



Sgt Andy White, West Mercia JBB Chairman

Police Bravery Awards were a fitting tribute

We always knew that last month's Police Bravery Awards was going to be a gut-wrenching event – and it was – but I think everyone came through it with an incredible amount of integrity.

Two of our officers, PC Mat Crisp and PC Ricky Gray, had been put forward for the awards following an incident last May which cost Ricky his life. They were part of the armed response unit called to help two colleagues, PCs Kierron Cornell and Sharon Phillips, who had gone out to deal with a domestic incident and found themselves being held at gunpoint. They were both very young in service at the time, but Kierron had the presence of mind to press the emergency button on his radio, and managed to keep the armed man talking. They did very well in a terrifying situation.

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When Mat and Ricky arrived, they were able to distract the gunman enabling the other officers to escape. Ricky then made direct contact with the gunman and before he knew it he was shot. Mat could see that Ricky was hurt, and managed to call for back up and get details of what was going on back to the control room. Ricky was eventually removed to a safe location, but tragically he died from his injuries.

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Bravery was clearly the main theme of the event. In nominating both Mat and Ricky for this award, we were fairly confident that Ricky's widow, Jenny and Mat had a fairly good chance of collecting an award. There was this feeling that when somebody puts their life on the line, as all four officers had done here, and Ricky had actually lost his life because of this, that when it comes to bravery, what more could anybody do?

In the end, Mat and Jenny went up twice, to collect the regional award and the overall award. There were lots of tears at our table, but everybody – both on the night, and back in force – felt that this was the right honour, and it helps to keep the issue of bravery at the front of everybody's mind.

What a lot of people didn't realise was that the night of the awards would also have been Ricky's birthday, which made everything more poignant.