Dear Mr Lack,

I checked yesterday at PRONI the NIGRA News where the murder of Thomas McKenzie was mentioned. It was in the issue of September/October 1976 (PRONI D3762/1/3/3). You didn't say if you had seen it or if you had asked his family about exchanging contact details with us.

The article says that NIGRA had been contacted by the RUC after the horrific murder as well as people who went to the disco (probably at that time the Chariot Rooms in North Street). It said that Thomas had been taken from the Oxford Street cruising area on the night of 11 July that year. No police follow-up apparently occurred.

That the murder of Frederick Davis had occurred on the same night three years earlier both having been in the same area for the same purpose seems too similar to be just a coincidence.

You mentioned the family of Thomas. This was an unresolved question we raised at a meeting with the HET at senior level but without the courtesy of an answer. Is there a legal or statutory definition of family? If not, can you not extend it and relevant disclosure in the case of gay people to their gay friends and representatives?

This is necessary because of the particular circumstances facing our community then, more so, yet still now. People were rarely out to their blood family while the police as in the Anthony McCleave case felt that no investigation would be preferred by the family to avoid the stain of homosexuality becoming known.

I think it would be accepted in England that ethnic community organisations had some standing in such matters so why not gay ones? Indeed I suspect that victims groups and the like here are given some access.

Could you look into this again please?

Jeffrey Dudgeon (NIGRA)

From: STEPHEN.LACK@psni.pnn.police.uk

To: jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com

Date: Wed, 16 Nov 2011 15:39:46 +0000

Subject: Murder of Thomas McKenzie.

Hello Mr Dudgeon.

Firstly I would like to thank you very much for your help regarding this matter.

Our team is responsible for reviewing Thomas' murder and we are detectives from England, Scotland and Wales. This has distinct advantages as we have no pre-conceived ideas, but it also brings problems as we rely heavily on persons such as yourself to supply us with local knowledge. This is invaluable as attitudes and trends do tend to vary and it would be incorrect for us to apply English standards upon anyone else.

With regards to our completed reports, we keep them confidential between ourselves and the family members who engage with us. Having said that, when we deliver our report to them, it is theirs to keep and deal with as they wish.

It is for that reason that we cannot supply you with a copy. We can however, if you so wish, discuss the matter with the family and ask them if they have any objections to us giving you a copy. We can also seek their opinion as to exchanging contact details so that you can meet. Again this is the family's decision and we are very much guided by them. I hope this explains the HET's position.

Once again thank you.

Kind regards,

Steve

From: jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com  
To: stephen.lack@psni.pnn.police.uk  
CC: alainlongchamp@hotmail.com  
Subject: HET - Murder at St Peters Church, Divis Flats Belfast. 1976  
Date: Tue, 15 Nov 2011 11:32:30 +0000

Dear Steve Lack,  
  
This was the murder of Thomas McKenzie on 11 July 1976. Unfortunately I have little memory of the event except for the guy's name and that it was mentioned in a copy of NIGRA News for some gay-linked reason. If I saw that story it would assist. Those newsletters are in PRONI (catalogue no. D3762/1/3/1 & 3). Is that the only source for the mention on the police files or is there another?  
  
There was no gay venue anywhere near Divis Flats. He would not have gone there unless taken forcibly or tricked.  
  
In the 1970s, the gay bars were, variously, the Europa Hotel Whip and Saddle bar, the Royal Avenue bar in Rosemary Street (part of the hotel with a separate side entrance), the Casanova Club in Cornmarket and the Chariot Rooms in North Street. Discos were held in the Royal Avenue Hotel and in the Students Union at Queens University. I am attaching an article on the gay geography of Belfast for your information.  
  
In 1976, NIGRA was under intense scrutiny by the RUC and most of our members had been arrested so we had less time for other matters.  
  
The cruising area at the time was largely around Laganbank Road between the Queen's and Albert Bridges where the Waterfront hall currently is. Anthony McCleave was murdered there in nearby Lower Chichester Street in 1979 when cruising/walking home from the Chariot Rooms.   
  
I think Frederick Davis who was gay was taken from that area too. He coincidentally was also murdered on the night of 11 July, three years earlier in 1973.   
  
On reflection, it was probably not a co-incidence. There is a possibility the same perpetrators were involved and a greater chance that, given it was the 11th July, lone Protestants on the streets late that eleventh night were liable to murderous sectarian attack. And gays yet more vulnerable with hatred enhanced by homophobia. One of Frederick's alleged killers, Benson, was himself murdered.  
  
I am assuming Thomas was a Protestant. Had he lived out of Northern Ireland for long or just recently returned from South Africa?  
  
We would like to be informed of the result of your investigation as we have been in the cases of the murders of Rev David Templeton and Frederick Davis. It may be that Thomas has no relatives in Northern Ireland and we feel we have a duty to stand in for them. Even if he has, we believe the concept of family has to be extended in the case of gay people, to their erstwhile fellows who have concerns that relatives may not. We have also a certain status by virtue of the statutory duty in section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act.  
  
Thanks  
  
Jeff Dudgeon

From: STEPHEN.LACK@psni.pnn.police.uk  
To: jeffreydudgeon@hotmail.com  
Date: Wed, 9 Nov 2011 15:58:02 +0000  
Subject: 1.NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED-All Networks:: Murder at St Peters Church, Divis Flats Belfast. 1976.

Mr Dudgeon.

Please excuse my direct approach.

I am an Investigating Officer on the Historical Enquiries Team. I am currently re-examining a murder which took place near to St Peter's Church Divis Flats Belfast during 1976.

Within the papers there is passing mention that the deceased may have been gay. It is merely a passing suggestion and although considered briefly by the original investigators it remained a loose end.

I wonder whether you could assist with some history of problems faced in Belfast in the mid 1970's by the gay community.

Were there any particular meeting places in the Divis Flats area at that time? Could that have been the reason he was there as the area would appear to be hostile to people with english accents (he actually was very quietly spoken and polite with a slight South African accent) and with his family circumstances.

It seems to me that the aggrieved person must have been known by NIGRA which caused the article in their newsletter. Would they have held meetings or social functions at this this time or even in that area?

If you can think of anything else which may be of use, I would be grateful.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Kind regards.

Steve.