

## MARCH 2005 - SUMMARY

- The month's media coverage was dominated by a number of incidents and cases which made gun crime headline news again. The death of Glasgow toddler Andrew Morton, shot in the head with an airgun, brought new calls for tighter controls over airguns, especially from Scotland. The lethality of airguns was further highlighted by the conviction of a Yorkshire man who had killed his friend after he had aimed and shot at him, not knowing the gun was loaded. The convictions and sentencing of those responsible for the murders of Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis in Aston on New Year's Day 2003 and the murder of jeweller Marian Bates in Arnold, Nottingham in September 2003 resulted in much discussion about the level of gun crime in Great Britain. Those responsible were rightly condemned. However, a different attitude appeared to be adopted towards the jailing of Manchester teacher Linda Walker who was convicted of shooting an airgun in the street and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

The other incidents and cases in March 2005 followed an all too familiar pattern.

- **Gun deaths and injuries** - Shooting incidents that resulted in death or serious injury were reported in Huddersfield, Hulme, Old Trafford, Scarborough, Kingsway (London), Upminster (two separate shootings), Enfield (two separate shootings) and Wembley (two men injured).
- **Armed hold-ups** - Guns were reportedly used in hold-ups and robberies in Muswell Hill, Loughton, Cambridge, Peterborough, Nottingham, Mayfield (Midlothian) and Edinburgh.
- **Imitation gun alerts** - No month goes by without the need for police to be called to incidents in which people (usually youths) carrying guns have been spotted in public, often sparking an armed response. This month there were incidents in Aldershot, Eye Green and Macclesfield. A Stockport youth was given a jail sentence after being spotted carrying an imitation gun on CCTV. Two pupils have been suspended from a Dundee school, apparently after an incident with a pellet gun.
- **Imitation and BB-guns used to threaten and injure** - Sometimes these guns are used in criminal activities, either being used to threaten or actually being fired. BB-guns were fired at members of the public in Sheffield (in which a pensioner was shot in the head), Handsworth and Wilmslow (in which a woman was also shot in the head). A Sunderland

girl was injured when one was fired at her by a child aged 6. There were reports of imitation guns having been used in hold-ups in Potters Bar/Barnet, Anfield and Hull and to threaten the police in Ruchazie.

- **Airgun snipers** - The death of Andrew Morton, killed by a sniper armed with an airgun, highlighted the lethal nature of many air weapons. The incident in which he was shot was not a one-off. In March 2005, as in previous months, others were targeted with airguns. Airgun incidents were reported from Dundee, Llangollen and Pentreban, and there were convictions of men for previous incidents in Stockingford (Nuneaton), Ayr and Cardiff Bay. In the latter two the victims were hit by pellets. There were also a number of cases of injuries to pets reported,
- **Drink and guns** - We often report incidents in which a person misuses a gun they own whilst under the influence of drink. Two court cases concerning airgun incidents in Nuneaton and Clacton were reported.
- **"Novelty" guns** - The horrifying ingenuity of some gun manufacturers was highlighted. The inquest into the death of Fabian Flowers at a Stockport night club revealed that there are guns available that disguised as key-fobs. A Nottingham man was convicted after being caught with gun disguised as a mobile phone.
- **Gun theft** - Among the guns stolen this month was a fully operational handgun containing live ammunition, taken from a private house in Cardiff.

## MARCH 2005 – INCIDENTS

### ENGLAND

*Liverpool Echo*, 31 March 2005

In one of a number of attacks on a shop in **Anfield**, a **ball-bearing gun** was brandished at staff.

*Cambridge News*, 31 March 2005

A cashier was held at gunpoint at a filling station on the **Linton** bypass. The robber took an undisclosed sum of money.

*BBC*, 31 March 2005

Six teenagers playing with **imitation guns** sparked a full-scale security alert at an Army training site at **Glenbourne** in Aldershot. All six received cautions for possessing imitation firearms in public.

*Stockport Express*, 30 March 2005

A 16-year-old caught on CCTV brandishing an **imitation 9mm Beretta pistol**, while wearing an electronic tag, has been jailed for 12 months. Police were alerted to the incident by the **Stockport** town centre CCTV system.

*Shropshire Star*, 30 March 2005

A man was arrested after an alleged shooting and car chase between **Atcham** and **Shrewsbury**. The suspect was arrested after police fired a Taser stun gun. Richard Summers later appeared in court charged with nine offences, six relating to the possession of a firearm (including a rifle and 71 rounds of ammunition) (*Shropshire Star*, 31 March 2005).

*Sheffield Today*, 30 March 2005

A man driving along a road in **Handsworth** had a gun pointed at him as two teenagers crossed the road in front of him. A woman coming out of a medical centre then complained of being shot at by the gang. A **BB gun** was confiscated from the teenagers.

*Manchester online*, 30 March 2005

Fabian Flowers, 19, may have accidentally shot himself as he tried to show friends how the safety catch of a mini "key-fob" gun worked. He died after he was shot in the head at point-blank range in a **Stockport** nightclub in February 2004. The coroner recorded an open verdict.

*Huddersfield Daily Examiner*, 29 March 2005

A man went to hospital with a gunshot injury to his right forearm after a shooting in **Huddersfield**.

*Peterborough Today*, 24 March 2005

An armed response unit was sent to **Eye Green**, near Peterborough, when a member of the public reported seeing two youths carrying a gun. The weapon was later discovered to be a **BB gun**. A firearms officer later warned that people who carry BB guns may risk being shot dead by police, if they do not cooperate.

*Wilmslow Express*, 23 March 2005

A sniper with a **BB gun** shot a woman in the head whilst she was walking along a road in **Wilmslow**. She was recovering after a pellet was removed from her skull. It is thought that the shooting was by young children unaware of the serious injuries that can result from fired pellets.

*This is London*, 23 March 2005

Donald Fearon was jailed for life after bursting into the home of an elderly man, assaulting him and robbing him at gunpoint.

*Kensington Times*, 23 March 2005

Police appealed for witnesses to an incident outside a nightclub in Great Queen Street, off **Kingsway**. Shots were fired during an altercation between two groups of males. A man later attended a London hospital suffering from a gunshot wound.

*icCoventry*, 23 March 2005

Gary Lee was drunk when he fired an **air rifle** at two joggers in the **Stockingford** area of Nuneaton. He was jailed for 15 months after pleading guilty to possessing a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence.

*BBC*, 21 March 2005

A man was shot dead by police after a van that had been driving the wrong way stopped on the A63 outside **Hull**. The man was reported to be armed, though there were differing reports as to the nature of the weapon.

*National Newspapers*, 21 March 2005

Peter Williams, 19, was found guilty of the murder of jeweller Marian Bates who was shot dead as she shielded her daughter from armed raiders in **Arnold**, Nottingham on 30 September 2003 (see [2003 incidents](#)). The suspected gunman, James Brodie, is believed to have been murdered. Three other men were convicted for other offences relating to the shooting.

*Epping Forest Guardian*, 20 March 2005

A gunman forced a cleaner to the floor and searched a house in **Loughton** before fleeing empty handed.

*National Newspapers*, 19 March 2005

Four men, Marcus Ellis, Rodrigo Simms, Nathan Martin and Michael Gregory have been found guilty following the fatal shooting of Charlene Ellis and Letisha Shakespeare. The incident, in which two of the victims' friends were injured, occurred in **Aston** on 1 January 2003. The men were in a car armed with three weapons, including a Mac 10 submachine gun, and fired 40 bullets. The intended victim appears to have been a member of rival drug gang. All four guilty men received long prison sentences.

*Eastern Daily Press*, 19 March 2005

Andrew McKinnon was convicted of kidnapping a woman at gunpoint, imprisoning her and possessing a firearm. The incident took place in **Beccles** in September 2001.

*BBC*, 18 March 2005

Police and the Army are investigating reports that a gun was illegally fired inside the Connaught Barracks in **Dover**.

*Barking & Dagenham Post*, 11 March 2005

Two men were shot in **Upminster** in a period of two days. In one incident a man was shot twice on the street, in the other a man was shot in the leg outside a pub. The local MP believes that the shootings are highly likely to be drug-related.

*BBC*, 11 March 2005

Leon Ellison has been jailed for five years for firing a gun disguised as a mobile phone on a **Nottingham** street. The gun was loaded with two live rounds. The weapon, which is fired by pulling a ring and pressing a button, was found nearby. Ellison pleaded guilty to possessing a firearm.

*This is Hertfordshire*, 10 March 2005

Daniel Holland was given nine life sentences after admitting nine robberies and asking for another 29 to be taken into account. He also received 18 months for nine offences of possession of a firearm or **imitation firearm** with intent to commit an indictable offence. Some of the robberies took place in **Potters Bar** and **Barnet**.

*Enfield Independent*, 10 March 2005

The paper reported the shooting of an **Enfield** mother-of-four (see *Evening Standard*, 2 March 2005) and the fatal shooting of a man two days later. The man was found dead next to his car after being shot twice in the head in an execution-style killing in **Enfield Highway**.

*Manchester News*, 9 March 2005

Sixteen shootings have occurred in south Manchester in a month, according to the police. In the latest a man was hit in the leg during a drive-by attack in **Hulme**. A few days earlier a man was fatally wounded in the chest after an argument at a party in **Old Trafford**.

*Yorkshire Post*, 8 March 2005

A man who killed a friend in his flat in **Castleford** when he fired a powerful **air rifle** at him, not realising it was loaded, is standing trial charged with manslaughter. Christopher Brain shot his victim through the eye and the pellet penetrated his brain. (See [November 2004 incidents](#)). He was sent to a young offenders' institution for three years (*BBC*, 23 March 2005).

*PA News*, 8 March 2005

An inquest jury found that a man shot dead by a police officer in **Clophill**, Bedfordshire, in January 2003 was lawfully killed. Colin O'Connor had aimed a black revolver at police "like a cowboy" as if to shoot from the hip.

*Scarborough Today*, 5 March 2005

A man was found dead in a **Scarborough** house with a gunshot wound to his head. The body of the man's mother was also found: she had died from natural causes. Firearms were recovered from the house which used to be a gun shop.

*Slough Reporter*, 4 March 2005

Reading Crown Court heard how police had found a high calibre pistol, as well as drugs, after two cars were abandoned following a car chase and crash on the M4 near **Maidenhead**. Six drug dealers were jailed for a total of 33 years.

*icSurrey*, 3 March 2005

Rapper Dizzie Rascal was arrested on suspicion of possessing an illegal weapon when police stopped a vehicle in which he was a passenger in **Bow**, east London. He was suspected of carrying a pepper spray, which is considered to be a Section 5 firearm.

*This is London*, 3 March 2005

Two men were badly injured after a shooting at a sports ground in **Wembley**. One victim was found in a nearby garden, the other arrived at hospital.

*PA News*, 3 March 2005

A drunken man pulled out a gun when disputing the price of a can of cider on a train approaching **Macclesfield** station. Armed police officers were called to the station and arrested the man. A **plastic gun** was found. Passengers were evacuated, the train was delayed for more than an hour and other services were disrupted.

*Peterborough Today*, 2 March 2005

Staff at a building society branch in **Peterborough** were threatened by a man with a gun and forced to hand over cash. No one was hurt but staff were left shaken.

*Hornsey & Crouch End Journal*, 2 March 2005

Masked men stole a £95,000 car at gunpoint outside a house in **Muswell Hill**. One of three men held up a black handgun to the victim's head. Thanks to a tracking device the car was found parked and locked up in Tottenham.

*Evening Standard*, 2 March 2005

A woman who was shot at her home in **Enfield** was fighting for her life in hospital. She was being treated under armed guard in a secret location.

*Sunderland Echo*, 1 March 2005

A six-year-old boy almost blinded a 12-year-old girl from **Pallion** when he shot her in the eye with a **ball-bearing gun**. The victim was playing with her friend when the boy aimed the weapon and fired at her face. The police described it as "an unfortunate accident".

*This is Hull*, 1 March 2005

Adam David Atkinson of **North Hull** who held a **replica handgun** to a shop assistant's head has been banned from the city store. He received a three-year anti-social behaviour order. Two years ago he had taken an **airgun** into school at **Anlaby** and fired it in a corridor.

*Sheffield Today*, 1 March 2005

A pensioner was shot in the head as she walked home from a **Sheffield** bus stop. The pellet was fired from a **ball-bearing gun**. The victim fainted with fear when she felt the blow and saw blood streaming from an inch-long gash.

*BBC*, 1 March 2005

Part of **Nottingham** city centre was sealed off following an armed raid on a betting shop. The raider pulled a handgun on workers before taking a "significant amount" of money.

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## SCOTLAND

*Evening Telegraph and Post (Dundee)*, 31 March 2005

Police are investigating an alleged incident at Lawside Academy in **Dundee** which involved a **pellet gun** and has led to the exclusion of two pupils.

*BBC*, 21 March 2005

Kevin Summers of **Hamilton** was jailed for more than three years after being caught with drugs and a stun gun. He pleaded guilty.

*Scotsman*, 16 March 2005

The owner of a newsagent's in **Mayfield**, Midlothian, threw crates of bread rolls at a gunman who tried to hold up the shop. The gunman fled.

*Grampian TV*, 10 March 2005

A police inquiry has been launched after a possible **airgun** attack on a fire crew in **Dundee** as they answered an emergency call out. The windscreen of their engine was hit and shards of glass shot onto the back seat.

**BBC**, 8 March 2005

Christopher McKenna admitted presenting and aiming an **imitation firearm** at police officers and placing them in a state of fear for their personal safety. The police had been called to a disturbance at a block of flats in **Ruchazie** in September 2004. McKenna was brandishing gun which he initially refused to lay down. The gun was found to have one ball bearing in the mechanism.

**News of the World**, 6 March 2005

Edward Farrow shot his ex-wife in the back of the thigh with an **airgun** after a row at his **Ayr** home. He has been sentenced to 150 hours' community service.

**Edinburgh Evening News**, 5 March 2005

A robbery at an **Edinburgh** bank may have been the work of a serial bank robber who is believed to have struck three times already in the city. In the latest incident an man carrying a handgun burst into the bank. Terrified staff were forced to hand over hundreds of pounds in cash.

**Scottish Newspapers and Television**, 3-6 March 2005

Two-year-old Andrew Morton has died two days after being hit in the head with an **airgun** pellet near his home in Craighend, **Easterhouse**, Glasgow. A firefighter in the area was also struck by a pellet and it is thought that the shot that hit the boy was aimed from a flat at the firefighters. A 27-year-old man, Mark Bonini, has been arrested and charged with his murder. He also faces charges of firing an air weapon at a woman, street light and windows and assaulting the firefighter by firing an airgun which hit him on the body and leg (See [Comment](#)).

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## WALES

**icWales**, 24 March 2005

A haul of weapons, including a German SS handgun were stolen from a house in **Llanrumney**, Cardiff. The handgun is fully operational and was stolen with live ammunition in it.

**Daily Post**, 15 March 2005

An **airgun** was fired at the bedroom window of a nursing home in **Llangollen**: three elderly residents were sleeping in the room. It is believed that the culprits were shooting ducks in the nearby canal.

**Times**, 5 March 2005

Graham Pickersgill was jailed for two years and nine months for firing an **air rifle** at a couple who were arguing in the street near his home in **Cardiff Bay** where he was hosting a party. Both his victims were hit by pellets.

**South Wales Echo**, 2 March 2005

A sniper targeted four bus passengers, including two children, waiting at a bus stop in **Pentrebane**, Cardiff. When police arrived they were seen to confiscate an **air rifle** but witnesses were surprised that no one was arrested. It is believed that the shots came from a block of flats.

*icWales*, 1 March 2005

Police recovered a **replica handgun** (Kimar model 92 8mm automatic blank self-loading pistol) from the River Taff in **Cardiff**. They suspect that the gun may have been used for some sort of crime before being abandoned.

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## INCIDENTS INVOLVING ANIMALS

*Devon 24*, 31 March 2005

A cat was shot and seriously wounded with an **airgun** at near point blank range. It was the latest of four incidents in the same road in **Budleigh Salterton**.

*Newquay Voice*, 30 March 2005

A family cat returned to its **Newquay** home with its leg hanging off and four **air rifle** pellets in its head. The leg was amputated, and pellets removed for its head but one other pellet could not be removed and the cat may also lose an eye.

*Epping Forest Guardian*, 19 March 2005

A cat which was shot with an **airgun** in **Waltham Abbey** had to be put to sleep after three months of treatment for damage to abdomen, spleen, liver, pancreas and other internal organs. He was shot with a single pellet at close range. His owners support more restrictions on who can access airguns.

*BBC*, 3 March 2005

In an **airgun** attack in **Delabole**, Cornwall, a kitten was shot as young children played with it in their garden. The cat is recovering after the pellet was removed by a vet. A police spokesman said that "Delabole does have problem with air weapons, particularly among young people".



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