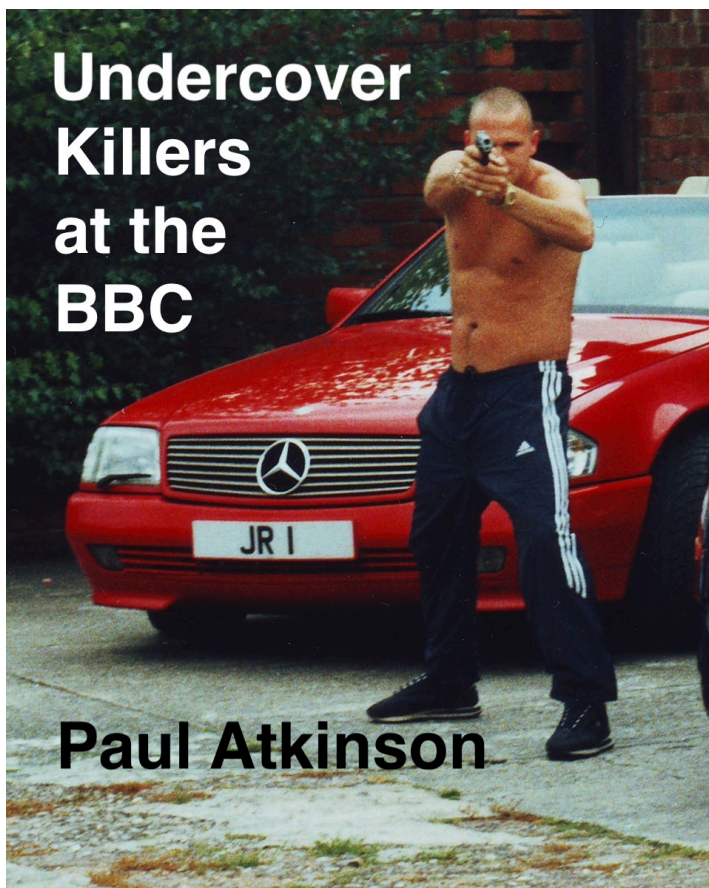


## Undercover killers at the BBC

Andrew Rosthorn

It has taken the former BBC producer Paul Atkinson nineteen years to research the story behind his 2022 book *Undercover Killers at the BBC*.<sup>1</sup>



Christopher Guest More, 23, was an undercover cameraman on a BBC true crime television series when he staged this picture, holding a Glock automatic pistol on his father's country estate. A year later he was one of four masked men who tortured and murdered a cannabis grower at a farmhouse in Cheshire.

In December 2021, after more than 15 years on the run, hunted for longer than Osama bin Laden or El Chapo, Guest More was extradited from Malta in 2019 and convicted of murder in December 2021 after three trials at Chester Crown Court.

His father, a millionaire private detective, known to lawyers and journalists as the Ultimate Hacker and also named Christopher Guest More,<sup>2</sup> had been jailed for nine months in 2004 after admitting taking clothes and cash to his son in Spain, eight days after the murder of Brian Waters, 42, at Burnt House Farm, close to Junction 18 of the M6 motorway in Cheshire.

<sup>1</sup> *Undercover Killers at the BBC* by Paul Atkinson, Bastion Books

<sup>2</sup> 'Mark Lewis and "the ultimate hacker"' *Lobster*, Summer 2012, at < <https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster63/lob63-mark-lewis.pdf> >.

During the manhunt the Cheshire murder squad raided the London home of the author of *Undercover Killers at the BBC*.

Paul Atkinson, a former Manchester police sergeant who had produced undercover reports for BBC TV on soccer hooligans, the Albanian mafia, Nigerian fraudsters and police racism at the Bruche police training college near Manchester, had an alibi and no connection with the murder at Burnt House Farm.

Martin Bright, home affairs editor of the *Observer*, eventually obtained a confidential letter written by Mike Todd, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, on September 11, 2003, to the BBC director-general, Greg Dyke, demanding 'a full apology to the men and women of Greater Manchester Police' for the BBC investigation in which Paul Atkinson managed to insert the BBC undercover reporter Mark Daly as a police recruit at the Bruche training college.

Bright revealed in 2005 that a South Yorkshire assistant chief constable was leading an Independent Police Complaints Commission investigation into whether 'senior Greater Manchester police officers had colluded with Cheshire police to organise the raid in order to seize Paul Atkinson's files, notebooks and videos.'<sup>3</sup>

The BBC's undercover report on racism in police training, screened as *The Secret Policeman* in October 2003, won a BAFTA award and an unprecedented apology from home secretary David Blunkett who had initially condemned BBC deception as a 'stunt'. The chief constable who had demanded a BBC apology from Greg Dyke was found dead four years later on a ridge 700 metres below the summit of Mount Snowdon. A coroner found that he died of exposure when his state of mind was affected by alcohol, sleeping pills and confusion due to his personal situation.

Paul Atkinson has now revealed how nine months before the Burnt House Farm murder the BBC hired Christopher Guest More, 24, and James Raven, 43, as undercover reporters on the true crime TV series *Crooked Britain* and that 'faking crimes for secret cameras ended in torture and murder.'

Having previously reported for *Lobster* on the professional and political activities of Guest More's father,<sup>4</sup> I wrote the foreword to *Undercover Killers*. Atkinson's discovery of a devastating leak of raw police intelligence that dropped into the hands of professional criminals in Manchester has exposed the danger of Westminster government schemes that were pioneered by Margaret Thatcher – to create a 'British FBI' for fighting domestic crime by

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<sup>3</sup> <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2005/aug/14/race.world>>

<sup>4</sup> 'Our Friends in the North West: The Owen Oyston Affair', *Lobster* 34 (Winter 1998).

using redundant Cold War MI5 spooks and electronic surveillance by GCHQ. The outcome of 'intelligence-led policing' by undercover spies and police ghost squads was a three-way 'investigative train crash' in Manchester, involving the National Criminal Intelligence Service, the National Crime Squad and the criminals Guest More and Raven, who used leaked police secrets to make their fake movies for the BBC.

Paul Atkinson writes, 'The leak doomed the cannabis grower Brian Waters to a dreadful death and condemned at least two innocent men in Liverpool to long prison sentences.'

In the foreword to *Undercover Killers at the BBC*, I write:

The BBC television true crime series *Crooked Britain* deserves to be remembered for perhaps the most crooked report ever transmitted by the world's most respected broadcaster.

A crown court judge found that *Funny Money*, an episode of *Crooked Britain* screened by BBC One at 19:00 on June 15, 2005, breached six of the BBC Producers' Guidelines for preserving accuracy, fairness and respect for truth.

Sheets of counterfeit American one-hundred-dollar-bills appeared to be rolling off a clandestine printing press in the North of England.

It took 16 years and four murder trials to prove that the movie of a machine running in a printshop in Ashton-under-Lyne had been faked by two BBC covert operatives described by a judge as 'a pair of villains.'

The sheets of US dollars were monochrome and printed on one side only. They were not even 'false instruments' under Section 1 of the Forgery Act 1981. Eight months after faking the *Crooked Britain* 'money shot' the two cameramen tortured and murdered a cannabis dealer in an operation that they both described in court as *Reefer Madness*.

James Raven, 44, a former market trader with a criminal record for violence, was soon arrested for the murder at Burnt House Farm, Tabley, near the M6 in Cheshire. He said he had worked on more than fifty 'true crime' programmes, including *Lifting the Bonnet* and *Crooked Britain* for the BBC and *Sleepers* for Channel 4.

Two days after the murder, Jimmy Raven's cousin and business partner, Christopher Guest-More, 25, flew to Spain and lived abroad for 16 years, listed as Infra-Red by Interpol.

Guest-More's millionaire father, Chris More, 61, one of Britain's most successful commercial detectives, was arrested and jailed for nine months in 2004 after admitting flying to Málaga after the murder to take cash and

clothes to his son. Guest-More lived in Malta with a genuine British passport, cloned in the name of a real British citizen, a classic spy trick.

Jimmy Raven was jailed at Chester Crown Court for at least 24 years for the murder of Brian Waters, 44. The cannabis grower had been tortured by masked men in front of his son and suffered 123 injuries, being beaten, whipped, burned with acid, shot with a staple gun and suspended head-first in a barrel of water.

Detective Chief Inspector Phil Jones, head of the Cheshire murder squad, said the crime showed 'the serious danger of television companies employing convicted criminals as researchers.' Raven was in prison when police used evidence from his spy cameras to help convict four people of conspiracy to counterfeit currency. A BBC News bulletin announced the screening of the corporation's investigative programme *Funny Money*:

Two years ago a BBC current affairs undercover team infiltrated a counterfeiting gang running a printing press in Manchester capable of producing £1 million a day in phoney British and American currency - and involved in a crime that was said by the National Crime Squad to be so sophisticated that it could have seriously damaged entire national economies. When the forgers were arrested they were in the final stages of perfecting a high quality £20 note which they believed would fool even the banks. No-one knows just how much of the counterfeit cash is currently in circulation.

This special investigation includes secretly shot footage of the forgers at work and interviews with law enforcement officers, both here and in America, to reveal for the first time the extraordinary inside story of Britain's most audacious funny money operation and how those behind it were finally brought to justice.

One of those convicted of conspiring to counterfeit currency was David Harper, 46, a former financial adviser and mortgage broker from Liverpool with no relevant criminal record, arrested three months after the BBC had handed their video discs to the National Crime Squad.

The face of David Harper appeared in BBC TV secret filming simply because Jimmy Raven, who controlled the secret cameras, asked him to act as a salesman and 'a sort of minder' when demonstrating a printing machine to a prospective buyer. The printing machine was a fake. The prospective buyer was a fake.

The phoney buyer was Chris More, role-playing in a fake movie



**David Harper**

created by Jimmy Raven and his own son, Christopher Guest-More.

Harper ended up in the dock at Manchester Minshull Street Crown Court with four other defendants who heard Chris More tell the jury how he had played the part of a crooked *Mr Big*, wanting to buy a machine for faking banknotes and traveller's cheques.

After four days of deliberations, the jury found Harper guilty by a majority verdict and Judge Bernard Lever told him he had been convicted

purely on his appearance in the BBC covert filming:

*It is often the case that those as high up the criminal chain as you Harper have no admissible evidence against you, and it is entirely due to the BBC that you are convicted and sentenced today.*

Harper had been living in a one-bedroom flat in Tuebrook, Liverpool. He did not even own a car but was ordered to repay £38,333 in perceived profits under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. He served an additional fifteen months in prison for failing to repay the profits of crime after Judge Lever declared that Harper had 'cash sloshing about' before his conviction:

*He looked a million dollars in black pin stripe suit and his silk tie. He exuded opulence. That was the real evidence that I saw. He didn't look to me like a man who was just trying to buy a bag of chips by doing a couple of nights on the door, until I remanded him in custody.*

Under financial and legal pressure from his failure to repay a Confiscation Order, living alone in Liverpool and working as a cleaner, Harper searched the web for fragments of fresh evidence that might allow him to reopen his case through the Criminal Cases Review Commission. Late one night he trawled a link to three paragraphs in an article written by me for *Lobster*. The article was about phone hacking and identified Christopher Guest-More's father as the Ultimate Hacker. The paragraphs said:

The private detective was Chris 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, 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 £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.

The *World in Action* reporter who called Chris More the Ultimate Hacker was a former royal correspondent for the *Daily Mail* named Howard Foster. After Foster drowned in 2014 'wild swimming' in the Mediterranean Sea, Martin Brunt of Sky News described him as 'friend, Sky News pioneer and all-round brilliant journalist.'

Foster's Ultimate Hacker made the headline in *Lobster* only because Howard and I had been invited by the BBC, one afternoon in Leeds in 2011, to hear the former director-general of the Security Service [MI5], Eliza Manningham-Buller, giving a Reith lecture on security.

When I commented that twenty *News of the World* journos had already admitted phone hacking but no newspaper would handle my friend Andy Chapman's story about Chris More hacking phones inside a Manchester Conservative club, Howard Foster hushed me: 'Just accept that Chris More is the Ultimate Hacker. Beyond your wildest imagination. He hacked a cabinet minister.'

As soon as David Harper saw Chris More described as the Ultimate Hacker, he emailed *Lobster* editor Robin Ramsay. Before that day was out Harper had briefed us on his case.

His case involved the BBC, the Bank of England and the United States Secret Service, with more interplay between cops, forgers, lawyers, journalists, judges and killers than a complete series of that intricate

French TV drama series *Engrenages*, the one screened by BBC Four with subtitles as *Spiral*.

The appalling spectre of criminals as journalists staging and filming crimes for the information and entertainment of BBC viewers loomed mightily over our puny efforts at trying to get David Harper's conviction overturned.

In 2014 Harper wrote to Nazir Afzal, the Chief Crown Prosecutor in Manchester:

On January 31, 2005, I was convicted of conspiracy to make counterfeit currency and sentenced by His Honour Judge Lever on June 13, 2005, to six and a half years imprisonment. The judge stated that I had been convicted purely on my appearance in covert filming carried out by two men, James Raven and Christopher Guest-More, who were both employed by BBC Television.

David Harper referred Nazir Afzal to the courtroom downfall of a valued colleague of mine, Mazher Mahmood, a *News of the World* reporter who had survived the newspaper's epic extinction over phone-hacking only to come to grief working for its successor the *Sun on Sunday*. In 2014 Judge Alistair McCreath stopped the trial of *X-Factor* television contestant Tulisa Contostavlos because he had 'strong grounds to believe' that Mazher Mahmood had lied in evidence before the trial and that 'the underlying purpose of these lies was to conceal the fact that he had been manipulating the evidence.'

The judge then excluded *all* the evidence of Mazher Mahmood; witness statement, sworn testimony at pre-trial hearing and secret recordings. The case against Tulisa collapsed for the fundamental reason given by Judge McCreath that 'a court cannot allow itself to be a party to improper conduct'.

Before David Harper's trial, Jimmy Raven gave evidence to Judge Lever by video-link from prison in a preliminary *voir dire* hearing. Raven said the BBC undercover investigation had been a 'complete set-up' in which he had held back from the BBC any 'inconvenient evidence'.

Raven's testimony under oath contradicted an earlier witness statement he had given to the police and so Judge Lever decided to reject all of Raven's written and oral evidence as 'unreliable' due to the lies he had told under oath.

Judge Lever did however allow the jury to watch selected extracts of the

Raven's undercover filming without defence counsel being able to question Raven on his methods.

Judge Lever's 2004 ruling on the validity and admissibility of the secret filming of Raven and Guest-More might one day be assessed against the 2014 McCreath ruling that 'a court cannot allow itself to be a party to improper conduct'.

Skilled in the unusual trade of undercover television reporting, the author has revealed what went wrong when the world's most respected broadcaster hired a pair of criminals to make 'fake news' that sent an innocent man to prison during the 16-year manhunt for the Undercover Killers at the BBC.

*Undercover Killers at the BBC* by Paul Atkinson,  
foreword by Andrew Rosthorn

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