

assault. However, as she was releasing Lunt, Prunty came across and asked why Lunt was being allowed to leave. This is a very important issue because, during consultations with the DPP, Prunty identified Lunt, not by name but by description and circumstances, as being one of the assailants. On him subsequently being shown a video in the Hamill family home, Prunty changed his identification evidence and named another co-accused, Dean Forbes. The video in question was news coverage of the release of Forbes and others from Court following the withdrawal of the charges against them. When the Hamill family put this to the DPP, further consultations took place between the DPP and Prunty. The DPP then directed that the charges against Lunt also be withdrawn.

- 6.2 Clothes were seized on 6.5.97 from 2 of the accused, Forbes and Bridgett. However, as there was no evidence to charge either of these persons, at this stage, they were released on bail pending further enquiry. A third person was also arrested on this date, however enquiries revealed that this was a mistaken identity and this person was released without charge.
- 6.3 On 9/10.5.97 two eyewitnesses made statements in respect of the assault on Mr Hamill and, resulting from this, searches and arrests were carried out on the early morning of 10.5.97 and 6 persons were subsequently charged. A further 2 persons were arrested on 15.5.97 and were released pending report to the DPP.
- 6.4 One of the police officers identified a person "kicking at" Mr Hamill, however, due to the circumstances at the time he was unable to effect an arrest. The suspect was not positively identified as Mark Hobson until the night of 9.5.97, following which Hobson was arrested on 10.5.97. Hobson is currently charged with Mr Hamill's murder.
- 6.5 The officer in this instance is the subject of a complaint.
- 6.6 D/Inspector Irwin quite rightly points out that forensic evidence on its own, in such circumstances, may not be sufficient evidence to substantiate a charge, and therefore it was of vital importance to obtain witness evidence by way of corroboration. In the early stages of the enquiry it was felt verbal admissions would not be forthcoming from any of the suspects, therefore extensive enquiries were carried out to identify potential witnesses and record evidence from them.
- 6.7 It should be noted that there were forensic links between one of the accused, Bridgett, and Mr Hamill. However, following the withdrawal of the supporting witness evidence, the remaining forensic evidence was deemed to be insufficient and the charge against Bridgett was withdrawn.
- 7 Relationship between Accused and Police Officer
- 7.1 This matter is the subject of a criminal investigation and a file will be forwarded to the DPP in due course. It would