

Mark Lewis and 'the ultimate hacker'

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The appearance of solicitor Mark Lewis at the Leveson Inquiry on November 30 provoked an angry response from a former client whose complaints have so far been unreported in the British media. The solicitor advocate who acts for the the parents of the murdered teenager Milly Dowler is accused of introducing one of his clients to a notorious private eye who bugged telephones in a defamation case.

The Legal Complaints Service has examined the allegations from a retired civil servant, Mrs Pat Middleton, but ruled in 2008 that her complaint about telephone tapping lay outside their jurisdiction. Mrs Middleton, 61, former treasurer of a Manchester Conservative club, has now discovered that the private investigator had previously worked for the *News of the World* and had just served a prison sentence.

After seeing Mark Lewis give evidence to Leveson about the hacking of Milly Dowler's phone messages Mrs Middleton contacted a reporter.

'In 2005, when he was acting for me, Mark Lewis talked about a private investigator accessing telephone conversations illegally when gathering evidence to fight my case.

The investigator, who was described as one of the best in Britain, played conversations back to me over the telephone. I questioned the legality of it and its admissibility in court. I was told there were ways and means by which it could be accepted.

When I saw him on television lambasting News International for doing what he had condoned in my case, I felt sick. I was absolutely floored when I saw this man speaking on behalf of the Dowler family. Exactly the same things had been done on my behalf – accessing telephone conversations illegally.'

Mark Lewis told Lord Justice Leveson he had been retained by a number of alleged phone hacking victims including Gerry and Kate McCann, whose daughter disappeared in Portugal, the Dowler family, Sheryl Gascoigne, the ex-wife of footballer Paul Gascoigne, and the property journalist Tom Rowland. He had taken out injunctions against News International on behalf of the footballer Garry Flitcroft and on behalf of Jo Armstrong, a legal adviser at the Professional Footballers Association.

He obtained an injunction in respect of a photograph showing Ms Armstrong with his client Gordon Taylor, the chief executive of the Professional Football Association who received £700,000 in compensation from News International.

At the Leveson Inquiry on December 16, Mark Lewis confronted Derek Webb, a former Hertfordshire police officer who had revealed that in 2010 News International had hired his firm, Silent Shadow, to track Mr Lewis, 46, and his former assistant Charlotte Harris when they were in Manchester.

Until 2009 Mark Lewis had been a partner at George Davies Solicitors LLP in Manchester, the long-standing legal advisers to the Professional Footballers Association. He has since moved to London as a consultant at Taylor Hampton in The Strand. Miss Harris, who represented publicist Max Clifford in a £1million settlement with the *News of the World*, now works at the London firm Mishcon de Reya.

Enter Chris More

It was to George Davies Solicitors LLP that Mrs Middleton took her defamation complaint in 2006. She believed that members of the Winston Conservative Club in Wythenshawe had defamed her after she was wrongly accused of taking cash from the safe.

'The police were brought in and I was arrested but no charges were brought. Mark Lewis introduced me to Chris More, a private investigator. I met them with my son Kenneth in the office in Manchester.

Mr Lewis and Mr More talked openly about phone hacking. Mr More said he had done it for the police, and

that it went on all the time. Mr More said he could produce the evidence to win the case. He said he would get the evidence on tape, and that he had done it "lots of times" and that he had done it for the police. When I asked how could we use it if it was illegal, Mr More said, "There are ways around it."

I have listened to taped conversations between parties involved in the case and I have been given transcripts, although I no longer have them.

I have a copy of a receipt from Chris More for a retainer deposit in the sum of £2000 and a letter from George Davies Solicitors acknowledging that Mark Lewis introduced me to Chris More.

I was told the case would cost me £20,000 and we would win it. I did win the case against those who had wrongly accused me, but the judge made no order for costs.

I then took further action against Mr Lewis and the firm of solicitors he worked for, without success. In all, my involvement with Mark Lewis has cost me £80,000. I complained about his conduct.

Unknown to me, my elderly mother, who has since died, remortgaged her home to fund the case. I would never have let her do that, but she did it because she said she believed I was telling the truth, in a vain hope that the justice system would uphold the truth in court. Now I want the truth about Mark Lewis and the investigator to come into the public domain.'

After losing her complaint case against the solicitors, Pat Middleton contacted the *News of the World*, early in the phone hacking scandal when Mark Lewis was acting for Gordon Taylor.

'They came and listened to me and the reporter announced they would pay me £250,000 for my story. Of course nothing ever materialised. I wonder why!'

Most wanted

The private detective was Christopher Guest More, 68, a millionaire jailed at Chester Crown Court for nine months in 2004 for helping his son to escape to Spain after the torture and murder of a cannabis farmer in Cheshire. His son, also known as Christopher Guest More, had been working for the BBC as a fixer and investigator on a programme called Crooked Britain. He is still wanted by the Serious Organised Crimes Agency and his picture, taken on his father's estate in Lymm, Cheshire, appears on the Interpol Infra-Red list of wanted men.

Cheshire police say the murder case cost Chris More senior £350,000. His technical ability is legendary. A former World in Action reporter at Granada Television remembered More as 'The Ultimate Hacker' and stated that during the legal battle between Jonathan Aitken MP and *The Guardian*, Chris More played to his prospective clients recordings of telephone conversations between the Tory defence procurement minister and his daughter Victoria.

Aitken's case against *The Guardian* and Granada TV collapsed after the production of evidence that Aitken's wife had not paid for him to stay at the Paris Ritz. Aitken was jailed for perjury in 1999.

Chris More had worked on investigations for News International for over 20 years, retained by their solicitors Biddle & Co. in the million pound libel action brought against *The Sunday Times* in 1988 by the 'socialist media tycoon' Owen Oyston. Rupert Murdoch's senior UK executive Andrew Knight ordered the case to be settled at lunchtime on the first day of the hearing.

Hired by Michael Murrin, a local political activist in Preston, Chris More had obtained a bank statement for one of Oyston's estate agency accounts.¹ Murrin brought More to the attention of the local Tory MP, Sir Robert Atkins, now MEP for North-West England. More was then hired for thirty thousand pounds in fees, jointly paid by the former foreign office minister the late Lord Blaker and the late Bill Harrison, a

¹ More's activities against Owen Oyston were described in 'Our Friends in the North West: The Owen Oyston Affair' in *Lobster* 34 (Winter 1998).

property dealer who had several times hosted prime-minister Margaret Thatcher at his home in Preston.

More delivered to Bill Harrison financial profiles of the Labour leader of Preston, the deputy Labour leader of Preston and their wives. When the documents turned up in Merseyside police files it was obvious that they were based on Inland Revenue tax records.

The unprecedented theft of personal income tax information at Preston was investigated by Dave Hartnett, now Britain's senior HMRC tax man, after questions in parliament from Dale Campbell-Savours MP and a meeting of senior civil servants in the office of Home Secretary Alun Michael.

Campbell-Savours, a member of the Commons Intelligence and Security Committee, complained to Cumbria police that he was being harassed by dozens of strange telephone calls, apparently generated by a computer in Florida. He also complained in the Commons about his researcher being harassed 'by a Manchester business man'.

In a 1998 confrontation in the Four Seasons Hotel at Manchester Airport, Chris More told Campbell-Savours: 'Get off my back. I've been looked at by the police. They knocked on my door.'

After Oyston won the libel case against the *Sunday Times*, Murrin and More investigated Oyston's connection with the Model Team model agency in Manchester.

In January 1996, when Oyston was facing multiple charges of raping some of the agency model girls, More told reporter Adrian Darbyshire of the *Blackpool Evening Gazette*:

'Murrin contacted me to ask me to get information about the model agency. We all thought Murrin was a nutcase. He was talking about kids being provided for sex. Double O [Owen Oyston] was in there somewhere, whether officially or by hearsay, I can't say.'

Oyston was jailed for six years in 1996 for the rape and indecent assault of one of the girls. He has since lost two appeals and an appeal to the European Court of Human

Rights in Strasbourg.

A year later, More was named in Florida as one of 15 defendants accused of racketeering, mail fraud and employing a Hambro subsidiary called Network Security Management to bug the U.S. phone billing system and steal items from the Florida home of Douglas Leese, a millionaire business rival of the Littlewoods stores family.

Douglas Leese's New York lawyer David Jaroslavicz claimed in the 140 dollar million Miami action that More and the other defendants

'...stole and converted highly confidential information from used typewriter ribbons, illegally diverted telephone bills and contacted persons identified in those telephone records under false pretences.

The defendants' ongoing and related activities in furtherance of their improper goals constitute a "pattern of racketeering activity," in violation of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act [RICO].

Defendant Christopher More is a private investigator who does substantial business in the State of Florida, and is believed to have a residence in Florida.

I still need to know more about the background of Mr Chris More, the British p.i. who thinks he is James Bond.'

In a 2008 judgment on a High Court case against the London solicitors Mishcon de Reya, Mr Justice Henderson noted that one of Mr Lewis's clients was investigated by forensic accountants after the bugging of the Edgware office of the newly-appointed chairman of trustees at the British branch of the Jewish National Fund.²

² Mr Justice Henderson's judgment, involving evidence given by Dr Anthony Julius, is online at <www.thejc.com/files/scan-judgment.pdf>.