

UK: Partner of Anthony Grainger, shot by police, campaigns for truth about his killing

Our reporters
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Anthony Paul Grainger, 36, an unarmed man, was shot and killed by police on Saturday, March 3, at around 7:20 p.m. in the small Cheshire village of Culcheth. (See “Unarmed man shot dead by police in English village”)

The scene of the shooting was a public car park at the back of a takeaway pizza shop. When the fatal shot was fired, the car had been blocked in by police cars and immobilised by means of shotgun fire at its tyres. CS gas canisters had also been used to shock and disable the car’s three occupants.

Following the shooting, the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) announced it had “served a formal notice of investigation on a Greater Manchester Police [GMP] firearms officer on Monday 2 April” and that the officer “will be criminally interviewed in due course”.

The family of Anthony Grainger has set up the Justice for Anthony Grainger campaign, which now has over 6,000 members of the Facebook group: #justice4grainger ...R.I.P Anthony Grainger.

The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to his partner, Gail Hadfield Grainger, and a friend who supports the campaign. Anthony’s mother had intended to take part in the interview, but was too emotional to speak about her son’s death.

Anthony’s two stepchildren, aged three and nine, were playing with their toys while the interview took place. Anthony also has two children from a previous relationship.

WSWS: What are your aims with the Justice for Anthony Grainger campaign?

Gail: We want the police officer who fired the shot that killed Anthony to be charged with murder. We also want to stop more police shootings. I hadn’t realised

how many people get shot by the police until we started looking into it after Anthony had been killed. In getting justice for Anthony, we are making it less likely that the police will be able to target innocent and unarmed people in future.

We also want commanding police officers involved in the pre-planning of the operation in which Anthony was murdered to be charged with joint enterprise, and those officers present at the time of the shooting to be charged with conspiracy. These are the charges ordinary people would face in the event of complicity in a crime. When the kids grow up I don’t want them to ask if their daddy Anthony was an armed robber, because he was not. I want them to say how terrible it was that the police shot their dad.

WSWS: Why do you think Anthony was shot?

Friend: We can’t really say at the moment because we don’t know. All we can do is ask the questions.

Gail: At the time of the shooting two people ran into a shop and shouted, “Get back. Keep out of harm’s way.” Who were those people? I don’t think that was normal behaviour for a member of the public. In a situation like that your instinct would be to just to look after yourself. We have no proof, but I believe they were undercover police officers—part of the operation and now part of “operation cover-up”. I think there is a lot more, deeper stuff that should come out.

Friend: If it is no longer an internal inquiry and it is a criminal inquiry, why hasn’t the police officer been arrested and questioned under oath? Why has he got the privilege to come in at his own leisure?

Gail: If you and I were accused of committing a crime, they would arrest us and make sure that we were interviewed in separate rooms, without being able to talk to each other or anybody else, until after we had given our accounts. If you didn’t give an account, they

would say, “Well, you didn’t speak until after you’d found out what you were supposed to say.” But the usual rules aren’t being applied.

Friend: If this was a pre-planned, intelligence-led operation, there would have been plenty of options available to them other than live ammunition.

Gail: They could have tasered or used rubber bullets.

Friend: They did use CS gas and that would have had a stunning effect. So they had no need to shoot.

Gail: Anthony had the fear of God put in him before he died.

Friend: The first thing we were told was that Anthony had been shot in the head. Then it came out that he had been shot in the heart and one lung. Then it was both lungs and the heart.

Gail: They couldn’t have shot through both lungs and the heart if he had been facing them. He must have been turning away.

Friend: He would have been in a defensive position. If he had been a threat to somebody, they might have been justified to use live ammunition. But they had immobilised the car and stunned them with CS gas. They had no clear view of weapons or anything else. So why did they discharge live rounds? There were plenty of other options available to them, so why didn’t they use them? It was a pre-planned operation—they must have had enough time to consider other options. They had enough time to assemble all those officers, fully armed and kitted out. And there were surveillance officers there as well.

Gail: Anthony was unarmed. Whatever he did, they had no reason to shoot him.

Friend: It is no longer a question of an accident. The cover-up of what happened and the police justification of what they did means that they cannot now claim that it was an accidental shooting.

Gail: I was just an ordinary person getting on with my life until this happened, and I didn’t believe a lot of the criticism I heard of the police. It was only through my experiences that I began to learn what the police were like. The police are supposed to be there to protect us, but they don’t.

What happened to Anthony was like something you would see on the TV taking place in countries such as Iraq, where people are shot dead in their cars.

Friend: The units that were trained in the north of Ireland have been brought back into Britain and they

are now using the same methods here.

(Gail explained that the police had claimed they thought Anthony was armed and posed a threat to their safety. To determine whether this could be true, Gail and her friend went to Culcheth to see the place where Anthony was shot. They took photos at the time of day that the shooting took place to find out if the police would be able to see what was happening inside Anthony’s car. Their conclusion was that the police could not have seen anything inside the car—at 7:20 p.m. it was too dark—even if they were not wearing gas masks at the time.)

Friend: We are not satisfied with what we have found out about the IPCC investigation so far. We have been told that the sign calling for witnesses was left up for only one day. That is why we are trying to find things out for ourselves. We don’t want to hear what we want to hear. We want to know what really happened. We can’t say what happened, we don’t know. But we do know the official version doesn’t tally up.

WSWS: How are you coping now?

Gail: I am OK when I am with the kids and busy with the campaign during the day. But in the evening when I am alone and the kids are in bed, it hits me.

Before this we had our own home and we were just being a family, peeling potatoes together and other family things. He was a good father and helpful around the house.

Campaigners for the Justice for Anthony Grainger are organising a charity event at the Pint Pot public house in Salford, Greater Manchester on May 12. Friends, family and supporters have also called for a Fathers’ Day protest in Piccadilly Gardens, Manchester on June 17 between 12 noon and 1 p.m. They are requesting supporters bring banners with Anthony’s name on them.



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