



THE MEMORIAL TO PC 65 ALLEN MASON SURREY CONSTABULARY

by

Robert Bartlett, MA



No known image exists of PC Mason, but this is the style of uniform worn by members of the Surrey Constabulary in 1857



Allen Mason was badly beaten in July 1859 whilst trying to arrest a deserter in Cobham. He lingered on, dying in December 1859, leaving a young widow and two small children. In Surrey Police Headquarters there were memorials to Inspector Donaldson and to John Schofield, both killed on duty by criminal attacks, but for some reason, PC Mason had been forgotten by history.

The chairman of the Surrey Police Retired Comrades Association with the full agreement of the then Chief Constable, Mark Rowley, decided this failure should be rectified, and to provide a memorial within Headquarters on the understanding that there could be no cost to the Surrey Police, given the dire financial pressures they were under. Therefore sufficient money was raised privately for the memorial and reception to be held at Mount Browne.

The memorial design was drafted by Kevin Morris (Retired Comrades Association) and sent to ornamental masons by Funeral Partners, Knaphill who refined the design and carved it. Many people made donations but it would not have been possible without the

support, including financial, from Barry Pritchard of Funeral Partners and Tony Croucher, of Woking Funerals, who made the arrangements to have the memorial carved, delivered and mounted, and in addition, provided name plaques to be placed in three conference rooms at Mount Browne, to be known as the Mason Room, Donaldson Room and Schofield Room.

The dedication of the memorial to PC Mason took place on Tuesday 14 February 2012 at 10.30am, with the Master of Ceremonies being Tony Forward, Life Vice President of the Surrey Retired Comrades Association and former President of the National Association of Toastmasters. After a welcome from the Chief Constable, Lynne Owens, QPM (President of the Surrey Police Retired Comrades Association, and incidentally her very first day of service in Surrey), Robert Bartlett MA (Cantab), Chairman and Life Vice President of the Surrey Police Retired Comrades Association, gave a talk on Policing Surrey in 1859.

This was followed by Christopher Atkins, QPM BA, Life Vice President of the Surrey Police Retired Comrades Association, who gave a talk on the specific details of the life and death of PC Mason, which he had extensively researched. The Dedication of the Memorial was then performed by the Reverend Robert Jenkins, Rector of Saint Andrew's Church, Cobham. The Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Surrey, Mr Gordon Lee-Steere, gave an Address, after which Robert Bartlett concluded the ceremony with an expression of gratitude.

So who was PC Mason? Allen Mason was a Surrey man, born at Chertsey in 1830. He lived in Eastworth Road with his parents, Francis and Sarah, brother Henry and sister Eliza, and worked as a labourer. He obviously had ambitions for more, and joined the Metropolitan Police in March 1851 but left after only a month. He returned to Chertsey, labouring for the well-known Locke-King family.

Eighteen months later, on Sunday 3 October 1852, he married Ann Turner at Saint Paul's Church, Addlestone. They were both single, he twenty-two, she twenty-four. Allen had lived at Addlestone Moor and Ann's home was in Addlestone village, although she was in service to the Liberty family who ran the nearby Ham Moor Saw Mills. He had married the girl next door, for the 1841 census shows the Turners and the Masons as neighbours, including Allen Mason, then eleven, and Ann Turner, thirteen.

Perhaps spurred on by his new responsibilities, he again applied to join the police, this time to the Surrey Constabulary. The force had been formed only in 1851 and offered opportunities for the ambitious, and a way of life for Allen very different from that of a labourer in a country town.

His application was successful and he was appointed on Monday 21 February 1853, when he was twenty-four years old, 5'9" tall, and allocated collar number 65. The collar number was so called because in the days of high 'choke collars' that is where officers' numbers were worn. But the term is still used today even though these numbers have long since migrated to the shoulders. Allen was sworn in by the Guildford Bench of Magistrates, just as in modern times when recruits stood in Number One Court (the old Quarter Sessions Court) in Guildford High Street, 'under the clock'.

He was appointed as a Fourth Class Constable on sixteen shillings a week and posted to Merstham. All new entrants were enrolled at this level, and there were four grades of Constable, with Inspector being the next rank up, there being no Sergeant rank. He was advanced to Third Class Constable, but in 1853 (only ten months after appointment) he was disciplined, lost his Third Class status and was fined five shillings (a third of his weekly wage) for failing to make a Conference Point. This apparently trivial offence was not so innocuous as it might appear.

Missing a Point immediately aroused fears for the officer's safety and, in addition, he could not be given work or messages, nor be met by his Inspector or Superintendent. Discipline in the force was enforced rigidly and few officers escaped a disciplinary hearing. In addition to the fine, Allen was moved to Nutfield – of all days on Christmas Day 1853. He now had to restore his reputation and make progress through the grades.

His postings were extraordinary, but certainly not unusual. After Merstham and Nutfield he was moved to Wrecclesham, Farnham, Millbridge, Egham and Cobham, sometimes only three or four months between moves, although on his later postings he stayed two years at Egham and Cobham. It was policy to make these changes because the Chief Constable was keen to ensure officers did not get too close to their communities, which must certainly have been the case.

Throughout this whirlwind of moves Allen's progress was restored. He regained his Third Class, went on to Second Class, and finally attained the status of First Class Constable in 1856, the highest rank below Inspector. In November of that year he took up his final posting in Cobham, described variously as Church Cobham or Fairmile.

We are able to see something of his family life. Police records show that he had two children when he joined, who we know to be Ann and Allen – named after their parents. In addition they later had Alice, born at Farnham in 1855 (but christened at Chertsey where her grandparents still lived) and finally Agnes, born at Cobham in 1858.

Sadly, little Alice died in 1859, not then four. A few months later further tragedy followed when Allen was badly assaulted in July while arresting a deserter. Nothing is known of the arrest, the injuries Allen sustained, nor what happened to the deserter. But what *is* known, is that Allen died later that year on Thursday 29 December 1859. The cause of death was a ruptured blood vessel in his lungs, the result, it was concluded, of the violent assault he had suffered.

He was buried in Cobham churchyard in the New Year, on Saturday 7 January 1860, beside his daughter Alice. An inscription on a headboard, now lost, recorded that :

'Allan Mason, police constable of the Surrey Constabulary, died 29 December 1859, aged 30, borne to his grave by his brother constables. Near this spot lies Alice Mason, his daughter, died 11 March 1859, aged 3 years and 11 months'.

No newspaper reports about the attack have been found, but the *Surrey Comet* did report his death in the edition of Saturday 7 January 1860 :

'Death of a Policeman – A policeman of the Surrey Constabulary Allan Mason, who had been stationed at Cobham for some years, and was greatly respected both by the inhabitants and the members of the force, died on December 29th, having broken a blood vessel in his lungs some short period before. In July last he was violently assaulted by a deserter, and this is presumed to have brought on the illness. He was interred this day, Saturday, and followed to his grave by a number of his late brother officers whose feelings evidenced they had lost a friend and a brother to whom they were sincerely attached.'

Allen's death was reported to the next Epiphany sitting of the Surrey Quarter Sessions. The Sessions were told that he had died of a ruptured blood vessel a few weeks before, and that his previous reduced state of health was attributed to a violent assault committed upon him by a deserter in July.

The terrible loss, of course, left Ann a widow to care for her three children, Ann, aged eight, Allan seven, and Agnes one year, and Ann needed urgent help. The Quarter Sessions had the power to grant her up to two thirds (£35) of Allen's annual pay and the

Chief Constable at the Epiphany sitting on Saturday 7 January 1860 proposed that they did so. He added that Police Constable Mason had six years service, and 'died in consequence of injuries he had received in the performance of his duties in July 1859. He had been very steady while in the force and had left a widow and three children unprovided for.'

On Thursday 26 January the Police Committee, with commendable swiftness and less than a month after Allen's funeral, agreed that Ann be given £35 as a grant. It was not a pension because widows' pensions for officers killed on duty would not to be introduced for another thirty years.

Ann Mason later married a Cobham man, James Johnson. He, too, subsequently joined the police, serving as a Constable in both Kent and London until he retired on pension. He and Ann had a further four children, and she died in the early 1900s.

Some cases uncovered that were dealt with by PC Mason :

TUESDAY 21 OCTOBER 1856 at the Surrey Michaelmas Quarter Sessions.

Thomas Holmes, labourer, was charged with stealing a watch at Farnham, the property of Robert Howlett. The prosecutor (*in other words, the injured person*) was in the *Princess Royal* public house at Farnham on Tuesday 23 September when he went to sleep, with his watch in his pocket, and when he woke it was gone. The loss was reported to PC A. Mason, Surrey Constabulary, who accompanied him to the prisoner's lodgings where the watch was found under a pillow on the bed after a violent struggle with the prisoner. The jury immediately found him guilty and he was sentenced to four years penal servitude. [The *Sussex Advertiser* and the *Surrey Gazette*, Tuesday 21 October 1856]

SATURDAY 29 MAY 1858 at the Epsom County Bench.

Sarah Elizabeth May was charged with breaking several windows in the dwelling house of Mr George Brown at Cobham. Mr Brown is the overseer for Cobham and was approached by the defendant and a man for relief, which he refused, and she broke two of his windows. PC 65 Mason was called to the house at half past seven in the evening to remove the prisoner and her two companions. The officer persuaded them to leave but he heard a sound of breaking glass and went and found the prisoner. On the way to the Station house she showed the officer several stones and said she wished she had broken more than she had. She told the court she had done it because she wanted to go to prison. Sent to the House of Correction for two months with hard labour. [The *Surrey Comet*, Saturday 29 May 1858]

SATURDAY 30 JULY 1859 at the Kingston County Bench.

William Miller obtained a hoe under false pretences. The prisoner borrowed some tools then sold them. PC65 Allen Mason, Surrey Constabulary, found the prisoner in the taproom of *The George* at Cobham, and was eventually sent for trial. [The *Surrey Comet*, Saturday 30 July 1859]

This memorial to PC Mason will obviously be well cared for, and remembered, but there may be memorials to police officers dying on duty, not necessarily murdered, which are being forgotten, and maybe neglected. An appeal therefore is made, if any member knows of any memorial or headstone to a police officer dying on duty, especially those within police premises where the public do not normally have access, then please would they send a copy of its wording, a description of it, its locality, and even perhaps a good photograph, to your Editor. A list will be compiled and published in this *Journal*, or, if necessary, even a Police History Society Monograph.

EAST SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY 1863



Friend of
Drill Sergeant Rogers

PS Norman

PC Potter

PC Firmin

PC Barnard

PC Thurkettle

PC Smith

PC Fosdick

PC Pulham

PC Redgrave

PC Alexander

unknown

PC Middleton

PC Woods

PC Noller

PC Edmonds

Drill Sergeant Rogers

PC Calver

It is interesting to note that Sergeant Norman, second from left, has two rows of buttons, rather than arm chevrons. The photograph is not distinct enough to recognise the medals worn by PC Potter and the unknown PC, but in PC Potter's case, they may be the Gwalior campaigns of northern India in the 1840s; and in the case of the unknown PC, may be the Crimean War of the 1850s.

This photograph has been supplied by Mr Fred Feather.

'YARNS FROM THE BEAT'

From 'Yarns from the Beat', *Police Review* Friday 18 September 1925

A teacher in one of the schools in a large town was having for her lesson the various trades of our workpeople, such as carpenters, bricklayers and so on, and finally she came to the policeman. 'Now, can anyone tell me what a policeman does?' she asked. Up stood one little fellow, and said 'Please, miss, my daddy is a policeman'. 'Well, Tommy' the teacher said 'if your daddy is a policeman, you'll be able to tell me best what a policeman does.' 'Yes, miss' said the little lad 'when my daddy sees big boys playing footy in the streets, he takes the balls off them, and brings them home to me.'