



Special Constable Jasper Jackson Mellett

By Mick Shaw

On the 1st August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany and so began "The Great War". Jasper Jackson Mellett, known as Jap, was 16 years old and working in his father's bakery at Wooburn Green in Buckinghamshire. Jasper was born at the bakery on the 29th October 1898, the third of seven children born to William and Jane Joy Mellett. William was a master baker and confectioner.



In 1917, with the war still raging, Jasper joined the Royal Flying Corps (RFC); he was 18 years old. Men were recruited into the service for their skills as mechanics, carpenters and upholsterers. Jasper, having a natural aptitude for anything mechanical, became a mechanic/dispatch rider with the service which was originally formed in May 1912. His job as a dispatch rider, serving in France, was to pick up and deliver information about artillery placements, trench lines, etc. This information was sometimes thrown out of balloons in pouches by observers and picked up by the dispatch rider. As a mechanic he would have helped maintain the aircraft, working alongside the armourers, metal smiths and riggers who dealt with the airframes. On the 1st April 1918 the Royal Air Force was formed, merging the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Navy Air Service and on the 11th November the same year saw the end of the Great War. Jasper stayed on in the service until he was invalided out in 1920. His service during the war earned him the War Medal and Victory Medal.



Jasper met his future wife, Lavinia Linda Tyler, while collecting his service pension at Wooburn Post Office where she worked. In 1921 Jasper started a cycle shop on the Green, very near his father's bakery. Not only did he mend bikes but he also repaired radios and gramophones.

Jasper married Lavinia (who was always known as Linda) on the 2nd April 1923 at St. Paul's Church Wooburn. In December 1926 they moved to larger premises on the other side of the Green where they were the first to have electricity in their house, installed by Jasper himself. They eventually had three daughters, and settled down into running the business and raising a family.



Jasper's life was a busy one; he never went to bed on a Friday night. This was a really busy night at his father's bakery, which was just over the road. He helped out overnight, returning home Saturday morning with fresh bread and lardycakes for his family's breakfast. He then went back to his shop where he worked all day. The bakery was eventually taken over by his brother Edgar.

In 1926 Jasper joined the Special Constabulary, being locally appointed to Wooburn Green and High Wycombe. Issued with a police uniform, his powers would have been the same as a regular policeman but only locally, probably in the Wooburn Green, High Wycombe area - unlike now when a Special Constable's powers extend to the whole of England and Wales. His uniform was the same as his regular colleagues but he would not have been issued a helmet; instead he wore a flat cap and as you can see in the photograph he wore the insignia of a Special Constable on his collar. As well as the 'S C' the insignia shows the swan of Buckinghamshire and above the King's Crown the same insignia was worn by regular constables but without the 'S C'. His warrant number was 4222 and unlike now, this number was not displayed on his uniform. His duties were to assist the local police at evenings and weekends, reporting to the local sergeant or inspector. His training was mainly on the job but he would have had evening classes on the use of his powers, law and arrest techniques. After nine years' service Jasper received his Long

Service and Good conduct medal from the Chief Constable and you can see in the photograph of him taken in 1940 he is wearing his medal ribbons from the First World War, from left to right the War Medal, Victory Medal and Special Constable Long Service and Good Conduct Medal.

During the Second World War his duties increased to cover regular police officers who were re-called into the army. Some police officers had seen regular service in one of the services prior to joining the Constabulary and on the onset of the Second World War in 1939 they were re-called back into the service. Special Constables were called upon to cover these officers. Like the Home Guard, he still worked at his regular job, in Jasper's case running the shop, and in the evenings and weekends he donned his police uniform and patrolled the streets. In the event of an emergency he was expected to close his shop and report for duty. Besides his normal duties he and his fellow Special Constables were trained to deal with a range of eventualities such as first aid in case of injury, initial coordination of the security of aircraft crash sites, clearing people from the vicinity of unexploded bombs, handling of unignited incendiary bombs and checking compliance with lighting regulations. At the end of the war in 1945 the Home Secretary said of Special Constables ".....you have responded loyally to all the many calls which have been made upon you. You have given generously of your time and energy....." For his war service Jasper received the Second World War Defence Medal. Persons entitled to this medal also included Regular Police, First Police Reserve, Police War Reserve, Women's Auxiliary Police Corps, Police Auxiliary Messenger Service and in Jasper's case the Special Constabulary. Special Constables received no pay as is the case today; their duties were on a voluntary basis. Jasper received a certificate from the Chief Constable of Buckinghamshire T.R.P Warren stating "*Jasper Jackson Mellett of Wooburn Green, High Wycombe served in the Special Constabulary during the World War 1939 – 1945. The thanks of the County are hereby conveyed to him for loyal and efficient service rendered to the public*". This was signed by the Chief Constable and the Chairman of the Standing Joint Committee for the County of Buckinghamshire.

His service in the 'Specials' did not end there ; he continued his duties as a Special Constable receiving a total of three "bars or clasps" with the words 'Long Service'. These are issued at ten year intervals to add to the long service medal and a silver rose is added to the riband when worn alone. In January 1951 Jasper was issued with his second 'bar or clasp' and, unusually, in July 1955 he was issued his third. The reason for this is not known but it is most likely that during the post war years the number of hours Jasper gave to the police service were such that the proportion of hours given during this period amounted to a normal ten year period a Special Constable was expected to do.



This would have been at the discretion of the then Bucks Chief Constable Brigadier Cheney. Jasper retired as a Special Constable at the age of 60 in 1958 having been 32 years in the service.

Jasper continued to work in his shop, known by locals as 'Melletts', repairing cycles, radios and gramophones. He said at the time of his retirement "*I started repairing radios in the days when they were a very new thing. I didn't know much but I learned from experience*". His shop was described by one local thus- "*It looked like a bomb had gone off in it, but he knew exactly where everything was if you needed a spare part*". Another said "*He was very helpful and very good at mending punctures, his shop looked like an Aladdin's cave*" One of his side-lines was to provide tannoy systems for local fetes and dances.

During his 48 years running the shop he never took a holiday and spent most Sundays mending the bikes and radios that had been brought in for repair during the week. His large garden was his hobby, which included an orchard and greenhouses, and he also ran an allotment. His family were never short of vegetables, but his pride and joy was his greenhouse chrysanthemums. Jasper was a popular, kind, considerate hard working man.

Jasper's shop doors closed during 1968 when he retired at the age of 70 but to local children the doors were always half open. For around five months he continued to repair their bikes- it didn't matter if the job was large or small they all found a ready welcome. Jasper said "*I love children, they are my best customers*" When Jasper finally closed his doors for good the local children made a collection and presented him with a box of cigars. Jasper never had a holiday until he retired in 1970 when he took his wife on holiday to Scotland.

Jasper died on the 30th November 1988 at the age of 90 in a nursing home in Fifield, Maidenhead. He was survived by his wife Linda and his three daughters Brenda, Daphne and Wendy".

Footnote:

No records of Bucks Special Constables survived the amalgamation in 1968 and records of the issue of Long Service and Good Conduct medals to Special Constables were never kept by the Home Office. Jasper's story has been put together from letters and a certificate from the two Chief Constables he served under, TRP Warren and Brigadier Cheney, also from local newspaper cuttings from the 1970s and information, medal ribbon and bar/clasps supplied by his youngest daughter Wendy and online research.

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