Dear BBC,

‘Unbelievable Story of Carl Beech’, shown on BBC2 on 24 August 2020

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000m22r>

I watched your Carl Beech programme with increasing dismay and indeed anger and ask that the contents be reviewed.

I was especially amazed at the frequent use of interviews with Mark Conrad of Exaro. That ‘news’ website’s role was not explained and he increasingly appeared to be a reputable journalist indeed a programme commentator who like the police was just a little credulous.

That was simply not the case while an examination of Exaro alone would have made an interesting programme.

Mark Conrad and other journalists, including the BBC’s Tom Symonds colluded with Beech, something writ large in the Henriques report which I have now looked at. Therein the Met Assistant Commissioner said they ‘prejudiced’ the investigation:

At para 2.6.35, Henriques wrote, “Asked about the participation of journalists Messrs Symonds, McKelvie, Bateman, and Conrad, she [A/C Gallan] said a lot of information was being fed to ‘Nick’ and it was really frustrating. The harm, she said, to the Allen family was disappointing. Tom Symonds said he only got pictures of people available on the internet. McKelvie fed an American name to ‘Nick’. That is why she had a degree of caution with these people. The four of them together prejudiced the investigation. She said that: 'I chose not to engage with them. Conrad and Symonds asked for an off the record conversation but I refused. I can't overstate the frustration with this type of behaviour. We referred it to the Attorney General and Press Standards. We were unhappy with the impact they had on the investigation”.

Even the BBC news story itself on 4 October 2019 when quoting the report stated (way down the webpage), “There can be no doubt that 'Nick' received information and assistance from Exaro and other journalists that misled officers and contributed to their concluding at an early stage that 'Nick' was credible.”

Using Conrad, was a serious error of judgement by the producer who should be reprimanded. Did the relevant controller even check such details against the Henriques report?

Some of the other interviews such as with Lady Brittan, Beech’s ex-wife and the second wife of his stepfather Raymond were interesting and added to our knowledge. Others were pointless and seemed to be padding, as were the daft silent movie images.

Tom Watson was dealt with almost tangentially and his role and horrific statements minimised.

There was no need for the various unrelated victims and survivors to offer their views. Such individuals were part of the problem in publicising allegations without evidence. One I recall suggested the stepfather must have been guilty which I thought should not have been broadcast given it was recognised Beech’s related military and Ted Heath stories were a fabrication and fantasy

I was pleased that Richard Henriques declined to participate in the tasteless charade of reading out Beech’s letters.

Increasingly it seemed to me that the artistic nature of the programme and the portentous music were a smoke screen for saying as little as possible about the monumental stupidity and nastiness of those who worked with and encouraged Beech, not least the BBC and the Met. I recall, although it was not mentioned, a very long ‘*World At One’* radio interview about the murdered boys who were of course nameless. The nonsense was breathlessly reported as an exclusive.

I must also add that the jail term to which Beech was sentenced was too long and seemed almost an attempt by the police and judiciary to exculpate themselves.

Yours etc.

Jeffrey Dudgeon

jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com

27 August 2020

Complaint text submitted to BBC (words limited):

I refer to the ‘Unbelievable Story of Carl Beech’, televised on BBC2 on 24 August 2020 which featured certain interviews which should not have been shown. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000m22r>

I watched your Carl Beech programme with increasing dismay and indeed anger and ask that the contents be reviewed. I was especially amazed at the frequent use of interviews with Mark Conrad of Exaro. That ‘news’ website’s role was not explained and he increasingly appeared to be a reputable journalist indeed a programme commentator who like the police was just a little credulous. That was simply not the case Mark Conrad and other journalists, including the BBC’s Tom Symonds colluded with Beech, something writ large in the Henriques report which I have now looked at.

Therein the Met Assistant Commissioner said at para 2.6.35 they ‘prejudiced the investigation'. Even the BBC news story itself (4 October 2019 ) quoting Henriques stated, “There can be no doubt that 'Nick' received information and assistance from Exaro and other journalists that misled officers and contributed to their concluding at an early stage that 'Nick' was credible.” Using Conrad, was a serious error of judgement by the producer who should be reprimanded. Did the relevant controller even check such details against the Henriques report? Some of the other interviews such as with Lady Brittan, Beech’s ex-wife and the second wife of his stepfather Raymond were interesting and added to our knowledge. Others were pointless and seemed to be padding, as were the daft silent movie images. There was no need for the various unrelated victims and survivors to offer their views. Such individuals were part of the problem in publicising allegations without evidence. One I suggested the stepfather must have been guilty which should not have been broadcast given it was recognised Beech’s related military and Ted Heath stories were a fabrication and fantasy. The 'artistic' nature of the programme seemed a smokescreen.

**BBC Response**

08/09/2020 13:20

Reference CAS-6288820-V6N5S0

Dear Mr Dudgeon,

Thank you for contacting us with your complaint regarding ‘The Unbelievable Story of Carl Beech’ broadcast on 25 August. We note your concerns with Mark Conrad’s involvement in the programme. The film focused on Carl Beech’s false claims against many prominent men in the UK, how these claims became frontpage news and how much money the police investigation cost. The story included interviews from many people who were effected by Beech’s actions, including Mark Conrad.

The programme featured exclusive interviews with many of the people most closely involved. As such, Mark Conrad was interviewed here as it was made clear in the programme that Mark was the journalist who first published the story and conducted an anonymous interview with him.

It's inevitable some viewers will disagree with certain guests and the opinions or claims they express. Our aim is simply to provide enough information for viewers to make up their own minds.

We realise you may still feel that we should have done things differently here. We’re guided by audience reaction and your feedback can help to inform our ongoing work for future pieces of this nature, so I have made sure to share your views with the programme production team as well as senior management generally on our audience feedback report.

This is amongst the most widely received documents within the BBC, so rest assured it has been brought to the attention of the appropriate teams.

Thank you again for taking the time to get in touch.

Kind regards,

Ryan Johnston

BBC Complaints Team www.bbc.co.uk/complaints