

PRIME MINISTER

UNVEILING OF THE MEMORIAL TO WPC FLETCHER

We leave No. 10 at 1000, to arrive at the rear entrance to the RTZ Building in St. James's Square at 1010. You will be met by Mr. Michael Winner, the film director, who is Chairman of the Police Memorial Trust which erected the monument. He will conduct you to the top floor of the RTZ Building, where you will meet the other platform guests (including the Home Secretary, Mr. Kinnock, Dr. Owen and Mr. Steel) and members of WPC Fletcher's family.

The party moves to the platform in the Square at about 1030. After the National Anthem, there will be short speeches from Mr. Winner and Sir Kenneth Newman, before Mr. Winner invites you to unveil the memorial.

Immediately after the unveiling, the Metropolitan Police band will play a fanfare and then those present will be asked to keep one minute's silence. This brings the ceremony to a close, and you return direct to No. 10.

The latest draft of your speech is opposite. We have set aside half-an-hour tomorrow to go over it. Mr. Winner's speech is at Flag A, and Sir Kenneth Newman's at Flag B.

There will be a press stand, including television, directly in front of the main platform.

31 January 1985

B

SPEECH BY SIR KENNETH NEWMAN QPM,
COMMISSIONER OF POLICE OF THE METROPOLIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEDICATION OF A MEMORIAL
TO WOMAN POLICE CONSTABLE FLETCHER
ON 1 FEBRUARY 1985

On 17 April 1984 in St James's Square Woman Police Constable Yvonne Fletcher was carrying out what we in this country regard as a routine everyday police duty - the duty of ensuring that people may exercise their democratic rights of free association and free expression within the rule of law.

In the midst of that lawful mission, she was gunned down by assassins firing from the Libyan People's Bureau. Such an unwarranted and insanely murderous reaction from an Embassy had previously been beyond the imagination of any British police officer or other citizen. The outrage provided a starkly tragic contrast between our own tolerant values and those of the occupants of the Libyan People's Bureau. It also transformed a routine event into a dramatic revelation of the rights and principles which the British police try to protect.

This memorial stone, standing near the place where young Yvonne's abandoned police hat lay so evocatively for many days, presents a two-fold testimony. First, a testimony to the role of police generally in upholding British democratic values; secondly, a testimony to WPC Fletcher's personality which embraced a wide range of outstanding human and professional qualities; qualities which, taken together, encapsulate an ideal to which all British police officers aspire.

On behalf of the police of the Metropolis, I thank Mr Michael Winner; all who subscribed to the memorial; and all present here today. I thank them not only for their kindness but for their reassurance that the sacrifice of Yvonne Fletcher and the services of the British police in general are not taken for granted but are valued and thought worthy of commemoration.

A

Speech by Mr Michael Winner, Chairman of The Police Memorial Trust for Friday February 1st at the unveiling by the Prime Minister of the Yvonne Fletcher Memorial on St James's Square.

NOT TO BE RELEASED OR PUBLISHED IN
ANY WAY PRIOR TO THIS SPEECH BEING
MADE

290 days ago on this exact spot and at this time, a member of the British Police Force was tragically snatched from anonymity to become a national heroine.

There is no one here who would not wish that Yvonne Fletcher had been able to finish that day as normally as it had begun.

And as we watched at home on the television the awful pictures of her death, combined with the extraordinary beauty of the smiling face of Yvonne in uniform taken from her Police identification photograph, there welled up in this Nation such a surge of sympathy and love as has seldom been seen.

And that regard, and I know this from the letters we receive, was both for Yvonne and for the Police in general, for the dangers that they face and the tragic price they so often pay.

And I felt that the death of a Police Officer deserved to be remembered and that it was fitting that the landscape of this great city should change, just a little, to accommodate a permanent marker to the bravery of Yvonne Fletcher and of all the other Police, so many of whom die on the pavements of the cities that they protect.

So the Police Memorial Trust was formed, and my goodness, would that you could all see, particularly the Police who are here, the thousands of letters we received, from the highest in the land, from famous people in all walks of life, but above all from the British Public, expressing the deepest regard and thankfulness for the Police and for their activities and sending us such money as they could afford.

And I think it is a sign of the nations' regard for the Police that we are able to welcome here today representatives of all the main Political Parties who at once agreed to be here to pay tribute to Yvonne Fletcher and to the Police Force.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome here the Prime Minister Mrs Margaret Thatcher; the Home Secretary Mr Leon Brittan; for the Labour Party - the Shadow Home Secretary Mr Gerald Kaufman; the President of the Liberal Party, Mr Alan Watson; and for the Social Democratic Party, Lord Harris of Greenwich.

And of course the Commissioner of Police Sir Kenneth Newman, and many of Yvonne's friends and colleagues. And in particular Tim and Queenie Fletcher, Yvonne's parents, with their daughters Heather, Sarah and Debbie - and you know getting to know Mr and Mrs Fletcher and their family over the last few months, I feel that I know personally some of the great qualities that everyone felt and knew Yvonne represented, because that is a really wonderful and fine family, and its particularly nice Tim and Queenie, and all of you, to see you here.

There is a thin blue line that protects the ordinary citizen from the forces of evil.

From time to time that line is broken, it was broken here with the death of Yvonne Fletcher.

It was broken some weeks earlier in Knightsbridge when Inspector Stephen Dodd, Sergeant Noel Lane and Woman Police Constable Jane Arbuthnot went into the area of a car they knew to be full of explosives, and likely to explode, in order to protect the people of this city - and paid with their lives.

It was broken on the neat, bungalowed sea-front of Frinton-On-Sea when Police Constable Brian Bishop was shot.

It was broken in the Garden of Remembrance by the beautiful Parish Church of Leeds when Sergeant John Speed was killed.

All these deaths within the period of a year. But that blue line is never really broken.

Because there are thousands more Police Officers all over Great Britain as dedicated as those who died, who continue in their duty.

They are no less heroic because they live on.

The Police Memorial Trust will commemorate the deaths of such policemen where ever they fall. Visibly. On the side-walk, on the pavement, on the roads, where their colleagues daily and nightly do their duty and some of them meet their end.

The debt we owe to these people is as worthy of recognition as the debt we owe to any of the other services that protect us.

On the day of Yvonne's funeral I wrote in one of our national newspapers the words that produced such a flow of letters and money from the public, although at the time there was no such organisation as The Police Memorial Trust - and these words I would like to paraphrase today.

I was referring of course to the tragic death of Yvonne Fletcher:-

"I can see a time in the future when human memory being what it is, the events that now seem so important have been forgotten. Maybe two people will be walking in St James's Square, and the sun's rays will catch the face of a Memorial, and one person will turn to the other and say 'Yvonne Fletcher, who was she?' To which there is a simple and noble answer 'She was a member of the British Police Force'"

I thank you all for being here today.

PRIME MINISTER

UNVEILING OF THE WPC FLETCHER MEMORIAL

The Unveiling ceremony takes place next Friday morning. You arrive at about 1010, have coffee in the RTZ Headquarters building with other guests, including the Fletcher family, and proceed to the Square at about 1030.

The first speaker will be Mr. Michael Winner, Chairman of the Police Memorial Trust which has erected the memorial. Sir Kenneth Newman will follow him briefly, and then you are invited to speak for a few minutes before unveiling the memorial. As the ceremony takes place in the open air, speeches are to be kept short - not more than about five minutes each.

I attach a first draft for your consideration, together with a background note by the Home Office (Flag A), and an extract from the Readers Digest on WPC Fletcher herself. This was sent in by Eldon Griffiths. (Flag B).

Invitations to the ceremony have been accepted by the official Opposition and by the Alliance. It is possible, but not yet certain, that Mr. Kinnock himself will be there.

DWB

25 January 1985