

principal failings arising from the incorrect decision about the author of the letters and tape are all too clear. Both the police and the public were conditioned to think that the Ripper had a Geordie accent and could be eliminated from the inquiries by a check being made of his handwriting. As will be seen in various parts of my report this decision resulted in disastrous consequences and especially insofar as it prompted the wrongful elimination of Sutcliffe as a major suspect.

225. Without wishing to minimise the error of judgement on the part of the officers concerned it should be said in fairness that once the "Special Notice" about the tape and the letters had been issued to police forces throughout the country and once the massive publicity campaign had been mounted on the same theme then the die had been well and truly cast. By the time Commander Nevill and others had advised against the positive elimination of suspects by reason of the tape and letters it would have been a mammoth task to search the records in the overloaded Incident Room with a view to rechecking all those previously eliminated from the inquiry. It would have been an even greater task for the outside inquiry teams to have followed through, and certainly could not have been done by the resources then available. It would also have meant admitting publicly, with potentially dire consequences, that the earlier decision to use the tape and letters as eliminating sieves had not been justified.

226. In my view the reluctance to follow the advice proffered by the discerning Detective Inspector Zackrisson of Northumbria, Commander Nevill of New Scotland Yard and the external Advisory Team can be attributed to this latter factor more than any other.

227. For ease of reference the principal events affecting the letters and tape inquiry are summarised in schedule form in Fig. 15.

#### **(vi.) The Police Interviews involving Sutcliffe**

228. When it was learned, following Sutcliffe's arrest, that he had been interviewed by police officers on nine separate occasions in connection with the Ripper series of crimes there was intense speculation about the failure of the interviews to lead to his earlier arrest. Naturally, therefore, this aspect became a focal point of my review of the Ripper crimes.

229. Sutcliffe was, in fact, interviewed by the police on twelve occasions between the 5th July 1975 (the date on which his admitted series of crimes commenced) and the date when he was charged with the 20 crimes for which he was subsequently convicted. Only nine of the interviews can be regarded as part of the actual police investigation of the Ripper series before Sutcliffe's arrest for them and of the remaining three, one related to a theft of car tyres from his employer and one to a drinking and driving offence. The final interview followed Sutcliffe's arrest in Sheffield and led to his admission of the various Ripper crimes. I will now deal with each of the interviews in some detail and then give my conclusions about their failure to produce a conclusive result. For ease of reference the twelve specific interviews during the inquiry are also shown in the table at Fig. 16

#### **15th October 1975 — FIRST INTERVIEW**

230. On the 15th October 1975 whilst Sutcliffe was employed as a tyre fitter at Common Road Tyres Ltd., his employers reported him to the police for the alleged theft of second hand tyres. Coincidentally, his namesake, Constable Sutcliffe of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police was asked to deal with this crime. He arrested Sutcliffe who immediately admitted the offence and produced the stolen tyres from the boot of his car. This was a simple case of theft and on pleading guilty to it at Dewsbury Magistrates Court on the 9th February 1976 Sutcliffe was fined £25. Fifteen days after this interview Sutcliffe murdered Wilma McCann in Leeds but at the time he was arrested by Constable Sutcliffe there was no evidence to connect him with the assaults on Rogulsky and Smelt earlier in the year and this particular event is not seen as having any significance so far as the series of crimes is concerned.

#### **2nd November 1977 — SECOND INTERVIEW**

231. On the 15th October 1977 Jean Jordan's handbag was found 189 feet away from the point where her body had been discovered five days earlier. When the handbag was searched a new £5 Bank of England note No. HW51 121565 was found in a secret compartment. Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway of the Greater Manchester Police came to the reasonable conclusion that Jordan had received the £5 note as payment for prostitution shortly before her death. Because the

**FIGURE 15**  
**LETTERS AND TAPE SCHEDULE**

<b>1978</b>			
	21st January	PEARSON	
	31st January	RYTKA	
1st LETTER	8th March		
2nd LETTER	13th March		
	20th March		Check in North East re 'cranks' and in hotel registers.
	26th March		Pearson's body found.
	21st April		Suspects' handwriting checked.
	16th May	MILLWARD	
	19th September		Dr Totty consulted.
<b>1979</b>			
3rd LETTER	23rd March		Saliva test shows 'B' Secretor.
	5th April	WHITAKER	
	17th April		Engineering inquiry enlarged to include North East.
	1st May		Handwriting used as eliminator.
TAPE	18th June		Saliva test shows 'B' Secretor.
	20th June		Tape indicates Sunderland accent.
	26th June		Inter-Force decision to publish letters and tape information.
	29th July		Press Release — Inquiry escalates "98% sure"
Sutcliffe's 6th interview — eliminated on			Scepticism in Northumbria re. authenticity of letters and tape.
1. Wife's alibi			
2. Handwriting			
	1st September	LEACH	
	13th September		"Special Notice" — Use of blood group and accent to eliminate.
	26th September		Caution expressed re. use of blood group and accent for elimination.
	2nd October		Publicity campaign — Huge response. Greater emphasis on tape and letters. "98% sure".
Sutcliffe's 7th interview — eliminated on	23rd October		
1. Wife's alibi			
2. Handwriting			
	6th December		Cdr. Nevill advises caution re. use of letters and tape in eliminations. Little apparent effect on attitudes.
<b>1980</b>			
	13th February		West Yorkshire Police "100% certain" letter writer is Ripper.
	21st August	WALLS	
	24th September	BANDARA	
	5th November	SYKES	
	17th November	HILL	
	25th November		External Advisory Team appointed.
	4th December		West Yorkshire Police "still 99% certain" letters from Ripper.
	16th December		External Advisory Team reports that too much dependence has been placed on authenticity of letters and tape.
<b>1981</b>			
Sutcliffe arrested	2nd January		No known connection with letters and tape.

**FIGURE 16**  
**SEQUENCE OF POLICE INTERVIEWS WITH SUTCLIFFE**

<i>Interview No. &amp; Date</i>	<i>By</i>	<i>Reason</i>	<i>Knowledge of Previous Interviews</i>	<i>Cars in Possession at Time of Interview</i>	<i>Decision of Senior Officers</i>
1. 15.10.75	P.C. SUTCLIFFE	Theft of tyres			Prosecuted
2. 2.11.77	D.C. HOWARD	1st £5 note inquiry			Further inquiries
3. 8.11.77	D.C. SMITH D.C. RAYNE	Follow up inquiry from 2nd interview	Knew of 2	Red Ford Corsair PHE 355G	<b>Filed.</b> No further action after 8.11.77
4. 13.8.78	D.C.P.D.N. SMITH	Cross area sightings Bradford/Leeds	Knew of 2 & 3	Red Ford Corsair PHE 355G	Further inquiries requested
5. 23.11.78	D.C.P.D.N. SMITH D.C. BRADSHAW	Cross area sightings — follow up from 4th interview	Knew of 2, 3 & 4	Red Ford Corsair PHE 355G	Further inquiries requested
6. 29.7.79	D.C. LAPTEW D.C. GREENWOOD	Triple area sightings Bradford/Leeds/Manchester	Did <b>not</b> know of 2, 3, 4 or 5	Rover 3.5 FHY 400K	<b>Filed.</b> No further action 23.8.79
7. 23.10.79	D.C. VICKERMAN D.C. ELAND	Follow up inquiry from Interview No. 5	Knew of 2, 3, 4 and 5	Rover 3.5 FHY 400K	<b>Filed.</b> No further action 19.11.79
8. 13.1.80	D.S. BOOT D.C. BELL	2nd £5 note inquiry	Knew of 2 & 3	Rover 3.5 FHY 400K	Further inquiries requested
9. 30.1.80	D.S. McALISTER D.C. McCRONE	Follow up to No. 8	Knew of 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 & 8	Rover 3.5 FHY 400K	Further inquiries requested
10. 7.2.80	D.C. JACKSON D.C. HARRISON	Follow up to No. 9	Knew of 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 & 9	Rover 3.5 FHY 400K	<b>Filed.</b> No further action 10.4.80
11. 25.6.80	P.C. DORAN P.C. MELIA	Drink/Driving Offence		Rover 3.5 FHY 400K	Prosecuted
12. 3.1.81	The final interview following his arrest.				

note was so new and held the possibility that its passage from the Bank of England to the person who had handed it to Jordan might be traced, it was seen as a clue of the greatest importance. Immediate inquiries were made to trace its origin. It was fairly quickly established that the note was the 64th in a batch of 69 brand new notes which had been sent from the Bank of England to a Leeds Clearing Bank. The 69 notes had then become part of a bundle of 100 notes within a consignment of £25,000 which had been released from the Clearing Bank on the 28th September 1977. Although the exact destination of these particular notes was not certainly known it was thought that there was a strong possibility that they were delivered to the Midland Bank Branch at Shipley.

232. This conclusion was accepted and inquiries at Shipley revealed that, although the particular note could have been paid across the counter of the Bank to a customer cashing a cheque or could have been part of a larger sum drawn by a local Building Society, it was more probable that the note had been part of money drawn from the Bank by one of many firms in the area to pay employees' wages. The £5 note could not have left the Midland Bank before the 28th September 1977 and since Jordan's murder occurred on the 1st October 1977 there was little likelihood that the note had passed through more than one or two hands before being given to Jordan. The most likely conclusion was that the murderer was an employee of a firm which drew money for wages from the Midland Bank at Shipley and had personally given Jordan the £5 note as advance payment for prostitution. The murder of Jordan was already clearly linked with the Ripper murders in West Yorkshire and the connection between the £5 note and Shipley provided a strong indication that the murderer was based in the Bradford area.

233. Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway believed that with the approach of Christmas people would be likely to be saving money so that it might be possible to trace someone who still had a new £5 note bearing a serial number close to the one recovered from Jordan's handbag.

234. The matter was approached with considerable urgency and a joint operation was mounted by the Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire Police to interview all employees of firms which obtained their wages cash from the Shipley Branch of the Midland Bank. The operation, which commenced on the 26th October 1977, was to be in two phases. The first phase was intended solely to identify £5 notes which people had in their possession. The second phase was to be a more detailed inquiry dealing with crimes in the Ripper series.

235. The first phase of the inquiry failed to identify any £5 note remotely connected with the note held by the police. A number of new £5 notes were traced however and were so far removed in serial number from the Jordan note that the people who held them and their employers could be eliminated from the inquiry.

236. Before starting the second phase of the inquiry the officers involved attended a briefing at which they were given as much evidence as was available which might help them to identify the murderer. Little evidence was, in fact, available at this time particularly in the light of the fact that only the murders of McCann, Jackson, Richardson, Atkinson and MacDonald and the assault on Maureen Long were regarded as being in the series. The earlier assaults on Rogulsky, Smelt and Claxton were not linked at this stage and the evidence from them was not given to members of the Inquiry Teams.

237. The principal evidential items available at that time were:—

- (a) That the murder weapon was thought to be a hammer
- (b) That an unknown cutting/stabbing instrument was also used
- (c) The murderer had previously worn wellington or industrial boots about size 7
- (d) The vehicle used by the murderer might be fitted with two India Autoway tyres (this evidence came from the Richardson murder inquiry eight months previously and was not rated very highly because it was thought that the tyres would in all probability have been replaced).

238. These points were brought to the attention of members of the Inquiry Teams during a briefing at which visual aids were used to re-inforce the comments of the senior investigating

officers, Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield and Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway. Mr. Oldfield also asked the Inquiry Team members to ask people being interviewed whether they had used taxis during the relevant period and paid their fare with one of the new £5 notes. A Leeds taxi driver, \_\_\_\_\_ was at this time a strong suspect and Mr. Oldfield hoped that the £5 note inquiry might lead to him. To assist inquiry officers an aide-memoire was prepared listing the points to be covered at interview including, in particular, the whereabouts of interview subjects on the night of Jordan's murder (1st October 1977) and on the night of the 9/10th October 1977 when it was believed the murderer had returned to the scene and inflicted further injuries to the body.

239. Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway, who was in charge of the Manchester end of the investigation, decided not to disclose to the West Yorkshire officers or to his own Inquiry Team members that the post-mortem examination of Jordan had revealed an attempt to saw off her head with a hacksaw. Chief Superintendent Ridgway wanted to keep this vital fact from the press so that it could be used in the future as an important corroborative clue.

240. Since October 1976 Peter William Sutcliffe had been employed as a lorry driver by T. & W.H. Clark (Holdings) Limited, of Hilliam Road, Bradford. This firm was one of those which drew its payroll from the Shipley Branch of the Midland Bank. For the purpose of the £5 note inquiry the various firms involved were given an alphabetical prefix and employees were given a serial number. T. & W.H. Clark were allocated the prefix 'F' and Sutcliffe the number 44, so that for the purposes of this inquiry his reference was 'F'44.

241. On the 2nd November 1977 Sutcliffe was interviewed at his home in Garden Lane, Bradford by Detective Constable Howard of the Greater Manchester Police and an officer of the West Yorkshire Police. This interview was in Phase 1 of the inquiry and it was first established that Sutcliffe did not have any £5 note from his pay of the 29th September. In answer to questions Sutcliffe told the officers that on the 1st October he had remained at home all the evening and that on the night of the 9/10th October he had been at home at a house-warming party which he and his wife had given for their friends and relatives. He said that he had last visited Manchester some twelve months previously whilst making a delivery for his previous employers. The officers also recorded that Sutcliffe did not own a motor car but this was clearly wrong and they cannot now remember whether Sutcliffe told them this or they assumed it because they had not seen a car at the house. At the time Sutcliffe was the owner of the red Ford Corsair No. PHE 355G which he had acquired on the 26th September 1977.

242. Sonia Sutcliffe, who was present throughout the interview, confirmed that her husband had been at home all the evening of the 1st October and that they had both been at the house-warming party on the 9th October. What she failed to mention was that after the party her husband had taken some of his relatives home by car and had been gone some time.

243. In the light of the information available to the inquiry officers there can be no real criticism of this interview. The Sutcliffes were amongst 8,000 people being interviewed and there was at that stage no reason for the officers to suspect them.

#### **8th November 1977 — THIRD INTERVIEW**

244. The officers in charge of the inquiry felt that it was important that the people being interviewed should not develop a "cosy" relationship with one pair of inquiry officers. It was thus a matter of policy that no person would be seen twice by the same officers although those carrying out subsequent interviews should have access to all of the information which had been obtained earlier. The interview under Phase 2 of the £5 note inquiry was conducted by Detective Constable Rayne of Greater Manchester and Detective Constable Smith of West Yorkshire. Neither officer can now recall the actual interview which was obviously one of many in which they were involved in this period, and reliance now has to be placed on the record which they made at the time. This shows that Sutcliffe and his wife claimed to have been at home together on the 1st October and to have been involved in the house-warming party on the night of the 9/10th October. This explanation was quite acceptable in the light of the fact that the young couple had only moved into the house in Garden Lane on the 26th September. The alibi for the 9/10th October was strengthened by Sutcliffe's mother who had been present at the party. The two officers went to see her and obtained a statement in which she confirmed the date and the fact that she had been

present. The two officers also found out that Sutcliffe was the owner of a red Ford Corsair motor car and that he had earlier owned a white Ford Corsair which had been disposed of as scrap some two months previously. They did not examine the Ford Corsair neither did they carry out a full search of Sutcliffe's house although they did ask questions about tools and footwear without learning anything which aroused their suspicions.

245. Reports on the interviews in Phase 1 and 2 were submitted to the senior investigating officers who marked them "File" in the belief that genuine confirmation of both alibis had been provided by the wife and mother. It is worth mentioning, of course, that amongst the 8,000 people interviewed many were unable to supply any form of alibi so the fact that Sutcliffe had a corroborated alibi was a substantial point in his favour.

246. Some indication of Sutcliffe's character can perhaps be gained from the fact that a little more than a month after this third interview, and whilst the Bradford area was still the centre of urgent police activity, he carried out a serious assault on Marilyn Moore in Leeds. Some of the West Yorkshire officers involved in the £5 note inquiry were transferred to the investigation of the assault on Marilyn Moore but this did not restrict the scope of the joint operation in Bradford.

247. In spite of the fact that the first and last numbers of the series of 69 £5 notes had been published and broadcast by the news media and that persistent inquiries had been made by the police no note from amongst the 69 was ever traced. Early in January 1978 it became obvious to the senior investigating officers that their vital clue had yielded nothing. They were still satisfied that they were on the right lines but were aware that some means would have to be found to reduce the inquiry base and allow the person who had received the £5 note to be pinpointed more closely. The officers from Greater Manchester returned home disappointed but hopeful that it might be possible to re-activate the inquiry at some future stage. Copies of all the Manchester inquiry papers together with the nominal index cards were sent to West Yorkshire to be included in the files of the main Incident Room at Leeds.

248. It is now obvious that the interview with Sutcliffe in the 2nd phase was not the in-depth probe which had been intended and amounted, in fact, to fairly superficial questioning and to answers which were accepted at their face value. Further questioning about the house-warming party in particular might have allowed what was regarded as a concrete alibi to be broken and so pave the way for further investigation of Sutcliffe and his identification as a suspect. As mentioned previously it is highly probable that at the time this interview was conducted Sutcliffe's car had on it similar tyres to those which left the tread marks at the Richardson scene. The failure to examine the car and its tyres was therefore significant, more particularly in the light of the fact that Sutcliffe was to use the same car at the time of his assault on Marilyn Moore a little more than a month later. The interviewing officers clearly failed to comply with their instructions that the house, garage and motor car of interview subjects were to be searched and so lost an opportunity to confirm or deny the factors spelled out to them during their briefing. Whilst the officers had no reason to suspect Sutcliffe any more than any other person being interviewed there was a distinct possibility that the person to whom the Jordan £5 note had been paid would be seen during the inquiry, and therefore, their attitude was not as positive as it should have been.

249. There is little doubt that senior investigating officers of West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester did not attach sufficient weight to the tyre mark evidence recovered from the scene of the Richardson murder because of it having been superseded by the description of the Mark II Ford Cortina in the Long case. Inquiry officers were thus not specifically told to record the details of the tyres on cars owned by interview subjects and could, therefore, be excused for not having taken this step on their own initiative. It is also worth mentioning, (as will be referred to again later) that throughout this inquiry the officers of the Greater Manchester Police travelled to Bradford daily in the most extreme weather conditions and generally worked a 12/14 hour day.

250. Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway's decision to withhold the knowledge that an attempt had been made to sever Jordan's head was in some ways understandable but on balance was wrong. Since it had been clearly established that a hacksaw had been used on Jordan's body officers should have been briefed to take possession of hacksaws so that they could be subjected to forensic examination.

#### 13th August 1978 — FOURTH INTERVIEW

251. The "Cross Area Sighting" inquiry intended to identify vehicle owners who made frequent visits to "red light" areas, prompted Sutcliffe's fourth interview with the police. Between the start of the computerised "Punters Index" on the 19th June 1978 and the 7th July 1978 Sutcliffe's red Ford Corsair was recorded on seven occasions, six in the prostitute area of Bradford and once in the Chapeltown area of Leeds. Sutcliffe was thus printed out as a "Cross Area Sighting" on the second computer print-out and was made the subject of the Incident Room action. A little over a month after his sighting in Leeds on the 7th July (during which time he had — unknown to the inquiry officer — been sighted on a further nine occasions in Bradford in his newly acquired Sunbeam Rapier car) Sutcliffe was seen at his home by Detective Constable P. Smith of the West Yorkshire Police. Constable Smith had previously been briefed that the object of his inquiry was to eliminate subjects by accounting for their movements on one or more of the murder dates. A list of the dates was provided and elimination was to be achieved by the examination of diaries, passports, holiday booking forms, records of periods in hospital or family anniversaries, etc. He (and other officers doing similar inquiries) were told that on no account was it to be made known that police observations were being carried out in prostitute areas nor were ball-pein hammers to be mentioned.

252. On the positive side, inquiry officers were briefed to find out whether people being interviewed made use of prostitutes and whether they possessed motor vehicles included in a list of types which could have made the tyre marks found at the scenes of the Richardson, Moore and Millward crimes. It was emphasised that vehicles in the BMC "Farina" range were most suspect but the instructions were that if any vehicle mentioned in the list was encountered during inquiries then full details of the tyres fitted to it should be obtained.

253. Constable Smith was aware of Sutcliffe's two previous interviews during the £5 note inquiry and had copies of the relevant papers with him. He was aware of the loose alibi which had been supplied and it was his intention to obtain a stronger alibi for the most recent murder which was that of Vera Millward in Manchester on the 16/17th May 1978. When Constable Smith arrived at Sutcliffe's home on Sunday, 13th August, he was busy decorating the kitchen. Sonia Sutcliffe was present during the interview. They explained that they had recently bought the house and that they spent most of their spare time on alterations and in decorating it, adding that they seldom went out and that when they did so they were always together. Initially they were not able to remember their movements on the 16/17th May but Sonia Sutcliffe subsequently said that on the 16th her husband "would have come home from work and stayed with her all evening". They both made written statements to that effect. Whilst his wife was out of the room Sutcliffe was asked whether he used prostitutes. He denied that he did and was then asked about the use of his car. It must be borne in mind here that Constable Smith was under instructions not to reveal that Sutcliffe's car had been seen in specific locations and was merely asking general questions about the use of his car during the evenings. Sutcliffe apparently satisfied Constable Smith that the Bradford sightings could be accounted for by journeys between Sutcliffe's home and the city centre and his place of work. He denied having visited Leeds and Constable Smith did not pursue this since he was aware of a fairly high error rate in the "Cross Area Sighting" inquiry. Perhaps not unreasonably Constable Smith accepted that the Sutcliffes were a normal young couple who were anxious to improve their home and were putting most of their effort into doing so. He was certainly impressed by finding Sutcliffe decorating when he arrived at the house and any suspicions he might have had were allayed by the couple's calm and normal demeanour.

254. Constable Smith did not check the tyres of Sutcliffe's car neither did he carry out any search of the house or garage. He later explained that he did not do so because he did not believe that the tyre tracks at the murder scenes could have been left by a Ford Corsair and because he had seen from previous papers that Sutcliffe's house had been searched during earlier interviews. This was, of course, not strictly accurate and the inquiry officer took too much for granted.

255. No particular suspicion was attached to the fact that Sutcliffe was being interviewed for the "Cross Area Sighting" inquiry having already been interviewed during the £5 note inquiry since Constable Smith believed that it was not unusual for people living in Bradford to become subjects of the two separate inquiries. The Bradford "red light" area sits astride a number of main access routes to the city so that many people going about their legitimate business would be recorded there. Unfortunately, Constable Smith did not have the actual times of the Bradford sightings

when he interviewed Sutcliffe as these were not available due to the limitations of the PNC print-out. Had they been checked from the input documents it would have revealed that the earliest sighting was at 8 p.m. and the latest at 12.50 a.m. which was hardly compatible with Sutcliffe's assertion that he "rarely went out in the evenings". Failure to challenge Sutcliffe on his denial of having visited Leeds in the evening was also unfortunate but perhaps depended more upon the general instructions about the conduct of the inquiry rather than a failure on Constable Smith's part.

#### **23rd November 1978 — FIFTH INTERVIEW**

256. When Constable Smith submitted his report in connection with the fourth interview together with the statements from Sutcliffe and his wife, the results were acceptable to his immediate supervising officer. When the papers were seen by Detective Superintendent Holland, however, he instructed that as Sutcliffe had owned two Ford Corsair motor cars (which were within the list of vehicles for the "Tracking Inquiry") the tyres of both vehicles should be checked. He also called for details of Sutcliffe's employers and for his personal banking arrangements to be obtained.

257. This inquiry in the form of a new Incident Room action was returned to Constable Smith. Although the action was dated 29th August 1978 the actual interview did not take place until the 23rd November because most members of the outside Inquiry Team had by that time been directed to the "Farina" inquiry, which had progressively developed following the murder of Helen Rytka in January 1978.

258. It is now obvious that this fifth interview with Sutcliffe was treated as a matter of simple routine to the extent that Detective Constable Bradshaw who accompanied Detective Constable Smith on his visit to Sutcliffe's home did not even get out of the police vehicle. Constable Smith discovered that Sutcliffe had banked with Barclays Bank in Bingley until the end of 1977 after which he had transferred his account to the Halifax Building Society at the Bradford Branch. Sutcliffe had, by that time, disposed of his red Ford Corsair which was not, therefore, available for examination. The two officers then visited the home of the new owners of the car where they examined the tyres. The tyres were not of the makes recorded at the Richardson, Moore and Millward crime scenes and Constable Smith added a note to his action report that the tyres had been fitted after the vehicle had changed hands and that details of the previous tyres were unknown. Records in the Incident Room gave details of Sutcliffe's employers, T. & W.H. Clark Limited, one of the firms involved in the £5 note inquiry. The inquiry action was endorsed to that effect.

259. What happened to the action and its associated papers when they were returned to the Major Incident Room cannot be ascertained. The staff there were clearly under a great deal of pressure with hundreds of actions awaiting allocation and the position worsened dramatically after the murder of Josephine Whitaker on the 4/5th April 1979. In any event the papers which related to the fifth interview were not to re-appear until eleven months had passed. Many things had happened by that time.

260. Whatever pressures were being felt in the Incident Room, no papers which were returned to it having been properly actioned should have been misplaced. I have commented elsewhere on the failure of the West Yorkshire Police to allocate sufficient manpower to the inquiry, particularly when completely new lines of inquiry such as the "Cross Area Sighting" inquiry or the "Farina" inquiry were commenced. The backlog of work in the Incident Room which resulted in important papers being mislaid or becoming temporarily unobtainable was to have even more serious implications for later interviews.

#### **29th July 1979 — SIXTH INTERVIEW**

261. In May 1978 Sutcliffe bought a black Sunbeam Rapier motor car which, as mentioned previously, was quickly to build up a list of sightings in the Police National Computer records. In time the volume of inquiries generated by the "Cross Area Sighting" inquiry was so great that the method of operation had to be changed so that action was called for only in respect of "Triple Area Sightings".

262. Between 26th June 1978 and the 22nd November 1978 Sutcliffe's Sunbeam Rapier was observed in the prostitute areas of Bradford on 36 occasions and in the Chapeltown area of Leeds,



twice. It was thus printed out as a "Cross Area Sighting" but because of the change of policy no action was taken in this connection. By the 22nd February 1979, the vehicle had been seen in both Leeds and Bradford on a further three occasions and it was also seen in Manchester and was subsequently printed out as a "Triple Area Sighting". This information should have been of the utmost significance had it been related to the earlier "Cross Area Sighting" of Sutcliffe's Ford Corsair and his earlier involvement in the Manchester £5 note inquiry. Unfortunately the three factors were not connected, an omission with the gravest consequences for the future of the inquiry.

263. As mentioned earlier in the report, all members of Inquiry Teams attached to the Millgarth Major Incident Room were transferred to Halifax following the murder of Josephine Whitaker on the 5th April 1979; no actions generated by the Millgarth Incident Room were issued for a significant period. Not until the 29th July (five months after Sutcliffe's car had been sighted in Manchester) was Sutcliffe seen in connection with it. Detective Constables Laptew and Greenwood of the West Yorkshire Police went to Sutcliffe's home where they saw him and his wife. They were completely unaware of the previous police interviews with Sutcliffe and in particular that he had been a subject of the £5 note inquiry. They were thus starting from the beginning with a man who, to the best of their knowledge, had not been involved but had come to notice because of the "Triple Area Sighting" of his vehicle. Whilst alone with Sutcliffe the officers asked him if he made use of prostitutes, telling him that if he did they would arrange to see him again at some other time when his wife was not present. He denied having anything to do with prostitutes and said that he had no need for that sort of woman. Sutcliffe then gave details of his work and the location of his employers' premises from which the officers concluded that the 39 sightings of his vehicle in Bradford could be accounted for by journeys between home and work and visits to the city with his wife. Sutcliffe also said that he had once taken his wife to a nightclub in Leeds and had used a route through Chapeltown Road, which led the officers to believe that this would account for one of the Leeds sightings. Sutcliffe was asked whether he had visited Manchester and denied having done so. Although the sighting was later verified the matter was not pursued with him for fear of alerting him to police surveillance of "red light" areas. Sutcliffe and his wife made statements covering their visit to Leeds but said that they could not recall having visited Manchester. Constable Laptew ascertained that Sutcliffe had visited Sunderland in connection with his work, although inquiries made later showed that he had not been there on any of the dates when the letters and tape recording were posted. The fact that Sutcliffe spoke with a quiet Bradford accent was noted as was a detailed description of him including the colour and style of his hair, details of his beard and moustache and the fact that he took size 8½ shoes and wore boots of the soft crepe soled variety. By the time of this interview Sutcliffe had sold the Sunbeam Rapier and had replaced it with a Rover 3.5 saloon. The officers later traced the Sunbeam Rapier to its new owner, recorded details of the tyres fitted to it and searched it but found nothing. Constable Laptew had, by that time, become suspicious of Sutcliffe and he made arrangements for the Sunbeam Rapier to be available for forensic examination should his senior officers feel that this was desirable. Unfortunately, no examination of that sort ever took place.

264. This interview with Peter and Sonia Sutcliffe took almost two hours during which the couple were calm and quiet, answering the questions put to them without apparent difficulty or embarrassment but not volunteering any additional information. During the interview the officers obtained a sample of Sutcliffe's handwriting in the form of a letter which he had written to his wife and they also searched his car and garage but found nothing to connect him with the crimes.

265. Sometime after this interview the two officers visited the offices of Sutcliffe's employers where he was described to them as a model worker. They were not told that he had previously been seen by the police in connection with the £5 note inquiry although a general mention was made that the firm had been one of those involved in the inquiry. Details of Sutcliffe's hours of work on the most recent murder date were obtained and also some of his records of work as a further sample of his handwriting.

266. Detective Constables Laptew and Greenwood were not satisfied with the outcome of the interview and they discussed a number of points arising from it, as follows:—

- (a) The loose alibi
- (b) Sutcliffe's denial of having been to Manchester after a positive sighting of his vehicle