



**HOME OFFICE**

**THE HILLSBOROUGH  
STADIUM DISASTER**

**15 APRIL 1989**

**INQUIRY BY  
THE RT HON LORD JUSTICE TAYLOR**

**FINAL REPORT**

*Presented to Parliament  
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department  
by Command of Her Majesty  
January 1990*

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Ballast **Nedam** (Appendices 5 and 7)  
Mr Norman Bush (Appendix 6)  
BBT Gargini (Appendix 8)

## **THE HILLSBOROUGH STADIUM DISASTER 15 APRIL 1989**

### **FINAL REPORT OF INQUIRY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. On 17 April 1989 I was appointed by your predecessor, the Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE, MP to carry out an Inquiry with the following terms of reference:

"To inquire into the events at Sheffield Wednesday Football Ground on 15 April 1989 and to make recommendations about the needs of crowd control and safety at sports events."

2. Two Assessors were appointed to assist me: Mr Brian Johnson CBE, QPM, DL, Chief Constable of Lancashire, and Professor Leonard Maunder OBE, BSc, PhD, ScD, FEng, FI Mech E, Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

3. The first stage of the Inquiry was primarily concerned with the investigation of events at Hillsborough Stadium on 15 April 1989 when 95 people were crushed to death at a Cup semi-final match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest.

4. Over 31 days between 15 May and 29 June, I heard oral evidence from 174 witnesses at a public hearing in Sheffield. I also received much written evidence by way of submissions and letters.

5. On 1 August 1989 I presented an Interim Report setting out my findings as to how and why the disaster occurred. Also, in accordance with your predecessor's wishes, I made interim recommendations aimed at preventing any further disaster and improving safety in the short term.

6. The Interim Report and its recommendations had of necessity to be made quickly so that action could be taken before the start of the new football season due to open in mid August. Despite all the speed I could muster, the recommendations left very little time for pre-season action, especially in Scotland where the fixture list started earlier than in England and Wales. I must pay tribute to the clubs, local authorities, police and other services for responding so promptly and for implementing the recommendations so wholeheartedly.

7. In my Interim Report I indicated that it would be necessary to conduct wider and deeper investigations before delivering a Final Report on the needs of crowd control and safety for the future. Accordingly, I invited and have considered a large number of written submissions describing present practices and problems and suggesting future changes. Those who have contributed are listed at Appendix 1. I am extremely grateful to all of them for their time and their views. I expect there are a number of contributors and correspondents who may look in vain for comment on each and every point they have raised. I hope they will understand that time and space make it necessary to be selective and to have regard to the main issues.

8. I have also had numerous informal meetings with those representing relevant public bodies, clubs and spectator interests. These have been conducted as private discussion sessions rather than hearings of oral evidence thereby enabling controversial issues to be explored and theories tested.

9. In all of this I have continued to be assisted by the two Assessors. Each holds a professional appointment carrying heavy responsibility and I am deeply grateful to both for devoting so much time to assisting me. Their contributions have been of the highest value. While the sole responsibility for this report is mine, I am comforted in the knowledge that both Assessors agree with it.

10. At my request, Professor Maunder chaired a Technical Working Party to review the technical aspects of the Home Office Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds (1986 edition), "The Green Guide". Each member of his team has much relevant experience and the team was well qualified for its task. I am most grateful for the co-operation and efforts of each member. The Report of the Technical Working Party is at Appendix 3.

11. In the course of the Inquiry, the two Assessors and I have between us visited 31 sports grounds. They are listed at Appendix 2. Of those, 24 were soccer grounds, but we also attended at grounds featuring Rugby Union, Rugby League, cricket, tennis and golf. I wish to record our thanks to the club officials who so readily

and hospitably facilitated our visits; also to the officers of local government, the police and the emergency services who together with club officials conducted us round the grounds, explained their operations and answered our questions fully and frankly. Seeing crowd control and behaviour before, during and after a match from various sections of the viewing areas was an essential source of first hand knowledge. It brought alive the written and oral reports we received.

12. I should like to express my thanks to the Home Office team who have staffed this Inquiry so well. Mr Robert Whalley was appointed as its Secretary. He has handled all the administrative arrangements impeccably and has given much invaluable advice and assistance on every aspect of the Inquiry. He was ably and diligently assisted by Mr Jonathan Sweet, Mrs Margaret Wither, Mr Tony Moore, Mrs Kate Humphries from the Home Office and my own Clerk Mr Ernest Pott. I also renew my thanks to the West Midlands Police, and, in particular, to Mr Geoffrey Dear QPM, DL, LLB, the Chief Constable, and Mr Mervyn Jones MSc, Assistant Chief Constable in full-time charge of the investigation, who have continued to provide me with helpful information at this second stage of the Inquiry.

13. Having made my findings as to the events at Hillsborough, I do not in this report say any more about them save by way of illustration. I am aware that inquests are still to be held, civil proceedings are in motion and the possibility of criminal charges is under consideration. However, those are not matters for me. I therefore turn now to broader issues as promised in paragraph 304 of my Interim Report.

14. My terms of reference are extremely wide. They embrace crowd control and safety at sports events of all kinds. However, crowd problems are directly related to the nature of the event and the numbers attending it. Realistically, this means that attention needs to be concentrated on events within the scope of the Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987. Even more specifically, the emphasis in this Report is especially upon football. The Hillsborough disaster and indeed other disasters before it occurred in crowded football stadia. The numbers and the atmosphere at a football match have created special problems such as overcrowding and misbehaviour not, so far, to be found to a like degree elsewhere.

15. That football is a special case has been expressly recognised by the Government in promoting the Football Spectators Act 1989. The Bill received the Royal Assent on 16 November 1989. It had commenced its course through Parliament before the Hillsborough disaster. Expressly because of that disaster and the setting up of this Inquiry it reached the statute book under unusual conditions. It was always to be an enabling Act whose implementation would require a Statutory Instrument. In order to have the provisions of the Act in place as soon as possible, the Government decided to proceed with it forthwith, notwithstanding Hillsborough and this Inquiry. That decision was subject to an undertaking to bring the matter back before Parliament on two separate occasions. First, before the appointment of the Football Membership Authority under the Act; secondly, to debate the scheme which the Act provides should be drawn up by that Authority.

16. I was expressly told by your predecessor upon my appointment that my terms of reference included consideration of the national membership scheme provided for in the Bill. That was confirmed on numerous occasions by Ministers in the course of the Bill's passage through Parliament. It was made clear that although the Act would be on the statute book before my Final Report, Parliament would have the opportunity to consider any observations I might make, including any about the national membership scheme. Thus, to take only two examples, Mr Nicholas Ridley, then Secretary of State for the Environment, said on the Second Reading of the Bill on 27 June 1989:

"I began by referring to Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry. I will emphasise again now what I said at the beginning. Parliament will have not one but two opportunities to debate and vote on the national membership scheme after we have received the report and in the light of any comments that Justice Taylor may make on the scheme. By proceeding with the Bill now, we can put the framework for the scheme in place and make it possible to move on rapidly with the scheme, if Parliament agrees that we should do so when it has seen what Lord Justice Taylor has to say."  
(Official Report, column 850).

Secondly, at the Committee stage on 6 July 1989, Mr Colin Moynihan, the Minister for Sport, said:

"I am certain that Lord Justice Taylor will feel in no way inhibited by consideration of the Bill in our suggested format, because we specifically amended the Bill to provide for the Secretary of State's approval of the scheme after the final report. .... the Bill is amended to enable the House to consider in detail the recommendations before we establish the Football Membership Authority to draw up the scheme. .... To hypothesise on whether Lord Justice Taylor is in favour of a national membership scheme or whether he



may not even comment on it, is totally irrelevant because the Bill provides for the House of Commons and House of Lords to consider the report before setting up a Football Membership Authority." (Official Report, column 56).

17. It must be a rare if not unique situation for a judge, appointed to conduct an Inquiry, to have within his remit consideration of the merits and provisions of an Act of Parliament already in place. It cannot be for a judge to opine upon the wisdom or terms of an Act expressing the established will of Parliament. But, where Parliament has passed an Act in such terms and upon such undertakings as expressly to provide that the Inquiry judge be uninhibited in commenting upon it and that Parliament should have the opportunity to consider his comments in further debate, then I conceive it to be his duty to express his views. My doing so should not be interpreted as showing any lack of the respect and deference due to Parliament. Not to do so, against the background I have described, would surely be thought surprising if not pusillanimous.

18. In Part I of this Report I state some lessons to be learnt from Hillsborough, examine the state of football today and propose a range of measures to give it a better future. In Part II I consider, in detail, measures to improve safety at sports grounds. Part III is concerned with crowd control at sports grounds and various strategies for dealing with hooligans. In Part IV I consider the provisions of the 1989 Act regarding the national membership scheme. Finally, at the end of the text, I set out my Recommendations. So as to avoid confusion, I have not set out my Interim Recommendations for the purpose of comparison. Hardly any excisions have been made. Where I have decided to repeat or amend the Interim Recommendations, they are included in the single list of Final Recommendations. I hope this Report and the Final Recommendations may be instrumental in promoting better and safer conditions at sports grounds in the future.

18 January 1990

PETER TAYLOR

# PART I - FOOTBALL: PRESENT AND FUTURE

## CHAPTER 1

### THREE SOMBRE LESSONS AFTER HILLSBOROUGH

#### i. Previous Reports Unheeded

19. It is a depressing and chastening fact that mine is the ninth official report covering crowd safety and control at football grounds. After eight previous reports and three editions of the Green Guide, it seems astounding that 95 people could die from overcrowding before the very eyes of those controlling the event. In January 1986, Mr Justice Popplewell, whose report following the Bradford Disaster was the eighth in the series, summarised those of his seven predecessors. The **Shortt** Report of 1924 followed disorder at the Cup Final of 1923. The **Moelwyn Hughes** Report of 1946 followed the disaster at Bolton Wanderers ground when overcrowding caused 33 deaths. In 1966 the Government commissioned the Chester Report on "The State of Association Football". The **Harrington** Report of 1968 drew attention to problems of crowd behaviour and led to the Lang Report of 1969 on the same subject. In 1972, Lord Wheatley's Report on Crowd Safety at Sports Grounds followed the disaster at **Ibrox** Park where 66 spectators died. The McElhone Report of 1977 on Football Crowd Behaviour of Scottish supporters was commissioned by the Secretary of State for Scotland. In 1984 an Official Working Group on Football Spectator Violence set up by the Department of Environment presented a further report.

20. As a result of the Wheatley Report, the first edition of the Green Guide was issued in 1973, and Parliament passed the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975. A second edition of the Green Guide was issued in 1976 and a third edition in 1986 incorporated recommendations made by Mr Justice Popplewell.

21. Introducing his excellent and concise summary of the previous reports, Mr Justice Popplewell said:

"almost all the matters into which I have been asked to inquire and almost all the solutions I have proposed, have been previously considered in detail by many distinguished Inquiries over a period of 60 years".

Because his citations from those earlier reports are still highly relevant, I append his summary of them at Appendix 4.

22. In my Interim Report I set out what happened at **Hillsborough** and why. That it was allowed to happen, despite all the accumulated wisdom of so many previous reports and guidelines must indicate that the lessons of past disasters and the recommendations following them had not been taken sufficiently to heart. I appreciate how easy it is to criticise with hindsight and that a new situation can always arise in human affairs which has not previously been envisaged. But many of the deficiencies at Hillsborough *had been* envisaged.

23. The Moelwyn Hughes Report in 1924 had stressed the need to start controlling the crowd well back from the entrance to the ground. The Green Guide required that "Turnstiles should be of such numbers as to admit spectators at a rate whereby no unduly large crowds are kept waiting for admission" (paragraph 44). Chapter 8 of the Guide required "Arrangements should be made ... to contain pressures before they reach dangerous proportions". Chapter 16 laid down maximum capacity which was grossly exceeded in the fatal pens at Hillsborough. Both the Green Guide (Chapter 15) and Mr Justice Popplewell had stated the need for gates in the perimeter fencing to be adequate to permit escape on to the pitch in an emergency. Why were these recommendations and others not followed? I suggest two main reasons. First, insufficient concern and vigilance for the safety and well-being of spectators. This was compounded by a preoccupation with measures to control hooliganism. Secondly, complacency which led all parties to think that since disaster had not occurred on previous occasions it would not happen this time. But there is no point in holding inquiries or publishing guidance unless the recommendations are followed diligently. That must be the first lesson.

#### ii. "It Couldn't Happen Here"

24. Amazingly, complacency was still to be found even after Hillsborough. It was chilling to hear the same refrain from directors at several clubs I visited:-

"Hillsborough was horrible - but, of course, it couldn't have happened here."

Couldn't it? The Hillsborough ground was regarded by many as one of the best in the country. It was selected

by the FA for the Cup semi-final and thought by them to be entirely suitable. The identical fixture had passed off uneventfully the previous year. I have little doubt that if the disaster scenario had been described to the management at Hillsborough prior to 15 April, they too would have said "Of course, it couldn't happen here". Yet something like it had happened at Hillsborough in 1981, albeit with less dire results. Moreover, I am satisfied from eyewitness accounts I have received that there have been many other occasions when overcrowding has led, at various grounds round the country, to a genuine apprehension of impending disaster through crushing, averted only by good fortune. I have heard from Police Commanders at a number of the grounds I have visited how relieved they are that capacities have been reduced in the interests of safety.

25. So, although the operational errors on 15 April were special to one ground and one day, the lack of precautions against overcrowding was not unique. I do not believe that sufficient safety measures were being applied at all other grounds. The lesson here is that Hillsborough should not be regarded as a freak occurrence, incapable of happening elsewhere. All those responsible for certifying, using and supervising sports grounds should take a hard look at their arrangements and keep doing so. Complacency is the enemy of safety.

### **iii. A Blight on Football**

26. Football is our national game. We gave it to the world. But its image in our country has been much tarnished. In my Interim Report I concentrated on overcrowding because it was the cause of the Hillsborough disaster. But wider and deeper inquiry shows that overcrowding is only one feature amongst a number causing danger or marring football as a spectator sport. The picture revealed is of a general malaise or blight over the game due to a number of factors. Principally these are: old grounds, poor facilities, hooliganism, excessive drinking and poor leadership. Crowd safety and crowd behaviour with which I am concerned are closely related to the quality of the accommodation and facilities offered and to the standards which are encouraged and enforced. So I think it necessary to consider all these aspects.

#### **Old Grounds**

27. Because we were first into the field, most of our football grounds are now elderly. Between 1889 and 1910, 58 of the clubs belonging to the current League moved into the grounds they now occupy.\* Many of them are ill-placed on cramped sites boxed into residential areas. When they were built, they were not intended to cater for the stream of coaches, vans and cars which now arrive and require parking space. Inside the grounds decay and dilapidation are often extensive. The terrace accommodation, in particular, is often uncovered and little has been done to improve the layout in accordance with modern expectations. This is chiefly because the safety and comfort of those on the terraces has not been regarded as a priority. In fairness, limitations of space at some grounds make it very difficult to achieve a layout appropriate to present day needs. By contrast, clubs in Europe and South America have the advantage of grounds built more recently on more spacious sites and planned to meet modern conditions. Where improvements have been made to our grounds they have often been patchy and piecemeal. This approach is itself a threat to safety. To build a seated stand over a standing area, to enlarge or divide a terrace, to rearrange exits and entrances or to modify turnstile areas - any of these measures is fraught with safety implications. Yet often such changes have been made to achieve one purpose without sufficient thought about the adverse side-effects which could result.

28. This was exemplified by the sequence of alterations at the Leppings Lane end at Hillsborough. Radial fences were installed to divide up the terraces; this led to a reduction in the system of crush barriers. The area inside the turnstiles was altered for purposes of segregation. Old signs were not removed; new signs were inadequate. The result was a bewildering complex which contributed to the delivery of excessive numbers down the tunnel into pens 3 and 4.

#### **Poor Facilities**

29. Football spectators are invited by the clubs for entertainment and enjoyment. Often, however, the facilities provided for them have been lamentable. Apart from the discomfort of standing on a terrace exposed to the elements, the ordinary provisions to be expected at a place of entertainment are sometimes not merely basic but squalid. At some grounds the lavatories are primitive in design, poorly maintained and inadequate in number. This not only denies the spectator an essential facility he is entitled to expect. It directly lowers standards of conduct. The practice of urinating against walls or even on the terraces has become endemic and is followed by men who would not behave that way elsewhere. The police, who would charge a man for urinating in the street, either tolerate it in football grounds or do no more than give a verbal rebuke. Thus crowd conduct becomes degraded and other misbehaviour seems less out of place.

30. The refreshments available to supporters are often limited and of indifferent quality. They are sold in

\*Inglist: Football Grounds of Great Britain p 10

surrounding streets from mobile carts and inside many grounds from other carts or from shoddy sheds. Fans eat their hamburgers or chips standing outside in all weathers. There is a prevailing stench of stewed onions. Adequate numbers of bins for rubbish are often not available; so wrappings, containers and detritus are simply dropped. This inhospitable scene tends to breed bad manners and poor behaviour. The atmosphere does not encourage pride in the ground or consideration for others. I accept that many fans are quite content to eat on the hoof when visiting a match, but there is no reason why the fare available should not be wholesome, varied and decently served from clean and attractive outlets. Fast food establishments meeting these requirements are readily to be found at railway stations and on high streets; why not at football grounds?

31. At most grounds little attempt has been made to provide pre-match entertainment. To do so could have a double advantage. It would give the spectators more value for their money. It could also bring them in earlier thereby avoiding congestion at the turnstiles in the last few minutes before kick-off. Such entertainment as has been tried has mostly failed to appeal to the spectators. They do not seem drawn by the musical offerings of the disc jockey or by marching bands. The football supporters' organisations complain that supporters have not hitherto been much consulted about this or about anything else affecting their well-being and enjoyment.

32. In giving this dismal account of the football scene, I have taken care to use the words "often", "at most grounds" or "at many grounds". I acknowledge that there are notable exceptions where great improvements have been effected and I do not suggest that every disagreeable feature I have described is to be found at every ground. Nevertheless, the overall picture of conditions and facilities to be expected by a standing spectator is depressing. It is in stark contrast to the different world, only yards away, in the Board Room and the lucrative executive boxes. I appreciate that they cater for an affluent clientele and bring in much-needed revenue. No one would expect or indeed want their plush carpeting or haute cuisine when visiting the terraces; but accommodation and facilities have often been below the basic decent standard necessary to give spectators dignity let alone comfort.

33. It is small wonder that attendances at matches gradually fell off from a peak of 77 million in the season 1949/50 to about 20 million in the late 1980s. No doubt other reasons played their part; for example, the emergence of other spectator sports and television. Until the 1960s most men worked on a Saturday morning and many went straight to the match in the afternoon. But the 5 day week together with increased car ownership made Saturday outings for the family a popular activity. On top of these factors, however, the prospect of attending football in the conditions I have described clearly became unattractive to many erstwhile supporters. Added to this was the fear of disorder. So far, I have not mentioned the further indignities endured by supporters as a result of hooliganism and the measures taken to contain it.

### **Hooliganism**

34. During the 1970s, hooligan behaviour became a scourge at and around football grounds. Rival fans abused and fought with each other on the terraces. The pitch was invaded, sometimes to facilitate the fighting, sometimes in an attempt to abort a match by those whose team was losing and on occasions to display anger and seek to assault a referee or a player who had incurred displeasure. Throwing missiles, either at a player or a policeman or at rival fans, became another violent feature. When the police responded by searching fans for missiles on entry, the practice grew of throwing coins (which could not be confiscated). Sometimes the coins were sharpened in advance to make them more damaging.

35. Mass singing of traditional songs, some of nation-wide appeal, some local to the area or the club, had become a part of the terrace culture. But the repertoire became augmented and degraded by abusive and obscene chants aimed at the referee or the opposing fans. A further nasty addition was racist chanting aimed at any black player of either team.

36. Hooliganism outside the ground also became rife. Supporters of rival teams abused and attacked each other. Hooligan gangs caused damage to trains, to buses, and to property on their route. Some deliberately went out of their way to rampage through local shops, stealing, wrecking and intimidating as they went - an activity known as "steaming". After a match, rival supporters would attack each other on the way home in the street, in public transport or in public houses.

### **Segregation**

37. To contain and control these manifold forms of anti-social and criminal behaviour there is now an elaborate complex of measures. The policy of segregation was born in the 1970s. Gradually, it has called for more and more extreme and expensive strategies by the clubs and the police. As each measure taken has been circumvented by determined hooligans, further measures have had to be grafted on to the system. Witnessing the full florid exercise taking place every Saturday afternoon nowadays makes one wonder how anyone could have contemplated going to such lengths to facilitate the watching of football. But nobody did; it just grew.

