating to the Steering Group in question who have receive a large amount of public funds.

However, I await anxiously your reply with the list of names of the Steering Group members.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Benton, J.P., M.P.,
 Bootle.

APP 1



JOE BENTON, J.P., M.P.
LABOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, BOOTLE CONSTITUENCY

Personal Assistant: Mrs. Ann McCartney
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Ref: 0867/1.11

The Rt. Hon. The Lord MacKay of Clashfern,
The Lord Chancellor,
House of Lords,
London.
SW1A OPW

30 July 1996.

Dear Lord MacKay,
Mr. & Mrs. Church



My above constituents and I have written to you previously regarding the provision of information following their son's tragic death at Hillsborough.

Since our last correspondence things have changed radically in that my constituents have secured Legal Aid.

Essential to our case is to obtain a list of the names of the people who formed the Hillsborough Steering Group, but frankly, we have hit obstacle after obstacle in trying to obtain this; the latest of this is the copy letter attached which my constituents have received from the Court Service.

Therefore, I hope you will not mind me writing to you personally and stressing the nature of my personal request for your assistance in obtaining this list. It is absolutely essential for me and my constituents to obtain this list in pursuance of what we consider to be right and just aims.

I hope you can see your way clear to facilitate this.

Yours sincerely,
Regards, Joe Benton
Joe Benton.





THE COURT SERVICE

Southside
105 Victoria Street
London SW1E 6QT
Telephone 0171 210 2085
Fax 0171 210 1797

Mr and Mrs D G Church



23 July 1996

Dear Mr and Mrs Church

HILLSBOROUGH STEERING GROUP MEMBERS

Thank you for your letter of 2 July about the Hillsborough Steering Group members. Your letter has now been passed to me for reply.

I am sorry to hear of the difficulties you are experiencing in trying to resolve this legal matter, but regret I am unable to help you. As my colleague Ms Beazley has previously explained to you, it is not possible for the Court Service, the Lord Chancellor or indeed any Government official to intervene or comment on, any case that is or has been before the courts. This is certainly not through any lack of concern but to uphold the principle that the judiciary are independent of Government and its administration.

As you are aware from Ms Beazley's letter of 18 April, the Court Service Customer Service Unit can only investigate complaints about the administration of the courts, but unfortunately could not investigate the matters to which you are referring as it is not the responsibility of this department.

I regret that I cannot help you but have placed your letter on file.

Yours Sincerely

Alison Couch
Customer Service Unit

CAS/118/2

MS L BEAZLEY

MR & MRS D.G CHURCH

CUSTOMER SERVICE UNIT
THE COURT SERVICE
SOUTHSIDE
105 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1E 6QT

RECEIVED
- 4 JUL 1996
CUSTOMER SERVICE UNIT



2-7-96

CAS/118/2

DEAR MS BEAZLEY

IT TRANSPIRED IN OUR TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH YOU ON 27-6-96, THAT YOU ARE IN A POSITION TO DECIDE, IF LETTERS TO THE LORD CHANCELLOR ARE IMPORTANT ENOUGH, FOR HIM TO RECIEVE, FOR SOMETHING WHICH IS VERY SERIOUS, AND VERY MUCH IN THE PUBLIC'S INTEREST, WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD FORWARD OUR REQUEST.

WE REQUEST THE LORD CHANCELLOR FURNISH US, WITH THE FULL LIST OF NAMES OF THE HILLSBOROUGH STEERING GROUP MEMBERS, WHO ALTHOUGH HAVING NO STATUTORY IN LAW, BUT FUNDED WITH THE PUBLIC'S PURSE, MUST BE ANSWER-ABLE TO SOMEONE.

AS WE HAVE BEEN AWARDED LEGAL AID TO SEEK COUNSEL'S OPINION, ANY REFUSAL ON YOURS OR THE LORD CHANCELLORS PART, TO FURNISH US WITH THE NAMES, WILL FORM PART OF OUR CASE,

YOURS SINCERELY

M. Church & Church

CA95/118/2

Mr and Mrs Church



18 April 1996

Dear Mr and Mrs Church

Thank you for your letter of 22 March concerning the Hillborough Disaster Fund. It would seem from your letter that you have corresponded with other offices within the Court Service or Lord Chancellor's Department as the letters on our file do not follow. I cannot see from this current letter how I can be of any help to you. This office can only respond to complaints about the administration of the courts or for requests for advice on procedural. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Ms L Beazley
Customer Service Unit

THE LORD CHANCELLOR
LORD CHANCELLORS DEPT
TREVELYAN HOUSE
GREAT PETER STREET
LONDON SW1P 2BY.

MR & MRS D.G. CHURCH



22-3-96

DEAR SIR

WE ARE ENCLOSING A LETTER OFF OUR
SOLICITOR.

MR DEREK MORRIS OF ALSOP WILKINSON, WILL
BE UNABLE TO FURNISH US WITH THE FULL LIST OF
HILLSBOROUGH STEERING GROUP MEMBERS UP TO THE PRESENT,
UNLESS HE IS HIMSELF A MEMBER. IF HE WAS SOLELY A
TRUSTEE OF THE HILLSBOROUGH DISASTER FUND, HE WOULD
NOT BE AWARE OF THESE NAMES, AS THE FUND'S
CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE BEREAVED FAMILIES CEASED ON
1-2-91, SINCE THAT DATE MANY FAMILIES LIKE
OURSELVES HAVE HAD TO CHANGE SOLICITORS IN THE
SEARCH FOR CIVIL RIGHTS TO BE EXERCISED, THIS IS
CONTRARY TO MEDIA INFORMATION IN THE PUBLIC ARENA.

YOURS SINCERELY

H. Church 

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