

## JURY CONCLUDE THAT MENTALLY ILL MAN DIED AFTER POLICE RESTRAINT

PRESS RELEASE DECEMBER 15<sup>th</sup> 2004

**HM Coroner Peter Bedford**  
**Venue: Windsor Guildhall**

Giles Freeman was a 37-year-old man who died on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2002 after being restrained on five separate occasions, four of which were in the prone position while handcuffed, by Thames Valley police officers from Slough Police Station. During the second period of restraint he was placed in the prone or semi prone position for almost 15 minutes and on the last occasion injected with Chlorpromazine. Moments later he collapsed and died. Giles had suffered from paranoid schizophrenia for many years and his illness was stabilised through medication. He had worked as a chef and was active in the Catholic Church.

Following a two week inquest the jury concluded that the cause of death was “cardio-respiratory-arrest associated with restraint and excessive activity whilst suffering a psychotic episode of paranoid schizophrenia”. They also returned a full narrative verdict as detailed below.

Deborah Coles, co-director of INQUEST, said:

“The inquest has heard very disturbing evidence about the treatment and care of a mentally ill man who needed hospitalisation but who instead was taken into police custody where following restraint he died. This case once again raises serious concerns about the use of the police cell as a ‘place of safety’ and highlights the ongoing dangers of current police restraint methods. These concerns were echoed by the damning report on Deaths in Custody published yesterday by the parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights.”

Jane Cowell, sister of Giles, said:

“The family note the highly significant comments from the jury who said that Giles was restrained on five separate occasions, four of which were in the prone position with handcuffs. Giles was a practicing Roman Catholic and was not read the last rites as he would have wished. We believe if Giles was not restrained in the prone position on so many occasions he would not have died and we would not be here today.”

The family was represented by INQUEST Lawyer’s Group member Terry Munyard instructed by solicitor James Bell from Christian Khan solicitors.

### Notes to Editors

For more detail about the issues arising from the inquest into Giles Freeman’s death please see the briefing on our website [www.inquest.org.uk](http://www.inquest.org.uk)

If you would like to interview the family please contact Gilly Mundy on 07977 589 311.

INQUEST has ongoing concerns regarding restraint related deaths. In 2003 we gave written and oral evidence to the Independent Inquiry into the death of Rocky Bennett, who died in October 1998 after being restrained at the Norvic Clinic in Norwich. We documented our concerns about the number of restraint related deaths in custody and the lack of joined up thinking between state agencies. In January 2003 and again in September 2004 we submitted evidence to the parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) Inquiry into Deaths in Custody. The family of Giles Freeman also attended a meeting INQUEST organised for bereaved families to speak to members of the JCHR about their concerns over custody deaths.

In their report, Deaths in Custody, published on 14<sup>th</sup> December, the JCHR recommended against the use of police cells as a place of safety and made a number of wide ranging and critical recommendations in relation to the use of control and restraint and the treatment of bereaved families. To read the report please see <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200405/jtselect/jtrights/15/15.pdf>

## Full Narrative Verdict

By September/October 2002 the mental health of Mr Freeman was deteriorating as a result of inconsistent use of medication prescribed to treat paranoid schizophrenia. After discussions over a period of weeks between Mr Freeman's family and social services it was finally agreed on the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2002 that a mental health assessment was required without delay.

During the early hours of the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2002 Mr Freeman suffered a psychotic episode of paranoid schizophrenia behaving in an acutely disturbed, agitated and at times violent manner. Police were called arriving at 01.29, Mr Freeman was restrained on the floor in a prone position, handcuffed, arrested and taken to Slough police station. Mr Freeman was 172cm tall considered medically obese (weighing approximately 20 stone), and exhibited considerable strength when restrained at 36 Huntercombe Lane.

On arrival at Slough Police Station at approximately 02.15 whilst still handcuffed Mr Freeman was restrained on the floor of the cell and searched. All restraints were removed and Mr Freeman was left in the cell.

During the FME's initial assessment around 02.50 Mr Freeman attempted to escape the cell and was returned to it with limited resistance.

Shortly after 04.30 whilst being seen by the full mental health assessment team with a view to being sectioned Mr Freeman made to escape the cell. He was restrained in a prone position on the floor in the cell corridor by several officers, "double cuffed" and returned to the cell. Mr Freeman continued to struggle against the officers exhibiting extraordinary strength and was restrained on the floor of the cell in the prone position.

The assessment team made Mr Freeman the subject of a compulsory admission order for treatment under section 3 of the Mental Health Act 1983 and he remained in custody as there was no bed available at Wexham Park until 07.00. Oral sedatives were offered to Mr Freeman but refused. Mr Freeman was released from all forms of restraint and left in the cell. He continued to be severely disturbed and agitated, shouting and striking the cell door repeatedly.

The FME returned to administer sedatives via injection in order to treat Mr Freeman's extreme agitation. At this point Mr Freeman again made to escape to cell, was taken to the floor by several officers and restrained. An intra-muscular injection of Chlorpromazine was administered by the FME. During this further period of restraint, at around 05.05, Mr Freeman was noticed to have stopped breathing. Despite attempts at resuscitation, he was not revived and was pronounced dead at Wexham Park Hospital at about 06.02 hours.

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>Deaths in Police custody</b>	36	52	48	57	58	65	46	36	34	47	62	39
<b>Restraint related deaths in</b>	2	5	7	5	5	9	6	5	5	5	11	2

# Inquest

Police custody												
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