



Charles Mandeville: Guildford's First Policeman

by Peter H Scholes



The exploration of the Mandeville branch of my wife's family tree has been - over several years - a fascinating journey which led back to Henry Mandeville or Mandefeild who died in 1600. Henry was a wheelwright in the village of Dunsfold in Surrey. His descendants remained in the area until the 19th century before migrating to other villages and towns in Surrey, and to London. Along this journey we met Charles Mandeville who was the first policeman in Guildford. Charles Mandeville was the youngest child of John and Rose Mandeville or Manvell. There were six sons and three daughters all baptised at the Church of St Nicholas in Guildford. John and Rose lived in Guildford, in Park Street. John Mandeville was an agricultural labourer - when he could find employment. The family was destitute for much of the time and in receipt of parish relief. The St Nicholas Parish Rate Book shows that John was ill during 1793 and 1794, and received a number of small sums from the parish. One entry records 3s 6d paid out for "a new hat" for one of the children. John died in 1825 and his wife, Rose, in 1842 at the age of 83, a pauper in

the Union Workhouse in Guildford. Charles Mandeville, who was born in 1805, married Catherine Holt at St Nicholas in 1825. There were nine children and twenty-three grandchildren. Catherine died in 1854. Some few years later, Charles married Mary from Shere in Surrey; there was one child of this second marriage. At the age of 14, Charles Mandeville was apprenticed by officers of the Parish of St Nicholas (church warden and overseer of the poor) as a plasterer to William Smith of Guildford. Charles was a pauper apprentice. The Poor Law Act of 1601 allowed the parish to place children of destitute parents with a master who would teach them a trade, and ensure that they could earn a living and not become a drain on parish resources. The indenture of apprenticeship would have stipulated that Charles "should not commit fornication, nor play at cards or dice, tables or any other unlawful games, and should not haunt taverns or play houses". The master would provide working tools and allow the apprentice "sufficient meat and drink". The apprenticeship would have been completed in 1826 with Charles a journeyman plasterer although as Charles married in 1825 it is possible that he was released by his master before that date. As a journeyman he would have been able to seek employment as a skilled workman and eventually set up business himself as a master plasterer.

The Night Watchman

Charles appears to have given up his trade as a plasterer sometime in the 1820s in favour of employment as a night watchman, Night watchmen, known in earlier times as bellmen, were paid for by property owners to supplement the system of Parochial Constables in towns such as Guildford. The Surrey Police website refers to a watchman, James Barrat in

Godalming, who in 1820 received a salary of £15 2s 6d per year. The sum of £2 15s was paid out for a watchman's hat and 4s 3d for a 'lanthorn', a candle-lit lantern with a horn window. In 1833, the employment of night watchmen in towns was regulated by the passing of the Lighting and Watching Act. Inspectors were appointed and a rate was levied on property owners to pay for the service.

The Borough Constable

Modern policing dates from Sir Robert Peel's Police Act of 1829 when the Metropolitan Police Force in London was formed although long before that date there were rudimentary police forces; in fact, "the ubiquitous Parish Constable was to be found everywhere". The creation of a Borough Police Force in Guildford in 1835 resulted from the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act. In the Minutes of the Council Watch Committee of 18th January 1836, it "was ordered that Charles Mandeville and James Wilkins be continued watchmen and appointed night constables of this borough at the salary of 18s in summer and 21s in winter". On the following day they were sworn in as constables before the Mayor, John Smallpiece, Gentleman. On 1st February, six pairs of handcuffs were ordered for the night constables. Some Watch Committee proceedings are reported in the publication, Surrey Police - A Pictorial History 1851-2001. At another meeting in January 1836, it was resolved to appoint nine constables for the borough. Three days later the appointments were made and the officers became operational shortly afterwards. Richard Jarlett was appointed superintendent at £15 per year; he was only part-time and was in fact a baker in the High Street. The Minutes also record the



appointment on 14th July of a day policeman, Phillip Clarke, at a salary of 17s 6d. The Watch Committee later decreed "that a newly appointed constable in addition to his salary.... be provided with clothes of the same description as the London police provided the expense thereof does not exceed five guineas". The clothes provided were the so-called Peeler uniform consisting of a top hat representing authority, and an eight-button, blue swallow tailed jacket representing servitude because, according to David Cross writing in the BBC British History website "although the police were considered public servants, they were also the public's masters". A leather stock, 10 cm deep, was worn around the neck as protection against attempts at strangulation with a piece of rope - a favourite trick of footpads. The uniform was completed by a broad belt with a large buckle bearing the Borough insignia, and a pair of heavy Wellington boots. The hat was 15 cm tall with a 5 cm wide brim and reinforced. The upper part was of leather overlapping a beaver skin body; it was reinforced inside with cane. Supposedly a symbol of authority, it has been suggested that the top hat was used for peering over stone walls in 'covert surveillance' operations. Whilst the uniform would have been very suitable for cold nights in winter, one can only imagine the level of discomfort in summer. Constables in some forces were allowed to purchase light-weight trousers for summer wear. The constable's 'appointments' were a truncheon, handcuffs, rattle to raise 'a hue and cry', and at night an oil lamp suspended from his belt. The truncheon was hidden in a long pocket in the coat tails. In some areas of town the constable would have carried a cutlass. Borough policeman were on duty

seven days a week without a break throughout the year. After one year's service they received ten days annual leave. According to David Cross "the Victorian policeman was very lucky to receive sick pay. However, if he had a hangover or injury caused by drinking, he might well receive nothing at the discretion of his Superintendent". Many Boroughs produced a Rule Book for constables and in one of these Mandeville as "No. 1 Peeler", and focussed on the long service of Thomas and his family. See page ?. As mentioned earlier, it is unclear how the portrait of Charles came to be painted but it is possible that it was produced in the 1920s from an original drawing for Allen Solly's advertising campaign.

The Toll-Gate Keeper

Following his police service, Charles returned to his trade as plasterer for some years and was then appointed collector of tolls on the Portsmouth road in Godalming on what used to be known as Anchor Hill. Toll gates came into being when turnpike legislation was enacted in the late 18th century as a supposed remedy for the deplorable state of English roads. The tolls were to be used to maintain the roads, but, although there was a general improvement in the condition of roads by the end of the 18th century, many of the Turnpike Trusts were more intent upon profit than upkeep. The toll-gate keeper was provided with a small house by the gate. The pay at the principal gates was usually no more than 5 shillings for a 24-hour day. The keeper's job came with the constant inconvenience of being awakened in the middle of the night and the danger of robbery and assault. Whilst Charles was collector of tolls, it was revealed in The Surrey Advertiser of 14th October 1865 that he appeared to have been struck

off the Electoral Register. It was reported under the heading The Borough Revision that "under the Parish of St Nicholas Charles Mandeville [and others] objected to by the Liberals, were struck off the list." No reason was given in the newspaper item. Charles Mandeville died at the toll house in Godalming of 'apoplexy' on 6th August 1868 aged 63, and is buried in the Nightingale Cemetery. After his death Mary, his second wife, continued to collect tolls until sometime after 1871. She died in 1896 aged 73.

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