

Monday 22nd March 2010 Forensic Investigation “Crime in Focus”

Repeating and expanding on the previous very successful presentation in March 2009, the above title neatly describes the presentation by Peter Goadby - Watt, Head of the Forensic Faculty of the Metropolitan Police Academy at Hendon.

Peter explained to fifty members and guests that the Metropolitan Police is London's biggest employer, with 55,000 staff. There are 35,000 police officers, 2,500 PCSOs and 17,500 civilian police staff – all with a huge £3.5 Billion budget.

The economic climate however is also making its presence felt and substantial cuts are expected. The Forensic Services Directorate (FSD aka SCD4), once termed the Directorate of Forensic Services until it became confused with a certain sofa company, comprises 1,500 staff; 500 “Borough” based Crime Scene Examiners, 80 specialist photographers, 200 fingerprint examiners and 15 DNA Scientists.



Following a decree by Parliament in 1871 that all prisoners should be photographed, by 1880 14,000 prisoners were on file. It was not until 1901 however, that crime scenes were first photographed – and that was using a confiscated camera!

With a Home Office grant of just 19s 10d (99p in ‘new’ money) the first Scotland Yard photographic “experimental” full time photographer was launched in 1902, expanding in 1905 to a full department - *still utilising confiscated equipment* but now with a budget of £100.00.

It would seem that “crime does pay” – enough, at least, to afford photographic equipment. In 1924, the first 35mm ‘Leica’ camera was bought (for £79.00) and the department expanded, in 1981 being civilianised and moving to SE17, (Elephant & Castle), in 1986.

Peter expanded on the specialisms required in Road Traffic Collision investigation, advising all to ensure as comprehensive a photographic record is gained and retained as quickly as possible. High level shots are very important, to gain as much an overview as possible for later analysis

Accuracy is essential and the transference from wet film, which provides an accurate record, to digital photography, which can be adjusted, has taken considerable liaison with Nikon to ensure Home Office approval.

The Metropolitan Police SERIS enjoy a world wide reputation and are active all over the world, attending major disasters, such as the Bosnian War and Asian Tsunami, to aid victim identification and train local officers in forensic techniques.

With such grisly subject matter, highlighted in some of the photographs shown, Peter and his team work hard to remain dispassionate. Experience has shown that it is important to remain objective and professional as it would be very easy to become too involved in personal tragedies.

We thank Peter very much for his time and wish him and his team every success for the future.