

## MISCELLANY

A compilation of items and letters from members of the Police History Society

A regular correspondent to the Editor forwarded the following letter which he had published in 'Beacon', the magazine of the West Midlands Police, in April 1981.

### Enjoying "Anecdotalage"

I joined the Birmingham City Police in October 1929 at the age of 19. By the end of that first day four of us were installed in Victoria Road Police Station at Aston. Of the very many things to be done in our new surroundings the most important was to start to memorise Legal Definitions. So it is after midnight when I am mentally absorbing the fact that "Law is defined by Blackstone as a rule of action prescribed by some superior which an inferior is bound to obey."

We soon found we had to find inspiration while on the top deck of a 3X tram into City. We made progress in the training school till the end of the year. The last period was taken up in the study of local bylaws. Putting theory into practice on the beat became interesting. Byelaw No. 5 of the Good Rule and Government, 1918, made it a punishable offence in Birmingham to commit a disorderly act. But what was a disorderly act? We found it useful to use this byelaw to deal with oafs who liked to give the raspberry after a young policeman on the beat had just passed him. We soon found ways to trap the oaf. Followed shortly after by a summons which read "For that he to the annoyance of passengers did commit a disorderly act by placing his hand to his mouth and making a loud noise as of wind passing." They usually got fined five or ten shillings. They always asked for time to pay!

Always on a Saturday night the policeman on the beat was peacemaker as the proletariat engaged in their fracas. A few got summoned for using indecent or obscene language. In court we could not use those wicked words

We had to write it down and hand the note to the Bench then it was passed to the defendant. Those words are all in any good class dictionary now. You must know them! In our day it cost an oaf five or ten shillings if caught. Maybe it really was good rule and government.

My hardest task in the Police School was teaching the teachers how to say my ancient Cornish name correctly. The lad from Tre Pol and Pen would not allow the "trev" factor to creep in. Never did. Never will. Of the instructors the best remembered must be Sgt. Blackburn (progenitor of Dr. Blackburn M.P.); always so knowledgeable, helpful and understanding of young recruits problems.

After four years it was time to take the examination for promotion to earn a two shilling rise in pay. In fact one could get to top rate of 90/- a week in eight years instead of ten years by passing the examinations, I still have the tome Harris' Criminal Law with the signature (not a facsimile) of Sir Charles Haughton Rafter KBE therein. He wished me well. That was over 50 years ago.

In the Police school the roll call (however many times a day) was always the same routine - Seddon, Done, Robbins, Ireland, Ashman, Madden and so through B and C to D Andrews, Ellis Havard, Crocker where I came in. Followed by Baldwin, Davies, Pumffrey and E Division.

How many are still up and about? There's just got to be some who ought to 'get fell in' at Tally Ho! Generally the first Friday in the month. There is always some loot to be won at bingo.

As I mentioned at the start, so I end. It is all Anecdotage!

**Alfred Trevener,  
Erdington.**

## Straw Boaters

It is hard to believe this was only 20 years ago.

Letter from Wellingborough School to Mr. Gott, Chief Constable, dated 29th September, 1965.

"I hope you will not think I am troubling you with a trivial matter, but I should appreciate your advice about straw boaters. They are part of the uniform here but Day Boys have previously been excused wearing them. I have now said that those living in or very near Wellingborough must do so, even if they are bicycling.

This has caused some parents to write and complain; their main argument is that if the wind blows the boater off it will probably cause an accident either to the cyclist or to someone following behind. I have suggested that they attach some elastic to both sides of the boater to form a chin strap.

The points which I should much appreciate your advice about are:-

1. From a Police angle, do boys bicycling at proper speeds - but wearing a boater - constitute a hazard?
2. Are there many other Schools in the County which wear boaters while walking or bicycling in a built up area?

With kind regards.

P.S. Did we bicycle with boaters at Radley? I can't remember."

### Minute from Assistant Chief Constable to the Chief Constable:

"I have spoken to Superintendent Roche and he does not remember any accidents being caused through a boater being blown off - he has not, however, checked the records.

Only the rowing blues at Oundle wear boaters and then with a blazer.

I do not know of any other school in the County where boys are required to wear boaters.

In my early days boaters had a cord attached to the back of the rim which led to the jacket button-hole. I would think that boys would prefer this to an elastic chin-strap.

In answer to the specific question of Mr. Sugden, I think boys in boaters may well be a traffic hazard."

Letter from Mr. Gott to Wellingborough School:

"Your letter of 29th September poses rather a tricky question and it is easier to answer the postscript first. I think that cycling with boaters at Radley largely depended upon whether you were a 'wet' or 'dry' bob. As the former, I certainly cycled for miles with a boater and I can't remember either others or myself having accidents on account of it.

We have no record here of accidents from this cause in Northamptonshire either. To be fair, however, if they were only minor ones, the Police might well not be called in.

As far as we know the only other School in the County where boaters are worn in public is at Oundle, but then only by Rowing Blues wearing blazers.

Theoretically, of course, boys wearing insecure boaters could be a hazard in windy weather. This is a little remote, however, and could certainly be overcome by an elastic 'chin-strap' or even by the old-fashioned rim-cord attached to the button-hole in the jacket lapel."

Letter from Wellingborough School to Mr. Gott:

"Many thanks indeed for your letter about boys wearing boaters while bicycling. It was kind of you to take so much trouble and your advice is very helpful.

I had already warned them to attach elastic chin-straps so I hope they will be sensible enough to do so. Best wishes."

Speeding on the M.1

Reply from a Chief Constable to a letter of mitigation. An unusual style not seen any more.

9.5.1972

"Further to my letter of 24th April, I have now seen the Police reports from which it appears that Constable Edwards quite properly verbally warned both the other driver and yourself for the way in which you drove on the motorway on 15th April.

Whilst you may well have felt that the other driver was 'hogging' the right-hand lane, two wrongs do not make a right. You certainly had not the slightest excuse for passing on the centre lane which, as I pointed out in my letter, is quite contrary to the Highway Code and your action could very well have resulted in a prosecution being taken against you, as it has been against many other drivers who have performed exactly the same manoeuvre. Police Constable Edwards reports, however, that your action did not cause any obvious danger and therefore quite properly dealt with your thoughtlessness by means of a verbal caution on the spot. I do not therefore propose to authorise any further action as far as you are concerned.

I notice, however, that you were apparently driving a V.12 E-type Jaguar. As one who has driven sports cars for nearly 45 years, including cars of superior maximum performance and certainly better handling than a V.12 E-type Jaguar, I feel it is most unfortunate that a sports car driver should indulge in this type of driving. Such cars have powers of acceleration that there is really no need for the driver to take any risks whatsoever and to do so on a Motorway merely gives other members of the public a very poor impression of sports car drivers in general.

In these circumstances, the catch phrase about - Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely - may perhaps have a ring of truth and I hope that you will not again pass on the inside on British Motorways in the future."

## Brutal Police Assaults

Reprinted Police Review, 28.12.1906.

CLAY CROSS - Finding that a drunken collier named Woodhouse was behaving in a disorderly manner, P.C. Millward advised him to go home, but he refused. On being taken into custody he became very violent and kicked the Constable on the legs. When the case was heard, Superintendent McLarty told the Magistrate that the prisoner had been up 33 times and at the April Quarter Sessions in 1905 he received 15 months for malicious injury to a Constable. For the assault, prisoner was sent to gaol for six weeks and for being drunk and disorderly for 14 days, the sentences to run consecutively.

COLEBY - The attention of P.C. Adlard was directed to three Grunken men who were walking arm in arm and making use of very bad language. The Constable spoke to them respecting their conduct and with some difficulty obtained the name and address of one of the party, who was taken away. The other two men then came up to him and struck him across the head with a stick, felling him to the ground. The Constable managed to get up but was knocked down a second time and the men got on the top of him and struck and kicked him several times about the head and body. He became semi-unconscious and the men left him. On recovering somewhat he followed them to Duston Pillar where he apprehended them and then brought them to Lincoln. When he arrived there he was covered with blood and in an almost exhausted condition, and was covered with bruises from head to foot. The Bench considered the prisoners had been guilty of a very serious assault on the Constable. They were determined to protect the Police and for being drunk and disorderly the accused would have to go to prison for seven days' h.l., and for the assault on the Police they would have to undergo one month's h.l., the sentence to run consecutively.

DERBY - When arrested for being drunk and disorderly, a man behaved like a madman, and P.C. Orme had great difficulty in getting the handcuffs on. The man had to be carried to the lock-up and on the way he kicked the Officer severely on the legs several times. P.C.'s Calladine and McKimmie eventually came to his assistance. Fined 10s and costs or 14 days for being drunk and disorderly, and sent for 21 days' h.l. for the assault.

ILKESTON - A man, on being ejected from a house, set upon P.C. Campbell who was compelled to use his staff. In the struggle with the man both he and P.C. Froggatt who came to his assistance were kicked. They had to strap the prisoner's legs and get assistance to carry him to the lock-up. Sent for six weeks.

KELSALE - P.C. Grey was riding from Saxmundham to Kelsale when his attention was drawn to something lying by the side of the road. The Constable got out of the cart and found it was a man. Failing to rouse him, P.C. Grey pulled him on to his feet, and advised him to go home. The man thereupon deliberately struck the Constable across the face with a stick, stunning him for a moment. On recovering, P.C. Grey closed with the man, who tried to repeat the blows, but the Constable warded them off. The wound inflicted on the Officer was found to be two inches long. Sent for three weeks' h.l.

PADDINGTON - Hearing a woman screaming "Murder" at midnight, P.C. Rolfe was attracted to the spot. Being told by the woman who was in night attire that her husband had been knocking her and the children about, he went up the stairs to the husband. He met him on the landing and the man at once ran at him and butting him with his head, tried to hurl him down the stairs. This he repeated three times. Then the man ran up the stairs and taking up a jam jar full of water threw both at the Constable. Ultimately the Officer got the man into the street, and with assistance conveyed him to the Police Station. Sent for six weeks.

RAMSGATE - In consequence of several complaints about begging, P.C. Harnett kept a man under observation. On being taken into custody the man became very violent, struck the Constable several times about the body and then rushed away. He was eventually caught and taken to the Police Station. Sent for three months h.l.

## Torquay Bread Riots 1847 - Arnold E. Reynolds

A minute of the meeting of Quarter Sessions dated the 19th October, 1847, refers to the approval of the sum of £60-7s.-9p. being paid for the conveyance of prisoners from Torquay to the County Goal, charged with riot.

In May 1847, there were Bread Riots throughout Devon, beginning in Exeter and the course of a few days trouble occurred at Exmouth, Dawlish, Okehampton, Collompton, Crediton and Tiverton. On Monday, 17th May, 1847, disturbances broke out in Torquay. Rumours were current several days previously that a riot was meditated, but so little was the danger that no provision was made to guard against it. At 7.30 in the evening a mob collected in Lower Union Street and made an attack on Bakers shops, the contents being carried off by women in their aprons. The rioters worked under cover of a dark night and owing to the economy of the Commissioners, no street lamps were permitted to be lit during the summer months and even the burners of the lamps were removed.

With a view to identifying the ring leaders, it was determined to turn on the gas. When this was done and the lamps lit, each emitted a flame about a foot high. By this time several thousand persons were in the streets, but when the orderly disposed attempted to seize the rioters, they were rescued by their companions.

The mob hurried down Fleet Street and attacked a shop, but one of the defenders armed with a crowbar, dealt the leader a terrific blow on the head, which felled him to the ground. Several shops in the Strand area were attacked and as the bread was thrown out to them, the mob refrained from inflicting any damage.

The rioters then made their way up Torre and commenced to attack Bakers shops on the opposite side of the road to where the Torquay Police Station now stands. They were overtaken by a party of tradesmen under the command of a Magistrate, and following some fighting the Riot Act was read and the men who had been captured were taken to the local 'lock up'. The Magistrates returned to the Town Hall at midnight and commenced examination of the



rioters, till three in the morning. Three prisoners were committed for trial and dispersed to Exeter, the others being remanded.

At noon on the 18th May whilst the Magistrates were disposing of the men in custody a body of 60 navvies employed on the rail works above Torquay marched into Torquay equipped with pick axes, crowbars and shovels with the avowed purpose of pulling down the Town Hall, unless their fellow workers were released. Here one of the Magistrates named H.C.M. Phillips met them. A man named Hart stepped forward and demanded the prisoners. He was told the party he was in search of was probably at that time in Exeter. The men then advanced towards the door of the Town Hall and the position critical. They made a sudden rush and Mr. Phillips seized the ring leader and held him fast. The Constables and Coast Guards coming up at that moment. Hart, with several of his companions, were arrested. Seventeen prisoners were lodged in the Watch House at one time. As further violence was expected a messenger was sent to Exeter and by evening 40 men of the 5th Fusiliers accompanied by County Magistrates arrived and were quartered in the Union Hall. In addition the 'ADELAIDE' a Revenue Cutter and the Government steamer 'VULCAN' brought detachments of Coast Guards. 300 Special Constables were also sworn in. Seeing these preparations the rioters made no further attempt to disturb the peace.

#### Torquay's Second Bread Riots

On the 5th November, 1867, there was another Bread Riot. Much property was destroyed by the mob, the women bringing supplies of heavy stones from Ellacombe, which were thrown at the Constables, some of whom were severely wounded.

In April a contingent of two Sergeants and twenty-nine Constables, under the Superintendent Shutler left for duty in South Wales, in connection with the Coal Strike.

From "Out of the Blue" by Hutchings and published by the Devon Publishing Company.