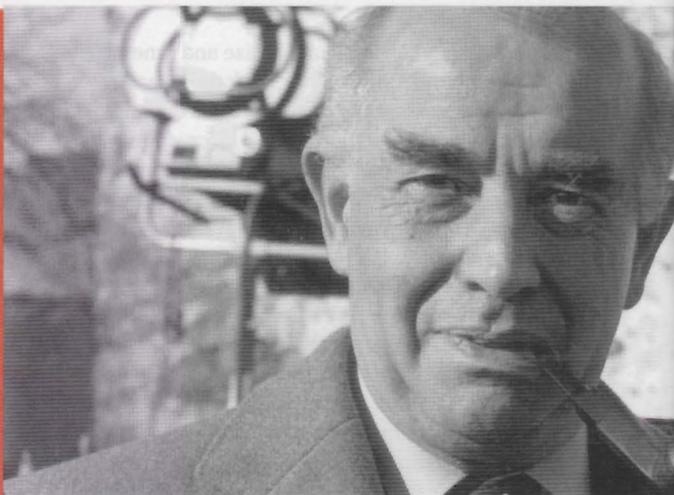


# Operation Julie: the

Two major LSD factories were operating in the UK supplying a worldwide market under the noses of the police, until a DI from Thames Valley drug squad became curious. What happened next helped revolutionise the policing of drugs. By **Harry Shapiro**



**I**N March 1976, at the police driving school in Devizes, Wiltshire, Detective Inspector Dick Lee of the Thames Valley drug squad gathered together a special team drawn from several Forces for a highly secret operation. When Vince Castle from Gloucester drug squad was contacted to attend he recalls DI Lee saying: "I'm not going to tell you what it is about. I'm not going to tell you where you will be. I'm not going to tell you anything about it. But if it's successful, it will be the biggest police undercover operation in history."

Back in November 1974, Lee had been compiling his annual report on the squad's activities when he thought he spotted a discrepancy concerning the use of LSD in the UK. The Reading and Windsor pop festivals were on his patch and he knew from undercover officers who had hung around the crowds dressed as hippies that acid was in big demand. However, the latest Home Office report to the United Nations on the UK drug situation failed to list any LSD seizures at all. Puzzled, Lee went to see the Central Drugs Intelligence Unit (CDIU) based at Scotland Yard to see what files they had on LSD. According to Lee's own account, the CDIU denied having any intelligence on the drug.

## GLOBAL SUPPLY

But at the next year's round of festivals, events began to move. Lee's officers were offered large amounts of LSD on a regular basis; there were indications of a Welsh connection – and most tellingly, the Met warned Lee off any investigations in Wales because they were following leads of their own. This suggested to Lee that the CDIU, based in the same building as the Met HQ, knew more than they were letting on. Lee went back to them and gradually began to piece together evidence which strongly suggested that there was a major LSD manufacturing outlet in the UK, that was not only supplying users here, but all round the world including the USA.

Lee realised that Thames Valley could not take this on alone. He needed to set up a team drawn from

officers based around the country, but especially along the supply routes from Wales to London. This was unprecedented and would demand a commitment of time and resources from several chief constables, none of whom were convinced that such a major drug operation could exist under their noses undetected. After months of meetings at the highest level fuelled by the mounting evidence that Lee was collecting, the top brass agreed.

But the whole operation had to be conducted in the strictest secrecy. Lee wanted to take out the whole chain – from LSD manufacture right down to distribution, and knew there would be endless opportunities for news of the operation to leak. Lee was especially wary of the Met because they had a bad reputation for corruption. Officers from the Met drug squad were already serving jail time and he knew from Customs that Met officers were implicated in an information leak to LSD distributors back in the early 1970s. The other major problem was that the brother of one of the prime suspects was an officer in the Met.

## BRILLIANT STUDENT

So who was in the frame? Intelligence from the Met, the CDIU, Customs and from overseas consistently came up with the same names, although exactly who they were, where they were and how they were connected from top to bottom, only emerged once the operation was under way. Richard Kemp was a chemist who graduated from Liverpool University where he met his girlfriend, Dr Christine Bott, a registered GP. Kemp was described to the police by his university tutor as "the most brilliant student I have ever had". There was some evidence linking Kemp to the Brotherhood of Love, an organisation set up by Timothy Leary to promote the use of LSD, but which took to underground manufacturing once the drug was banned in the States in 1966. Andy Munro was a Cambridge University chemistry undergraduate while Henry Todd supposedly prepared and sold LSD microdots.

# day acid reigned

1990  
Man gets 3  
months for selling  
rizlas & pipes



Lee's team began its work with officers from Thames Valley, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Wales, but eventually brought in colleagues from Devon and Cornwall, West Midlands and elsewhere including the City of London force, which had experts who could track the money. One burning issue was what to call the operation. As they were sitting around a table pondering this critical question, in walked an attractive, raven-haired WPC called Julie Taylor. Problem solved.

Lee had the team, the name, and a mishmash of evidence, but he was woefully lacking in equipment. Eddie McLean from Devon and Cornwall recalled: "From Wales we got a Ford Escort with 98,000 miles on the clock and a Triumph motorbike both painted the same colour and if the sun shone on the door in the right way, you could still see 'Heddlu' (police) on the side." Repeated requests for high-tech surveillance equipment were turned down on cost grounds. The one time they did manage to scrounge some state of the art tracking gear from the security services, it was returned in a carrier bag after the car in which it was installed came off the road and ended upside down in a field.

## WELSH CONNECTION

At the start of Julie, all roads led to Wales. Samples of LSD seized in the Thames Valley were traced to a Welsh distributor Alston Hughes known as Smiles. Kemp had been involved in a fatal road accident and during a search of his car, fragments of paper were found which when pieced together said 'hydrazine hydrate', one of the precursor chemical for making LSD. Kemp and Bott were living in an isolated cottage near Tregaron and making trips to a tumbledown mansion house called Plas Llysin not far away at Carno. The house was owned by an American, Paul Anaboldi, and Lee learnt that he had a houseguest – the son of a Bulgarian diplomat who jumped bail in the USA charged with LSD manufacture. Lee was convinced that Plas Llysin was an LSD lab.

The plan was to have 24-hour observation on both

the mansion and Kemp and Bott's cottage. A team of 'surveyors' were camped outside the mansion – while a nearby cottage was rented and teams of officers stayed there under various guises which didn't fool the locals for a minute: fishermen on holiday, two married couples, a manager (Dick Lee) sent to recover after a breakdown, but regularly visited by colleagues. At one point, WPC Glenys Garlick had to join the 'fishermen' to quell rumours they were gay.

Conditions for the officers observing Kemp and Bott were atrocious. They were dug in on a Welsh mountainside with almost constant driving wind and rain – and nothing to show for it. They moved closer to the suspect cottage, but had no direct view, so they had to mount a telescope on baked bean tins poking out of the roof and take turns trying to see if anything was going on. Not only was nothing happening but it looked like the lab was being dismantled. Eventually the team recovered a treasure trove of lab equipment from a nearby well. But they were too late to catch anybody making LSD and the house owner Anaboldi escaped capture.

## NO WAY

Meanwhile, Lee had another team hunting for Todd and Munro. Eventually they tracked him down to Seymour Road in West London. Another long-term observation and surveillance operation was mounted. Again conditions for the officers involved were less than ideal. This was the long hot summer of 1976 and they were cooped up in a baking hot van for hours at a stretch – and when they knocked off, life was not a whole lot better. Keith Campbell remembers "a four bedroom house with 14 of us living in it – somebody had a mattress in the cupboard under the stairs".

One day, they were on observation outside Seymour Road when a man entered the house and didn't emerge for a week. When he came out, he was clearly stoned. He was Andy Munro and he had just made a huge pile of LSD microdots. The police had previously searched the basement of the house and

The main players: DI Dick Lee, Richard Kemp, undercover officers (and overleaf) the Operation Julie team, with its namesake in the front row with the tie