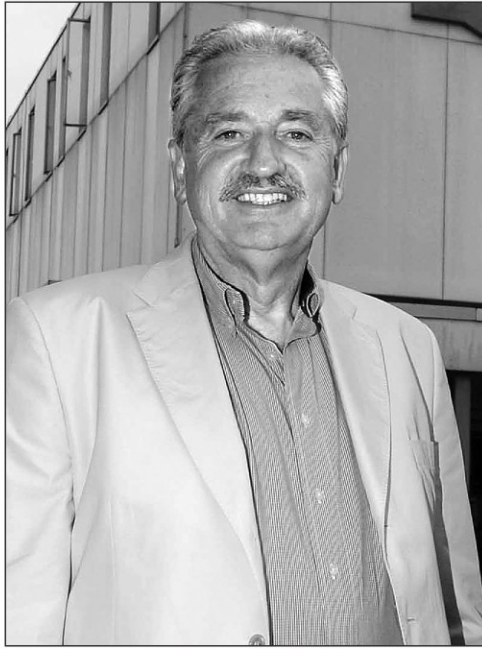




Christopher Kelly Snr – an ordinary beat bobby



Chris Kelly – his business affected by crime



Less police contact when cars were introduced

CHRISt Kelly is a West Midlands boy made good. After growing up on a Wolverhampton council estate, he now owns a business with a £100 million turnover, employing 500 people.

But like so many, his business has been seriously affected by crime, prompting him to serve for several years on a Home Office crime reduction panel at New Scotland Yard. He received no payment for his services.

You would therefore think that he would be just the type of person the law enforcement agencies would turn to when they wanted to know what the priorities were for people on the ground.

Yet when he recently applied to join West Midlands Police Authority, his application was rejected.

Here are his thoughts on law and order in Blair's Britain:

"Tony Blair will probably be remembered, not so as he desperately wished, for his success, but for his abysmal failure, and this today shows across his face without too much detection.

Tough

Some say Iraq has been his biggest failure, and it probably is in terms of lives lost and financial cost, but at home most folk will say his biggest failure was not being 'Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' as he pledged.

The voters now know that it will never happen of course, and most would say that things have actually become worse since Tony swept into power back in 1997.

I grew up on a council estate in the Deans Road area of Wolverhampton. My father was an ordinary beat bobby and we lived in a semi, next to another police family.

Most folk recognised these as police houses, not by a sign outside, but by the fact that they had a different style.

Our house looked just like another pair half a mile away, one of which was occupied by a lovely local constable called Ted Jones for

Boss who yearns for old-style policing

It is nearly 15 years since Tony Blair pledged to be "Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime." Here, West Midlands businessman CHRIS KELLY says his inability to fulfill this pledge will be remembered as one of his biggest failures

many years. Both my father's and Ted's police transport was either on foot, or a Raleigh bicycle.

Consequently, they got to know local folk well, especially those who would be a cause for trouble.

I remember well my mother serving up my father's dinner at 10.30 one night after his 'two 'til 10' shift, and saying that she had overheard a local woman on the bus telling another woman that they had just booked a holiday. They had also ordered a new three piece suite, and she reminded my father that her husband was not working

(not that he needed reminding).

After eating, he pulled up his neck tie, put back on his police jacket and helmet and walked off to the neighbour's house.

My father was well aware that a local off licence had been raided and the contents of the till taken.

He returned home not long after midnight, having arrested the chap, who then spent the rest of the night in the cell (no instant bail then) to await the pleasure of the magistrate the next day.

Not long after, in the mid 60s, Prime Minister Harold Wilson

brought in police 'panda cars' with the idea that the ordinary policemen would get to crimes quickly, which they did of course, but they totally lost their local contact.

Soon afterwards most police houses went too, and that effectively sealed the loss of local policing, particularly on council estates in large towns and cities such as Wolverhampton.

By contrast today we have a system where more often police officers do not know the locality that they police, let alone the street names and the people in them.

Crime has a huge social cost and effect on society, and not to fund the police properly is a total nonsense. We pay far more in insurance premiums and the many other costs of crime than ever we would if the money were to be spent on an effective, efficient, well managed and well motivated police service.

Army

We also lost the autonomy of what was called the police Watch Committee, which was then made up of the 'great and the good' of the local police area. It did what it said on the tin, it watched over the chief constable, who also in those days was not a career policeman, but more often a retired army officer.

Commitment to the community, not the pay, was the criteria of all these people then.

Today we have local councillors who get paid to sit on police authorities, with pay to add to their council pay and expenses too, and then more often in my opinion, instead of bringing the chief constable to account, they defer to the chief and anything that he or she wants to do.

Across the country we have seen police targeting honest hard working folk, whereas real criminals are allowed to go about their business without hinder.

The old system worked, and the explosion in crime will continue until we really do get someone who will do what Tony promised.

The General Election can't come soon enough for many folk – me included."