

STATEMENT OF RODGER HOPE IDE

AGE / DATE OF BIRTH: OVER 21

This statement, consisting of 5 pages each signed by me, is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

DATED 170996

SIGNED R H IDE

SIGNATURE WITNESSED BY

I am a Bachelor of Science, a Chartered Chemist, a Member of the Royal Society of Chemistry, a Chartered Biologist, a Member of the Institute of Biology and a Member of the Institution of Fire Engineers. I have been a forensic scientist for twenty seven years working for most of this time at the Home Office Forensic Science Laboratory Birmingham. During that time I have examined many cases of this type, offering a specialist service in knot and ligature examination for Forensic Science Laboratories and Police Forces throughout the country. On the 13th September 1996, I attended the Forensic Sciences Service's Laboratory, Aldermaston and, in the presence of Roger Mann of that laboratory, I examined two items as follows :

SRG27 - black boot lace

SRG39 - blue fabric, knotted

Both items had been securely and adequately packaged.

Information

I have received written and verbal information to the effect that on the 9th July 1996, Linda Russell was walking with her two young daughters Megan and Josephine, taking them home from school. The route involved walking through a rural area, including isolated

woodland. Subsequently, the body of Linda Russell and her daughter Megan were found, together with Josephine Russell who was badly injured. The family pet dog was also found dead at the scene. The blue tights or leggings, SRG39, were found tied to a tree and I understand that the black bootlace was found nearby.

Purpose of Examination

The purpose of my examination is to identify the knots present in the two exhibits and to provide any other information which may be relevant to the enquiry.

Technical Issues

Apparently simple knots can be tied in different ways and it is sometimes possible to deduce details of the circumstances from the manner and sequence of tying. The tying of certain knots is said to demonstrate expertise characteristic of particular trades or activities. It is generally possible to comment on the behaviour and security of a knotted system and it may be possible to establish whether the victim had attempted to escape.

Most of the commonly encountered knots are built up of successive overhand knots. It is possible to tie overhand knots in two ways, which are mirror images of each other.

I have used a convention for naming overhand knots. I describe knots in which the left free end is on top as "l" and those in which the right free end is on top as "d". Modes of tying overhand knots are not normally diagnostic of right - or left-handedness.

Reef knots are made by tying two different successive overhand knots.

Granny knots are produced by tying two successive overhand knots of

the same type. Granny knots are therefore easier to tie and are significantly more common than reef knots.'

Certain types of knot, particularly reef and granny knots, can turn inside out (invert) when subjected to strain or interference.

Inverted knots are normally less secure than the parent knot, and may allow the knotted system to change in form by sliding into a different position.

Examination and results

A full record of the work undertaken is contained within case notes made at the time of the examination and these are available for inspection if necessary.

Black bootlace

The item consists of a flat, black, braided bootlace, approximately 990 millimetres long, measured under slight tension with the knots in position. At a position between 200 and 210 millimetres from the tag end, is a place where I understand a blood spot had been removed by the Forensic Science Laboratory for test purposes. There are three tightly tied knots, respectively 585, 620 and 650 millimetres from the original tag end of the bootlace. These are respectively a d overhand knot, a d overhand tied on top of another d overhand knot and a d overhand knot. At a position approximately 930 millimetres from the tag end another knot was present when I made my examination. I understand that this last knot had been tied for experimental purposes. It was a loosely tied d overhand knot. The cut end of the bootlace shows evidence that it has been cut for approximately 90% of its width and the remaining part of the bootlace has been broken by

force. The cut does not have a recent appearance. Approximately 470 millimetres of the central portion of the bootlace appears to show evidence of having been stretched or subjected to tension. It is possible that this is a result of its previous use as a bootlace. However, this stretching is in my opinion more likely to be a result of its use as a ligature.

Blue fabric knotted

Item SRG39 is a pair of dirty, dark blue, well-worn tights. The surface of the fabric is worn, with pills of fibres over most of the external area. The soles of the feet are dirty and appear to be stiff with sweat or dirt. Vegetable material is attached to the fabric and some twigs have been incorporated into knots. Most of the pair of tights are the correct way around, but one of the legs is inside out. There are three knots tied in the tights, which have evidently been cut from around the trunk of the tree. The first knot to have been tied is likely to have been the knot which secured the tights to the tree. This was formed by tying one of the legs of the tights to the waist portion of the tights around the tree using an l.l. granny knot.

This knot was tied fairly tightly, but incorporated twigs and possibly ivy stems within itself. The other two knots formed small loops near to the ends of the legs. These loops are formed in a way consistent with them having been tied around the wrists or ankles of a victim. The knot tied on the longest protruding leg of the tights is a d l reef knot, which has formed a loop approximately 48 millimetres in circumference when the tights are not subjected to tension. I measured the force required to extend the size of this loop, because

the material from which the tights are constructed is capable of stretching readily. When subjected to a force of 5 kilograms, the total circumference of the loop was 130 millimetres. When subjected to a force of 10 kilograms, the circumference was 176 millimetres. The knot tied in the shorter protruding leg of the tights was a d.d. granny knot, which formed another small loop. This loop was 70 millimetres in circumference when relaxed, 190 millimetres in circumference when subjected to a force of 5 kilograms, and 224 millimetres when subjected to a force of 10 kilograms. The tights were capable of stretching more when greater force was applied and it is evident that whatever had been tied within the loops was removed without untying the knots.

Interpretation

The bootlace contained three original knots, which had been pulled very tight and which have no particular purpose in their present form. The middle portion of the lace has been subjected to strain. This is not the normal pattern of distortion I would expect in normal usage of a bootlace, because in normal usage greater strain is exerted near to the ends than in the middle of the lace. One end of the lace had been partially cut and partially broken some time in the past, although probably not recently. The three visible, original knots conceal a fourth, which had been tied prior to the visible middle knot. All four of these knots had been tied in the same way (d overhand). Whilst such knots can arise by chance, it would be a coincidence that all four knots are of the same form. The loose knot at the end of the bootlace is also a d overhand knot, but I understand that this had been tied for experimental purposes in the laboratory.

All three knots used in the tights are different, which may indicate that the person who tied them was not in the regular habit of tying knots. However, under the stressful conditions which prevailed, the knot tied might simply be the result of chance and geometrical accessibility, controlled by the position of the subject involved. Although some force was involved in pulling the small loops tight, this was evidently not sufficient to retain whatever had been tied within the loops permanently.

Conclusion

In my opinion, based upon the information available to me at present.

- 1 the original knots in the bootlace are four d overhand knots, one of which is superimposed on another;
- 2 the central portion of the bootlace has been subjected to strain;
- 3 one end of the bootlace has been partly cut/partly broken, but probably not recently;
- 4 the tights were tied first around the tree using a l.l. granny knot, then around two other items such as wrists, using a d.l reef knot and a d.d. granny knot respectively;
- 5 the method of tying does not demonstrate expertise.

Appendices

I append copies of six annotated photographs to this statement. I have the original, unretouched negatives in my possession.

R H IDE SIGNED

STATEMENT TAKEN
PLACE:

TIME: DATE:

WITNESS TO SIGNATURE:

OFFICERS SIGNATURE: