

## CSI London part 3: How the City Police's CSI System helped in Operation Magnesium

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**When an innocent bystander was shot outside the Urban Music Awards in 2004, as a result of crossfire between two rival South London Gangs, the CSI system was not only invaluable to the officers on the ground – dealing with five separate crime scenes in different parts of London within half an hour of the shooting – but delivered a forensic case so watertight that the chief suspect pleaded guilty on day one of the trial.**

In the first two articles we outlined the benefits of the City of London Police's CSI system, eFex to SOCOs and as a management tool for statistics. Here, in our final article we really see eFex in action as a major investigation unfolds and its role in courtroom victory.

### **5 Crime Scenes, 18 rounds and a Car Chase with the National Media Watching**

The City of London Police had to act incredibly swiftly and co-ordinatedly. Within minutes of shooting 18 rounds in a street in the Barbican, both gangs were driving away. One was chased by the police. The firearm was discarded half a mile away at London Wall. The vehicle was stopped another half mile away and three suspects arrested. The media was already present covering the awards, so this was guaranteed from the start to be a high-profile case.

As SIO for the incident, Bob Wishart explains: "We not only had a lot of forensic submissions but there were five separate crime scenes: the street of the shooting where we had to recover all 18 rounds; the lady in hospital who was shot (a bullet passed through her breast and ended up in her bra); the getaway car which was stopped in a different part of London; skin swabs and all the clothing from the apprehended suspects; and the car pound where the vehicle was taken." Although each of the suspects could be placed at the scene of the crime, not surprisingly, none of them would admit to being the shooter. So this could have been a difficult case to nail down. To Bob Wishart, managing the forensics was vital from the very beginning to the final appearance at court.

### **Prioritising Forensics with 3 Suspects in Custody**

Bob Wishart continues, "There were two ways in which our CSI system, eFex, was crucial – firstly in making investigation decisions and, later, getting a guilty plea on day one in court. eFex allows both the presentation and the examination of the forensics." DI Ian Gray, now in the Economic Crime Unit, adds to this, "eFex was great in the management of forensics from various scenes because it is web-based.

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This means that officers could go into different stations, access Efex from any computer, and make their submissions. So for example, the clothing forensics were taken at Snowhill Police Station.”

“Efex allowed us to Prioritise what needed to be recovered and in what sequence. Specifically for example, I had three suspects in custody but knew that we only had a limited time before we had to let them go. Because all the information, from all the officers, at all the scenes was logged onto Efex immediately, I could see, in real time, what evidence was going through the system. That let me make sure that the clothing analysis and swabs, and the firearm analysis were done first thing in the morning when the lab opened.”

### **Building a Watertight Forensics Case**

Ian Gray makes a point about Efex that applies to all forces. “Nowadays the forensic tests are so good that the defence case rests in finding fault with the continuity and providence of the evidence. In recent years, cases have been lost at court on this.” Efex played a vital role in managing and tracking every bit of evidence. Gray continues: “Bob needed a watertight forensic package, always keeping one eye on the courtroom from the beginning of the case. Efex is a brilliant management tool. It allows you to locate the evidence, track what happens to and see the outcome of tests, from wherever you are. It does a huge chunk of work with us. Efex, from a management of forensics, from an SIO perspective, has taken a massive worry away. As long as the nominated officer is doing what they should, Efex will make sure of results. Anyone can use the system to drill down and find out the minute details of the operation.”

### **Accessed from any Computer at Different Stations**

When an officer first logs an exhibit, it is given an identification number. Because the interface was designed by the City Police, it has the appropriate mix of drop-down menus and free note space to adapt to real-life situations. So, in Operation Magnesium, officers could record notes from the scene plus include video – for example a video had been shot of the recovery of the firearm. Everything went straight on the system, with a unique identity.

Although the three suspects were quickly arrested and held at Snowhill, it took teams of officers a full sixteen hours collecting the numerous rounds of ammunition from the busy city street that had been cordoned off and was surrounded by press. Meanwhile, the incident room was at Bishopsgate. All this time several officers in all the different locations were logging their submissions onto Efex. However, because it is a web-based system, Bob Wishart as the SIO was able to log in regularly as the enquiry developed, in real time, to see which exhibits had been recovered and read a description of them. Using Efex Bob could set the forensic strategy in conjunction with Jeff Alpe, the Scientific Support Officer.

As a result of quick and informed decision making, the next morning, a sample taken from one of the suspect’s coats, along with a swab could show firearms residue on his arm and hand.

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Using Efex, the exhibits officer and disclosure officer could have continual sight of each submission coming back from the lab. But it wasn't just the physical results that were important but the continuity of statement - from the analysis, packaging, tracking, each with individual serial numbers.

### **Seamless Forensics Process marked by 'No Complaints, No Problems'**

Efex played an obvious part in the 'Golden Hour' and a short time afterwards into the night. "But it is only in the aftermath that we can sit in the incident room and have time to reflect and bring it all together," said Bob. "To look at the route each exhibit is taking, see what is going on, fill in the gaps.

"One of my roles, as SIO, is dealing with problems as they arise. In terms of exhibits and disclosure, this was the tightest forensic job I'd ever been involved with and in some ways, its success was marked by the total lack of problems! I didn't have any officers coming to me and complaining about anything. There were just no obstacles in the system. I couldn't fault it. Efex was an undoubted benefit to everyone on the case. And this was a big, complicated case – much more than most. So the fact that Efex pulled everything together was superb, a massive plus mark." Ian Gray adds his voice to this: "Efex handled all the forensics, and in this case, it wasn't just DNA and firearms residue but had various spin-offs in terms of high tech evidence. For example satellite submissions tracking mobile phones and computer analysis. Efex handled it all seamlessly."

### **Day One in Court and 'Guilty M'lord'**

Most importantly perhaps, of course, is that while Bob always had one eye on the courtroom, he was able to manage and deliver a flawless forensic case. So much so that the suspect gave up the ghost and pleaded guilty on day one. Operation Magnesium is a great example of justice for the victim, but also of rewarding police work.

For more information or a free consultation, please contact us today.

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