The ballad of Eli Hall

TEFLONRABBIT ARTICLE No.184

Unique Identifier:80198e45-7a41-45f7-8c1d-b309318c5c26



Record breaking siege causes inconvenience to local hipsters

Sunday, November 10, 2019 - 13:11

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BBC Article:
"He told officers he was on a mission from the Rastafarian God, Jah, and that he had enough ammunition to 'fill a bath'."

Evening Standard:
"However, the SAS-style outfits and equipment, the dog squads, the armoured Land Rovers, the helicopter hovering overhead and the lights trained on the house failed to intimidate Hall, or even persuade him not to fire at police."

Local counter-culture motto :
"When I die I know I'm going to Heaven because I served my time in Hackney"

Hackney Siege Winter Operation Drugs Mare Street London Shooting Marijuana Metropolitan Police Media Persons of Interest

26 December 2002 to 9 January 2003

According to Wikipedia Eli Hall was "was a 32-year-old gangster and former nightclub doorman". However, what it doesn't mention is the fact that he had an IQ comparable with that of a 12 year old. Neither does it include details such as his weight lifting hobby or his favourite past time of providing security in the local corner shop, literally for peanuts. Apparently he could get through several large bags in an evening.

Less than eleven days into the record length 'situation', a man appeared at the cordon with a large pizza for Eli Hall. He made a compelling case that the pizza should be allowed to reach its destination unmolested. The officers on duty allowed the pizza through and searched the cheese based fast food by way of an afterthought. Underneath the extra large meat-feast stuffed crust †, was a sealed bag containing a not insubstantial amount of high potency marijuana. When the officers returned to the cordon to ask the man to explain his actions, he had inconveniently disappeared into the late evening gloom of Mare Street.

† Best effort estimate. Actual toppings remain confidential

Had this been a single occurrence, it would be hilarious enough. But this incredibly bold weed Samaritan returned the next night and attempted to repeat his master deception. Unsurprisingly, the officers at the scene had received high quality intelligence regarding this elaborate and brazen confidence trick. Also the entire area of Hackney Central was saturated with numerous government departments and their operatives. From plain black jump-suited detachments of numberless personnel, to helmeted sentries with Heckler & Koch automatic firearms. When the man handed over the pizza, the officers took it and searched him by way of a prelude to arrest. By many accounts he received a custodial sentence the following day.

The general tone of the Wikipedia page alludes to Eli Hall being some form of hardened criminal. However the 'OG' pizza stunt was more in line with the overall remit of Eli and the rest of the Hall men. The details are somewhat vague but apparently one of his family was arrested in the car park of a prison. While on a routine bulk delivery, he had decided to also fit in a prison visit. The prison staff suspected that there may be activity of a suspicious nature afoot and it all ended up with a search revealing a car boot full of kilo bags of cannabis and an arrest not long thereafter.

Approximately one week into the siege, the local residents were becoming somewhat anxious regarding the ongoing disruption to their everyday lives. The cordon came right to the edge of the local pub door and afforded the various shifts of round the clock presence access to the pub facilities. It also afforded them an unprecedented opportunity to gather yet more high quality intelligence on the various regulars of said pub.

Editors note: To the rather charming WPC on the Sylvester Path cordon who chatted me up in the snow at closing time - discretion prevented me from trying to close the deal. However it was all a long time ago and I'm sure a lot of water has passed under the bridge ... blah blah blah - feel free to use the site contact form to gain further essential information on this historical Hackney event.

The local Hackney Gazette was beginning to include quotes of negative reactions from the public. One of them stood out from the rest; The officers on the Wilton Road cordon were required to attend to a rather disgruntled man in his late 20's*:*

> *What do you mean I can't go through - but I need to go through - so let me through - will you?*

The officers explained that this was an ongoing situation and that nobody was allowed to cross the cordon until further notice.

> *But you're preventing me from getting to my drug dealer!*

Again, the Metropolitan Police are not inexperienced when it comes to such magnificent displays of subterfuge. They promptly assured the man that it was just as well that he could not get to his drug dealer or they would certainly arrest him on the way out.

By the middle of the second week, the entire community was exceedingly keen to have the situation resolved one way or another. The banter in 'The Old Ship' would often include shouts of

> *Just bloody shoot 'im*

and depending on the time of evening, accompanying cheers from the clientèle.

Wikipedia also omits details regarding the quite extensive efforts to compel Eli Hall with non violent means. The electricity to the block had been cut off by the fourth day and this was happening during the coldest month of the year. There was snow on the ground which had fallen weeks previously and still not thawed. According to the local grapevine, Eli Hall thwarted the combined efforts to freeze him out by burning furniture and lifting weights to keep warm.

There was also an account from the housemate who 'escaped' on day eleven. He had known Eli Hall for a considerable time and there was no grapevine version of his story which included anything representing any threat to his well-being during the entire incident. In fact there were details regarding the meals that they had cooked together over a pile of burning dinner chairs.

One day after Eli had made it into the record books for maintaining the longest ever police siege in Britain, things were rapidly brought to a conclusion. The official story states that he set fire to the flat and shot himself. This was some years prior to social media live streaming and Eli wasn't the most IT savvy punter anyway. As such, there is no counter to the mainstream narrative. There are some anomalous details contained within it which tend to fail when subjected to robust interrogation. Most prominently the autopsy account of his death:

> *An autopsy revealed that the police bullet had entered Hall's cheek and lodged in his neck but was not fatal. The cause of death was determined to be a self-inflicted gunshot to the temple.*

Ultimately this version of events may well be legitimate, however it fairly smacks of a rather convenient outcome. One would imagine that a high velocity round to the face which then lodges in the neck would probably incur quite a substantial amount of blood loss. Having said that, surviving such a considerable injury could well motivate anyone to take their own life rather than carry on living with such profound facial scarring. In any event, Eli isn't telling his side of the story anytime soon and the official narrative is backed by such paragons of transparency as local MP Diane Abbot.

It's difficult to estimate exactly what motivated Eli Hall in his single handed tete a tete with the Metropolitan Police. As a part of local Hackney history, the siege does serve as a fairly harsh reminder that you can't fight city hall and win.