

Great Britain's Experiment in Gun Control Leaves 12 More Dead

Cumbria shootings: gunman Derrick Bird kills 12 then shoots himself

A gunman killed at least 12 people in a shooting spree in Cumbria and injured another 25 before taking his own life.

By Richard Edwards, Crime Correspondent Published: 7:53PM BST 02 Jun 2010

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/7798513/Cumbria-shootings-gunman-Derrick-Bird-kills-12-then-shoots-himself.html>

Derrick Bird, a taxi driver, drove down the west coast in a three and a half-hour rampage blasting passers-by at random. Some reports suggested he had beckoned victims over to his car before shooting them at point blank range, while other witnesses described seeing Bird driving down the road pointing his gun out of the window.

A friend who he had met the previous evening, Peter Leder, said Bird had told him: "You won't see me again." A fellow taxi driver, who did not want to be named, said Bird had argued with colleagues on the evening before the attack three of his colleagues had been shot, two fatally.

He said: "All of the taxi drivers were friends. But I heard last night there was an argument on the taxi rank. "I don't know what caused it, but something must have happened last night. Derrick Bird took off in his car and went home. I don't know what time of night it was."

Armed with two weapons - a .22 rifle and a shotgun - Bird drove down the coast from Whitehaven where the first attacks took place, leaving a trail of carnage in his wake. Residents of the county were warned to stay indoors as police followed the deadly route, discovering more bodies as they went. At one point Bird abandoned his Citroen Picasso for another car which he then crashed near woods in the picturesque Lake District town of Boot. The body of Bird, a 52 year-old divorced father-of-two, together with his guns were found nearby.

Throughout the afternoon witnesses came forward with harrowing tales of the trail of destruction left by Bird. In addition to two people in Whitehaven - one of whom as named locally as Darren Rewcastle -, other victims are believed to included Garry Purdham, a farmer working in a field alongside a road where the killer passed, a woman out shopping and a man in Egremont crossing a bridge. Reports suggest a door-to-door salesman, a cyclist, a pub landlord were also hit. Witnesses described how some victims were shot multiple times as they tried to flee. A number of the dead were said to have been shot in the head at point blank range.

Police said they were struggling to cope with the scale of the crime. Detective Constable Stuart Hyde said officers are examining 30 crime scenes. "Our condolences go out to families and friends of those affected by the horrific incidents that unfolded today," he said. "These are local people and local police who knew the people killed and injured today. "It's been a truly exceptional and challenging incident that Cumbria Police has had to deal with today." David Cameron pledged today to do everything possible to help communities "shattered" by the killing spree.

Updating the Commons at the start of Prime Minister's Questions, he said: "The Government will do everything it possibly can to help the local community and those affected and to keep the House informed. "When lives and communities are suddenly shattered in this way, our thoughts should be with all those caught up in these tragic events, especially the families and friends of those killed or injured."

The incident started at a taxi rank in Duke Street, Whitehaven, a picturesque port on the west coast of Cumbria. Local people first raised the alarm at 10.35am after shots were fired into a car. Alan Hannah, 68, of Great Broughton, told the Whitehaven News: "A car pulled up on the left, stopping at the lights. "I saw a man with a large shotgun and his windscreen was smashed. I drove through the red light to get into Lowther Street and get out of the way. I got home safely but was very shaken."

Bird then fled by car, with witnesses reporting seeing him hanging out of the driver's window with a shotgun. With the police in pursuit, he passed the nuclear powerstation at Sellafield, which was temporarily locked down, on his deadly journey. From Whitehaven, Bird headed to Egremont where he killed at least two more people, before passing through Gosforth and Seascale, leaving more bodies in his wake. A man reported finding the body of another of Bird's victims - a woman in her 60s carrying shopping bags - outside his house in Egremont.

Billy Boakes, 23, did not see the shooting but heard two gunshots at around 11am. He said: "I thought nothing of it at first, I thought it was just a trailer banging as it went down the lane but then I looked out the front window two minutes later and saw a car and a push bike parked up and thought there had been an accident. "I went outside and saw the body of the woman lying outside my house." At the small hamlet of Boot, as terrified locals hid in the village pub, Bird abandoned his transport and fled on foot.

The vicar of Eskdale, the Rev Anne Baker, said she heard that two people had a lucky escape when they approached him after the collision to see if they could help. She said police were tracing the gunman's route to the wood where he apparently shot himself, hoping not to find any more victims.