

UNDERGROUND ITEMS FROM THE TELEVISION AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

by Paul Creswell

"7/7: SAVED BY A MIRACLE?". Monday 5 July 2010, BBC1, 22.45 to 23.25.

Warning: *This review is a little traumatic by reason of the subject involved. It will not make good reading if you are at all squeamish.*

As might be expected from the title, this programme studied the experiences of some of the survivors of the 7 July 2005 bombings on London's transport system.

Your reviewer has not attempted to make any indication of the various individuals' feelings on whether any 'miracles' actually took place. I believe that your Editor agrees with me in that individuals' religious views have no place in a magazine such as *Underground News*, as they have nothing to do with the operation or history of the London underground system.

The programme looked at the experiences of three survivors, one 'almost involved', four doctors, one First-aider, one Fireman and four relatives (of three deceased). Your reviewer has taken the liberty of including some clarifications, as not all locations, etc., were clear in the programme, especially as the recollections moved from the person to person throughout the programme, presumably to keep it interesting to the viewer. These have been shown in *italics*, within brackets.

Jack Linton was fourteen years of age and this was his first trip to London without an adult, the trip being undertaken for work experience. He paused at Liverpool Street (main line) for some hash browns and to watch the rush-hour activity from the balcony level. Regrettably, this delay put him on the fated outer rail Circle Line train. About ten seconds into the tunnel there was a massive bang and he thought he was going to die. The faces of his nearest and dearest flashed before his eyes. He grabbed a lady's arm and said he did not want to die, wishing his Mum or Nan were there to comfort him. Further down the carriage was a girl in a hat, Christine, who comforted and cuddled him and stopped him from seeing the horrendous sight surrounding them. Once they got to the street, she said "good-bye" and he thinks of her as his 'Angel for an Hour'.

Terry Hiscock was a deputy headmaster, on his way to an education conference. He initially boarded a train going in the wrong direction, so changed at Moorgate. Unknown to him at the time, he was then just a few feet from a bomber. He thought the train had hit something and there was a lot of acrid, oily smoke. He found himself on the floor. He saw a woman apparently embedded in the side of the carriage, asking for help. He tried to lift her clear, but could not manage it. He reassured her that help would soon be there, there being nothing else he could think of doing. *(It is unclear whether Terry was involved in the Liverpool Street/Aldgate incident or the Edgware Road incident, as the change of direction at Moorgate could have been either way round. However, with reference to **Carrie Taylor** (below) Liverpool Street/Aldgate seems the more likely of the two).*

John Tulloch ran for a train at Euston Square, complete with a case on wheels. The train was packed and there was one seat, so he took it and placed the case beside him. This simple act must undoubtedly have saved his life. The carriage seemed to disassemble and he passed into unconsciousness. He woke to find blood on his face. *[His story now continues under **Wing Commander Craig Stanniforth** (below)].*

Louise Barry was evacuated from Edgware Road station, with no reason given. *(Perhaps, with hindsight, this was just as well!).* She found herself looking at a group of buses, one of which (a number 30) had 'Islington' on the destination blind. One of the bombers, having been also, presumably, evacuated from Edgware Road, caught the same bus and was sitting above her as they travelled Eastwards. *[One assumes that they had (both) walked along Marylebone Road to Gloucester Place, as there were probably no buses along Marylebone Road with the various emergency road closures by then in place].*

When the driver stopped to advise his passengers of a diversion, she considered getting off. However, it was cold and raining, so she stayed on. After the bomb exploded, she tried to scream but could not and made her way through the injured to get out. She recalled being put on a table top and being taken into the British Medical Association Building, where there were many wounded beside herself – she was in hospital by 11.00 and being operated on by 13.00.

Jasmine Gardner had missed the 30 bus (*no location was given, but must have been near to Tavistock Square*), so she decided to play 'catch-up' and get it at next stop, as the traffic was bad enough to make this a possibility. She saw the bus just 'disappear' and then it was in tiny parts and she realised that the people on it must also be in tiny parts and she too would have been in parts also, had she had managed to catch it at the previous stop. Someone took her arm and led her away, advising her not to look back – good advice, she reckoned with hindsight.

Wing Commander Craig Stanniforth was a member of the R.A.F.'s Tactical Medical Wing and he had been on a train travelling in the opposite direction to one of those which were bombed (*it would appear he was travelling eastbound towards Edgware Road*), which then stopped abruptly. He later understood that this stop had been caused by the doors blown from the bombed train derailing his train. (*It seems to your reviewer more likely that the falling doors shorted out the current rails*). Someone asked if there was anyone available with medical training and Craig had studied first aid. He managed to jump from his train into the bombed one. He stopped **John Tulloch** (*see above*) from wanting to go to sleep and kept him talking about his children at University. They were chatting like two old men on a park bench! Craig then suggested that they try to walk out – which they did.

Michael Ellis was a fireman who arrived at Tavistock Square on his appliance. He found a man (*assumedly in civilian clothes*) giving instructions. He asked who he was and found it was **Doctor Peter Holden** (*see below*). Michael later reflected on how strange it was that a bus, already on a diversion, should be demolished right outside the headquarters of the British Medical Association.

Dr. Peter Holden was a G.P. and was in attendance at the British Medical Association (BMA) headquarters that fateful morning. As (good) luck would have it, he was trained as a major incident commander. According to **Dr. Du Feu** (*see below*) he transformed the scene at Tavistock Square from chaos into something resembling order. He decided that the approach would be to 'do most for the most' and attempted to make the BMA forecourt into something resembling a hospital ward, with the patients laid out neatly in rows.

Dr. Mandy Du Feu was standing next to the driver on a bus going in the opposite direction to the one bombed, as her bus was so very crowded (*presumably due to the shut-down of the Underground*). She tried to resuscitate a lady at the back of the bombed bus with severe injuries. She also asked a man to help her who was cradling a woman who was quite obviously dead. He would not leave her.

With the shortage of supplies, some of the victims' torn clothing was used to make temporary tourniquets.

Dr. Laurence Buckman was also in the BMA building. Because the bus exploded outside the BMA headquarters, there was no shortage of doctors – including specialists – more doctors and certainly far more specialists than you would find in any emergency ward! He saw a man in full chef's uniform holding another man's head.

Shortage of equipment was a big problem – supplies being delayed by the gridlocked traffic situation. The BMA had only standard office first aid kits, but at least there had been a committee meeting under way, which ensured plenty of doctors were around. Improvisation became the order of the day – fireman's 'duck' tape and table cutlery were used as at least they were immediately to hand. The shortage of saline was solved when a 'large' policeman arrived with an armful – each doctor wanted a pack immediately!

Esther Hyman (seeking sister **Miriam** ['Mim'] – who died). (*It was unclear as to where 'Mim' died – your reviewer thinks either the bus or Liverpool Street/Aldgate were the most likely locations*). 'Mim' was attempting to reach Canary Wharf. When she did not return home by the evening, a family search was initiated, of the four hospitals mentioned in the media, but to no avail.

A charity was set up in her name and this is situated on the East coast of India and has treated some 15,000 children with eye problems (Miriam was short-sighted).

June and John Taylor (seeking daughter **Carrie**, who died). Carrie was 24 years of age and was in the same carriage as Terry Hiscock, who survived. June had travelled with her to London, as usual, and had said 'goodbye' at about 08.30. Carrie had delayed her journey slightly, to do some shopping, thus ending up on the fatal train. There was no reply on her mobile. Four hospitals were named by the media for survivors. At one hospital, a receptionist thought Carrie might be there (being shown her picture). Regrettably, this turned out to be an error.

Graham Foulkes (seeking son **David**, who died). David was 22 years of age and this was his first trip on the Underground alone. Graham advised him on how to set about boarding a crowded train. Hearing of the bombings, they were unable to contact his mobile phone. Then his employer rang to say that they had listed him as missing. They switched on several televisions to cover as many channels as possible, finding the telephone lines to advice centres were all busy.

Graham discovered a company (on a website) that traced mobile phone locations and they found both of David's had been at Edgware Road since 08.45. Later, Graham visited the carriage concerned and was able to see and touch the exact spot where David died. As well as the destruction of seats, doors and windows, there was a large hole in the floor. David had been about opposite a bomber.

Although four bombs exploded that day, that at Russell Square (responsible for roundly half the deaths) received only a passing mention. One would have thought it should have featured quite strongly. However, if you only have some forty minutes, it is probably impossible to do justice to all the of day's four bombings.

There were a large number of 'infill' shots of trains, tunnels, platforms, etc. Now, seeing as Russell Square was the only 'tube' bombing (the others, of course, being 'sub-surface' as regards stock, tunnels and stations), one could perhaps be surprised at seeing 'tube' trains, tunnels and platforms! (As Russell Square just had the briefest of mentions). Well, surprised one was, as they appeared one after another, almost certainly being greater in number than the (correct) 'sub-surface' shots! (No, your reviewer did not count them!). At least one 'reconstruction' took place on a Northern Line train (to judge by the map seen, clearly showing the south end of that line). The Northern Line was, of course, not (directly) affected, being a tube line and not even the same line as the 'not included' Russell Square! (*The train used for the reconstruction was the 1972 Mk1 unit kept on the Aldwych branch for filming and other purposes, ex-Northern Line and still with Northern Line route maps – Ed*).

Your reviewer has not attempted to name the bombers, as their names were not shown on the screen (unlike the persons named above). He would have no idea how they were spelt.

The programme was (to myself) extremely interesting, if somewhat traumatic. Perhaps the producers plan a 'follow-up' programme to cover Russell Square?

Finally, I must apologise for any errors above. The recollections of the survivors/doctors/relatives, etc. appearing were very mixed-up. One person appeared no less than seven times and in 'knitting' together so many 'bits', it seems to your reviewer that it is almost inevitable that errors will creep in! I also found (after a number of viewings) that there were some totally unanswered questions of my own.

"FIRST CUT: ONE UNDER" (formerly known as 'a person under a train'). Friday 31 July 2010, Channel 4, 19.30 to 20.00

This programme looked at the subject of suicides on the London underground. It did not dwell on the suicides themselves, but more on the effects on those directly involved such as witnesses, family and the driver of the train. The term 'train operator' was never used – your reviewer imagines that was partly because the driver giving the most detail had left the underground some thirty-five years back (before the term 'train operator' arrived) and also because 'driver' is a much more meaningful term to television viewers.

David was an ex-driver, who had started in the late sixties as a guard, after a break from university. Although, upon applying, he was steered towards a management training course, he declined this offer. He thus commenced as a guard, then progressing to guard/motorman, and finally motorman. He spent twenty months as a driver, which included two suicides.

The first was in the rush hour and he was proceeding on reds and yellows (signals) and could see the train in front. The 'guy' did a 'flyer' as he was about half a car from stopping and doing no more than about 10mph. He informed his guard there was 'one under' and got down to the track (which he said he should not have done), in the hope that he might have missed the man, which he had not. His first reaction was anger – 'how dare you'!

His second was on Christmas Day (thus putting it well back in time!), just fourteen minutes after picking-up his train. The fire brigade had to jack up the train. He has speculated that if he had been late for duty (e.g. stayed in bed) the 'spare man' would have had to deal with it. His marriage was breaking-up at the time and he is unhappy talking about the incident. There was no counselling in those days (about the mid-sixties it seems) and he effectively 'lost it'. He resigned, as a direct result of the incident, then becoming an artist in the West Country.

He did not travel on the underground for fourteen or fifteen years, still loses sleep and has nightmares and, even after thirty-five years, cannot forget it. He knows of others who were totally destroyed by such events.

Peter was a retired driver, who had two fatalities in his time. He remarked how they arrive 'out of the blue' – you are not sent a text warning! There is physically no time to stop.

He knew of drivers who had done 'a full service' without a suicide – he considered them to be lucky. Different people are affected in different ways. For some, even a mention of the subject makes them re-live the whole event. At the Coroner's Court he had difficulties when faced with meeting the families. One mother refused to accept that her daughter had committed suicide. In his other case, the person had left a note and the family expressed 'sorry' to Peter, which he reciprocated.

Steve is a Coroner Liaison Officer and made a number of interesting comments. It seems that more men than women commit suicide, though often not for the usually presumed reasons (e.g. they have lost a vast sum on the Stock Exchange). Often there is either a history of depression or some mental health issues.

He deals with one a week (not all from the underground?) and 50% die. For those injured it often affects the rest of their life. Witnesses tend to just run. It is not at all uncommon for the family to be aware that something is wrong.

He had seen that **Debbie** (see below) seemed very relieved when the Court hearing was over.

Rob is a driver, who had been driving since the late-nineties. A woman came out of bushes on his right side and he knew instantly what she was going to do. He got out of his seat and crouched down so as not to see and put his fingers in his ears, but still heard.

He thought if only he had been on holiday, or had swapped duties, he could have avoided it. Unable to look the family in the face at the inquest, he just stared at his shoes. He disliked having to tell people at the inquest things that they clearly did not want to hear.

He started smoking and drinking alcohol and the effects upon him transferred to his wife. He saw a psychologist and finally returned to work.

Debbie was the widow of **John**, who committed suicide. On Christmas night John had a panic attack and was hyperventilating and they agreed he should see his G.P. On the day of his suicide, he left early for his shift. She got up later and found a text from him to say he was taking his life, so she rang 999 with his description. She found the whole thing was so 'unreal'.

John was very conscientious about his job (deputy manager of a respite care home for adults with learning disabilities). He was always looking at his phone, even though he was not 'on call'. Debbie thinks he both got exhausted and that work-pressure probably built up. She feels that men are expected to bear stress in order to succeed.

At the inquest, she tried to visualise what happened. The driver did not go to the inquest and she wished he had attended, so she could have told him that she did not hold him responsible and was so sorry about what happened to him.

She got very angry with John on her first birthday after the event and has chips out of the kitchen floor where she threw plates at it! Running helps her to get calm when she thinks about her loss. She feels that John's was a selfish act, bringing pain to all concerned – herself, the witnesses, the driver.

Tony was **Debbie's** Police Liaison Officer, so his arrival at her house confirmed her worst fears – she was running distraught around the garden when he arrived.

At times when no person was on screen, we were given montages of street scenes, tunnels (pedestrian ones having lights in the centre of the roof – and traversed at high speed, presumably in an attempt to simulate a train in tunnel) and moving lights.

There were several shots of suburban surface railways, buses, even the Docklands Light Railway appeared. What we did ***not*** see was the Underground, in any shape or form – no, not even ***once!*** There were even some good shots of overhead line equipment – now where do we find that in use by underground trains?

The above criticisms excepted, this was an interesting programme overall. Your reviewer must admit that he had never really given thought to the effects that a suicide attempt, whether successful or not, could have on so very many people.