

PRESS OFFICE

Police Headquarters
Carleton Hall
Penrith
CA10 2AU

T 01768 217009
F 01768 217018
www.cumbria.police.uk



CUMBRIA
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PRESS CONFERENCE

Statements read during a press conference on Thursday 3 June 2010

Chief Constable Craig Mackey:

“The events of yesterday morning are utterly tragic and our thoughts, condolences and prayers are with the loved ones of those who were injured or lost their lives.

“We have invested all our resources into a full and comprehensive investigation to piece together a picture of what happened yesterday morning in West Cumbria so that we can try to understand what could drive Derrick Bird to take the lives of 12 innocent people and injure 11 more.

“As always, the communities we serve have demonstrated their strength, support and compassion, for each other, and for the emergency services who worked so hard in incredibly harrowing circumstances. I’d like to thank our communities for their help so far, but we need their continued support to be able to understand why – and how – this happened.

“We have around 30 crime scene locations along 25 miles of the west coast of Cumbria which makes this a unique and challenging investigation for Cumbria police.

“More than 100 highly trained detectives have been assigned to the investigation and forensic evidential searches and tests at each location are continuing. We have now concluded a 225 square km land and air search so are not expecting to find any further victims.

“We have more than thirty family liaison officers in place to support the victims’ families and alongside our partners in the health service and local authorities, are offering as much support as possible to help people come to terms with what has happened.

“The family liaison officers have been working through the night to comfort families and are working to formally identify those who have been killed and inform loved ones. We work very closely with families as part of this process which, as you can imagine, takes a considerable amount of time. It is likely that formal identification will occur throughout the course of the next few days so I’d ask for your continued patience as families come to terms with their loss.

“Following formal identification, we are now able to confirm the details of four of the eleven people who tragically died yesterday:

- 60-year-old Kevin Joseph Commons – a local solicitor. Mr Commons was a senior partner in law firm KJ.Commons and Co, and was found dead in the driveway of his house on Frizington Road, Frizington, yesterday afternoon.

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- Mother of two, Susan Hughes, 57, of Park View, Castle Croft, Egremont, died on Haggard End, Orgill, in Egremont.
- Jane Elizabeth Robinson, 66, of Drigg Road, Seascale whose body was found on Drigg Road a few hundred yards from her home.
- Father of three daughters, David Bird (twin brother of Derrick Bird), 52, was found dead at his house on High Trees Farm, Lamplugh.

“We are supporting all the families in every way we can and their deaths are being fully investigated. Yesterday, the emergency service personnel had to deal with one of the most horrific and complex incidents ever encountered in the UK. We should not forget that the teams who responded at the scenes also live in these communities and will have to deal with their own shock and grief. Despite these traumatic circumstances, I have every confidence that our officers and staff will continue to provide a high level of service to the people of Cumbria.

“We are grateful for the support provided by our neighbouring forces who have contributed to our teams of experts. This support is continuing and we currently have around a dozen specialist crime scene investigators and six family liaison officers in place from Lancashire and Dumfries and Galloway Constabularies.

“What happened yesterday was unthinkable and is without doubt the most horrific incident I have seen in my 25 year-long policing career. Anyone who has visited or lived in Cumbria will understand why we are so proud of it. We now need to work together as a county to recover as we look to the future.”

Detective Chief Superintendent Iain Goulding addressed the press conference based around the following statement:

“As Mr Mackey has already said, our thoughts are with the family and friends of the twelve victims. The priority for our investigation is identifying WHO has been injured and killed and WHY the suspect, Derrick Bird, has committed this atrocity.

“We have a dedicated team working to formally identify the victims and our priority is supporting the families and friends who have lost loved ones, ensuring that next of kin are informed before we confirm the names of those who have died to the wider community. We hope you will understand that we need to treat the families with the dignity they deserve by ensuring they are informed of their loss by police before reading this tragic news in the media.

“There has been a lot of speculation about the motive, and our aim is now to uncover the truth, to answer the questions we all have. What were Bird's movements in the hours and days leading up to these murders? What was his state of mind? What weapons did he use and why did he do it?

“We have more than 100 detectives working on the case. These have been split into five smaller teams who will each focus on forensically searching and building a

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picture of what happened along particular sections of Bird's route. But to do this we need help from the public and are appealing for help from witnesses or anyone who knew Bird or has been in contact with him recently.

“So who was Derrick Bird? He was a 52-yr-old self employed taxi driver who had lived in the same terraced house in Rowrah since 1993. He drove a dark silver Citroen Picasso, which he used to transport himself along yesterday's fateful route. He was known to police after being convicted of a relatively minor incident of theft from his employer 20 years ago, for which he received a 12 month suspended sentence in July 1990.

“He has two children to an ex wife who are aged 16 and 28. From 1978 to 1990 he worked for BNFL, until he was dismissed in relation to his theft conviction. He then worked for a couple of years in the construction industry before working as a taxi driver.

“Bird held a shotgun certificate since 1995 and had been renewed on a five year basis. It was due to be renewed in November 2010. He also held a firearms certificate since January 2007 which he was granted for shooting vermin and recreational target practice. As part of the licensing procedure Bird would have been visited at home.

“We can now confirm that he had valid licences for the possession of the weapons he used yesterday. Anyone who can shed some light on Bird's life; his hobbies, his lifestyle of his state of mind, should contact police. Anyone who witnessed a shooting or shots being fired should contact police, and anyone who saw Bird's Citroen Picasso yesterday should contact us,

“I would like to thank the community for their support in this difficult time. Once again, Cumbria has proved itself to be compassionate, strong and resistant.”

“ANYONE WITH INFORMATION THAT THEY THINK CAN HELP OUR INVESTIGATION IS URGED TO CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY ON 0800 096 0095.”