

extract 5 from Sunday Times article of 23 May 1971

Haratty: The contradictions of William Ewer

The next part brings us to the 15 point statement itself of William Ewer made to the Sunday Times the previous week:

This next part is the strangest aspect of William Ewer's exclusive 15 part statement of 16 the May 1971. Of all the 15 points it was the least contentious. By its very nature it was impossible to check. It was however stated with great vehemence, and read as follows:

"I only met Mr Charles France who was a prosecution witness once in my life. I remember he came into my shop after the trial was over. He came in to offer his apologies for Mr GREGSTEN'S DEATH. He said it had all been most regrettable. I remember calming him down and saying justice had been done in a fair and open trial. I told him to go home to his wife and lead a normal life. I later heard he had COMMITTED SUICIDE."

Mr France, the man who figures in the Alphon 'confessions' as the operational executive of the murder, actually committed suicide three days after Hanratty's appeal was turned down. He made two suicide attempts before the trial opened at Bedford Assize Court.

Several questions are raised by Mr Ewer's statement about Mr France.

Why for example would a man he had never met before come round and **apologise** for the fact of Gregsten's death?

Why would France feel any particular self reproach about the crime itself? [on the public record he had acted as a responsible citizen: He had given damaging circumstantial evidence about the disposal of the 'murder weapon' but does not seem to have displayed hostility at the trial].

Why would Mr Ewer take such pains to advise a man he apparently did not know about the necessity of leading a normal life?

These are undoubtedly the kind of questions that would have to be asked at any effectual official inquiry. Meanwhile a number of remarkable coincidences bolster a strong case for such an inquiry. The official description of the murder suspect changed from a man with 'deep set brown eyes' to one with 'large icy-blue saucer-like eyes' eight days after the murder.

Incidentally, this change in the description was announced upon the day when Mrs Gregsten's inspirational sighting of James Hanratty is alleged to have occurred.

Mrs Gregsten visited Miss Storie in hospital **before** any suspects were presented to her for identification. After one of these meetings Mrs Gregsten related how 'her friend' Miss Storie was struck by the murderer's 'blue and staring eyes'. James Hanratty's eyes were large and blue.

Miss Storie, who admitted that she had only seen the murderer's face momentarily illuminated in headlamps of a passing car, ultimately identified a man-Hanraatty-more closely related to Mrs Gregsten's disputed "intuition" than to the original description. It would have encompassed Mr Alphon who Miss Storie failed to identify on a parade before the hunt for Hanratty began in earnest.

THE AMBIGUOUS SUICIDE NOTES

The trail which led to the arrest of Hanratty appears more mysterious the more it is scrutinised.

BUT THIS IS NOT ALL. The role played by the late Charles 'Dixie' France in the affair has not been cleared up. According to the 'confessions' produced by Peter Alphon, the role of France was pivotal in the A6 crime. And Mr Ewer considers the role of France may have had some importance.

Recently two Sunday Times reporters have been allowed to read Charles France's letters, written before his suicide. Outside the France family they are the only people who have read all these documents. One reporter believes that they should be accepted at their face value---France committed suicide because of the shame he brought his family by introducing a 'monster' like Hanratty into the household.

The other believes the letters are the expression of a man trying to protect his beloved family from the stigma of his own guilt---that he was, in fact, involved in the murder either with Hanratty or, more horrifically, with Alphon.

Both reporters however agree that the only conceivable way of testing their interpretations is by public inquiry and that more than reasonable doubt has been cast on the method by which Hanratty was convicted. The prosecution case omitted more of the background to the murder than it revealed. If it had been fully known at the time, it seems improbable that Hanratty would have hanged.

My additional note. There are many other examples of withheld evidence in this case but this article confines itself to the evidence not submitted about the Gregsten family and Ewer's /France's and Alphon's contributions.