

To: The Chief Constable

3rd December, 1976

Sir,

About 11.00 a.m. on Saturday, 27th November, 1976, a telephone call from an officer of the Thames Valley Police was received at Stretford Police Station to the effect that a coach load of West Ham supporters were on their way to the Manchester United football ground from the Grays area of Essex. These supporters were believed to be in possession of a number of offensive weapons. The officer from Thames Valley had been informed of this by the driver of the coach, which was expected to arrive in Stretford between 12.15 p.m. and 12.30 p.m. that day.

This information was circulated to Cheshire Constabulary and to patrols in Altrincham, Sale and Stretford.

At 2.30 p.m. that day whilst on a static point at the junction of Warwick Road and Chester Road, Trafford, a police sergeant saw the coach on Chester Road. He stopped the vehicle, spoke to the driver and a number of police officers were sent to the coach. All the youths who were on the coach were dressed in the colours of Manchester United and they intimated that they followed that team. The coach was searched and one youth was arrested for possession of a wooden stave, a flick knife and another small razor knife. He has been sentenced to 3 months' detention. No other youths had any weapons in their possession when they were searched. A search of the coach, however, revealed the following items: 1 meat cleaver, 1 sword, 4 wooden batons, 2 daggers and 2 flick knives. There were also a number of bottles on the coach. All the youths were then allowed off the coach.

The coach driver told police that he had seen the weapons whilst the coach was stopped at the M.1 Services, Newport Pagnall. He had informed the local police there and asked them to inform Greater Manchester Police. He was thanked for his information and his public spiritedness.

About 5.30 p.m. the same day twelve of the coach party came to Stretford Police Station having missed the coach back to Essex. They were questioned about possession of the weapons but all denied any knowledge. They were all later given travel warrants to return to London.

One point that should be brought to notice is the fact that although the youths wore the favours of Manchester United they were all West Ham United supporters and did, in fact, have their favours hidden on the coach.

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It indicates that they were prepared for battle and were quite capable of mounting an offensive role wearing the supporters colours of another club if they were, in fact, supporters of any team at all and not just a coach load of hooligans.

This is the first occasion in this area that such a number of offensive weapons have been found on a coach and which could be attributed to a party of alleged football supporters.

It is most fortunate that this information was passed to police by the coach driver because if this had not been so it would have been more than likely that a quite serious fracas would have resulted with some very serious injuries being inflicted. It does confirm as well our information that hooligans who travel from all over the country attend certain football matches with the express intention of creating problems not only for other supporters but for police.

This information may be of value to other Chief Constables who have problems with visiting supporters, especially those who claim to be Manchester United followers and are, in fact, just plain hooligans out for causing trouble.



Assistant Chief Constable

