

# North Wales Police Photo Policy

***If you've ever come into contact with a camera-shy police officer who threatens dire consequences if you dare to snap a photo, then you may find this new North Wales Police Guidance helpful.***

by Genny Bove

Make no mistake. When you're at a demonstration or action and the police move in, then the last thing they want is members of the public - many of whom now routinely carry cameras and phones capable of taking video footage as well as photos - snapping them in action.

If you've had a police officer demand that you stop taking photos, threaten to arrest you, assault you, take a swipe at your camera, actually arrest you, seize your camera or film, delete pictures and so on, then you are not alone. These occurrences are not uncommon, and even happen to professional photographers, witness these three examples.:

The *National Union of Journalists (NUJ)* website [www.nuj.org.uk](http://www.nuj.org.uk) reports on this ongoing case, now set for trial in October:

*Alan Lodge, a freelance photographer and NUJ member, appeared before Nottingham Magistrates today (23/5) for a pre-trial review. Paul Dhami, of Thompson's Solicitors, outlined the facts of the case to the bench. "Mr Lodge was taking photographs of a police armed response unit on Alfred Street, Nottingham, on Saturday 18th March [2006]. He was arrested firstly for assault, then de-arrested. He was then arrested and de-arrested for breach of the peace, before finally being arrested and later charged with obstruction."*

*The defence centres around new Media Guidelines, agreed between... Nottinghamshire Police... and the NUJ, earlier this year. During the incident, Mr Lodge's equipment and memory card were confiscated. Yet the guidelines clearly state that police officers have no right to seize such equipment simply because somebody is taking photographs.*

In a similar case also championed by the NUJ, this time involving Thames Valley Police, the assistant Chief Constable eventually issued an apology and, exceptionally, rescinded the caution issued to photographer Andy Handley after he was arrested for taking photos.

During the *Sack Parliament* action in London last October, freelance photographer Marc Valeé was injured when assaulted by a police officer. A report on the Indymedia website [www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk) describes how Marc was "grabbed by police and swung forcibly around by his arm, falling and hitting his head hard."

Last September, I was arrested briefly outside the Hafod Quarry landfill site, where I had been blockading the gate. I had taken digital photos of two police officers, one of whom took exception to this (not the reason I was being arrested). I originally declined to delete the photo, but when I was in the police car the WPC continued to shout and scream at me about the photo. Fearing for the safety of my (borrowed) camera, I agreed to remove the photo, but later made a complaint to the police about this and other issues around the arrest.

Following an unpleasant interview at Wrexham Police Station, where the then investigating officer began by expressing his personal opinion that it was the WPC and not me who had cause to complain, this part of my complaint was eventually formally investigated by another officer and upheld, and new guidance has now been issued to officers, including:

*We cannot prevent members of the public from taking photographs of Police Officers in public places. In many cases, we would actively encourage it, during the Llandudno Extravaganza or Eisteddfod for example. If a photograph has been taken in a public place for publication in a paper, magazine or on television then if required, we could approach the editor asking them not to publish and outline our reasons for making the request, but they are not legally obliged to approve our request...*

*If a member of the public is taking pictures of an officer in a public place and it is causing concern to the officer, it is suggested that the officer approaches him or her to ascertain as to [sic] why the pictures are being taken, asking them if necessary, not to do so. If they refuse then the officer has no remedy unless and until the pictures are published when they can be considered in the context of the actual publication.*

So now you know. Evidence in the form of pictures taken by members of the public can be crucial in trials to back up statements made by activists about their actions and the actions of police officers. Without this evidence, many more miscarriages of justice would take place. Happy snapping!



# Obituary: Gwyndaf Jones

by Rowena Thomas

## 1923 - 2007

I met Gwyndaf and his wife Enid at my very first 'demo' in the late 1970s when I joined a line of people on a Llangollen field, with some trepidation I must admit, during an International Eisteddfod. As members of Wrexham for Nuclear Disarmament, we stood side by side, each holding a peace message written in a foreign language, in silent protest as audience members flocked into the evening concert.

All went well, people nodded and smiled as they passed, until the host for the evening, Lord Chalfont (who hated CND) swept by in his chauffeur-driven black limousine. He turned his head, looked at us and, if looks could have killed, we'd have dropped dead one by one like a row of skittles!

After that I met Gwyndaf - a charming man - many, many times. The Llangollen International Eisteddfod Committee refused to let us have a stall on the field. However, Gwyndaf, who lived on Ffordd Abaty (Abbey Road), where the Eisteddfod takes place, contacted the residents and we were given permission to run the stall on a private road. Visitors to the Eisteddfod came through a gap in the hedge and we were given lots of support, especially from foreign visitors. The following year, the gap was closed off!

I went on more than one occasion to the Soviet Union when Gwyndaf and Enid were part of the group. They were always great fun to be with, as they were when they invited me to join



*Gwyndaf Jones and his wife Enid (left and second from left) pictured during a trip to Moscow*

them on a trip with the Llangollen Civic Society to Holland.

It was through Gwyndaf that a Latvian lady who had come to the UK at the end of the war with husband and son, and now a widow living in Coedpoeth, was reunited with members of her family whom she didn't know existed.

CND Cymru were hosts in Aberystwyth to a group of six Latvians, three of whom came on to Wrexham and were welcomed at the Peace and Justice Centre. I arranged for Vilma to be there and (it's a long story) Gwyndaf gave me the name and address of someone who could arrange visas, give them good advice etc.

As a result, she and her son flew to Riga, where they were met by sixteen members of her family, of whom she was unaware, all holding flowers!

Thank you Gwyndaf.

We continued to exchange Christmas cards, but after his move from Llangollen, when the message on the card was 'Do come and see us', I was unable to do so.

I was sorry that at his funeral services, neither minister referred to Gwyndaf's peace activities. But, never mind, there are many of us who remember him with great love.

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