

Tory grandees fight Gilfoyle ‘cover up’

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A Times investigation revealed records describing how senior officers hushed up police blunders at the death scene of Eddie Gilfoyle’s wife

TOM PILSTON/THE TIMES

The home secretary is being urged by former Conservative ministers to end what they say is a cover-up by police over the convicted murderer Eddie Gilfoyle.

Lord Hunt of Wirral and Sir Peter Bottomley urged Theresa May to intervene after an investigation by *The Times* revealed records describing how senior officers hushed up police blunders at his wife’s death scene.

As Gilfoyle’s former constituency MP, Lord Hunt has always believed in his innocence. The one-time minister in Margaret Thatcher’s cabinet now believes this is the worst miscarriage of justice for decades.

He said: “This is becoming a long-running saga of cover-up after cover-up. The home secretary should lift the lid on what has been a catalogue of errors resulting in the most unjust conviction of anybody in my 40 years in parliament.”

Gilfoyle was convicted of murdering his pregnant wife, Paula, after tricking her into writing a suicide note and hanging her in the garage of their home in 1992.

He was released after 18 years in prison but remains a convicted murderer and is fighting for an appeal.

Merseyside police held an immediate review into its own errors at the death scene but withheld the findings from the defence at trial.

When the Police Complaints Authority was sent to Merseyside to look into failings in the murder investigation, the force tried to hide the existence of the critical report and suppressed notes of interviews with officers who found the body, *The Times* disclosed this month.

Mistakes included cutting down Mrs Gilfoyle's body before CID arrived, failing to take photographs and omitting to seal off the scene. A policeman put the rope into his pocket and it was later incinerated.

The defence only recently discovered that a main cause of the errors was a police policy in the Wirral division to put the local coroner's officer in charge of suspicious death scenes. Lord Hunt, a solicitor, said that policy "looks not only to be contrary to best practice but also unconstitutional".

The Times has for eight years been uncovering undisclosed evidence about Gilfoyle's case. Mrs Gilfoyle's diary, which showed that she had previously attempted suicide, was kept from the defence for 20 years.

Merseyside police said it had supplied the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which examines suspected miscarriages of justice, with all its documents about the murder inquiry, adding that "it would not be appropriate to comment further at this stage".

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<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/tory-grandeets-fight-gilfoyle-cover-up-jxhcqh8h>