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CHIEF INSPECTOR

I am a Chief Inspector in the South Yorkshire Police and work at Force Headquarters, Sheffield. From time to time I attend a football match as a spectator. I had few commitments during the weekend 15-16 April and so obtained a ticket for the F.A. Cup semi-final game between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest.

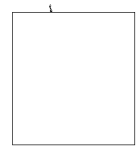
My ticket was for seat NN 28 in the South Stand uncovered enclosure. (The seats number 1-230 from West to east, my seat was therefore relatively close to the Leppings Lane enclosure on the 13th row from the front).

The day was fine and sunny, I left the city centre about 1.20 p.m. in my car to travel to the ground. I drove from Bridge Street out of the city via West Bar, Gibraltar Street and Langsett Road. I had allowed for heavy traffic but was surprised that there was very little problem until the usual bottleneck at Hillsborough corner traffic lights. I travelled through the junction towards Hillsborough Football Stadium. There were no hinderances as I travelled down Leppings Lane onto Penistone Road and left into Claywheels Lane.

I parked my car in Claywheels Lane and walked towards Hillsborough Stadium. The time would be about 1.45 p.m. (1345).

Many people were milling around, but there were no large crowds as I made my way to the Penistone Road roundabout and along Leppings Lane. All the way along my journey I was continually asked for 'spare' tickets and 'swaps' by young male Liverpool supporters. I politely answered the first few but the number of enquiries became so overwhelming that I simply walked past or shook my head.

My ticket was green in colour and showed admission by a South Stand gangway closest to the South West corner of the stadium. I consulted the schematic map on the rear and the natural route appeared to be via Leppings Lane and a



service road which leads to the South Stand. The ticket bore no mention of colour coding - I assumed until a long time after the event that ALL tickets were green.

I saw no reference to colour coded direction boards. Furthermore, I reached the South Stand service road and found the way barred by a serial of officers, under the command of Inspector Harvey, ensuring the proper segregation of fans. I was allowed to pass through but an awful lot of supporters were invited to walk round the block and enter the South Stand from Penistone Road. The point of relating this is to indicate that the information provided on the ticket itself could have been much more comprehensive and the direction boards more prominently displayed.

I took up my seat and saw from the electronic clock behind me that the time was 1.54 p.m. (1354). The ground was very sparsely populated. There was, however, a quite densely packed area in the two centre enclosures behind the Leppings Lane end goal.

I bought and read a match programme as I waited for the game to begin. I remember at one stage, looking across to the West stand terraces and seeing the supporters patting a multi-coloured beachball around the centre enclosure. The significance of this is that the crowd were not so tightly packed as they were able to raise their arms and bounce the ball around.

The two teams came onto the pitch for a warm-up session. I don't remember the time precisely but remember that it was early, perhaps 2.30 p.m. or 2.35 p.m. (1430-1435). When the teams left the pitch I remember that the ground seemed more full.

About 2.45 p.m. (1445) I can't remember precisely, I saw several fans from the centre enclosures scaling the wall and climbing into the seating enclosure. I interpreted this as mischievous rather than arising because of overcrowding. I saw about four or five police officers, one an Inspector



standing in the aisles of the seating enclosure close by the front of the stand. I was not surprised to see the officers move to prevent this activity and thought it proper that officers should eject those who had managed to climb into the stand. He escorted the young man up the aisle and out of the stand. The climbing from the standing to the seating area ceased, apart from a very occasional person.

There appeared to be sufficient officers on the perimeter track around the ground.

The two teams returned to the pitch at about 2.55 p.m. and I considered it unlikely that the game would be able to start at 3.00 p.m. however, the preliminaries were curtailed and the teams were in position to kick off around that time or a minute afterwards. The crowd in the South Stand were all standing. I sat down before many around me and thereby did not see the kick-off. As people began to sit down there was a cheer from the crowd and my attention was drawn to the 'players tunnel'. I guessed that the Nottingham Forest Manager was taking his seat but could not see the subject of this interest.

I saw very little football played because, seconds afterwards, my attention was drawn to fans being allowed out of the Leppings Lane enclosure and onto the pitch. I immediately assumed that the centre closure had become overcrowded and that the Police there were transferring fans to another enclosure. I became concerned when I saw that the fans were just sitting on the pitch and were not moving towards other enclosures. Other fans were scaling the perimeter fencing and dropping onto the perimeter track.

Members of the public around me who were less than 100 yards from the incident interpreted this as a pitch invasion and there were many calls for strong police action to get the fans back into the enclosures. The man sitting beside me suggested putting police dogs into the enclosure. Because



the police officers were not just allowing but assisting the fans over the fence and out of the emergency gates, I realised that this was not a pitch invasion and was definitely a matter for concern.

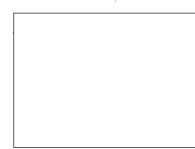
I recall that the football players and officials continued the game for an inordinate period after I had realised the need for the game to be halted. Fans were actually sitting on the pitch. The football match was not helping the officers attempts to deal with the situation because there were cheers and surges and the attention was drawn away from the matter at hand.

I saw Superintendent Murray come from the direction of the Police control room and go to the perimeter track. He went to the area behind Leppings Lane goal and then walked very quickly, almost ran, to the linesman in front of the South Stand. He clearly wanted the game to be stopped. I would have thought the linesman could not have misinterpreted Superintendent Murray's intentions and yet he simply ran away from him keeping up with the play on the pitch.

My attention was now totally fixed on the Leppings Lane end of the ground and I saw at one point that Superintendent Greenwood ran onto the playing area and ensured that the match was stopped.

More and more people streamed onto the playing area via the emergency gates at the front of the enclosures or by climbing over the fencing at this point. The first indication I had of the extent of the problem was when two Constables, one was Police Constable Marsh, 'F' Division, carried a young boy from that area to the pitch immediately below where I was sitting and began to give mouth to mouth resuscitation to the boy. They worked with a member of the public to resuscitate the boy for some time and appeared to have been successful as the crowd which had gathered round turned towards the stand and cheered.

It seemed to be a long time until the single St. John's Ambulance appeared

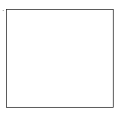


on the playing area. The scene was becoming more and more chaotic although there were more than enough Police Officers who were doing everything they possibly could to deal with the situation.

I thought that, as there were so many Police Officers on the pitch there may be a lack of control around the back of the stand so, at about 3.25-3.30 p.m. (1525-1530) I left the stand and went to a point at the South West corner, immediately behind the Police Control tower. There were other Police officers there, none of whom had radios. I imagined that all the injured would have been brought onto the pitch and would be evacuated at this point. It being the nearest access point for ambulances, I therefore looked towards making the casualty station. There was a Police landrover parked in just the spot where I considered the ambulances may park and I wasted an awful lot of time getting the landrover moved - there were no keys in the vehicle.

At this time a middle aged man with a stewards tabbard rolled up in his jacket pocket walked up to the young steward who was wearing his tabbard and dutifully manning the gate at this point. The older man said "Oi, get that jacket off, some supporters just beat a couple of our lads up when they found out they were stewards."

When I next looked around there were two casualties at this point. One male about 6 feet tall and heavily built, 28-30 years, laying on a metal stretcher. He was obviously dead. I helped a Policewoman and a member of St. John's Ambulance in their attempts to revive him but was struck at that time by the futility of the operation. The other casualty was very much alive, holding his arm. An ambulance arrived and after attempting resuscitation for a few seconds on the deceased man the ambulance crew suggested putting him in the ambulance, I helped them to do that and then told the group of 4-5 Police Constables at this point that I wanted one of



them to accompany the body. A young male constable who spoke with a Merseyside accent, but who I'm sure, was wearing the uniform of South Yorkshire Police, said "I'll go, I know his family." I was amazed at this comment but had not time to follow it up.

The other slightly injured man got into the same ambulance and the ambulance left. There was nothing to do at this point so I instructed the Police Constables to keep the area clear for ambulances and walked along the service road towards Leppings Lane to ensure unrestricted access for the emergency services which I expected to arrive.

As I turned a corner of the service road walking towards Leppings Lane I was met by the full tragedy of the situation. There were a row of ambulances at this point beside the perimeter wall of the stadium, numerous people were receiving medical attention. But at least ten male bodies were laid out in attempted recovery position along the fence beside the river and no one was paying them any attention whatsoever, they were obviously dead. Their skin had a mottled blue pallor and their limbs were completely limp.

There were literally dozens, if not a hundred or more, Police Officers at this point under control of Chief Inspector Purdy. I was in civilian clothes without a radio and felt completely helpless in this situation. I continued to the end of the service road and there encouraged several supporters who were trying to walk down the Service road that they could not do so until the emergency services had departed. I arranged a group of Police Officers who were not engaged with anything, into a cordon across the mouth of the junction.

I now found myself outside the cordon and had felt of little use inside, I decided to leave the stadium to telephone my wife to reassure her that I was uninjured. The telephones in Leppings Lane were, not unexpectedly, full and had queues of people outside. As I walked along Leppings Lane there were



groups of Liverpool supporters standing around and they appeared very aggressive. A Police car was driving up and down Leppings Lane, asking via the P.A. system, for fans to clear the way for ambulances. I saw more than one supporter kick out at the slowly patrolling car. I returned to my car parked at the junction of Claywheels Lane with Niagara Road. I decided that I would drive to Hammerton Road, telephone my wife from there and assist in any way I could at the Police Station. I arrived at the Police Station to find it much calmer and well staffed than I had anticipated. I telephoned home. After a short time the talk was of relatives and friends being received at Hammerton Road. I decided that this was an area in which I could offer useful assistance.

Together with other officers, notably Detective Chief Inspector Agar, I helped to transform the 'new' CID Office at Hammerton Road into a relative reception area. In the early evening friends and relatives began arriving at Hammerton Road, I don't know how they had got there or who had decided upon Hammerton Road as the point of reception. It quickly became apparent that we would need a larger area for them to gather and wait. The Hillsborough Boys Club Hall was suggested, the keyholder was known and so it was arranged. All the Social Workers/Helpers gathered there and received the friends and relatives of supporters when we had obtained a formal report about a missing friend or relation.

The system worked as follows: Somehow (?) people who had lost contact with friends/relatives at the time of the incident were directed to Hammerton Road Police Station. The team of officers working with me would complete a M.F.H. report and we would then pass the person making the report over to the Social Workers at the Boys Club.

During the course of the evening/night our growing list of 'missing' persons was checked with lists of casualties at hospital and with lists of arrested



persons. About 1.00 a.m. the stream of friends/relatives ceased and, after contacting Chief Superintendent Mole at the makeshift mortuary, I closed our operation down.

The final duty was to drive to the mortuary and check the M.F.H. reports against the list of deceased. I handed all documents to Detective Inspector Charles who was working at the mortuary and who said he would be working the following day. I left duty at 4.00 a.m. on Sunday 16 April 1989.

As a postscript to this report about the incident, I am reminded of an earlier visit to Hillsborough Football Stadium in my youth when there was a very large crowd.

The match was a first division league game between Sheffield Wednesday and Manchester City. It was the last game of the season and Sheffield Wednesday needed to win the game to remain in the first division. It would be about 1971.

It was an all ticket evening game and my ticket was for Leppings Lane. I arrived with a friend in good time and took up my position on the terracing behind the goal but, before the start of the game, the terraces had become so full that not only was I unable to see much of the pitch, but it was a very uncomfortable situation. There was no room to move and I remember, at one time, being squashed against a barrier to such an extent that I was exerting all my energies to prevent injury and quickly became totally unconcerned about the game. I dreaded any goals or near misses as this was followed by a surge of people which caused me to be squashed painfully against the barrier.

By half time I had seen very little football and was thoroughly fed up with the situation. Half time was the first opportunity I had to move my position and, after fighting my way through the crowd I found a more comfortable position at the front of the south west corner of the Leppings





Lane terracing. I had been in very large football grounds before and since but had never experienced anything quite like the pressure that was created in this crowd at Hillsborough.

