

Drug-crazed bodybuilder died after being Tasered four times in less than a minute by police trying to arrest him, inquest hears

The Daily Mail



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Look at the date that Dale Burns died. August 2011! Why the delay? Or are we not meant to ask?

As it happens, I covered this story, albeit not in detail, when I was writing for the Sovereign Independent Newspaper. Dale was the first man to die in the UK from by being tasered. He was just one of three who were killed after being shot with these 'none lethal' weapons over an 8 day period in the UK.

Here is what I wrote back then:

Another of the 3 men to die in this 8 day period has been named as 27 year old Dale Burns. Mr Burns, a keen body builder from Barrow-in furness, Cumbria became the first man in Britain to die from police taser after officers shot him 3 times with the powerful 50,000 volt gun. Mr Burns had also been sprayed with Pepper Spray after officers had been called to his bedsit home on the 16th of August following reports of a disturbance.

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I notice that the number of times Dale was shot has increased by one since I first covered the story. Nothing to worry about though... Hmmm.

A bodybuilder was Tasered four times in less than a minute by police as they struggled to arrest him, an inquest has heard.

Dale Burns, 27, from Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, died hours after being repeatedly hit 'without warning' by the electric shock gun and pepper-sprayed in the face as officers tried to hold him with handcuff and leg restraints, the hearing was told today.



Father-of-two Mr Burns was described as a 'gentle giant but with a drug habit' who had taken a 'gram of Madcat', an illegal drug, on the day he died, the inquest at the County Hall in Kendal heard.

The taxi driver had also abused steroids and ecstasy pills while working as a nightclub bouncer in Barrow, the inquest heard.

Alan Sharp, the Deputy Coroner for South and East Cumbria, told the jury of five women and six men they may have to see distressing CCTV footage of a wild-eyed, semi-naked and agitated Mr Burns in the police van after his arrest for criminal damage.

Mr Burns died at Furness General Hospital around two hours after police were first called to his flat on August 16, 2011.

At around 6pm a woman living in the flat below Mr Burns noticed water coming through her ceiling, Mr Sharp told the jury.

The landlord's agent was called and broke into Mr Burns's flat to find him undressed, thought to be high on drugs and possibly self-harming and police were called at 6.33pm.

Two police cars and a police van arrived, with six officers in total arriving at the property.

Pc Kevin Milby 'seemed to assume the lead' and he was authorised to carry a Taser.

The officers found Mr Burns in his flat naked from the waist up, sweating, very agitated, with dilated pupils and his eyes rolling in the back of his head.

Mr Sharp said: 'Dale (Burns) told Pc Milby, "I have taken one gram of Madcat".'

The officers decided to call an ambulance and 'tried to engage Dale' in the living room, with the situation seemingly under control.

But when the paramedics arrived Mr Burns 'indicated in clear terms' he did not want treatment and they left.

As the bathroom toilet, extractor fan and light fitting were broken, Mr Burns would have to be arrested for criminal damage, the inquest was told.

He was becoming more and more agitated and aggressive, throwing things around the room and objects out of the flat window on to the street below.

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Mr Sharp told the jury: 'After throwing a glass out of the window, Dale turned towards Pc Milby and approached him, eyes rolling into the back of his head with fists clenched.

'He was fearful he would be attacked and feared for his own safety.

'The officers said there was simply no time to issue a warning.'

At 6.50pm Pc Kilby fired the Taser for the first time, with the barbs lodging on Mr Burns's torso, and a five-second pulse of electrical charge struck him.

It caused him to fall backwards then forwards, knocking his head on a TV cabinet.

Three seconds after, the officer discharged the Taser again, for a further five seconds, but this did not stop Mr Burns as the officers struggled to get handcuffs on him.



'Gentle giant with a drug habit': Lisa Wilson (right), Mr Burns's former partner and mother of his two children, said he would take pills and inject anabolic steroids as part of his bodybuilding regime, a sport he started to become interested in when he was just 13, his mother Donna Rodden (left) told

the inquest



Distressing: At Mr Burns's hearing the jury had to watch distressing CCTV footage of a wild-eyed, semi-naked and agitated Mr Burns, pictured with daughter Honour, in the police van after his arrest for criminal damage. Then 23 seconds later the Taser was used again, but between the second and third discharge another officer also used Pava, or pepper spray, on him.

The third discharge was 'not successful' in enabling the officers to handcuff him and at 6.50pm and 52 seconds the Taser was used on him for a fourth and final time.

Mr Sharp said: 'All the discharges took place in the space of a minute.'

'It will be important to keep that timetable in mind.'

The officers managed to get handcuffs and leg restraints on him and decided to carry him down the three flights of stairs to the police van outside to take him directly to hospital.

He said: 'During all this time Dale was said to be struggling violently with the officers.

He warned the jury they may have to see distressing CCTV footage, which lasted 10 minutes, from cameras in the police van of Mr Burns's behaviour on the journey.

Mr Burns was carried into the emergency ward at Furness General Hospital in Barrow and medics administered diazepam at 7.35pm and he calmed down.

But he had a seizure that lasted several seconds at 7.43pm. He then suffered a heart attack and despite hospital staff and a police officer giving CPR for 40 minutes, he was pronounced dead at 8.41pm.

A post-mortem examination revealed there was no abnormality of Mr Burns's heart but there were traces of 'Madcat', or the drug MDPV, in his blood.

Lisa Wilson, the mother of Mr Burns's children, told the jury her former partner would take pills and inject vials of anabolic steroids as part of his bodybuilding regime.

Mr Burns would also regularly take ecstasy pills and she had also caught him smoking cannabis and snorting cocaine while working as a bouncer, she said.



'General dissatisfaction': Mr Burns, pictured with son Ethan and daughter Honour, began to suffer from depression from 2009 onwards, his mother said Ms Wilson said: 'I put a stop to that.'

She agreed with the description of Mr Burns as a 'gentle giant with a drug habit', adding that he was 'never aggressive'.

His mother, Donna Rodden, said he started becoming interested in bodybuilding aged 13, left school three years later and by 18-years-old began working as a bouncer at pubs and clubs in Barrow.

It was a job he later had to give up after having his licence revoked when convicted of threatening behaviour.

Later he worked for Network Rail but took redundancy amid fears he was a suicide risk and over failing a company drugs test.

Ms Rodden said she thought her son began to suffer from depression from 2009 onwards, gradually getting worse, with a 'general dissatisfaction' about how his life was going.

She said: 'Nothing ever shook off that grey cloud.'

Around the same time she became aware her son was also taking plant food, a 'legal high' that 'made him happy'. He also began to take a drug called 'Ivory Wave' he bought from sex shops.

The drug use made him 'slightly paranoid' and damaged his relationship with the mother of his son, Ms Rodden added.

Fourteen months before his death, Mr Burns took an overdose and his father David Burns, an offshore cable installation worker, said he was aware of his son's drug use.

He told the inquest he tried to get his son to get help and counselling but he 'did not stick with it'.

The inquest continues.

The shocking truth about Tasers

<http://www.stuff.co.nz>

A 14-year-old boy and a 70-year-old man are among the New Zealanders stunned by police Tasers since their introduction last year.

Figures obtained by the Sunday Star-Times show police have "presented" Tasers to offenders 797 times since March 2010 and, of these, they were fired 102 times. However, the police's Tactical Options Research database shows the weapons

were ineffective on 36 of those 102 occasions, meaning the weapons worked only two-thirds of the time.

Green MP Keith Locke was concerned police needed to stun a pensioner and a teenager rather than subdue them in other ways. A 70-year-old could easily have a heart condition or circulatory problems – which had been linked to serious injury and death from Tasers overseas – and the boy's development could be harmed by being put in "a state of terror".

Locke said it had been observed in New Zealand's Taser trial and in overseas police forces that it was "just so tempting" for officers to pull out the Taser to induce compliance when other tactics were available.

"Do we want a form of policing that uses the terror of possible use?"

Police national firearm and taser project manager Superintendent John Rivers said Tasers were resulting in far fewer injuries to police.

"Not that many years ago I would have thought hand-to-hand engagement is a benign option – the hell it is. Far more people and police get hurt when it comes to fighting and scragging."

Police Association president Greg O'Connor also defended Tasers over hand-to-hand conflict.

"The worst injuries I got were from trying to subdue somebody who didn't want to be subdued."

Rivers defended the Tasers, saying they were a "less-lethal" option but they could have "unforeseen consequences".

"We can't promise that some time in the future [a death or injury won't occur]. That's just the nature of policing."

Police said the 36 failures were due to "operator error" with

the two probes either missing the offender or failing to lodge in their skin.

More worryingly, the stun guns have been fired more times by accident than in the line of duty, with concerns over officers' ineptitude with the weapons borne out by the statistic that Tasers have been "unintentionally discharged" 108 times.

All but one of these accidental firings has occurred during "pre-operation sign out checks" at police stations, predominantly where officers failed to notice a loaded Taser cartridge prior to carrying out checks.

The other accidental firing took place inside a police car, but police were unable to provide details.

Rivers said the failure rate was in line with international statistics.

"It's not infallible. There's no surprises in the way things are tracking."

The definition of a Taser being ineffective had recently been widened to include another option having to be used.

Several of those cases occurred because the incapacitation was "short term" and police had not moved in to restrain the person in time and they had "recommenced" their behaviour.

Rivers said the accidental discharges had not resulted in any injuries but he said it was "frustrating".

Locke, an outspoken critic of Tasers, said the large number of times Tasers were presented showed a "mission creep" towards policing through fear.

"I would question whether the 797 times [would all] fit the guide line of serious danger to the officer."

He would not criticise the amount of training officers got with Tasers but he said: "You can never get enough training."

Feedback from officers on the ground was that "it has made them and the people they police safer".