

West Yorkshire Police to investigate the disappearance of Madeleine McCann: A good thing or a bad thing?

A Madeleine Foundation news article, 18 March 2010

On Friday 12 March this year, The Madeleine Foundation wrote to the Home Secretary, Alan Johnson, making a number of points in relation to any proposed review or re-investigation into the disappearance of Madeleine McCann.

One of our key points was that any review or re-investigation should not be carried out by Leicestershire Police, as we believed them to be wholly discredited in terms of their failure to investigate Madeleine's disappearance without fear or favour. According to a report in the Daily Telegraph last week: "A Home Office spokesman said: 'We can confirm that the Home Secretary had a private meeting with Kate and Gerry McCann. Leicestershire Police stand ready to co-ordinate and complete enquiries if further information comes to light in the UK; or if requested to do so by the Portuguese authorities, who continue to lead on the overall investigation'." We strongly advised the Home Secretary to select an independent police force to carry out any review or re-investigation, not Leicestershire.

The Daily Star report

Today's [18 March] *Daily Star* carried this report (below), announcing that West Yorkshire Police had been approached by the Home Office to carry out some kind of re-investigation into the Madeleine McCann mystery.

SHANNON MATTHEWS COPS DRAFTED IN TO SEARCH FOR MADDIE

18th March 2010 - By Jerry Lawton

THE police team who found hoax kidnap victim Shannon Matthews are to probe Madeleine McCann's disappearance. West Yorkshire Police's Homicide and Major Enquiry Team (HMET) will study Portuguese police files.

Madeleine's doctor parents Kate and Gerry, both 41, are said to be "delighted" at the move. It follows a meeting with Home Secretary Alan Johnson at which they begged him to relaunch the official search for their daughter.

He asked the Child Exploitation Centre And Online Protection Centre to appoint a new investigating force. They have called in HMET, whose officers found Shannon, then aged nine, alive 24 days after she vanished in Dewsbury, West Yorks, in February 2008. Detectives worked out her disappearance was a plot to claim reward money dreamed up by her mum Karen, 34, and stepdad's uncle Michael Donovan, 40, who were jailed for eight years.

Portuguese and British police forces have been at odds since Madeleine vanished from her family's Algarve holiday apartment in May 2007, days before her fourth birthday. A source told the Daily Star: "It's hoped we can clear the decks and start over again."

The case was archived as unsolved in July 2008, and the McCanns, of Rothley, Leics, have had to hire private detectives to search for her.

[Source: <http://dailystar.co.uk/posts/view/126788/Shannon-Matthews-cops-drafted-in-to-search-for-Maddie/>]

So, do we welcome this move, with an independent police force, just as we asked for in our letter to the Home Secretary last week? Are we pleased to hear a source say: "It's hoped we can clear the decks and start over again"?

No, we don't. And the main reason we don't support this proposed re-investigation is because of this sentence in the Star report:

The Home Secretary Alan Johnson...asked the Child Exploitation Centre and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) to appoint a new investigating force. They have called in the Homicide and Major Enquiry Team of West Yorkshire Police.

The relationship between the McCanns and Jim Gamble of CEOP

It's clear from this, if the *Star* report is accurate, that the decision to appoint the West Yorkshire Police Force was made by CEOP. And that means it was made by its Chief Executive, Jim Gamble.

CEOP is an unusual type of organisation. It has the powers of a police force, yet is not subject to the usual types of regulations covering the actions of a police force. Notably, CEOP is exempt from the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. It is something of a law unto itself though answerable certainly to the Home Office, who appointed Mr Gamble.

Our concerns arise out of what appears to be an unusually close relationship between the McCanns and Jim Gamble. Most recently, Jim Gamble invited Dr Gerald McCann to speak at a CEOP-organised conference on abducted children, held on 26 January at the School of Oriental and African Studies in Bloomsbury, London. The closing speech of the conference at 4.00pm was given by Dr Gerald McCann. The welcome address was of course given by Jim Gamble himself. The press release about the conference stated its purpose was "To explore the issues associated with a variety of child abduction cases, predominantly focussing on sexually motivated stranger abductions".

Mr Clarence Mitchell, the McCanns' chief public relations adviser, admitted on 19 February in a *Channel 4* interview that the disappearance of Madeleine McCann was 'a complete mystery'. In addition, the final Portuguese Police report in July 2008 said that they had been examining two alternative theories side by side: (a) abduction and (b) death in the McCanns' holiday apartment. Given the absence of any compelling evidence of an abductor, still less abduction by a 'sexually motivated stranger', it is reasonable for us to ask: "Why was Dr Gerald McCann chosen to make the final address to this conference?"

Late last year, Jim Gamble featured in the worldwide dissemination of what was called a 'viral video', titled 'A Minute for Madeleine' which, once again, drew attention to the fact that Madeleine was still missing, and urged people to search for her. Speaking at a news conference to launch the video, Gamble said: "The person we are looking to reach is likely to be a partner, family member, friend or colleague of the person or people who were involved in Madeleine's disappearance. The video is a message aimed at prompting the conscience of the individual to remind them that it's never too late to do the right thing." He went on to compare

the disappearance of Madeleine to the snatching off the street at the age of 11 of Jaycee Lee Dugard , who then spent 18 years in captivity in a Californian backyard before being found by officials. The commentary in the video is by Gamble, who asserts that ‘Madeleine is now six’ and then shows an artist’s impression of how she might look now. He emphasised that ‘someone out there’ is holding a secret and should come forward.

Incidentally, the ‘Minute for Madeleine’ viral video brings out the uncanny resemblance between the CEOP logo and the coloboma defect in Madeleine’s right eye. This similarity can be seen very clearly towards the end of the video as the CEOP logo is seen to move ever closer to Madeleine’s right eye (Link: Home page on <http://ceop.police.uk/>).

At the same time, he toured TV studios with the McCanns giving interviews on SKY NEWS and on ITV’s ‘Good Morning’. He and the McCanns had clearly pre-arranged what each would say, as Dr Gerald McCann parried a question and said “Jim will be answering that”.

On the ‘Good Morning’ programme, Gamble came out with a strange statement: “It is the first time [a viral video] has been done...it has the potential to get to the person we are looking for. We are not looking for someone who has seen this girl particularly. We are looking for the person who knows or strongly suspects the individual or individuals involved in Madeleine's disappearance - the person who for a long time has perhaps struggled with their conscience keeping a terrible secret”.

Why did he not want the person who has ‘seen’ Madeleine, only the person who might ‘know something’ about those involved in Madeleine’s disappearance?

Will the West Yorkshire Police conduct a fully independent re-investigation into all possible explanations for Madeleine’s disappearance?

We’ve seen that there is a close nexus between the McCanns and Jim Gamble, who has personally selected the West Yorkshire Police to carry out this re-investigation. We question therefore whether that police force will truly be given a remit to ‘start from scratch’ and be permitted to examine not only the abduction scenario but also the possibility that Madeleine died in her parents’ holiday apartment. For example, will the West Yorkshire Police talk to Goncalo Amaral, the original senior investigating detective in the case? His book ‘The Truth of a Lie’, which

outlines the evidence that Madeleine died in Praia da Luz, has sold half a million or so copies throughout Europe.

Before taking up his current job as the head of CEOP, Gamble was a superintendent in the Police Service of Northern Ireland and then became Head of the National Crime Squad. Whilst there, he set up the National Crime Squad's specialist response cell - the Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) - and was involved in the creation of the first international law enforcement partnership to combat child abuse online - the Virtual Global Taskforce.

As head also of NCIS (the National Criminal Intelligence Service), he headed the highly controversial Operation Ore investigation into those people downloading images of child sexual abuse. Operation Ore is a topic we may revert to in a future article. It was criticised by some for wrongly accusing individuals of downloading child pornography just because they had accessed a certain website with a credit card, whilst others were certain that Operation Ore had discovered a number of prominent people who had been viewing extreme child sexual abuse but was refusing to prosecute them.

Mr Gamble says he first became involved with the McCanns as a result of receiving a letter from them which 'deeply moved' him and prompted him to offer to help. But his views have been controversial. He has suggested that paedophiles convicted of looking at child pornography should not necessarily go to prison, but should be encouraged to seek treatment and could be managed within the community. This prompted a response from Michelle Elliott, director of the children's charity, *Kidscape*. She told the BBC: "They are just as guilty as the people taking the photos. If they didn't view, the child wouldn't be abused. Therefore I think those people deserve prison".

Conclusion

Jim Gamble has an extremely close understanding with the McCanns. At every opportunity he actively promotes the theory that Madeleine was abducted by a paedophile. It is, therefore, of great concern that this is the person who has recommended West Yorkshire Police Force to carry out any review or investigation.

Whoever is entrusted with re-investigating this difficult, sensitive and highly controversial case must be given a full brief to go wherever the

evidence leads, and not simply adopt the abduction theory and continue merely to follow up a procession of claimed 'sightings' of Madeleine.