



Jeremy Thorpe: centre of court case row

# Thorpe: how Scott tried to spread his allegations

By James Fox

NORMAN Scott's emotional outburst in a West Country court last week was his third, and most successful, attempt to publicise his allegation of a "sexual relationship" with Mr Thorpe.

Scott's claims were made in front of a court that was duly surrounded with Press and television reporters who knew that there was more than a minor fraud charge to be reported. His earlier allegations were made with much less fanfare. . . .

● In 1971 to senior members of the Liberal Party.

● In 1972 in the unlikely setting of a coroner's inquest into the death of his landlady and friend, Mrs Laura Parry-Jones.

In the meantime Scott also persistently tried to get Fleet Street interested in the story, without success. He took a lengthy manuscript, which deals in great detail with eight years of his life up to 1971, to the Daily Mail and the Sunday Express. For "safety" he distributed copies to various other people, in Britain and abroad.

The aftermath of Scott's approach to Liberal leaders in 1971 is outlined in a statement issued yesterday by Mr David Steel (and reported on page one). The statement says that Mr Thorpe was in fact cleared by his party. But the statement leaves out some background which throws light on Scott's behaviour.

It was Mrs Parry-Jones who wrote first to Emlyn Hooson, her MP, early in 1971 with an allegation about "someone high up in the Liberal Party."

"I did not think at the time that it involved Thorpe," said Mr Hooson yesterday. "She came to London and saw Steel, who told me later that it was Thorpe."

Hooson decided that he should see Scott himself—who was using his real name Norman Josiffe, at the time. A meeting was arranged in June, 1971, between Scott, Hooson and Steel, in the House of Commons. A few weeks after that meeting a second interview with Scott was arranged, this time with Lord Byers, senior Liberal parliamentarian, sitting in as well.

"We met him in my room," says Byers, "and the meeting lasted for about 45 minutes. He was in a highly emotional state, always bursting into tears, and made all sorts of allegations."

Byers added that at the first hint of interrogation, Scott got up screaming and ran out of the House of Commons. "We then told Thorpe what Scott had said," says Hooson, "and he denied the allegations totally."

Hooson and Byers, however, also contacted Scotland Yard soon after this meeting.

Hooson continued: "By contacting Scotland Yard we were trying to show that there was no suggestion of criminal activities on the part of Thorpe. At that stage a sexual relationship would have been criminal. [Scott was under 21.] We also wanted to find out if there was any evidence of blackmail.

"We told Thorpe we had done it, I think, afterwards. He seemed willing. He denied any relationship. Scotland Yard said they had no intention of taking any action. After that there seemed no reason whatever for not accepting Thorpe's categorical denial."

Hooson says: "I did tell Thorpe, in the presence of Steel, that, if there was any truth in the allegations, then for the sake

of the party, it was his duty to resign. He swore there was no truth in it."

Scott's other main attempt to publicise his allegation before the court case last week was in 1972. Four reporters were sitting in a court in Bangor in May of that year waiting for a major inquest.

Before that inquest came, they found themselves listening to an inquest on Mrs Laura Parry-Jones, who had died at 48 of alcoholic poisoning, at her home in Talybont, near Conway.

Scott told the inquest that he was a good friend of Mrs Parry-Jones and went on to describe her visit with him to London to see Mr Emlyn Hooson. Scott said, by way of explanation, that he had lived with Mr Thorpe for six years and that the Liberal leader had personal documents belonging to him.

The reporters filed the story but no newspaper used it. Thorpe was told at the time that the allegations had been made. His attitude has always been that they are wholly without foundation.

The documents that Scott had referred to in that hearing were, in fact, the documents that he had given to Byers, Steel, and Hooson when he met them at the Commons in 1971. Hooson had taken these to the police. "I showed them everything I had," he says.

They included, says Hooson, letters to Scott from Peter Bessell, Liberal MP for Bodmin from 1964-70. He disappeared two years ago following the collapse of his financial affairs and is now believed to be living in America.

Last week it was revealed that Mr Bessell had made a series of payments to Scott in the late 1960s, ending in 1969. Letters from him to Scott suggest that they were made on a weekly basis.

But Mr Bessell himself has now intervened to explain the reasons for the payments. In a letter sent within the past 10 days from a secret address in the United States, he has offered to swear an affidavit that the payments were made to protect his own name, not Mr Thorpe's.

The letter was dispatched to Scott's solicitors for use in last week's court case, and has now been seen by several Liberal MPs. In it Bessell says that he was worried by the possibility that revelations about a relationship with a woman could harm him.

Between that incident in 1972, and Scott's allegations in court last week, his life seemed to take a downward turn. His marriage to a Lincolnshire girl, Susan Myers, had broken up after two years. He was always short of money, despite Bessell's help. His wife says that, during their marriage he had sought psychiatric help.

Scott had moved to Devon in 1959 to help Thorpe in his constituency, although he was never well-known in local political circles. He planned books described himself as an author and took up male modelling.

Then in October last year Scott was found on the lonely coast road between Minehead and Lynmouth by an AA man, Ted Lethaby. He was weeping beside the body of his Great Dane, which had been shot. A man has been charged in connection with the shooting. The case comes up in Minehead on Friday.