

The Leveson Inquiry

Witness Statement for Part 1, Module 2

EXHIBIT AT1

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Hope of DNA breakthrough in search for Rachel's killer

STEPHEN WRIGHT

DETECTIVES have made a potentially vital breakthrough in their hunt for the killer of Rachel Nickell.

Forensic experts have found a DNA sample which could belong to the man who murdered the former part-time model on Wimbledon Common.

The sample, understood to have been recovered from Rachel's underwear, is regarded by detectives as 'an exciting development' in the inquiry.

The discovery came after Scotland Yard launched its most comprehensive review ever of the horrific case to coincide with last year's tenth anniversary of her murder.

Rachel was stabbed 49 times and had her throat cut in a frenzied attack on Wimbledon Common on July 15, 1992.

The 23-year-old was killed in front of her son Alex, then a month short of his third birthday, and their dog Molly in a crime which appalled the nation.

It is understood that the DNA is only a 'partial sample', meaning that it would not provide detectives with a full profile and identity of the killer.

But it would be sufficient to possibly rule out potential suspects such as **Colin Stagg**, the oddball sex offender sensationally acquitted of Rachel's murder in 1994.

Police know the DNA is that of a male and also know that it does not belong to Rachel's partner Andre Hanscombe or their son Alex.

Detectives are checking their records to see if the DNA matches, in any way, that of any of the suspects.

It is thought Stagg's DNA was destroyed after his acquittal so officers are currently unable to make a direct comparison.

If Stagg refused any request to give a voluntary DNA sample, police would not automatically have the right to arrest him.

They would have to have additional grounds such as witness testimonies linking him to the murder.

For 11 years, the Nickell inquiry has been hindered by a lack of 'direct' forensic evidence linking any suspect to the murder scene on Wimbledon Common.

The discovery of the DNA sample has raised hopes that the net is finally closing in on the man responsible for one of Britain's most gruesome murders—Scientists are attempting to enhance the sample to get a fuller profile which could be used as part of the evidence in any future prosecution.

A police source said: 'This discovery gives us a tremendous opportunity for success. If this is the killer's DNA, we will be able to rule out suspects but not categorically rule anyone in.

'However, we have to temper our excitement with the knowledge that there could be an entirely innocent

explanation for this DNA.' Forensic tests are continuing on a number of other clothes and items recovered from the murder scene.

Stagg, 39, was cleared of Rachel's murder before prosecution evidence was put to a jury after a judge condemned the use of an undercover policewoman as 'bait' to try to gain a confession.

Last night a Scotland Yard spokesman refused to confirm the DNA discovery, or talk in any detail about the progress of the Nickell inquiry.

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END

---- INDEX REFERENCES ----

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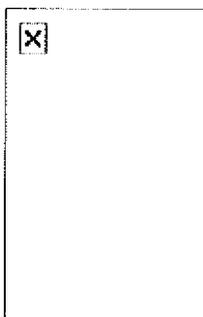
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MailOnline

Police 'refuse' Stagg DNA test



**Murdered: mother
Rachel Nickell**

Police refused to take a DNA sample from the man cleared of murdering ex-model Rachel Nickell today after he volunteered the test to prove his innocence "for good".

Colin Stagg arrived at Wimbledon police station in south-west London hoping to end what he called a decade of speculation and "finger pointing" directed at him.

But police declined to take a sample, he said.

Ms Nickell, then aged 23, was stabbed 49 times while walking on Wimbledon Common with her two-year-old son in 1992. The killer has never been caught.

Mr Stagg, from Roehampton, west London, was charged with the murder.

But the Old Bailey trial judge Mr Justice Ognall acquitted him and threw out the case, describing the undercover police operation as "wholly reprehensible".

Mr Stagg told Sky News: "I still feel that for the last 10 years they have continued to point the finger at me as the suspect.

"In the eyes of the public I'm still the main suspect.

"I have done everything humanly possible to try to prove my innocence and I thought this would be the time I could do it and clear my name for good."

Scotland Yard said in a statement: "It is not our policy to discuss what specific inquiries may be made with regard to possible DNA evidence in criminal investigations.

"It must be noted that should the Metropolitan Police Service require DNA samples from persons in any inquiry it would seek to obtain them in the usual manner."

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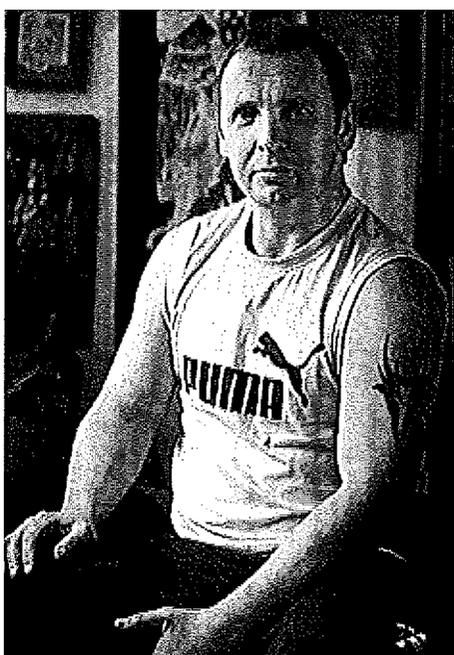
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MailOnline

Colin Stagg awarded £250,000 compensation

by STEPHEN WRIGHT

Last updated at 09:06 10 January 2007



Colin Stagg is to receive up to £250,000 compensation from the Home Office

More than 12 years after he was cleared of murdering Rachel Nickell, Colin Stagg is to receive up to £250,000 compensation from the Home Office.

He has been told he is eligible for a payout because Scotland Yard bungled the initial investigation into the 1992 murder of the 23-year-old part-time model.

The sum will be the first of a series of awards made to Mr Stagg. He is expected to receive damages from Scotland Yard which could amount to £1million. There is also the possibility the Crown Prosecution Service will be forced to make a payment.

A Government-appointed assessor is to decide how much money 43-year-old Mr Stagg should receive from public funds.

The development is the first public admission that police and the Crown Prosecution Service bungled the initial investigation into the notorious Wimbledon Common murder.

Mr Stagg, 43, spent a year in custody charged with Rachel's murder before an Old Bailey judge ruled in 1994 that key prosecution evidence, involving an undercover woman detective in a 'honeytrap' operation, was inadmissible.

Despite being acquitted, unemployed Mr Stagg claims he has been made a pariah and says he is still widely suspected of the murder.

Following a multi-million-pound reinvestigation of the case, detectives are expected to charge a convicted sex killer with the murder of Miss Nickell in March.

Crown Prosecution Service lawyers believe there is sufficient evidence to prosecute the 40-year-old Broadmoor patient, who cannot be named for legal reasons.

He is being held indefinitely for the brutal killing of a young mother and her daughter 16 months after Rachel was stabbed to death on Wimbledon Common.

The suspect, a paranoid schizophrenic, was questioned about the Nickell murder in June after a DNA breakthrough in the case.

'Incontrovertible' evidence

Police believe 'incontrovertible' evidence links him to the murder of Rachel, who was stabbed 49 times and sexually assaulted in front of her two-year-old son Alex in July 1992.

Last night a Home Office spokesman told the Daily Mail: 'We can confirm that Colin Stagg has been told he is eligible for compensation under the discretionary compensation scheme.

'As with all such cases, once eligibility has been approved, the independent assessor, Lord Brennan, QC, decides on the amount payable.'

Under the scheme, compensation is payable following wrongful conviction or charge 'arising because of a serious default by a public authority or through exceptional circumstances such as complete exoneration'.

Sources believe Mr Stagg is in line for up to £250,000 because the shambolic Scotland Yard investigation ruined his life.

It is believed Scotland Yard chiefs have already discussed the idea of making a formal apology to Mr Stagg. But for legal reasons they are unlikely to say sorry until the second trial has been completed.

Should the new prime suspect be convicted, the Met is expected to come under huge pressure to pay compensation to Mr Stagg.

There is also thought to be a case that the Crown Prosecution Service, which backed the controversial honeytrap operation involving an undercover officer, should also consider paying compensation to Mr Stagg.

In June, Mr Stagg said he was very happy to hear the new prime suspect had been quizzed - but added he was still waiting for an official apology from Scotland Yard.

He said: 'If he gets charged, hopefully things would start moving forward, not just for me, but for the Nickell family as well. I'm still getting called a murderer.'

Last night, Mr Stagg could not be reached for comment at his home in Roehampton, South-West London.

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