



Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham, North London, became famous after the traumatic events of 5th/6th October 1985. On 5th October 1985 Mrs Cynthia Jarrett, a woman who was well known and respected in the Tottenham Black community, collapsed and died during the course of a police raid upon her house. About 24 hours later, severe fighting broke out around the access roads to the Broadwater Farm Estate. Contingents of police who were massed at the access roads were the targets of missiles and petrol bombs for a number of hours. Several buildings and motor vehicles were burned. PC Keith Blakelock, an officer who had come onto the Estate as part of a contingent supporting firemen dealing with a fire, was killed through multiple stab wounds. In the weeks following these disturbances, police officers remained on the estate in large numbers; many homes were raided and searched, and their doors broken down; and many hundreds of people were arrested, and questioned and charged with offences.

1.2 The Council of the London Borough of Haringey called for "a thoroughly independent public inquiry into the death of Mrs Jarrett and subsequent events and into the breakdown in police/community relations in Tottenham". The Home Secretary refused to exercise his powers to order an official inquiry. In those circumstances the Inquiry Panel, chaired by Lord Gifford QC, accepted the Council's invitation to make an independent inquiry into the disturbances and their causes.

1.3 The Inquiry reported in July 1986. The findings of the 250 page report covered 8 principal chapters:-

(i) The Inquiry traced the history of Broadwater Farm from its construction in the late 1960's, through being a vandalised "problem estate" in the 1970's, to the period of 1980-1985 when Broadwater Farm was turned around into an estate where a remarkable variety of community organisations and self-reliant initiatives were flourishing. The Inquiry gave credit for this transformation to the dynamism of local residents, organised through the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, and to the Local Authority, which responded to the community's demands with funds and with imaginative decentralised forms of management.

(ii) The Inquiry traced the history of relationships between the Estate and the police. It found that attitudes among police officers to the Estate were most uneven; while a number of local senior officers were committed to community policing, there were many others, both among junior ranks and among the senior Metropolitan Police command, who saw Broadwater Farm as a nest of crime. Progress towards improving relations was frequently set back by provocative raids. Poor communications between the community and local police officers were not improved by the refusal of the police until after the disturbances to take part in meetings of the Broadwater Farm Panel, a Council sub-committee which had the responsibility of discussing all matters relevant to the Estate and its peoples' welfare.

(iii) The Inquiry dealt in detail with the circumstances leading up to Mrs Jarrett's death. It found that there was a succession of abuses of civil rights, from the initial arrest of Floyd Jarrett to the unjustified decision to search the Jarrett home. It examined the verdict of the inquest jury that Mrs Jarrett's death had been accelerated because of a negligent push from one of the searching officers as she stood in her kitchen doorway. The Inquiry severely criticised the Police Complaints Authority for its conclusion that no blame was to be attached to the police for her death. In reality her death was a tragedy caused by police misconduct which should never have happened.

(iv) The Inquiry found that Mrs Jarrett's death, and the failure of the police to act effectively in response to the

deeply-felt anger of the community about it, led directly to the disturbances of 6th October. The Inquiry traced the history of the night's events. It found that the police had been subjected to a terrifying experience. It declared that there was no evidence to support the allegation that the disturbances had been the result of premeditated planning.

(v) The Inquiry described the police raids which took place in the weeks following the disturbances, and expressed deep anxiety about the many complaints that juveniles and young adults had been questioned over days without access to a solicitor. However because a number of trials were then pending, the Inquiry could not form any definite conclusions.

(vi) The Inquiry published the results of a survey conducted on its behalf by the Middlesex Polytechnic of a large sample of residents of the Estate. The survey revealed that the Estate, which comprised 1,063 households and around 3,000 people, had an ethnic composition of 49% White residents, 42% Black, 3% from the Indian Sub-Continent and 6% others. Less than a third of the adults on the Estate were in full time employment. When asked about problems on the Estate, the residents overwhelmingly placed unemployment as the biggest problem. Crime, and the lack of facilities for the young, were the next most serious problems identified. In relation to crime, residents wanted the police to put highest priority on sexual assaults, heroin dealing, robbery, burglary and racial attacks. They did not find that the police were very successful at dealing with these crimes, and they were anxious for the police to respond more readily to calls for help. Two thirds of those who responded believed that the police engaged, at least sometimes, in threats, violence and the falsification of evidence.

1.4 In its two concluding chapters the report turned to its recommendations for the future. It called for co-operative policing, a policing strategy by which the police at all levels co-operate, on a basis of mutual respect and equality, with those agencies which represent the community, in order to deter and detect those crimes which the community believe to be priority evils. To achieve those, the Inquiry called for a programme of

education and training of officers of all ranks in the skills which are needed for co-operative policing in a multi-ethnic community; for commitment to be demonstrated by the top ranks of the police leadership, through the ranks downwards, to eradicate oppressive and racist policing; and for a system of consultation and accountability which is effective to secure changes in policing strategy, when the community is seriously dissatisfied with the service which it is receiving.

1.5 The Inquiry expressed great concern about the effectiveness of the newly formed Haringey Community and Police Consultative Group. It criticised the Haringey Council for not having participated in the formation and operation of the Group, but it also deplored the unrepresentative character of the Group's composition.

1.6 In its concluding chapter the Inquiry turned to the Estate itself and its environment. It called for greater resources to be made available from central to local government; for investment and support for projects which would generate employment; for the continued development of community facilities, and in particular a community centre for the Estate; and for greater participation between schools and colleges and local people, in order to improve the quality and take-up of local education. Finally the Inquiry made severe criticisms of the distorted and racist reporting by many sections of the media, both in earlier years and in the aftermath of the disturbances.

1.7 The Inquiry concluded its report on a note of forward looking hope:-

"We regret the reasons which led to the Inquiry being set up, but we have been privileged to have been part of it. We have each gained in knowledge and understanding from what we have heard and read. We have seen how the human spirit can face real and desperate problems and overcome them. We conclude our work believing that although Broadwater Farm last October passed through the most tragic days of its history, there are people enough on the Estate, in the surrounding area, in council offices, in the police service, and elsewhere, who have the courage and ability to help build a united and successful community for the future."

1.8 The publication of the report made a major impact in the press and on television and radio. Commentary was largely favourable. The Guardian described the report as a "document worthy to be set alongside Lord Scarman's report on Brixton". The Chief Superintendent of the Tottenham Division wrote to Lord Gifford describing the report as "a valuable contribution to police/community relations in Tottenham". A Home Office Minister said in Parliament that the report raised several important issues, and invited Lord Gifford for a constructive discussion, particularly on the policing aspects of the report. The reaction of local people was also positive. The Vice President of the Youth Association said that the report had recorded a history which needed to be written, a history which portrayed the community truthfully with its strengths and its faults. He said that the past had been set straight; it was now up to the people of the Farm to build the future.

1.9 The Inquiry was not an adequate substitute for an official Inquiry which would have had the full support of the Government and which would have required participation by the Metropolitan Police. An official Inquiry would have access to police documents and radio messages. It could have investigated more thoroughly how the disturbances could have been prevented, and how they could have been better managed so as to reduce conflict and danger to life. Above all it could have involved both the police and the community in examining how to stop the recurrence of a similar tragedy.

1.10 However the Inquiry has no doubt that, in the absence of an official inquiry, its own work was essential. In the short term, the Inquiry served as a focus for the presentation of bitter grievances suffered in particular by the Black community of Tottenham. It rectified the gravely distorted picture of Broadwater Farm which had been portrayed in the media. It informed the public that there were deep-rooted causes to the disturbances which had erupted on 6th October 1985. It put forward constructive proposals for the police, Council and other agencies to act upon.

1.11 The Haringey Council accepted the Inquiry's recommendations as "a basis for action". It resolved that detailed proposals should be drawn up for implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations, subject to the principle of full consultation,

involvement and control by the community. It invited the Inquiry panel to review progress in police/community consultations and the Council's response to its criticisms, and to report further in 12 months. This invitation to return to Broadwater Farm was confirmed in October 1987.

1.12 In accepting the invitation, the Inquiry panel recognised that it was all too common for reports of this kind to be shelved and forgotten. They recognised a responsibility to the Broadwater Farm community which had welcomed their intervention in 1986. They were aware that the deep seated problems of Broadwater Farm and other inner city estates had in no way been resolved. Finally, the Inquiry had important unfinished business, to analyse the outcome of the Broadwater Farm trials. For its reconvened Inquiry, four objectives were set:-

- (i) to review progress on the recommendations made in the original report;
- (ii) to consider the outcome of the criminal trials which could not be considered earlier for legal reasons;
- (iii) to examine the state of relations between the police and the community in the light of any new developments;
- (iv) to contribute to the current debate on the problems of the inner cities.

1.13 The reconvened Inquiry was allocated very limited funds, a total budget of £30,000. The limitation was justified in the light of the Council's acute financial crisis, but it has meant that the Inquiry has had less time and resources available than it would have wished. The Inquiry held four days of public hearings in January 1988, and convened a public meeting in February 1988. It has been able to study a mass of documentation, especially in relation to the trials and to the actions of the Council. Members have conducted a number of interviews. In particular, because of the acute concern which had been expressed over the convictions of Winston Silcott, Engin Raghup, and Mark Braithwaite, Lord Gifford visited each of the 3 men in prison.

1.14 The report falls into two halves. Chapters 2-6 deals with the police and the judicial process. Chapter 2 reports on rela-

tions between the police and the Broadwater Farm community, while Chapter 3 deals with progress, or the lack of it, towards better community/police consultation. Chapters 4-5 cover the trials in detail, leading to the conclusion that there have been serious miscarriages of justice, and Chapter 6 makes recommendations in the light of that analysis. The rest of the report deals with Broadwater Farm in its relations with central and local government. Chapter 7 covers developments since 1986, Chapter 8 the impact of local and central government policies, and Chapter 9 education. Chapter 10 sets out the Inquiry's general conclusions as to the actions and policies required if a community such as Broadwater Farm is to have a real opportunity to fulfill the aspirations of its members for a better quality of life.