

# COVER SHEET



Witness: Second Witness Statement of William  
Furner / HN3095

Exhibits Referred to: None

Date Statement Made: 18 September 2020

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**UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY**

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**Witness:** William Arthur Furner / HN3095

**Occupation:** Retired

**Address:** c/o Metropolitan Police Service, Directorate of Legal  
Services, Empress State Building, London SW6 1TR

1. I have been asked to provide a witness statement for the purpose of assisting the Undercover Policing Inquiry. In preparing this statement I have sought to answer all the questions asked of me in the Rule 9 request dated 18 March 2020 and first provided to me on 26 August 2020.
2. I have been shown the documents provided by the Inquiry in the witness bundle for the purpose of making this witness statement. I have not refreshed my memory by looking at any other document. I have referred throughout this statement to various of the documents in the witness bundle.
3. There is no restriction order in place in respect of my real name. I did not use a cover name.

- [REDACTED]
4. This witness statement concerns my time in the SDS between summer 1968 and September 1970. This was over 50 years ago. The information I provide in this witness statement is to the best of my recollection.

### **Personal details**

5. My full name is William Arthur Furner. I go by the name Bill, and was known by this name when I was in the SDS. My date of birth is [REDACTED]<sup>1</sup> 1931.

### **Police career before and after serving with the Special Demonstration Squad ("SDS")**

6. I joined the Metropolitan Police in 1964, aged 33. Having attended training school, I was posted as a uniformed Constable to Leman Street Police Station from 1965 until August 1966 and then to Chingford Police Station from 1966 until I joined Special Branch in 1968. Towards the end of 1967 there was a Force notice going around asking for people interested in joining Special Branch. I applied and I was interviewed. I joined Special Branch on 1 January 1968 as a Detective Constable. This was a level transfer rather than a promotion. I spent about 6 months or so in E Squad and then joined the SDS.
7. I had not done any undercover policing or work using a cover identity prior to joining the SDS.

### **SDS – Formation**

8. The SDS was set up to infiltrate the left-wing organisations who were involved in the Vietnam war protests and to obtain information about their activities and

[REDACTED]

intentions. As far as I was concerned, the notion of infiltrating organisations was new and different; I don't think Special Branch had before gone out and infiltrated organisations as we did in the SDS.

9. Conrad Dixon was the Chief Inspector of the SDS when it was set up, but I think it was the Assistant Chief Constable and Arthur Cunningham who were involved in the decision to set up the SDS. The Chief Inspector would have reported to both of them.
10. I don't remember exactly when I joined the SDS but it must have been in June or July 1968. I was one of the first half a dozen or so officers to join. I witnessed the formation of the SDS. In terms of my selection, I told to report to Conrad Dixon as part of a group. He explained to us what was happening and what the SDS was all about, i.e. the aim was to infiltrate these organisations and feed back information. This was the first time I had heard of the SDS. We started straight away. There was no selection process.
11. I did not decide to join to the SDS. They told me I was a member of the team and that was it. I accepted it as normal routine.

### **My role**

12. I worked in the office, practically all of the time. I dealt mainly with paperwork that came in. There was the odd occasion where I went to a meeting or to a demonstration and reported back. I remained in the office throughout my time in the SDS. I never joined the subversive organisations.

- [REDACTED]
13. I held the rank of Detective Constable when I joined the SDS. I was not promoted whilst I was on the SDS.

### **Training and guidance**

14. I did not have any training for my role in the SDS. I learnt as I went. We were taken as Special Branch officers and told what the job was about. I think it would be very difficult to have any training for that.
15. No training, advice, guidance or instructions were repeated or refreshed during my time on the SDS.
16. I did not receive any training on race equality from the Metropolitan Police either prior to or during my time with the SDS.

### **Duties**

17. My role was administrative. My responsibilities included checking the rent books, making sure the undercover officers paid their rents and that it was all genuine and above board. I did not have any involvement in obtaining cover accommodation for undercover officers; this was down to individual officers. I only had a supervisory or review function in this regard. I would also check undercover officers' diaries and submit them. I would check for the accuracy of the sums they were claiming in expenses by totting up the figures and checking they were claiming the right amount. For example, an officer might have gone to a meeting and then drinks afterwards and they would claim the cost of the drinks back. I would be given diaries either at the SDS flat or when undercover officers

[REDACTED]

came to Scotland Yard. I think I was given them weekly. There was no set routine whereby undercover officers had to provide their diaries on a specific day; I simply had to see them in order to check the figures. The diary system was common throughout CID. A rigid system of presenting diaries on a specific day did exist in Special Branch. How frequently undercover officers filled in their diaries was up to them. I do not know how that worked.

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18.

**The office would also get information from the Security Service and it was my job to go through this and abstract from it any names, addresses and details and file them. The information concerned the same groups the SDS were interested in and we received them because of this shared interest with the Security Service.**

[REDACTED] I did not get any requests from the Security Service for intelligence. I imagine that happened but I do not know. I have no knowledge of any briefings by the Security Service.

19. Occasionally I would produce other SDS paperwork. For example, if I went to a meeting I would produce a report. My involvement with intelligence was limited to that which I obtained myself when attending a meeting or demonstration. I did not deal with others' intelligence and had no involvement with the intelligence provided by undercover officers. I do not know whether intelligence was recorded by officers away from safe houses.
20. I had no involvement with procuring or the administration of safe houses. I had no involvement with the procuring or administration of vehicles used by SDS

[REDACTED]

personnel. This was done by police contract. I had no involvement with obtaining cover documents for undercover officers.

21. I had no involvement in writing up SDS intelligence reports so there is limited information that I can provide about reporting. I think the undercover officers provided written and verbal reports. undercover officers would telephone the office and if I got the call I would pass the telephone to Phil Saunders. I have no idea of the frequency with which this would happen. Undercover officers would report on the names of the people involved, their aims, what they said at a meeting, and sometimes provide physical descriptions. The undercover officers would meet up at the safe house and occasionally came to Scotland Yard. The safe house is where written and oral reporting would be provided and brought back to the Yard. At the safe house there would be a general discussion about who would go to meetings or demonstrations and next steps would be actioned based on the intelligence provided. I imagine Conrad Dixon and Phil Saunders received telephone calls with reports as well. Phil Saunders would have been involved in writing up intelligence reports. These reports would then go to Conrad Dixon, who presumably would pass them on to Arthur Cunningham and the Assistant Chief Commissioner. As I understand it, reports went as high as the Home Office. I think the usual Special Branch methods were adopted for retaining reports, that is the reports were filed according to the organisation they concerned. I had no involvement in filing; it would have been done by the filing staff. All filing would have gone to the general registry and no copies would have been kept with the SDS. I have no idea how they were organised, or how long files were retained for.



22. I played no part in tasking, instructing or steering undercover officers about what they should report on or how they should report. I have no idea about any decisions to write up or not write up certain intelligence. I was not involved in the dissemination of SDS intelligence.
23. I had no role in processing overtime claims. Overtime was decided by the Chief Inspector. From memory, I never claimed overtime. I think it was a matter of if we were allocated a job, we did it. I do not know how serving on the SDS affected take home pay.
24. I have been shown the Routine Meeting / Poster Parade report dated 29 October 1968 (Doc 7: MPS-0736479) which bears my signature. I imagine this report was given to me by DC Tyrrell to be handed on to the Chief Inspector. I do not particularly remember this. I would not have typed any of this report and I did not attend the meeting, so I imagine we met somewhere and he handed the report to me and I handed it on.
25. There were no formal written policies or procedures during the time I was on the SDS. There were never any performance reviews. A training scheme was run by Special branch for those who wanted promotion, but it was not anything to do with the SDS. One on one meetings were probably held as and when they were called for. I never had any meeting like this. I do not know if records were made or kept.



[REDACTED]

## Premises

26. When I was in the SDS, we started out by operating from Scotland Yard. This was where we were formed. From there, officers who were tasked with infiltrating went out and joined the organisation and found themselves accommodation.

27. When I was in the SDS we only used one safe house, which was a flat in

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West London.

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Details of how location was secured.

[REDACTED]. It was the main SDS flat. It had

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[REDACTED], which was all the things we were

looking for. If there was a mass meeting, we would all assemble at the flat.

9

Further details of how location was secured

28. I was based in the Yard. I would go to the safe house quite often for the general meeting that everyone turned up at. This meeting was very regular. There was no set pattern in terms of how often it took place, but if something cropped up that everyone had to be involved in we met up at the flat. I remember on one occasion we took the Assistant Chief Commissioner Crime to visit the flat. We also had a Christmas party at the flat.

29. I cannot list any other premises from which the SDS operated during my time on the Squad.



## **Management structure**

30. When I was in the SDS, management positions were held by Conrad Dixon, Phil Saunders and Riby Wilson. My direct line managers were Conrad Dixon and Phil Saunders; I only reported to them.
31. Conrad Dixon was the head of the SDS and he directed operations and liaised with seniors. He also went out and joined organisations. Phil Saunders was the second-in-command. He also joined an organisation. He spent more of his time in the office with me than anyone else; it was mainly me and Phil in the office. Riby Wilson was a Detective Inspector when I knew him. He would be out and about, sometimes in the office and sometimes doing whatever he was doing with an organisation. I don't remember which organisations any of them went into.
32. I held an administrative position, along with Phil Saunders and Roy Creamer. We were the principal people in administrative roles. Phil Saunders was the person we reported to. Roy was a fount of all knowledge as far as the subversive left-wing organisations were concerned. Undercover officers would come to him asking for advice and direction on these groups.

## **Individual managers and administrators**

33. Conrad Dixon had a very loose reign. He did not clamp down on you hard and he left you to your own initiative. I am sure he did adopt a cover name but I do not know what it was. The SDS was hardly a rank conscious organisation. I had quite a lot of personal interaction with Conrad as he was often in the office. My interactions with him were generally either as a result of being in the office or in

[REDACTED]

the flat. I only remember going out to a meeting once with him. I think it was August bank holiday in 1968, and we went up to Hampstead. Practically the whole team went. I cannot remember what it was for; I think there was a fair at Hampstead and information had been received that a group were going and we went up to identify them.

34. Phil Saunders was the kingpin and ran the office. All of the reports that came in went to him and he would filter them up to Conrad Dixon. Phil was the go-to man in the office. He was very free and easy. The whole Squad was very rank-less, for example we called each other by our Christian names. I have no idea if Phil adopted a cover name. This side of things was kept very quiet for obvious reasons. I had more interaction with Phil than anybody else, other than Roy, as a result of being in the office. Our interactions were very good.

35. Riby Wilson was a member of the SDS when I was in the SDS. He was very free and easy. Again, he did not pull rank. I had a fair amount of interaction with him when he was in the office, and occasionally I went out with him. He dealt with the press.

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[REDACTED]

he took me with him for this. Otherwise, we just had general interaction in the office. I do not know if he had a cover name.

36. I have been referred to Annex B of "Penetration of Extremist Groups" (Doc 6: MPS-0724119). I note that it states Riby Wilson was responsible for "press and

[REDACTED]

informants". I do not remember there being a great deal of interaction with the press. On the occasion I have described above we had specific information about a potential incident relating to the press and Riby was involved in dealing with this. However, I did not know of any general liaison with the press. Informants were the lifeblood of the SDS. I only ever met one. I did not know informants to have been part of Riby's role. Informants were not something you would discuss for obvious reasons so I do not know about the interaction the SDS had with them.

37. Ray Wilson was a member of the SDS whilst I was in the SDS. I think he was a Sergeant. I would not consider him management: he was a member of the Squad. I do not remember his particular role but as far as I was concerned he was a peripheral figure. He was occasionally in the office. I do not know whether he adopted a cover name. I did not have a lot of personal interaction with him.

[11]

38. [REDACTED] HN332 [REDACTED] was a peripheral figure as far as I was concerned. I did go out with him once on an enquiry but that was it. His management style was like the others: free and easy. I do not know what his role or duties were. I do not know if he adopted a cover name. I interacted with him in the office when he came in. I was never close enough to know what he was doing or his cover name, things like that.

39. I have been referred to Annex B of "Penetration of Extremist Groups" (Doc 6: MPS-0724119). I note that next to [REDACTED] [12] HN332's [REDACTED] name and under "duty" it states "Poster Workshop". Poster workshop was a left-wing organisation. As the

[REDACTED]

name suggests, they would prepare the placards for demonstrations. I do not remember him being in that organisation.

13

40. I remember [REDACTED] HN294 [REDACTED] vaguely. We were on the SDS at the same time. I have no idea of his duties. All I remember is that he was on the team. Again, he had a casual management style and he had a great sense of humour. He was a Geordie, if I remember correctly. I do not know whether he used a cover name. I did not have a lot of interaction with him.

41. I do not know Wilf Knight.

#### **Undercover officers**

42. I only interacted with the undercover officers insofar as they would hand me their diaries and we would talk. I knew from their records and from talking to them the organisations and personalities they were involved with, but they never discussed with me in any detail what they were doing or who they met. I did not know, for example, minute-by-minute what they were doing. On average I would see the undercover officers about once a week. Towards the end of my time in the SDS it was much less frequent because the risks of being seen coming into the Yard were much greater as deployments were underway. If we met, it would be either at the Yard or at the flat and during the latter part of my time in the SDS it was more often than not that we met out of the Yard.

43. I recall the following people were on the SDS at the same time as I was on the SDS: Conrad Dixon, Phil Saunders, Riby Wilson, [REDACTED] 14 [REDACTED] HN332 [REDACTED] Roy

[REDACTED]

[15] [REDACTED] [16] [REDACTED] [17] [REDACTED] [18]  
Creamer, [REDACTED] HN68 [REDACTED] HN331 [REDACTED] HN329 [REDACTED], Mike Tyrrell, [REDACTED] HN326  
[REDACTED] [19] [REDACTED] HN334 [REDACTED] HN330 [REDACTED], Helen Crampton, Dave Fisher  
and Mike Ferguson. Having looked at Annex B of "Penetration of Extremist  
Groups" (Doc 6: MPS-0724119), I recognise the name DC [REDACTED] HN321 [REDACTED] he was also on  
the SDS at the same time as me. I can picture his face but I cannot remember  
his first name.

44. I would consider the following people as having been undercover officers: Conrad  
Dixon, [REDACTED] HN68 [REDACTED] HN331 [REDACTED] HN329 [REDACTED], Mike Tyrrell, [REDACTED] HN326  
[REDACTED] HN334 [REDACTED] HN330 [REDACTED] and Mike Ferguson. I would not consider  
Joan Hillier, Roy Creamer or Helen Crampton to have been undercover officers.  
I am not sure whether Dave Fisher was an undercover officer. Phil Saunders and  
[REDACTED] HN332 [REDACTED] occasionally went undercover.

45. Having looked at Annex B of "Penetration of Extremist Groups" (Doc 6: MPS-  
0724119), I do not recognise the names [REDACTED] including DC HN322 and DC HN336.  
[REDACTED]

46. I do not know whether Helen Crampton, Dave Fisher, [REDACTED] HN331 [REDACTED] or Mike Tyrrell  
used cover names.

47. Joan Hillier was in the office. She did administrative work or went out on enquiries  
if directed to do so by Phil Saunders or Conrad Dixon. She did not have a  
particular role in the office, albeit she was there more than most others. She was  
effectively a dog's body.

[REDACTED]

48. I was not aware of any unhappy working relationships between members of the SDS, whether undercover officers or managers. It was a well-run squad from that point of view.

49. The only matter of which I'm aware that may have involved one of my contemporaries in the SDS committing a criminal offence is that [REDACTED]

31

[REDACTED]

The matter did not go to court and the officer was not charged with an offence.

50. To my knowledge, none of my contemporary undercover police officers, whilst deployed:

- (i) provoked, encouraged or caused a third party to commit a criminal offence;
- (ii) engaged in sexual activity with others whilst in their cover identity;
- (iii) arrested, charged, tried or convicted in their undercover identity;
- (iv) involved in incidents of public disorder, violence or other criminal activity;
- (v) report any legally privileged information, now that this concept has been explained to me;
- (vi) report on the activities of any elected politicians.

51. I have been asked what my contemporaries achieved for the benefit of policing. Their deployments meant that we had the people under observation and different organisations completely and utterly taped; they did not make a move that we did

[REDACTED]

know about. The obvious benefit was that we knew what their aims were. For example, there was one group that decided they would chain themselves to the rugby posts at Twickenham when South Africa were playing. We knew about this and uniformed police were told so they could be present with bolt cutters. The chap bolted himself during the rugby match, uniformed police turned up and uncut him and off he went without any disruption caused. Information like this came to uniformed police from the Superintendent or Assistant Chief Commissioner. Before I was in the SDS, I had no knowledge or awareness of Special Branch Squads providing uniformed police with threat assessments or other forecasts in relation to the likely numbers or moods of those attending upcoming public events.

52. The SDS had a very close liaison with the Security Service. There were conferences for us both, and [32] information from the Security Services came into our office.

[REDACTED] Reading this information was a major part of my job. [REDACTED] I cannot really

say what specific assistance we gave them. We helped each other. [REDACTED]

[33]

[REDACTED] The information from the Security Service came to us because of the shared interests

[REDACTED] the SDS and the Security Service. [REDACTED]

Special Branch were the arm to make enquiries had the power to effect arrest. The Security Service was divorced from police work.

53. When I was on the SDS, officers would have spent time preparing for their deployments. I did not know what they would do as part of these preparations or how long undercover officers would have spent preparing. I imagine they must have been told what was known about the organisations they would be infiltrating,



[REDACTED]

got the files out of the registry, read up on the groups and then planned their steps ahead. I knew they were being briefed and told what to look out for, and then they would have been sent out from the main office with the intention of joining one of these groups. I did not know at this preparatory stage the groups into which they were being sent, or for what. As I have said above, I was not involved in tasking. Although it was not a 'need to know' issue, it was not just discussed openly.

54. None of the deployments came to an end whilst I was on the SDS so I cannot say whether or not it was usual for undercover officers to spend time in the back office or safe house(s) after withdrawing from their deployments.

#### **Attendance at activists' meetings**

55. I have been referred to a Routine Meeting Report dated 10 September 1968 (Doc 1: MPS-0738806). Next to "Officers Present" it states "D.S. Fisher, D.S. Wilson R., D.C. Furner". "D.S. Wilson R." must be a reference to Detective Sergeant Ray Wilson because I do not remember going to a meeting with Riby. If the document says I was present I must have been there, but I cannot say I specifically remember attending this meeting. I attended very few activists' meetings when I was in the SDS; I particularly remember attending one meeting, but I did attend others. I can remember attending several large demonstrations, for example at Trafalgar Square and at Twickenham. These would be occasions when I was told to attend. I did not use a cover name. For meetings, I only went as a member of the audience. I would not participate; I would just observe and take notes. I would wear a scruffy coat. I did not change my appearance in any way to disguise

[REDACTED]

myself. I was not trying to join the relevant organisation. At demonstrations I would mingle with the crowd. I have no idea the extent to which Ray Wilson attended activists' meetings.

### **Metropolitan Police Telegrams**

56. I have been referred to a Metropolitan Police Telegram dated 24 October 1968 (Doc 2: MPS-0746537) and a Metropolitan Police Telegram dated 25 October 1968 (Doc 3: MPS-0746538). It is my signature on these documents. I would have been in the SDS at this time. They think these are reports I received over the telephone. In the case of Doc 2, I do not remember going down to Sussex. The persons recorded next to "From" would have been the originator of the message, who was telephoning the message through. I would have had no idea of the source of the information, that is to say where the person reporting the information to Special Branch would have got it from. I would submit the information as a report received over the telephone. I would have signed the document to indicate that I took the report over the telephone. I do not know how often I did this. If it came in by telephone and I took the call then I would submit the telegram. I don't remember other examples. I have no idea what the letters "p.i.w", found near the bottom left of Doc 2, stand for. I do not remember adding the file references. I do not think I would have included those when I typed up the telephone reports, but I am not sure.

### **Special Report**

57. I have been referred to a Special Report dated 29 October 1968 (Doc 5: MPS-0730788). This report bears my signature. I imagine I was asked to check on a

[REDACTED]

registration number of a car, which I did, and then I submitted a report with the information I found.

### **The Security Service**

58. I had no contact or dealings with the Security Service whilst I was on the SDS.

### **Senior management and oversight bodies**

59. When I was on the SDS, the Assistant Chief Commissioner Crime visited the SDS on one occasion that I know of. Aside from this I do not remember any other visits by senior managers of the rank Superintendent or above.

60. I remember that I collected the ACC from Waterloo station and drove him to the SDS flat because they did not want him picked up from the Yard and taken straight there. When he was at the flat, the ACC talked with the undercover officers about the work being done. I then took him back and dropped him somewhere. The visit would have been before the 27 October demonstration, but I am not otherwise sure of the date. As far as I was concerned it was unusual to have visits like this from the boss.

61. Conrad Dixon did have an interview with Jim Callaghan, the then Home Secretary, at least once to brief him. I heard about it after it happened on one occasion, but I think it happened more often than that.

62. I am not aware that anyone from any outside body with any form of regulatory or oversight responsibility for policing visited the SDS whilst I was there.

[REDACTED]

### **Leaving the SDS**

63. I left the SDS on about 29 September 1970 because I got another job at the Ministry of Defence [REDACTED]

### **Post SDS Police Career**

64. I did not have a police career post SDS. After I left the SDS I resigned from the Metropolitan Police in order to take up the job at the Ministry of Defence.

### **Any other matters**

65. There is no other evidence I am able to give from my knowledge and experience which is of relevance to the work of the Undercover Policing Inquiry.

### **Request for documents**

66. I do not have any documents or other information which are potentially relevant to the Inquiry's terms of reference. I have already provided a number of photographs to the Inquiry, which are exhibited and explained in my First Witness Statement.

### **Diversity information**

67. I am male and English.



I believe the content of this statement to be true.

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Signed:

Bill Furner

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Dated:

18.9.2020