

I was violated by a police spy – and the state gave its blessing



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He slept with at least 10 women

Eleanor Fairbraida was led to believe Mark Kennedy, below, was an activist like her

Undercover officers once routinely slept with their targets. One victim waives her anonymity and condemns the ‘huge betrayal of trust’

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Home Affairs Correspondent

Eleanor Fairbraida was harvesting salad on an organic farm in the Yorkshire Dales when she received the phone call that would turn her world on its head.

She was told the close friend she had known as Mark Stone, a committed environmental activist with whom she had been intimate over a number of months, was in fact an undercover police officer.

His real name was Mark Kennedy, and for the past seven years he had been working for Scotland Yard to spy on Fairbraida and dozens of other climate change protesters across Europe.

As part of the deception – one of the biggest policing scandals in modern times – Kennedy, a married father of two, slept with at least ten women between 2003 and 2010.

“It was a huge betrayal of trust,” Fairbraida recalled this weekend. “It was a horrific violation, it was non-consensual and it was supported by the state.”

Her decision to speak out publicly for the first time coincides with the revelation that Kennedy, a former officer in the secretive National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU), is being investigated over allegations of criminal misconduct.

Detectives recently interviewed Fairbraida, 45, as a witness and are seeking evidence from other alleged victims about Kennedy’s sexual activities and claims he may have acted as an agent provocateur to incite criminality.

Kennedy, 53, is one of at least 130 undercover officers employed by the NPOIU and its predecessor unit, the Special Demonstration Squad, whose spying activities are being examined by a separate public inquiry.

They operated in secret for more than 50 years and monitored more than 1,000 political groups, including anti-apartheid campaigners, and even the family of Stephen Lawrence, the black teenager murdered by racist thugs in 1993.

Many of the officers were issued with fake identities taken from dead babies. Some fathered children with the women they had been tasked to spy on.

The undercover policing inquiry, led by Sir John Mitting, a former High Court judge, is due to publish its first report at the end of this month.

Fairbraida, who has sons aged five and eight and three adult stepchildren, has waived her right to anonymity to speak about her experience. Until last week, she was listed as a core participant of the Mitting inquiry under the alias “Jane”.

The daughter of distinguished archaeologists, Fairbraida was raised in rural Hampshire and studied biology at New College, Oxford. By 2003, she had moved to Nottingham, where she became involved with Earth First!, a direct-action group operating out of the volunteer-run Sumac Centre in the city.

The centre was a hub for left-wing and radical groups involved in civil disobedience and appears to have been picked by Kennedy and his handlers as a starting point for his infiltration operation.

Fairbraida believes she was the first activist he met. “He said he’d had a nasty break-up with a girlfriend in London and that he needed to start a new life,” she recalled. “He had long hair, piercings and tattoos ... he certainly didn’t look like a policeman.”

Kennedy – or Stone as she knew him – said he was keen to attend a national gathering of Earth First! groups that summer in Yorkshire. Their friendship began after he gave Fairbraida a lift in his van. “Not only did he have a van, but he was up for using it, driving around to demos and gatherings,” she said.

Kennedy also had a lot more money than Fairbraida and his new activist friends, earning him the nickname “Flash”. He claimed the money came

from doing delivery work for his “Uncle Phil” in London. Fairbraida believes, in hindsight, that this was probably a reference to his Scotland Yard handler.

Towards the end of 2003, Kennedy moved into a house in Nottingham with Fairbraida and two other activists. Soon afterwards, he started a sexual relationship with Kate Wilson, one of Fairbraida’s friends from Oxford and the only other British woman abused by Kennedy to disclose her real identity.

Over time, he reportedly travelled to 22 countries to take part in – and monitor – a wave of climate change and anti-capitalist protests. They included the G8 summit at Gleneagles in Scotland in 2005 and violent actions on the Continent organised by anarchists. “Kennedy put himself out as someone who really hated the police,” Fairbraida said.

By autumn 2008, Fairbraida was single and found herself flirting with Kennedy, who had split up with Wilson but had started another relationship with a

Welsh-born activist known as “Lisa”. They got drunk and slept together after Kennedy invited her out. Although there was no emotional connection between them, Fairbraida said they carried on having sex for about six months.

It was Kennedy’s six-year relationship with Lisa that led to his double life unravelling. On a campervan holiday in Italy in July 2010, Lisa found a passport in the glove box bearing the name Mark Kennedy and an old mobile phone containing messages from two children referring to their “dad”, according to The Guardian.

Lisa raised her concerns with activist friends, who obtained a birth certificate for one of Kennedy’s children. It listed the father’s occupation as “police officer”.

In October 2010, six activists confronted Kennedy directly with the evidence, prompting a tearful confession.

The activists then set about alerting all the women they knew Kennedy had slept with, including Fairbraida. She called the revelation that he was an undercover police officer “a complete mindf***”.

Yet her main concern at the time was Lisa. “She was completely broken,” Fairbraida said, holding back tears. “He’s had six years of her prime life when she could have been having children. He was everything to her – and it was just a lie.”

Fairbraida initially considered herself simply “unlucky” for ending up in a sexual relationship with Kennedy. At one point she even blamed herself: “I felt castigated and shamed that I’d been infiltrated in this way.”

Wilson, 42, later won damages and an

apology from the Metropolitan Police as part of a group action. She also launched a case – supported by Fairbraida – at the Investigatory Powers Tribunal.

In September 2021, the tribunal ruled that Wilson’s human rights had been breached and that Kennedy had “grossly debased, degraded and humiliated” her.

The tribunal judgment added that senior officers supervising Kennedy “either knew of the relationship, chose not to know of its existence, or were incompetent and negligent in not following up on the clear and obvious signs”.

Fairbraida’s involvement as a witness in the case meant she was given access to police logs about her. They revealed that she had been a specific “target” of Kennedy’s spying operation. Fairbraida is now convinced that he deliberately slept with her to win her trust.

Following his unmasking more than a decade ago, Kennedy sold his story to a national newspaper. He later blamed the Met for failing to “protect” him from falling in love with the environmental campaigners he had been sent to infiltrate.

After resigning from the force, he briefly continued his undercover work, pretending to be an animal rights activist for a private investigations company supplying intelligence to big corporations.

Kennedy is now believed to be at the centre of a criminal investigation into misconduct in public office, Operation Montrose, led by Detective Chief Inspector Kirstie Masters, a Met officer seconded to the National Police Chiefs’ Council. The NPCC said no arrests have been made. “As this is an ongoing investigation, we cannot provide any further comment,” a spokesman said. Kennedy declined to comment.

Like Fairbraida, Kennedy has also been given core participant status in the Mitting inquiry.

Launched in 2015, the inquiry – which has already cost more than £64 million – is divided into six tranches. A report into the first tranche, covering the activities of police spies from 1968 to 1982, will be published on June 29. Public hearings dealing with Kennedy and the NPOIU are unlikely to commence until 2025.

“Kennedy destroyed lives, but the problem goes far beyond him, right up the ranks,” said Elizabeth Forrester, a solicitor at Birnberg Peirce, who represents Fairbraida. “We want the inquiry to hold his superior officers to account.”

Fairbraida, who now lives in Bristol and does charity work, attends only the occasional public demonstration these days, including one in London in April led by Extinction Rebellion.

“I see what I’m doing now as activism,” she said. “I have a platform because I had a sexual relationship with Kennedy. But for me, the bigger story is about the corruption of our democracy.”

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