



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



33 Downsview Road, Seaford, BN25 4PU

22nd January 2009

Dear Chris

Regarding the photograph on the top right of page 7 of PHS Journal 23, I think I can help.

This photo is in fact a small part of the far left of a group photograph taken of Hastings Borough Police in 1928. An original copy of this photograph that formerly hung in Hastings Police Station is now displayed at the Old Police Cells Museum at Brighton Town Hall. I have photographs of the whole thing as they have been taken for museum cataloguing and record purposes.

If you have an e-mail address I should be happy to mail them to you in case you want to publish the full picture in a future edition of the PHS Journal or Newsletter. I should warn you however that the original is in a frame almost 3 feet wide, so fitting it all in to the width of an A4 page might cause some loss of detail!

As far as the picture on page 7 is concerned I can tell you that it shows one of two BSA 7.86hp combination motorcycles newly purchased in August of 1928 to "be used for the purposes of traffic patrol, transporting officers to the scenes of crime, etc, and for carrying dispatches".

All of the uniformed officers are wearing a straw helmet that was introduced for summer wear but was, in practice, largely disliked. The straw was uncovered and after a shower of rain the helmet lost its shape. These helmets were, according to one contemporary account, the subject of much amusement amongst the local people. The officer standing behind the motorcycle is a sergeant. Hastings Borough used a large wreath type helmet plate at this time. That issued to constables was black with a large Borough coat of arms centre, and those issued to sergeants were of white metal overall. If you would like a picture of the white metal helmet plate, please let me know and I will send you one. A surviving example of the Hastings straw helmet is in the Old Police Cells Museum collection.

The mounted officer shown in the picture on page 7 is the only mounted officer in the whole picture, though there are at least 3 un-mounted constables pictured wearing long riding boots. The first full time mounted officer in Hastings seems to have been deployed in late summer 1893 following complaints made to the Watch Committee "about the unruly behaviour of certain day excursionists". A photograph of 1921 (taken, I think on the occasion of the annual Force inspection) shows five mounted constables. But I think that only one of these horses was actually used regularly by the force, the others being hired as necessary from local riding schools, and used for civic processions and VIP visits. This would account for the con-



stables in riding uniform appearing in the group photograph without their horses. The last horse used by

Hastings police was retired in 1942 due to difficulty in obtaining animal feed.

On a totally different matter, can I ask you if there was ever anything approaching an “accelerated promotion scheme” in the early Metropolitan Police? Some time ago I wrote speculatively to you to see if any records in your possession recorded the appointment of a Thomas Hayter Chase as a constable in the

Metropolitan Police. Chase intrigues me as a chief officer of police in Brighton who was effectively “airbrushed from history” in two “official” histories of that force. In essence he became embroiled in a fraud being perpetrated by a lady friend of his mother’s (from the Isle of Wight) that almost erupted into a full scale scandal in 1853,

so he left under a cloud. In his application for the chief officer post in Brighton in 1844 Chase stated he had joined MP as a constable on 8th March 1839, but within a year had become Superintendent of the Isle of Wight police division having, it would seem, been seconded at the request of Hampshire magistrates to establish a police force in the then combined areas of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (an ex-MP colleague was made the chief constable). Prior to joining the MP Chase had been a Captain in the artillery of an expeditionary force in the Spanish Peninsula, so I think it unlikely that he would have joined the police as a mere constable unless there was some expectation of fairly rapid advancement. That said, I might be wrong, and maybe his talents were spotted whilst he was a constable?

If you could proffer any clues from your own knowledge of the early days of the MP I’d be grateful. Incidentally, after a few years as Stationmaster at Burgess Hill railway station, Chase successfully applied for the post of Chief

Constable of Portsmouth in 1859, but he left about a year later after what seems to have been another finance-related local scandal, and then became a renowned spymaster in Southern England for the Republicans during the American Civil War, passing back information on British firms doing business with the so-called “Rebel South”.

So, all in all he’s quite an intriguing character.

With all best wishes,

Derek Oakensen

WHERE IS THIS?



Can anyone identify the location of these three pictures.

They are postcards published sometime in the 20s to 30s

I believe that they are possibly Metropolitan Police,

Here are a few suggestions:

- **Hendon Officers Training School**
- **Peel House in Victoria**
- **Bramshill College**
- **One of the 4 Sports Clubs**

IDEAS OR SOLUTIONS TO THE EDITOR

