



### FASTEN MY GARTER THE STRANGE STORY OF THE METS BADGES

Chris Forester

Many years ago I was involved in the setting up of the Mounted Branch Museum. One of my tasks was to identify and locate possible exhibits. One of the more obvious places to plunder was, or so I thought, the Receivers stores, then at Lambeth. In

those days the prevailing intention of all police store persons appeared to be to make it as difficult as possible for any officer to prise any items of equipment from that bastion. The process started at ones station where the necessary documentation had to be obtained. First you had to get past the stores clerk who's sole aim in life was to find some reason not to issue anything, after all stores are for storing, if they were for issuing they would be called ISSUE. If it was an item that the local scrooge carried in his personal safe he might, (but usually not) issue you with a replacement on exchange of the old item. This was usually after a minute examination that could end with the worn out article being thrown back with the remark, 'There's plenty of life in that yet'. If the item was clothing or other more exotic equipment he would begrudgingly fill out the necessary forms. You then had to travel to the main stores at Lambeth. Here one would appear with the correct forms only to find that there was at least one T not crossed or an i not dotted. This extreme omission was quite enough for a peremptory shake of the head and with a wry smile the forms would be handed back. No issue on THAT day.

After another long journey back, this time after a checking procedure of the documentation with the fine tooth comb, one would present and sit in anticipation awaiting the item of equipment required only to be told that it was 'On Back Order', whatever that meant. This news would again be delivered with the wry smile that told you that once again the staff had thwarted you. Most articles took at least three visits to the stores, one of which included the staff going on

Tea or Lunch break just as you arrived so that one had a two hour wait. The only officer I ever knew that ever got exemplary service was one Zbigniew Voychek Slawinsky or

Slav from Wandsworth, the Mets only Polish mounted policeman. At that time there was a notorious stores lady, I will call Sybil, who was renowned for her vinegary customer service and reluctance to issue anything. Whatever you wanted, she did not have it in your size, type, colour, material or whatever. If she did have it in stock she would virtually throw it at you in her obvious disappointment at having to issue something that fitted. This then was the lady that we were always at variance with until one day I visited with Slav. On our arrival we walked straight into the fitting room past the three grumpy TraffPoll officers who had been sitting there for two hours. Slav then greeted Sybil with a smile and a hug. The conversation went thus:

**SLAV**, 'How are you today, Sybil my dear'. Here Sybil simpered! Yes it was definitely a simper. **SYBIL**, 'Oh hello Slav Lovey' .....LOVEY!!!

**SLAV**: 'You're looking very lovely today if I may say so, have you had your hair done?'. Another simper, **SYBIL**, 'Oh fancy you noticing that'.

**SLAV**, That blouse really suits your colouring you know. Another simper,

**SYBIL**, 'Oh do you think so?'

**SLAV**, 'Is every thing alright at home',

**SYBIL**, 'Oh yes and how nice of you to ask'.

**SLAV**: 'Is Toby OK'. (Toby was I found out, the Cat). Sybil then launched into a litany of Toby's medical problems that went on for ten minutes.

**SLAV**, 'Well we all have our crosses to bear don't we dear'.

**SYBIL** (*Who is by now wiping a tear from her eye, re Toby's incontinent habits*). 'Thank you my dear you are so sympathetic, now what can I do for you'.

Slav then proceeded to tear the arse out of blagging. He came away with not only his new breeches and tunic that Sybil had got specially tailored for him but several items of kit that were not on the documentation and a promise that he would be first in line for one of the new (*then unobtainable*) riding hats on issue. As an open mouthed hanger on I also got a half smile and more kit than I expected.

I learnt a lot that day, as Slav said 'One gets more with sugar than vinegar'. More like Saccharin I would have thought.

Anyway I digress, on my quest to Lambeth for any outdated equipment I was disappointed to find that the Bow Street Museum had won everything worth having some years previously. I got this information from George Tibbs, the saddler. (*Later to be awarded the BEM for his 48 years service to the Metropolitan Police and having to put up with grumpy Mounted men*). He then told me a story that illustrated the lengths the job will go to in order to avoid embarrassment. Back in 1938 George was a spotty faced apprentice saddler in the old Receivers stores at Brixton. At that time the incumbent King was George V. As with all our monarchs his cipher was carried on all identifying badges and crest used within the Metropolitan Police. This particular cipher was to come to some prominence within the service when an irate Garter King of Arms wrote to the Times and the Commissioner, at that time, Sir Phillip Game to complain that the Metropolitan Police were not entitled to wear the monarchs badge with the Garter around as they were had never been awarded this honour. A corporate gulp and no argument was put up. The edict came down, "**THIS MATTER MUST BE DEALT WITH.....but with some discretion; the public must not be made aware of this humiliation!**"

Young George then found himself on overtime to assist with the re-badging of the whole Force. This included all helmet plates, cap badges, crests and signs as well as all transport logos and apparently took something over a fortnight to accomplish. This left the store with several thousand obsolete badges. My ears pricked up, old badges could be used to trade with other anorak collectors. I had to ask the question, 'What did you do with them'. George smiled and said, 'You wouldn't believe me if I told you'. 'Try me', I said. 'Well', he said, 'Soon after all this happened, one Tuesday night at about 10 o'clock they sent a Copper round to get me. My mum got me out of bed and the policeman said it was urgent so I scrambled into my clothes and walked from Lordship Lane, Dulwich where I lived to Brixton Stores. When I got there I

was told to go and load some sacks into the old delivery lorry we had. They were all the badges and assorted crests, I knew that because I'd put them in the sacks. My Boss told me that I wasn't to tell anyone what we were doing as



it was all covered by the Official Secrets Act and if I told anyone I would be put in prison. Well the next thing was we pulled up on Blackfriars Bridge. It must have been about three o'clock in the morning by now, we unloaded the sacks and dumped them over the side. I suppose it must have been high tide but it was too dark to see.' He smiled to see my face, 'I said you wouldn't believe me didn't I'.

What a novel way to dispose of ex police equipment!

## The Unsung Heroes,

*(Or don't believe everything you read in the papers!)*

Michael Matsell

On the 5th of June at about 2.00am in the early morning, Sergeant Len Taylor of the Lincolnshire Police, was on night duty at Louth police Station. The telephone rang and Sergeant Taylor answered. "It's the duty officer at Manby Park RAF Station", said the caller, "There is an unidentified aircraft down in your area". He then gave the Police Sergeant a map reference. Sergeant Taylor consulted his map on the office wall and ascertained that the aircraft was in the South Reston locality which is along the present day A157 Road. The village of South Reston is about 5 miles from Manby.

Sergeant Taylor knew the local Bobby for that area was PC Jack Draper so he contacted the officer by telephone, at his Police House. PC Draper told his Sergeant that he had not heard a plane crash but he would go and investigate. The PC had a Harley Davison motor cycle which was supplied under the Lease Lend by the Americans. Sergeant Taylor told Constable Draper he would be in the area as soon as possible to investigate the Manby Officers report and would meet up with Constable Draper

Fortunately War Reserve Police constable Maugham came into Louth Police Station at that very moment with the official police car. The two Police Officers set off in the car heading in the direction of South Reston. After a short drive they came across P.C. Drapers motor cycle parked near a gate leading into a field. Sergeant Taylor alighted from the vehicle and told War Reserve Maugham to drive around and see what he could see.

It was a lovely moonlit morning with a slight chill as the early dew settled on the ground. The Sergeant set off walking across the field, a silvery glow shining off the hedges and the crop of cabbages. As the Sergeant neared the other side of the field he saw P. C. Draper and another person standing by the side of an aircraft. The other person turned out to be a German Pilot that it transpired had landed an Heinkel 111 in the cabbage field.

By good luck Sergeant Taylor had been studying the German language so was quite able to converse with the German Officer. Sergeant Taylor had a form with him, which was used to report on crashed a aircraft, so he recorded details of the plane, the bomb load that it carried and any other crew members. By meticulous questioning the Sergeant found that the pilot, was a member of Geschwader 8/KG4 his name being Ober Leutnant H. Pass and the aircraft code was 5JXFS. The German was dressed in a black leather coat and he told the sergeant that he was the pilot. He also reported that the other crew member's "*Alles Fallschirm ober de Wash*" (all parachuted over the Wash). The German Officer continued in his native language telling the Police Sergeant that the plane was the latest type Heinkel and was laden with a new type of bomb but the bombs were not dangerous. The Sergeant asked

the German if He was armed, and with that the pilot pulled out a Luger Pistol which he handed to PC Draper who in turn handed the weapon to his Sergeant. He placed the gun in his night belt. It was at this moment that Sergeant Taylor began to smell in the air a very strong scent or aviation fuel and also noticed the German was very uneasy and was feeling in his pockets. As the Sergeant had been trained in bomb disposal he realized that the aircraft had a demolition charge which the crew should have operated to destroy the plane. It was obvious this had not worked especially with the smell of fuel in the morning air. The German Officer asked for a match and Sergeant Taylor refused the request. The Police Officer decided to move away from the plane and they moved off in single file.

During the same morning on the 5th June 1941, two youths, D. Woods and C. Goulsbra, members of the Home Guard were fire watching at Authorpe in a chicken hut and equipped with a stirrup pump, one bucket and a coke stove. The two youths saw the Heinkel in the moonlight, pass over their abode and they noticed that the engines had stopped. The plane glided out of sight. The two Home Guard members left their post, donning steel helmets and grabbed their rifles setting off in pursuit. Near the Vicarage at South Reston they met the Vicar also on Fire watching duty and he informed the two youths that the plane had just cleared the rooftops but nn had not heard the plane crash. The two youths carried on their way to look for the plane. Returning to the Police Sergeant, the German, and PC Draper made their way across the field away from the Heinkel. Suddenly a shot rang out from a 303 rifle. Sergeant Taylor pulled the German down onto the ground as the