Surrey Constabulary History

'An in depth history of policing in Surrey'

**August 2024**

www.surrey-constabulary.com

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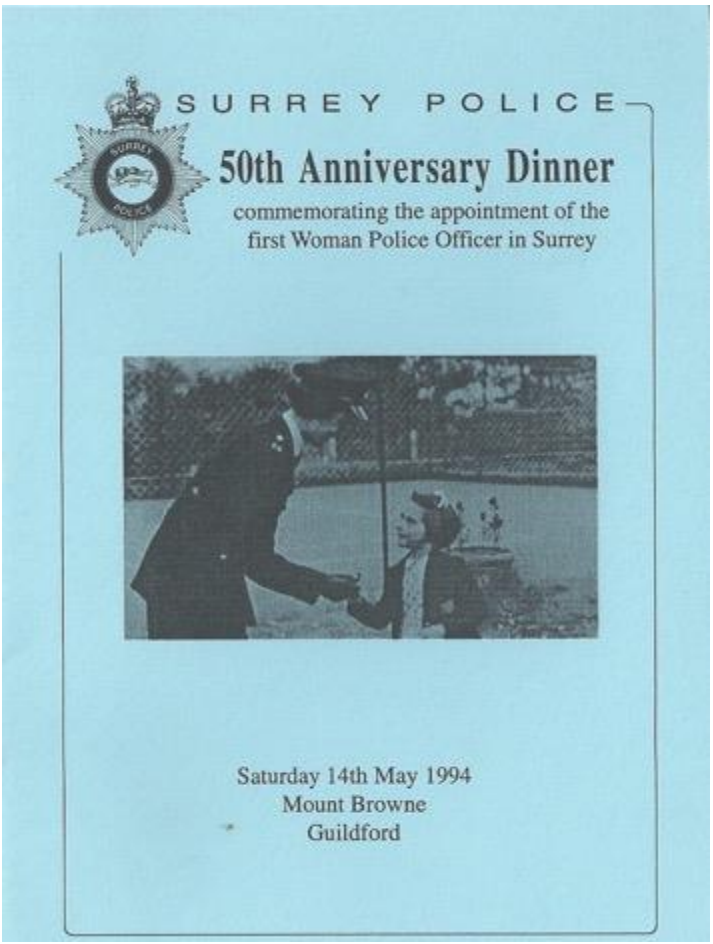
# Surrey Constabulary History 116



# Contents


| | |
|---|---|
| **1994 50th anniversary dinner** | **1** |
| **1994 ARV and WPC Nicole Smith dog handler** | **2** |
| **Tunbridge Wells Police scandal of 1853** | **3** |
| **Cold War Fighter Jet Collision Over Guildford** | **4** |
| **William (Billy) Beacher Chief Constable Reigate Borough** | **11** |
| **Murder on a Dark and Isolated Road 1834** | **19** |
| **The Sussex and Surrey Burglars 1845** | **47** |


Armed Response Vehicles were introduced in March 1994.

WPC Nicole Smith and Sabre receiving a certificate from Deputy Chief Constable David Williams.

# Heroes and Villains: The Tunbridge Wells Police scandal of 1853

Robert Bartlett

Within this work there is much detail on how the local micro police forces operated with some detail of the activities of Isaacs and his gang in Surrey, Kent and Sussex in the 1840s.These were the men who murdered Rev Hollest at Frimley, leading to the formation of the Surrey Constabulary.

Derek Oakenson the author of the research, on the 18 July 2024 wrote in an email to Robert Bartlett: Having been involved in negotiating the use of the paper, (Heroes and Villains) I have now had agreement that it can be used on your website, with one condition about citing its source and a warning about copyright. I've agreed the following form of words with the journal editor, to be attached to any link to the paper.

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**There is a second article published in 1991 in Southern History "**Popular Protest and Social Crime: The Evidence of Criminal Gangs in Rural Southern England1790—1860" by Roger Wells. Again, mention is made of the Isaacs gang and their activities. Reassuringly much of the ground covered by Roger Wells was also "uncovered" during the research into the origins of the Surrey Constabulary and the activities of the criminal gangs. In 1991 there was no Internet which over time has revolutionised historical research both for the professional and interested amateur. Currently work is being undertaken into Surrey based gangs to try and uncover how many more crimes were down to this horrible gang captained by Isaac. Readers may well be aware of the Shere and Pepperharrow gangs.

The articles referred to can be found at www.surrey-constabulary.com - The Isaac's Gang.

# Cold War Fighter Jet Collision Over Guildford

From Richard Bond full version in Guildford Dragon.[1] Published 24 January 2013 updated 2 July 2023.

On Monday 5th May 1952 a formation of US Air Force jet fighters acting as "enemy" bombers were being attacked by RAF jet fighters as part of a joint exercise. When two of the jets collided at 24,000 feet to the north-east of Guildford, the town narrowly escaped disaster.

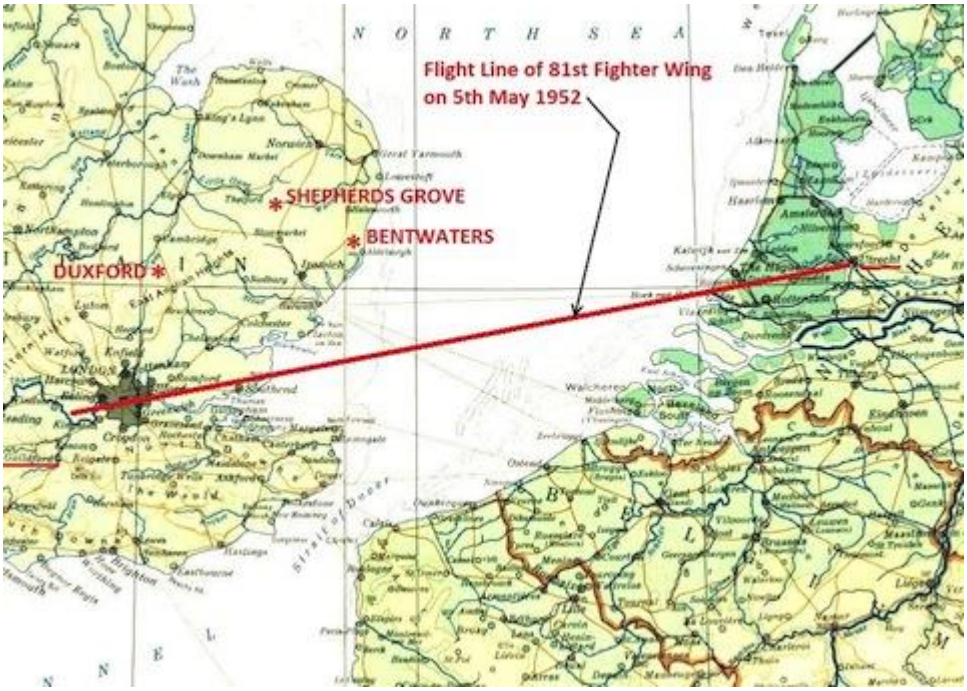
The American aircraft were 32 North American F86A Sabre single seat fighters of the 81st Fighter Interception Wing (FIW) based at RAF Shepherds Grove nine miles north-east of Bury St. Edmunds and at RAF Bentwaters, ten miles east-north-east of Ipswich, both in Suffolk.

The USAF Sabres were sent to the UK in late summer of 1951 to be under the control of RAF No.11 Group, Fighter Command in defence of south-east England at a time of heightened east west tension caused by the Korean War. The F86A was the first swept wing jet in operational allied service and was the only allied aircraft capable of countering the recently introduced Russian Mig 15 fighter jet.

The 81stWing was comprised of the 91st, 92nd and 116th Fighter Interceptor Squadrons (FIS).

On the 5th May 1952 the 81st FIW was briefed to fly to Utrecht in Holland and then back across the North Sea acting as Soviet bombers with their target being London. They were to fly at 25,000 ft. at a speed of Mach 0.6 (approx. 418 mph at 24,000ft).

[1] https://guildford-dragon.com/cold-war-fighter-jet-collision-over-guildford/




The 92nd FIS with twelve aircraft was to lead with three flights in a 'Vee' formation. Each flight of four aircraft was to fly in a diamond pattern with 200ft between aircraft and 500 to 1000ft between flights.

The 116th's twelve aircraft were to fly in the same pattern to the right and lower than the 92nd. The 91st, with just eight aircraft, were to fly a similar formation to left and higher than the 92nd.

Once the Squadrons had rendezvoused over Holland, the commander of the 92nd Lt. Col. James H. Carlyle led the whole formation as Red flight leader. Behind and to his left was Capt. Milton Gray Whitford leading the second four aircraft flight of the 92nd as "Bouncing White Leader" (White 1).

Whitford was an experienced airman having acting as a co-pilot on five bombing raids over France, Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1945. This was with the 427th Bombardment Squadron of the 303rd Bombardment Group USAAF flying B17 Flying Fortresses from RAF Molesworth, Cambridgeshire.

Whitford and his flight took off from Shepherds Grove at 15:30hrs. His F86A Sabre was serial number 49-1311.

Having met over Utrecht the large formation of F86A Sabres was forced to fly at 30,000 ft. because of a layer of cloud at 25,000 ft. As this dispersed they gradually descended to their briefed height.

At RAF Duxford in Cambridgeshire, No.64 Squadron, part of the Duxford Wing with No.65 Squadron, were scrambled to intercept the incoming "bomber attack". With three other Wings, the RAF fighters climbed to carry out attacks on the intruders as part of a Ground Controlled

Interception (GCI) exercise. All the fighters were single seat Mk.F8 Gloster Meteor twin engine jet fighters.

Leading No.64 Squadron was their commander Squadron Leader Peter Douglas 'Tommy' Thompson. He qualified as a pilot in August 1940 and took part in the Battle of Britain where he shot down three enemy aircraft. He flew in the defence of Malta and then in North Africa, Italy and North West Europe until the end of the war.

**Peter Thompson in Spitfire XVI in late 1950s.**

He took off at 15:55 from Duxford leading three pairs of Meteors. His aircraft was serial number WE929 with the aircraft code letter 'H'. Thompson's wingman was Flight Lieutenant Jackson.

Approximately halfway across the southern North Sea, about forty Meteors intercepted and started making attacking passes on the American formation. The Sabre pilots described the attacking Meteors as swarming all over them in repeated attacks which continued all the way to the Sabre's target of London.

Near Heathrow airport, Lt. Col. Carlyle ordered the formation of Sabres to make a right turn to the north to start their return to their bases.

Capt. Whitford dropped his flight down and entered a gentle bank to the right. As he did so he looked around and saw two Meteors coming in from his 5 o'clock position. It seemed to him that they would have seen him so he turned back to watch his leader and continue the turn. A moment later out of the corner of his eye he saw two Meteors almost directly above and overtaking him. They were also in a right bank so that the bellies of their aircraft were toward him making it impossible for their pilots to see him.

They were so close that he knew they were going to collide. He later recalled “I swear that the wings stretched from one side of the horizon to the other”. Realising that the collision was now inevitable he pushed his microphone button and yelled “Look out” for the benefit of the rest of his flight. At the same time he ducked his head down into the cockpit. The time was 16.30hrs

At that moment the tail of the lead Meteor hit and removed the nose and canopy of the Sabre which immediately caught fire. Whitford felt a sudden blow which pushed his head down further. His helmet, which was ripped off by the airflow after the collision, when later recovered, had a split up the rear of it. At the same time he lost his oxygen mask. The violence of the collision seemed to him as if it was head-on. He heard metal scraping and tearing and was finally left sitting in the remains of his now frontless cockpit at a speed of over 400mph at 24,000ft.

Knowing that he quickly had to escape, he reached down and felt for his safety belt which he had to hunt for in a fraction of a second. Finding and releasing it, the airflow just sucked him out without hitting anything. He was now out in clear air.

Having past over so many open fields Whitford now looked up as he neared the ground at 300 to 500 feet to find that he was descending right into the centre of the “little town” of Ripley with all its buildings, chimneys, telegraph poles and trees!

As he got lower he climbed up his parachute lines and pulled his feet up to avoid obstacles as they came towards him. He now seemed to be falling very fast and crossing the High Street he narrowly missed hitting some telephone wires.

He was now heading towards Ryde House, a large detached Queen Anne house, on the western side of the High Street. Passing over a six foot fence he rapidly descended vertically behind trees next to the road and the front of Ryde House toward a grass lawn.

With his hands on his parachute risers and with his knees bent ready to roll he hit the ground but instead of rolling ended up falling face forward on the lawn burrowing a little furrow with his nose. He had landed just a few feet from a glass conservatory on the northern side of Ryde House with his parachute hung over the corner of the house itself. He immediately jumped up and tried to walk around. It had been 19 minutes since he had left his aircraft.

The first person to reach Captain Whitford was John Hutson who had been working in the pharmacy of Whites chemist shop in the High Street. He was alerted that something was happening when he saw people outside the shop looking up into the sky. Going out into the street he saw the pilot land in the garden of Ryde House. Still in his white lab coat he rushed across the High Street and up the driveway of the house, which at that time ran directly up to the front of the building (the driveway now goes up the side of the house).

As a scoutmaster and chemist shop worker he had first aid knowledge and proceeded to help the bloodied pilot. With other people Whitford was helped out of his parachute harness and other flying equipment. After saying that he felt fine and that there was nothing much wrong with him he was persuaded to lie down until the ambulance arrived.

The American pilot was then wrapped in blankets and had his face washed to see where he was cut. He had also suffered abrasions to both hands, his left knee and right thigh. Mrs Hole brought him out a large brandy and a cup of tea. After his brandy and while sipping his tea, the ambulance turned up. This was some ten to fifteen minutes after he had landed. Whitford was loaded into the ambulance and taken to the Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford where he was kept in overnight for observation.

**Royal Surrey County Hospital (now Farnham Road Hospital).**

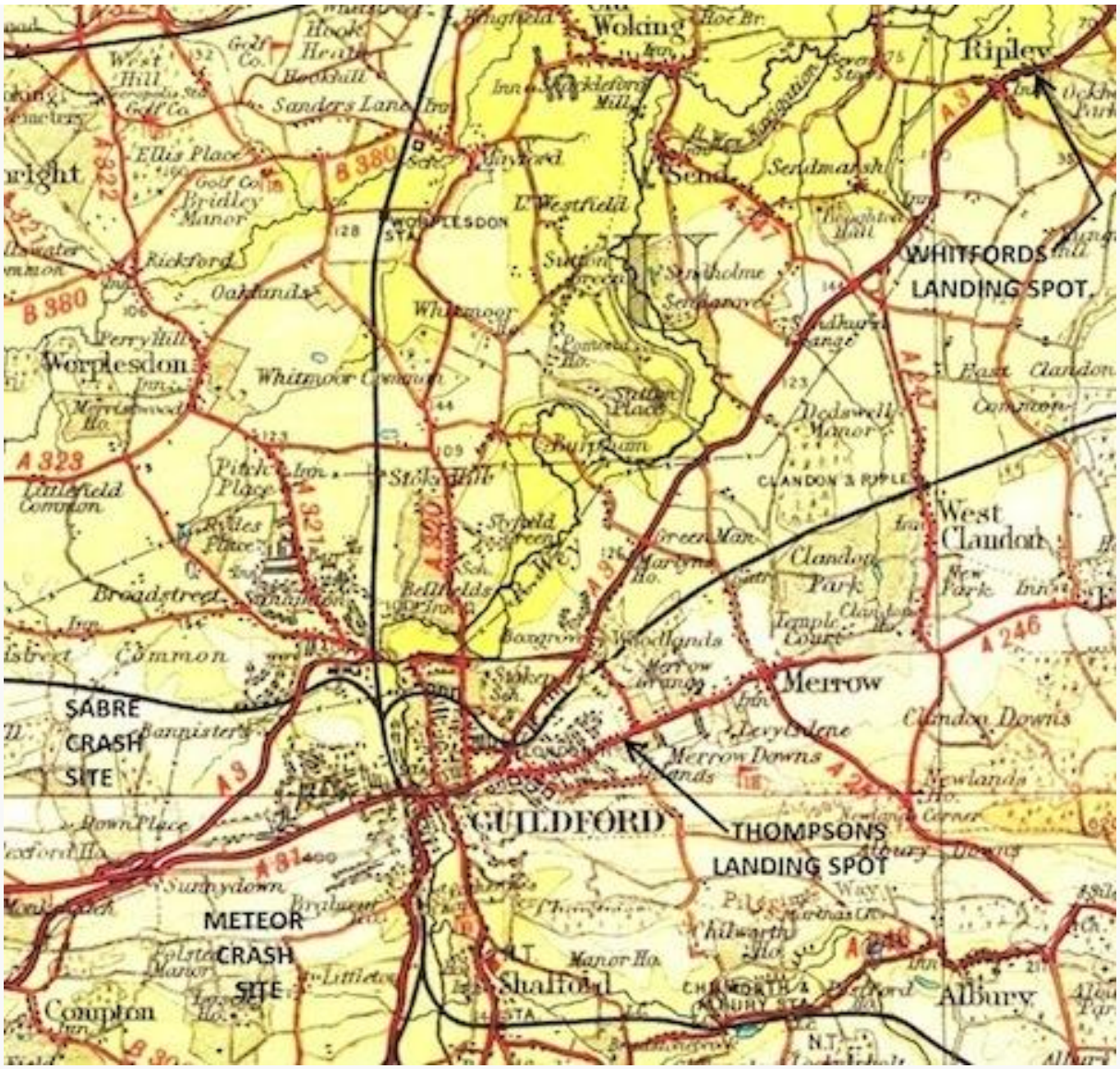
Coming into land he just missing a house and then gently landed on the grass verge of Epsom Road, Merrow, Guildford near to a road called Gateways. Motorists stopped their cars and went to help him together with local residents. However, he was completely uninjured. He told the small crowd that had gathered round him that some other aircraft had crashed into him and taken his tail off. He asked where the nearest RAF airfield was so that he could get an aircraft back to his base.

Not long after this the St. John's ambulance arrived having responded to the numerous 999 calls. It conveyed the uninjured pilot to Guildford police station in Guildford.He executed a left turn away from the burning aircraft but realised that his aircraft had been badly hit. He didn't know how bad the damage was and could feel jolts from the aircraft. After a few seconds he found that he still had good control of the aircraft at stalling speed. Reassured by this he flew back to his base at RAF Shepherds Grove and made an uneventful landing.

Capt. Whitford's burning aircraft came straight down and buried itself in a field of rye half a mile south of Wood Street Village just south of the Guildford to Aldershot railway line on the land of Blackwell Farm. It left a crater approximately 30 feet in diameter with little left to see above ground. As the local fire brigade attempted to tackle the burning aircraft wreckage there were many explosions and the police kept onlookers back. Despite the efforts of the fire brigade the remains continued to burn far into the night. Small parts of both aircraft that became detached during their decent were scattered over a wide area.

The Sabre came down just as children were leaving Wood Street village school. Many of them rushed to see the crashed aircraft but were kept back until police arrived by a lady who rushed out from her house in just bedroom slippers.

Sqdn. Ldr. Thompson's Meteor crashed into trees in East Warren woods on the Loseley House Estate, one and a half miles south-west of Guildford. A dense pall of smoke rose above the trees and police cordoned off the area. One of the wings came down in a field on the southern slope of the Hog's Back the other on an area of sand east of the ruined St. Catherine's chapel. Part of a fuel tank from the Meteor damaged the roof of a house in Pewley Way half a mile east south-east of Guildford.




Rob Long lived on a hill in Park Barn Drive half a mile east of the Sabre crash site. His father, who was on duty with the Royal Observer Corp at the post on the Hogs Back, telephoned home to his mother. He said to let Rob know that there was an RAF/USAF exercise taking place and to look out for it.

Outside Rob and his friends were just able to make out the formation at high altitude. They saw a puff of smoke appear within the formation which was the collision. Soon debris was falling and fluttering down all over the area. They briefly caught a glimpse of the Sabre, which seemed to still be under full power, before their view of the ground was blocked by a hedge and they felt a huge thump as it buried itself into the ground.

They jumped on their push bikes and cycled towards Wood Street. Nearing the location of the crash they were stopped from proceeding by the police. Skirting around from this they observed the crash site from other vantage points.

In the next few days the USAF and the RAF arrived to recover the wreckage of their respective aircraft. Rob found that the USAF posted a rigid guard around the crash allowing no one near especially not young boys. At the Meteor crash site, the RAF airmen were somewhat more laid back. As they sat around brewing up a pot of tea the boys were told they could go and look at the Meteor wreckage but not to touch anything.

David Bailey visited the Sabre crash site after the USAF had left and says that there were numerous schoolboys collecting small bits of the aircraft from the field.

Terry Flack saw the crash site of the Sabre and says that it just left a massive hole in the ground. On a school cross country run the next day the route took them on the south side of the Hog's Back where he saw the wing of the Meteor lying in the field and the wreckage in the trees. He later managed to find a small pneumatic valve from the Sabre which he still has.

At the Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford, Captain Whitford was checked over, cleaned up and put on a ward with other local patients. He was visited by John Hutson from Ripley. Later he was sitting chatting to the other patients when a nurse came in and said he really ought to get some rest. Shortly after a doctor came in and said that he needed to give him an injection. Whitford didn't ask what it was for and didn't think further about it.

On the 8th May 1952 the USAF held an Accident Inquiry (Board of Officers) in the Wing Operations Room at RAF Duxford. All the US and RAF pilots involved in the incident or nearby gave evidence. The findings were that the Meteor pilot had not kept an adequate view of all the aircraft in the US formation.

Recommendations were made that simulated "bomber" formations be kept to just twelve aircraft with greater distances between flights and attacking aircraft to make attacks in smaller flights to reach their target aircraft in waves rather than a mass formation.

The cost of the written off Sabre was quoted in the report as $185,105.00.

After the inquiry Milton Whitford met Peter Thompson who took him to the Duxford officer's mess for a couple of drinks. Milton later told his family that Thompson was "a hell of a nice guy and I liked him a lot".

A later RAF Court of Inquiry came to a different conclusion and found that the cause of the accident was due to the formation of Sabres "carried out almost a crossover turn which they

were not expected to do". It concluded that neither of the pilots could "be considered blameworthy".

The collision seems to have been regarded by both air forces as something like a modern day motor racing incident, where things unfortunately occur for a split second in the heat of the moment. As Milton Whitford later remarked: "It was not that uncommon for planes to come together [then]. Every month you would hear of someone being lost."

# William (Billy) Beacher Chief Constable Reigate Borough Police and Superintendent Surrey Constabulary

Several press cuttings and copy Reigate Borough Police documents have recently come to light from Mr. Beacher's family. PC Keen who featured in last month's History, was after the war, to become Mr. Beacher's son in law.

**A soldier before joining West Sussex Constabulary 1913-1931**
**Served First World War Western Front**

**Chief Constable of the Borough then a superintendent post amalgamation**

# Remember this?

**Just celebrated his eightieth birthday is Mr. Billy Beacher, whose flamboyant signature and writing style is known to many police officers in the county.**

Although best remembered as Chief Constable of Reigate for twelve years, he was in the former West Sussex force from 1913 to 1931. But Mr. Beacher's association with the Force went back to the day in 1890 when he was born at Steyning Police Station, where his father was the Sergeant.

When he left school, William Henry Beacher (known always as Billy) joined the postal service as a messenger boy, but seeing little prospect of advancement he left to join the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in 1907. He left in 1913 to join the Police Service, but in August, 1914, found himself back in the Light Infantry and posted to the Western Front. For his actions as one of the first "Old Contemptibles," he was awarded the Mons Star.

## Rejoined

The war over, he rejoined the Police as an Instructor at Horsham, being promoted to Sergeant the following year. He was later posted to Worthing and in November, 1921, was promoted to Inspector and in 1922 he was promoted to Superintendent at Horsham. He was then 29 years old, and was thought to be the youngest superintendent in the country.

In 1931 he was appointed the Chief Constable of Reigate, an office which he held until the Borough's amalgamation with the Surrey force in 1943. Mr. Beacher was awarded the K.P.M. in 1942.

Mr. Beacher was well known not only for his very forward-thinking policing but for his services to the sport of tug of war. He was the founder-Chairman of the Tug of War Association and was presented with the Association's Award of Merit in recognition of over 50 years' service to the sport. Under his coaching, several Police teams won high honours, including members of both the former East and West Sussex forces.

## Interview

In a recent interview, Mr. Beacher said that the object of any police work was to prevent crime, not to catch the criminal after he had committed the act. "When we can wipe out both the need for crime and the environment which breeds crime, then we can be satisfied that we have done the job to the best of our ability. Until then we must keep on trying."

One of Mr. Beacher's early innovations was to issue a card entitled "Suggestions to Assist Local Police." This contained advice to the public on how they might help their police force by reporting suspicious persons and movements to the police!

"The prestige of a police force is tremendously important. People must look up to their local policemen and admire them. There must never be any suggestion that they are in any way lacking. If there is one thing I can't stand it is a slovenly policeman," he said.

## Reverted

When Reigate Borough Force merged into Surrey, it's Chief Constable reverted to the rank of Superintendent and remained in the town until his retirement in 1951. He continued as a tug-of-war judge until 1959 but he is now less active due to arthritis in his hip, and following the death of his wife, lives alone in Ashington, near Pulborough.

Mr. Beacher's father died in 1962 aged 99 years, and between father and son they had nearly 80 years' police service.

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Schoolteacher: "Who can tell me why Robin Hood always robbed the rich?"

Young wag: "Because the poor didn't have any money."

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# Chief

**The Chief Constable and M**
**Mr. Williams receiv**

**Patrol the newspaper of the Sussex Constabulary December 1970**

## Billy—a good 'copper'

With the passing of Billy Beacher goes surely the last of the old-time country "coppers" who was, and had to be his own "citizens' advice bureau".

Each day he had to be friend, adviser, teacher, admonisher, nurse, vet—indeed, everything that happened in the Sussex countryside, he was expected to know about.

Billy came through a hard school to reach the top of his profession and was a success all the way.

An example of his wisdom in dealing with difficult situations occurred in 1926 when the General Strike was at its worst. Many of his men had been drafted to the mining areas, and if trouble had broken out locally, it is doubtful if even he could have dealt with it.

Billy's way was to meet the strike committee, to whom he explained his problem and his solution. He told them he was making them responsible to see that the pickets did their job properly and that no incidents were allowed to develop. That way, he told them, you will be helping me maintain good order here. And there was no trouble.

That same year, Billy Beacher, with Sergeants Gee and Collins, local railwaymen and others, all members of the Ambulance Association, founded the Horsham division of the St. John Ambulance Brigade and organised a 24-hours-a-day service in the town for the first time. All concerned were volunteers.

If I might end on a personal note to show another side of Billy's nature, when I was in my teens, my pals and I often played cricket opposite Billy's house and I recall one day when I hit a [illegible] six, which unfortunately for me, went through the window of his sitting room.

I didn't know which was worse, the loss of the ball, or the damage I'd done. Billy as usual solved both problems. He gave the ball back with a lecture on how to hold the bat properly, and a bill for 4s. 6d. for repairs to the window.

He was interested in the Blue Star Harriers, football, and tug of war and was active in all of them. I would describe him as a man's man, with a woman's understanding.

FRANK G. HOLMES
President,
St. John Ambulance
28 Lynwood Court,
Horsham.

# 'One-way Billy' dies

**The man who introduced one-way traffic to Horsham's Carfax and West Street is dead.**

Police superintendent in Horsham from 1922 to 1931, Mr. William Henry Beacher was found dead at his home in Hillcrest Drive, Ashington, on Saturday by a neighbour.

The funeral service is being held in Horsham Parish Church on Monday, followed by private interment.

"One-way Billy" as he became known, moved from the town in 1931 to become Chief Constable of Reigate and he was the first policeman in Surrey to have a radio transmitter installed in his car.

It was while in Surrey that he formed the Special Regular Force and the Special Constable Aircraft Section.

### Local title

But it was as the man responsible for introducing the one-way traffic system that he was best known in Horsham.

"Beacher's Brook" was a local title for the system, which later became known as "Barker's Bite" when his successor as local superintendent, Mr. Arthur Barker, changed the traffic flow.

For well over half a century Billy Beacher took a keen interest in tug-of-war and in November 1966 he received the Amateur Athletic Association's Tug-of-War Association award of merit. Founder - chairman of the association, he was only the fourth person to receive the award.

One-time AAA chief judge at the White City, Billy was seen at his home on Saturday morning. Soon afterwards, his neighbour Mrs. Ada Fielder found him dead in his bungalow.

A post-mortem examination revealed that Billy had died from natural causes, so there will not be an inquest.

# *Tribute to ex-police chief*

THE FUNERAL of the former Chief Constable of the old Reigate police force, Mr William Henry Beacher, took place at Horsham Parish Church.

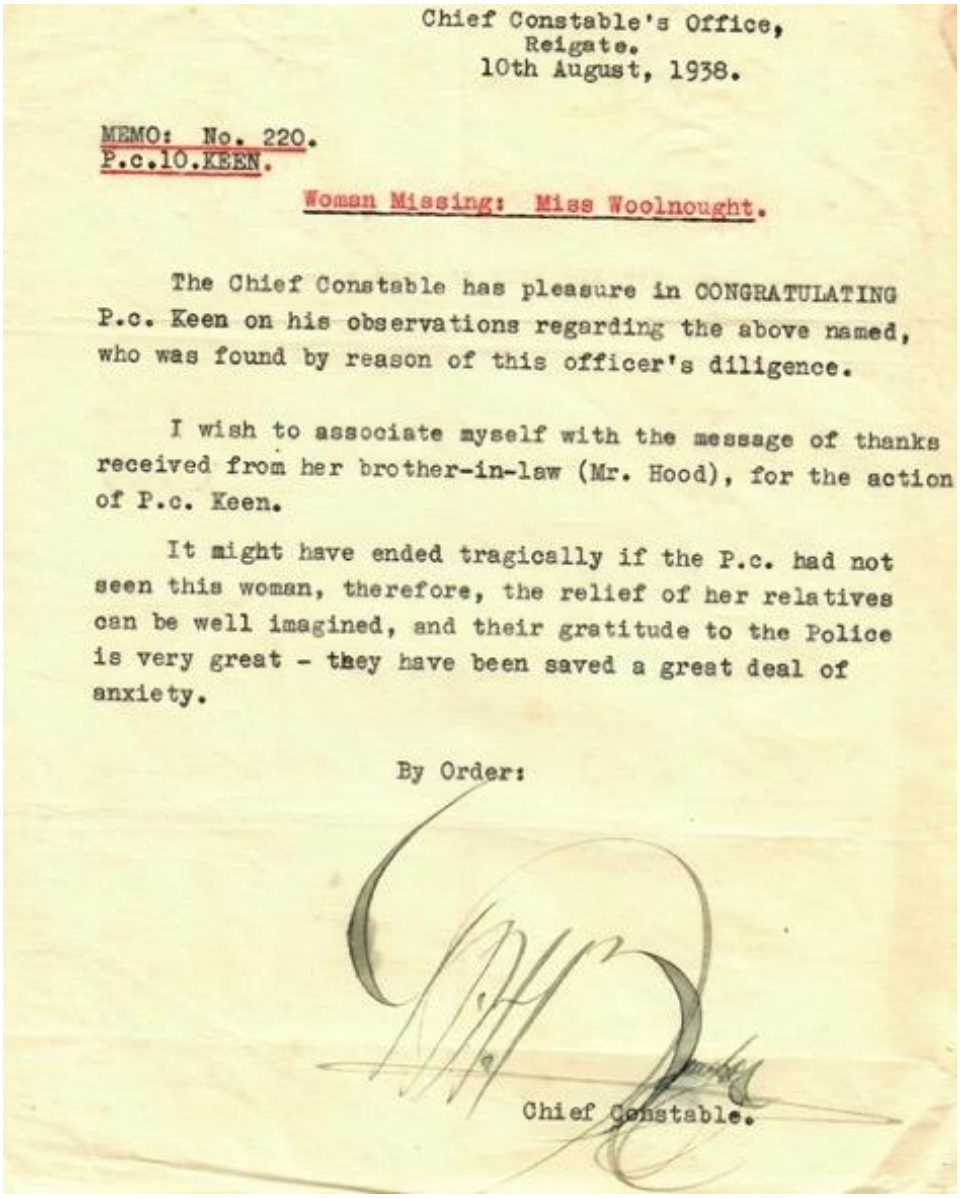
Mr Beacher was 84. He became chief constable in 1931. He became superintendent of the Reigate force in 1943, and retired in 1951.

At the funeral there were representatives from many of the public services.

Constable of Surrey, Mr Peter Matthews, attended, as well as the Assistant Chief Constable of Sussex constabulary. Also present were many ex-policemen from the old police force, and members of the Fire Service and the St John's Ambulance Brigade.

Relatives and friends of the late Mr Beacher increased the number of the congregation to 150.

**Mr. Beacher's medals**



Chief Constable's Office,
Reigate.
10th August, 1938.

MEMO: No. 220.
P.c.10.KEEN.

Woman Missing: Miss Woolnought.

The Chief Constable has pleasure in CONGRATULATING P.c. Keen on his observations regarding the above named, who was found by reason of this officer's diligence.

I wish to associate myself with the message of thanks received from her brother-in-law (Mr. Hood), for the action of P.c. Keen.

It might have ended tragically if the P.c. had not seen this woman, therefore, the relief of her relatives can be well imagined, and their gratitude to the Police is very great - they have been saved a great deal of anxiety.

By Order:

Chief Constable.

**10 August 1938 Commendation**

R E I G A T E  BOROUGH  P O L I C E.

Chief Constable's Office,
REIGATE,
12th June, 1936.

GENERAL ORDER: No. 468.

STOLEN MOTOR CAR. ARREST AT REIGATE on 2nd June, 1936.

With reference to the above and two men:

John L O R D A M

a n d  Frederick Chas. B R O W N

who were arrested for larceny of a motor car from the "A" Div. District of the Metropolitan Police; SPECIAL MENTION must be made of the new Probationer:

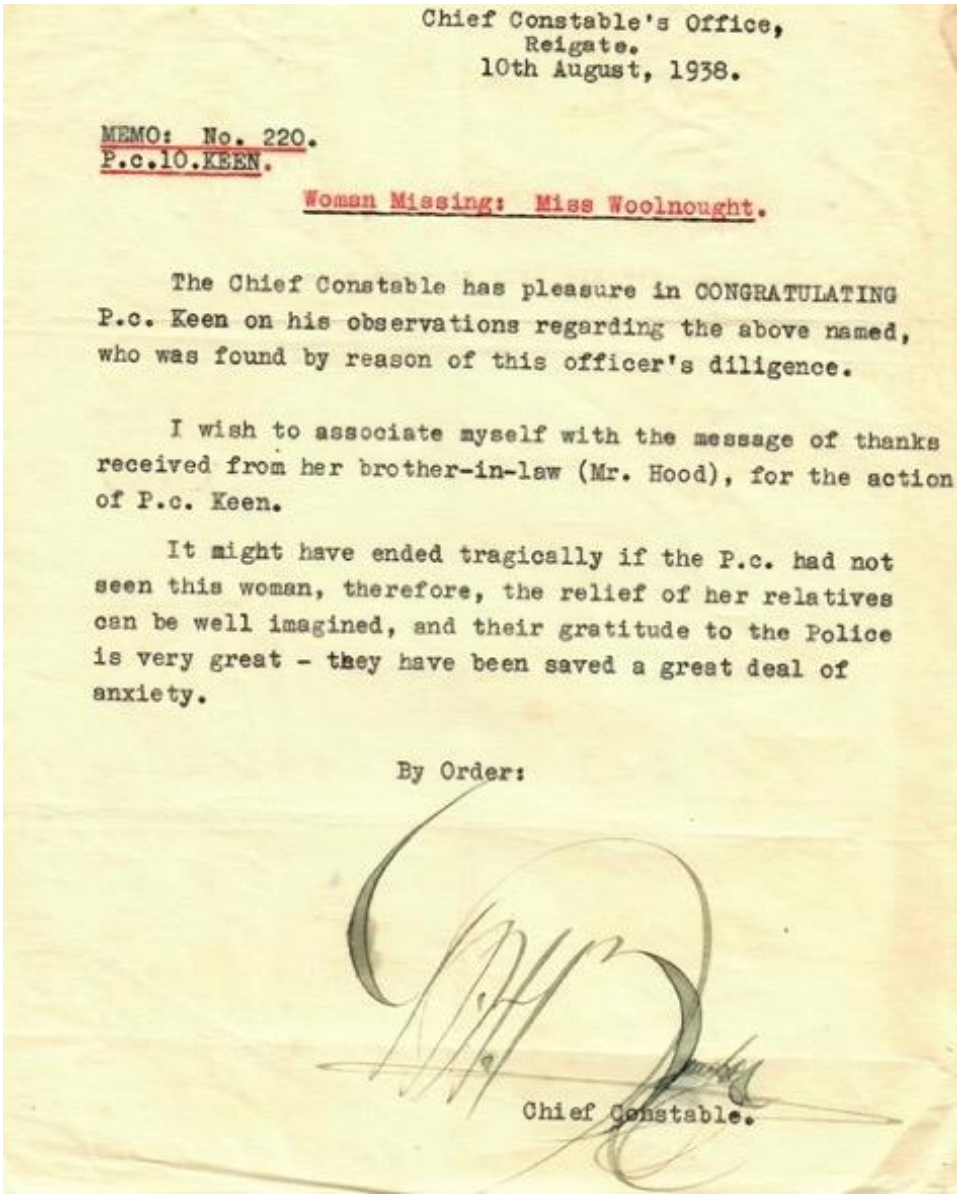
P.C. 10. C. KEEN.

for his observations and activity.

It was a very nice piece of work for a young officer with only two tours of duty to his career; to effect such an arrest for another Force is very creditable.

The Chief Constable has read with interest of the activities of all officers concerned and compliments the Reigate Division on their co-operation and good work throughout. It was definitely the speedy communication and quick work which brought about the arrest of both men, without delay, and the Chief Constable is very pleased to issue this GENERAL ORDER. The whole thing was the outcome of very efficient police work.

BY ORDER OF:



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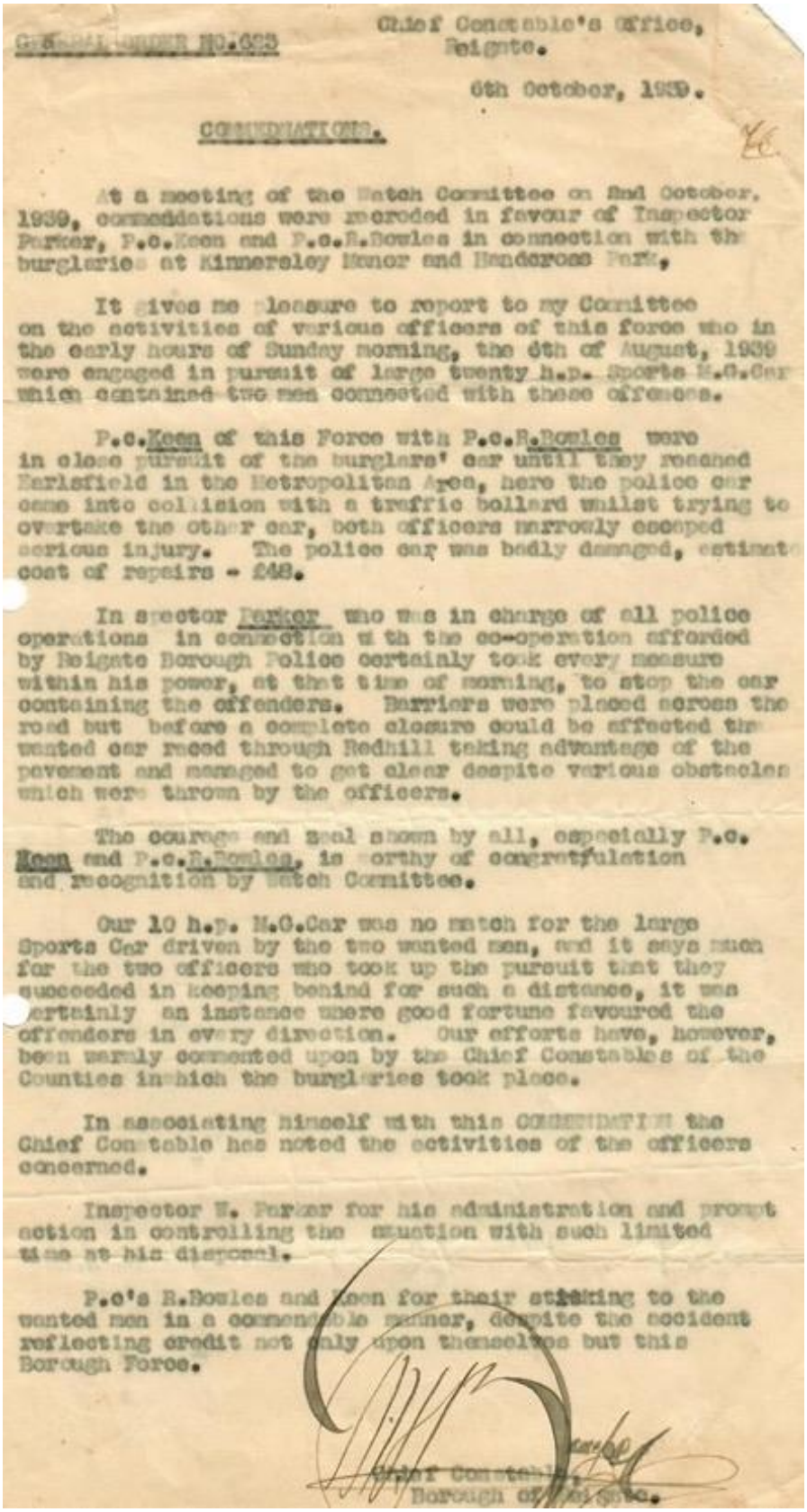

Chief Constable's Office,
Reigate.

6th October, 1939.

COMMENDATIONS.

At a meeting of the Watch Committee on 2nd October, 1939, commendations were recorded in favour of Inspector Parker, P.C. Keen and P.C. R. Bowles in connection with the burglaries at Kinnersley Manor and Henderons Park.

It gives me pleasure to report to my Committee on the activities of various officers of this force who in the early hours of Sunday morning, the 6th of August, 1939 were engaged in pursuit of large twenty h.p. Sports M.G. Car which contained two men connected with these offences.

P.C. Keen of this Force with P.C. R. Bowles were in close pursuit of the burglars' car until they reached Earlsfield in the Metropolitan Area, here the police car came into collision with a traffic bollard whilst trying to overtake the other car, both officers narrowly escaped serious injury. The police car was badly damaged, estimated cost of repairs - £48.

Inspector Parker who was in charge of all police operations in connection with the co-operation afforded by Reigate Borough Police certainly took every measure within his power, at that time of morning, to stop the car containing the offenders. Barriers were placed across the road but before a complete closure could be effected the wanted car raced through Redhill taking advantage of the pavement and managed to get clear despite various obstacles which were thrown by the officers.

The courage and zeal shown by all, especially P.C. Keen and P.C. R. Bowles, is worthy of congratulation and recognition by Watch Committee.

Our 10 h.p. M.G. Car was no match for the large Sports Car driven by the two wanted men, and it says much for the two officers who took up the pursuit that they succeeded in keeping behind for such a distance, it was certainly an instance where good fortune favoured the offenders in every direction. Our efforts have, however, been warmly commented upon by the Chief Constables of the Counties in which the burglaries took place.

In associating himself with this COMMENDATION the Chief Constable has noted the activities of the officers concerned.

Inspector W. Parker for his administration and prompt action in controlling the situation with such limited time at his disposal.

P.C's R. Bowles and Keen for their steering to the wanted men in a commendable manner, despite the accident reflecting credit not only upon themselves but this Borough Force.

Chief Constable,
Borough of Reigate.

**6 October 1939 Commendation**

**Geoff Todd:** The item about former Reigate Borough officer Colin Keen in the last edition, and mention of his marriage to his former chief constable's daughter brought back

memories. Former Borough CC Bill Beacher was the rep for Friary Meux Brewery in the mid to late 1950s, a time when many of Surrey' Constabulary's stations had social clubs. He would be a regular visitor to Oxted, which had a club, stopping for a drink, usually tea or coffee, while soliciting any orders. He was always cheerful. Colin and his wife, I noticed, were the publicans at The Red Lion, Cowfold, West Sussex, in December 1959. Was it a Friary pub by any coincidence? Mention of social clubs at stations will bring back memories to many of your readers. In the older stations they were squeezed in but when new ones were built, they were an important feature of the building. It kept the police family together and provided a facility for single officers in the Section Houses.

## Murder on a dark and isolated road in 1834[2]

Move away from believing all was milk and honey; these were dangerous times, so much so that a carter from Bletchingly who was murdered at Banstead in 1834 was "in the habit of driving with one hand holding the reins, while holding a loaded pistol in the other, keeping another loaded pistol in reserve." And still he was murdered.

In late 1833 and early 1834 there had been a spate of daring and violent highway robberies which causes considerable alarm locally. The attacks culminated in the death in February 1834 of John Richardson who was returning to his home in Bletchingly from the corn market in Epsom. A large reward was offered for information of the murderers which led to upwards of 30 people, from all over London and the South East of England, being taken into custody and questioned.[3]

[2] Much of this material comes from the Epsom and Ewell History Explorer
[3] https://eehe.org.uk/?p=25584

This case explicitly places responsibility for the detection of crime with the magistrates who acted as "investigation magistrates" similar to the Napoleonic system of France where detectives act under the guidance of the legally trained magistrate. The costs of cases were considerable and met by the magistrates which in many cases no doubt influenced their course of action. The high level of interest and the spread of knowledge of the murder from Banstead to Bedfont amongst probably non-newspaper readers is an indication that this type of random murder was unusual although the carrying of firearms does indicate a high level of threat of attack. There was no forensic, no means of ascertaining if the blood on the smock was even human, no way of obtaining evidence from the abandoned gun or from the victim's vehicle. The examination of the suspects was in an office and not a court and it does seem that they were not charged with murder which would most likely have been the next stage if the magistrates were convinced there was a case to answer. There was no local means of investigation and immediately a Runner was deployed by the Home Office and later the Metropolitan Police became involved. The constables from Surrey were just parish men, possibly tradesmen, who were taking their turn at the job, and their involvement appears to have been very limited.

**Early Metropolitan Police PC Bow Street PC Sole**

On the 26 February 1834 at just after 9am Mr Richardson a carter started on his way from Bletchingly in east Surrey for Epsom market. After a few miles, at the Tadworth Gate tollbar whilst paying his bill he pointed out to the keeper a man he had just passed on the road some two hundred yards away. "See! Look! There he is!" Richardson explained that he did not like the appearance of the man, for while the wind was blowing, he saw the shape of a horse pistol under his frock. "You keep your eye on him, for I am sure he is up to no good."

At 6.30pm, business done, friendships renewed in the tavern, Mr Richardson left for home. Two hours later between eight and nine o'clock the town of Epsom and the surrounding villages were thrown into the greatest terror and alarm by the report that Mr Richardson had been found by the roadside murdered. A Mr West another carrier on approaching the junction of the Ewell and Banstead roads heard the report of two pistols and heard someone groaning. West, about

two hundred yards away, got down from his cart and headed towards the groans seeing two men who altered their course on seeing him, towards Ewell. West then found Richardson, dead. Mr West had a companion, Bachelor, decided to immediately go after the two men who had gone off to Ewell but reconsidered, as it would mean leaving their cart and its cargo. They went to a large house close by and grooms and ostlers rode off spreading the alarm across the countryside. Bellringers on their way home, made aware of the incident recalled seeing two men of similar description running fast and out of breath from where Bachelor had seen them. A further witness came forward. He had seen Mr Richardson just before he was killed and just after, saw two men in light coloured frocks that unnerved him so much he set off at a gallop. As he rode away, he thought he heard the sound of two pistols but not being quite sure he rode on.

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The magistrates forwarded the following morning information about the murder to the Home Secretary. He passed it to the chief magistrate, Sir Frederick Roe, of the Public Office, Bow Street. It should be remembered that at this time the Metropolitan Police had been formed for about five years and they were still reliant on the Bow Street Runners to investigate serious crime. Henry Goddard a very experience Runner happened to be at Bow Street and the chief magistrate "immediately directed me to proceed without delay to the scene, telling me to use all energy and spare no expense to discover the murderers; and he added that as it is probable that in the course of the enquiry I would have to contend with desperate characters, I was not to forget to go armed with a brace of loaded pistols."[4]

Goddard went to Epsom where he met with one of the local magistrates at the offices of local solicitors who then accompanied him to the scene of the murder, following the track of the two men to Leatherhead where enquiries were made until long past 1am. "For several days and nights Goddard was making enquiries in surrounding towns and villages "searching the low slums, the lodging houses, the "Tom and Jerry's" and other places resorted to by tramps and suspicious characters. A suspect named Cheesley, a suspicious and desperate man from Merstham became prominent, known to wander around at night returning home as the labourers went out. When interviewed Cheesley was evasive and was arrested and handed to the custody of a constable (parish, unpaid). There was no evidence and he was released. Sam Cottrell of Bethnal Green was arrested by one of the principal officers of Bow Street and brought for examination by the magistrates at Epsom. One of the bench proposed that the suspect should

[4] " Memoirs of a Bow Street Runner" Henry Goddard Museum Press 1953 page 78

dress in a Billycock and short white frock so the witness Mr. West might see him and the bell ringers who failed to identify him. The man was discharged and his expenses met.[5]

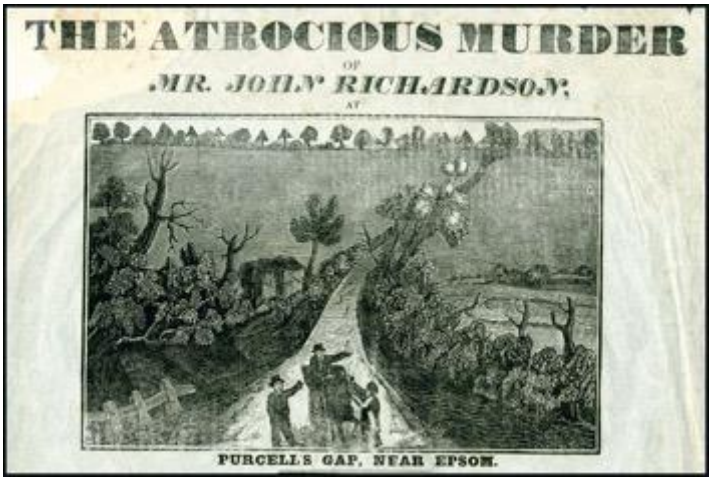
**Bow Street officer Henry Goddard – later Chief Constable Northamptonshire**

**Bow Street Court and police station**

The inquest was held at the Surrey Yeoman at Banstead where two women witnesses came forward with a gun they had found on the track the men had run along. The victim thought to have been robbed of up to thirty pounds, owned the pistol. The inquest adjudged there had been a murder and it was revealed that Mr Richardson had not long before been instrumental in the capture of two notorious characters that were tried for highway robbery at the Surrey Assizes. The trail went cold until ten days after the crime the magistrates received an anonymous letter stating that two brothers of notorious bad character John and Harry Childs of West Bedfont had changed their way of life since the murder. The writer was so convinced of their guilt that he promised to appear before the magistrates once the men were in custody. Goddard was tasked to apprehend the men and he asked for a warrant, which was declined so off he went in a four-wheel chaise and two local parish constables. Harry Childs was soon found and asked if he knew of the murder of Mr Richardson and he agreed he did. When asked where he was on

[5] " Memoirs of a Bow Street Runner" Henry Goddard Museum Press 1953 page 79

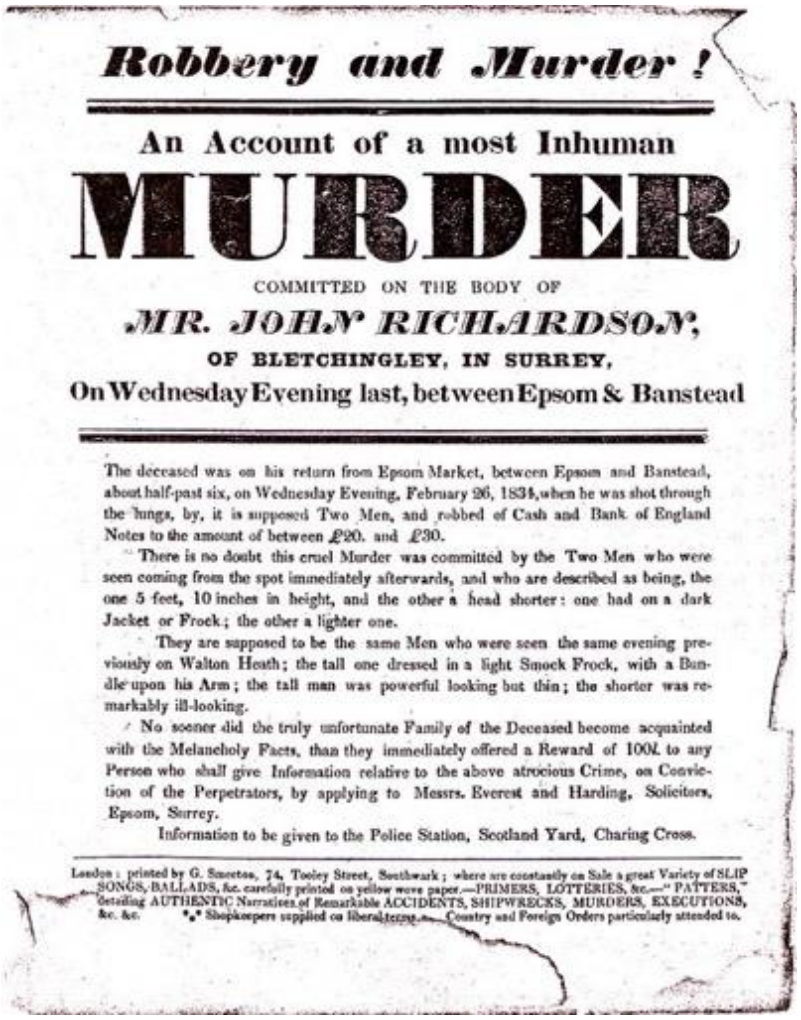
the night he said at home in the village. Goddard then intended to take Harry and his brother John who was close by voluntarily to the magistrates. The men explained they had a load for Covent Garden that would be wasted if they went to Epsom now but the following day, they would be happy to go to Bow Street to which proposal Goddard agreed. The following day the men were detained and interviewed but again there was no evidence to support the anonymous letters. The letter writer continued to allege involvement of the men and sent copies to the commissioners at Scotland Yard. A warrant was issued for the arrest of the brothers and entrusted to Inspectors Grossmith (a former Runner who had joined the police in the rank of sergeant) and Barfoot of the B Division of the Metropolitan Police for the purpose of being properly executed but the men had disappeared.[6] Information came in and Inspector Marchant and Sergeant Reynolds of the Metropolitan Police went to West Bedfont and arrested both men taking them to Epsom.




At this time a rather strange turn of events. Inspectors Grossmith and Barfoot stated that on the afternoon of the 26 February the day after the murder as they were returning towards town from Reigate, within a mile and half of Bletchingly they saw two men in a lane, which were considered suspicious enough to be spoken to. When they were informed of the murder the following day, they were satisfied the men in the lane were the murderers and when the Child brothers were taken into custody, they were considered to be the same men.[7]

After examination by the magistrates the men were remanded overnight whilst further enquiries were made into the answers given by the men. At 9am the following morning as the court gathered the two police officers told the magistrates that upon enquiry, they found the alibi given by the two men to be totally false. The Magistrates upon being satisfied the truth had not been revealed remanded the men for further examination on Saturday and they were taken to Horsemonger Lane Goal. It was in expectation that the writer of the anonymous letters would redeem his pledge and come forward. [8]

[6] " Memoirs of a Bow Street Runner" Henry Goddard Museum Press 1953 page 83
[7] " Memoirs of a Bow Street Runner" Henry Goddard Museum Press 1953 page 84
[8] " Memoirs of a Bow Street Runner" Henry Goddard Museum Press 1953 page 85



**Robbery and Murder!**

An Account of a most Inhuman

# MURDER

COMMITTED ON THE BODY OF

**MR. JOHN RICHARDSON,**

**OF BLETCHINGLEY, IN SURREY,**

**On Wednesday Evening last, between Epsom & Banstead**

The deceased was on his return from Epsom Market, between Epsom and Banstead, about half-past six, on Wednesday Evening, February 26, 1834, when he was shot through the lungs, by, it is supposed Two Men, and robbed of Cash and Bank of England Notes to the amount of between £20. and £30.

There is no doubt this cruel Murder was committed by the Two Men who were seen coming from the spot immediately afterwards, and who are described as being, the one 5 feet, 10 inches in height, and the other a head shorter: one had on a dark Jacket or Frock; the other a lighter one.

They are supposed to be the same Men who were seen the same evening previously on Walton Heath; the tall one dressed in a light Smock Frock, with a Bundle upon his Arm; the tall man was powerful looking but thin; the shorter was remarkably ill-looking.

No sooner did the truly unfortunate Family of the Deceased become acquainted with the Melancholy Facts, than they immediately offered a Reward of 100*l.* to any Person who shall give Information relative to the above atrocious Crime, on Conviction of the Perpetrators, by applying to Messrs. Everest and Harding, Solicitors, Epsom, Surrey.

Information to be given to the Police Station, Scotland Yard, Charing Cross.

London: printed by G. Smeeton, 74, Tooley Street, Southwark; where are constantly on Sale a great Variety of SLIP SONGS, BALLADS, &c. carefully printed on yellow wove paper,—PRIMERS, LOTTERIES, &c.—" PATTERS," detailing AUTHENTIC Narratives of Remarkable ACCIDENTS, SHIPWRECKS, MURDERS, EXECUTIONS, &c. &c. *** Shopkeepers supplied on liberal terms.—Country and Foreign Orders particularly attended to.

Meanwhile help was being sought from the Home Office. Local magistrates entered into correspondence with the Home Secretary.

**Nork near Epsom**
**27 Feb 1834**

**To Lord Melbourne**
**Home Secretary**

My Lord

I think it my duty to inform your Lordship that a shocking murder was committed within half a mile of this house yesterday between six and seven o'clock in the evening, the particulars of which in as much detailed in the enclosed handbill as they could be in any account that I could give, and it must be submitted to your Lordship whether any further reward shall be offered or any other step taken by Government: whatever you think best I am sure will be done.

I can't help suspecting this murder has been committed by the same two men who in the month of September last, robbed a gentleman very near the same spot, on a market day also, about the same hour of the day, and who knew that this unfortunate man has been in the habit of frequenting Epsom market for some time past, but this neighbourhood is overrun with vagrants of all descriptions and the magistrates in ---- to know what to do.

I have the honour to be
My Lord

Your Lordships most obedient servant

(Believed) Lord Arden
Written in pencil in the margin (Not 100% certain of transcription)

Baron Tesier called by today at the office - I mention this case about reward (?) and a Borough officer immediately sent down at the expense of the Government.[9]

Written on an attaché frontispiece

Nork Feb 27, 1834 Lord Arden
Murder of Mr John Richardson
Near Epsom
Offer of reward and pardon

In Gazette of February 1828

I think an additional reward of £100 should be offered (initials)

The magistrates should put the law in force against suspects

Note in pencil on next sheet
<u>Anson</u>
Too add reward
<u>Permission for pardon</u>
<u>To be in Gazette Today(?)</u>

[9] HO 64/4

# Latest Particulars

# THE EPSOM MURDER

And Highway Robbery, committed, as supposed to be, by two Ruffians, on Mr. John Richardson, Farmer of Bletchingly, who was robbed, and barbarously and inhumanly murdered about half-past Six o'clock in the evening of Wednesday the 26th of February 1834, on his return home from Epsom Market.

About half-past six o'clock on Wednesday evening, Feb 26at a deliberate murder was committed on the person of Mr. John Richardson steward to John Perkins, Esq., of Bletchingly, Surrey. The unfortunate deceased had come over in the morning from Bletchingly to attend Epsom corn-market. He put up at the King's Head; and he is known in the course of the day to have received a sum of 23l. 3s. of Mr. Stokes, of Ewell. This money consisted of a 10l. and two 5l. Bank of England notes, three sovereigns, and three shillings. Of these notes Mr. Stokes is only enabled to give the number of one, & that is a 5l. note, number 39,583. After the market was over, Mr. Richardson returned to the King's Head, and there dined at the Ordinary, but left soon after to meet a gentleman at the Spread Eagle, with whom however he only took a single glass of wine; and returning thence to the King's Head, he ordered out his gig, and started for Bletchingly about 6 o'clock.

The spot where the foul assassins were lying in wait for him, is about midway between Epsom and Banstead. It is supposed that one of the two men (for that there were two is proved beyond doubt) seized hold of the horse's head, while the other came up to the side of the gig and demanded deceased's money. The deceased always travell'd with loaded pistols, and it is believed he replied to the demand by firing at one or other of the villains, but missed his aim, and that the ruffian by the side of the chaise instantly fired his pistol which unhappily took a fatal effect. That the pistol was fired by the villain who stood on the near side of the chaise is evident from the direction of the ball, it having grazed the left arm and passing sideway through the body missed the heart, but perforated the lungs, and the ball was found lodged against the bladebone of the right shoulder.

## LATEST PARTICULARS.

In the course of the day Charles Cottrell was sent from Union-hall to Epsom, on suspicion of being one of the two men who attacked and murdered Mr. Richardson, the prisoner, who is known to be a desperate fellow, was taken into custody by Mr. Superintendant Dixon of the G division, and two Policemen, at a house in Bradfoot-place, Boston. He made a resistance, and swore they should not take him alive; at the same time rushing towards a table upon which some knives were lying. He was secured: he answers the description of the taller man in the handbill offering the reward; and it was stated that he was one of the paries concerned in the robbery of the clergyman's house in Surrey, a few years back, when the servants were locked up in the coal-cellar. There were marks of blood on the handkerchief found in his possession when taken.

## COPY OF VERSES.

Oh give attention high & low of every degree
And shed a tear when we unfold the Surry
Tragedy. [tread,
Of Thirtell and of Corder we in history do
And scarce can we remember ought this murder to exceed.
CHORUS.
Then high and low attention give, and listen unto me, [tragedy,
While I with sorrow do unfold the Surrey
John Richardson a farmer was, in Bletchingly did dwell,
By every neighbour was esteemed, a man respected well,
A tender father, husband kind, to wife and children too,
Who little thought that fatal morn he'd took his last adieu.
As he to Epsom Market went, two ruffians they espied, [did ride,
And saw with one a blunderbuss as he along
That more he'd parted from his tender children and his wife,
But little did he think they meant to take his precious life.
From Epsom market in his gig, he was returning home, [alone,
To Bletchingly upon a dark and dreary road
On that fatal Wednesday evening at half-past six o'clock, [the spot.
He was overpower'd, fired at, and kill'd upon
His tender wife and children dear expected his return, [did weep and mourn,
But oh when they did hear the news how they
Then from the weeping widows eyes rolled down the briny tear,
Six orphan children by her side, sunk down in deep despair.
May those six orphans dear in God above a father find,
May he dry up the widows tears and soothe her troubled mind,
And when they leave this land of woe where they received their pain,
May they with Christ in heaven above together meet again.
What must these barbarous ruffians feel that shed that precious blood,
Can they one moment think for to escape the eyes of God.
That innocent blood for vengeance cries, and
May we shortly see
These barbarous ruffians pay their lives forfeit on the tree.

The enquiry continued with upwards of thirty men were taken into custody and examined on suspicion of this murder with the whole of the expenses borne by three or four magistrates in the neighbourhood and the valuable assistance of the solicitors Messrs Everest and Harding was given free.

The Morning Advertiser newspaper of April 14, 1834, reported on the continuing examination of the Childs brothers before the magistrates and other gentlemen in the Commission of the Peace. Inspector Grossmith was asked what evidence he had to bring forth in support of the charge, and he replied that he had several witnesses in attendance that saw two suspicious looking persons resembling the prisoners near Epsom on the day of the murder. The toll collector was called and said he had never seen the prisoners before. The prisoners were then

allowed to mix with the crowd in the court and witnesses called to see if they could be identified, which they were not. The defence solicitor said that in the agitation of the moment associated with their arrest his clients had given a wrong account. He had seven witnesses that would give a good account of the men's whereabouts on the day of the murder. A blood-stained smock was produced, owned by John Childs but he said he was hit upon the head with a staff and the blood flowed profusely on to the smock-frock and other clothes. The men were discharged without suspicion of being concerned in the murder even though a further anonymous letter had been received that morning and considered by the magistrate to be "mere wastepaper."[10] The men left with half a crown to cover their expenses to get home.

The perpetrator was not one of those arrested but another man who whilst waiting to be hung at Winchester on a burglary charge admitted the murder as a response to the victim's bold resistance to attempted highway robbery.[11]

Further press reports established the extent of the horror of murder in this rural area of Surrey.

**Horrid Murder and Highway Robbery**


An extraordinary sensation of horror and alarm has been produced at Epsom, Banstead and Ewell, and has extended itself far and wide, in consequence of a daring and deliberate murder committed about half-past six o'clock on Wednesday evening, upon the person of Mr. John Richardson, steward to John Perkins, Esq, of Bletchingly, Surrey. The unfortunate deceased had come over in the morning from Bletchingly to attend Epsom Corn market, as had been his almost invariable practice since the establishment of this market, about a year back. He put up, as usual, at the King's Head; and he is known in the course of the day to have received a sum of £23.3s off Mr. Stokes, of Ewell This money, it was ascertained in the course of yesterday, by Mr. Stokes coming forward and making a deposition before the Magistrates, consisted of a

[10] " Memoirs of a Bow Street Runner" Henry Goddard Museum Press 1953 page 88
[11] The Scotland Yard Files Moss and Skinner National Archives 2006 page 60

£10 note and two £5, Bank of England notes, three sovereigns and three shillings. Of these notes, Mr. Stokes is only enabled to give the number of one, and that is a £5 note, the number of which is 39,583. It does not appear, as far as can be ascertained at present, that the deceased received any other moneys.

After the market was over, he returned to the King's Head, and there dined at the ordinary, but left soon after to meet a gentleman at the Spread Eagle, with whom, however, he only took a single glass of wine; and returning thence to the King's Head. He ordered out his gig and started for Bletchingly about six o'clock. The spot where the foul assassins were lying in wait for him is about midway between Epsom and Banstead, and distant about half a mile Northeast from the Grand Racing Stand. The deceased had safely passed along the crossroad which runs along the Northern skirt of the Epsom Downs, and had entered a narrow lane, in which before proceedings more than 300 yards he comes to a deep hollow, known as Purcell's Gap. The ascent from this is by a remarkably steep although short hill, and it is near the brow of this hill that the foul deed was perpetrated. A spot more secluded, or better adapted in every respect for the perpetration of a deadly crime, could hardly be imagined. There is no house in any direction nearer than a mile, and the country all around being remarkably open, consisting for the most part of downs and sheepwalks; the facilities for escape are very great. The deceased must necessarily have walked his horse up the hill leading from out the hollow towards Banstead - a circumstance that, no doubt, led to the selection by the assassins of that particular part of the lane. It was very near the brow of the hill that the murder was committed.

It is supposed that one of the two men (for that there were two is proved beyond doubt) seized hold of the horse's head, while the other came up to the side of the gig and demanded the deceased's money. The deceased always travelled with loaded pistols, and it is believed he replied to the demand by firing at one or other of the villains, but missed his aim, and that the ruffian by the side of the chaise instantly fired his pistol, which unhappily took a fatal effect.

That the pistol was fired by the villain who stood on the near side of the chaise is evident from the direction the ball took, it having grazed the left arm, and passing sideway through the body missed the heart, but perforated the lungs, and the ball was found lodged against the blade bone of the right shoulder. Death must have been almost instantaneous. Mr. West, carrier between London, Ewell, and Banstead was approaching the spot at the time, and distinctly heard the reports of the two pistols, and heard the deceased utter an exclamation. He also saw the two men, who at first were approaching towards him; but on seeing him, ran off in a different direction. The deceased breathed his last, just as he got up, and he placed him in his cart and carried him to the sign of the Surrey Yeoman, at Banstead. Information was instantly sent off by express of the occurrence to Messrs Everest and Harding, Solicitors, at Epsom, and also Clerks to the Magistrates acting for that division of the county. A Meeting of the neighbouring Magistrates was convened, and it was simultaneously agreed that a reward of £100 should be immediately offered. The intelligence of the melancholy event spread rapidly, and produced one common feeling, in every class, of deep regret for the loss of one so generally and deservedly respected, and desire for the apprehension of the perpetrators of this dreadful murder.

At nine o'clock at night Mr. Gosse, a resident Magistrate, accompanied by Mr. Harding, of the firm of Messrs Everest and Harding, went in a post chaise over to Banstead, to view the spot where the murder was committed, and to investigate its circumstances. Late as it was, they examined six witnesses that evening, and yesterday 14 more were examined before Messrs Goss, Northey, and Trotter, Magistrates for the county. The evidence thus taken, it is thought prudent to keep secret, for the present; but thus much may be stated, that it points directly to the two individuals originally suspected; and as the county is being scoured in every direction, sanguine hopes are entertained that not many, even if one day should elapse, before the murderers are apprehended.

Five men were apprehended in the course of yesterday, on suspicion; and of these, after an examination before Messrs Gosse, Northey and Trotter, four were discharged; and the fifth is detained - not on suspicion of being implicated in the murder - but as a rogue and vagabond, and on suspicion of having stolen property in his possession. He is at present in Epsom Cage, but will be sent in the course of the day to Horsemonger Lane Gaol. Besides the original reward of £100 offered by the Magistrates, John Perkins, Esq., yesterday communicated to Mr. Everest his wish that an additional £100 should be offered in his name.

Baron Tessier, who is Chairman of the Magistrates for the division of the county, yesterday came up to London, for the purpose of seeing the Home Secretary on the subject; but the result of the interview was not known, when the Reporter left Epsom at eight o'clock last evening. It is a most extraordinary circumstance connected with the dreadful case, that the deceased himself saw, in passing over Walton Heath on the morning of the day, on his way to the market, the very two men who are strongly suspected to be the murderers. The taller of the two had a smock frock on, and the wind blowing strongly at the time, pressed the frock so closely against the body of the man, that the deceased, who had a suspicion of their characters, saw, or fancied he saw, the clear outline of a horse pistol. He mentioned the circumstance to the toll-taker, at the Tadworth Gate, and advised him to keep a sharp lookout after the fellows, as he thought they were after no good. The tollgate keeper has been examined before the magistrates, and states that he did so notice the men, that he should be able to identify them the instant he saw them; his description of the men tallies with that given by West, the carrier.

The deceased, it appeared from the evidence taken before the Magistrates, likewise mentioned the circumstance at Epsom to Mr. Butcher, a builder and auctioneer, and also to his brother, and made use, in the hearing of both, to the remarkable expression, "If you hear of my being robbed or murdered, you will know who did it."

Of the two pistols, which the deceased had in his possession when he left Epsom, one is missing, and is supposed to have been carried off by the murderers. The other was found loaded in his coat pocket. Mr. Butcher says the deceased had repeatedly said he would never suffer himself to be robbed by two men, and that he always travelled at dark with a loaded pistol in one hand, and the reins in the other. At the entrance of the lane, where the murder was committed, and distant from the spot only about 300 yards, Mr. Hart, solicitor, of Reigate, was,

about three months back, stopped in his gig by four armed men wearing smock frocks, and robbed of a considerable sum of money. The deceased was a remarkably fine florid complexioned man, about 40 years old, and has left a wife and sic children, and his wife advanced in pregnancy.

## Coroner's Inquest

At two o'clock yesterday afternoon, Mr. Carter, of Kingston, one of the Coroners of the County, arrived at Banstead, and a respectable Jury, principally consisting of farmers, having been empanelled at the Surrey Yeoman's Arms, the following brief evidence was taken touching the death of the unfortunate deceased: - The body was lying in an upper room of the house, where it was viewed by the Jury.

James West, carrier, of Banstead, deposed, that on Wednesday evening, about half-past six o'clock, he was coming from Ewell to Banstead, in his cart, having Mr. Batchelor riding with him in front; when half-way up the hill leading towards Banstead, on the Ewell road, he heard the report of two pistols, and almost immediately afterwards saw two men in the field to the left of the road, and behind which field, at a distance of about 100 yards from the road, is a small coppice wood, known as the "Rose Bushes." When first he saw them, they were coming from the Banstead and Epsom road towards him; at that moment he heard a faint cry of "Lord have mercy upon me." He instantly jumped out of the cart, and ran towards the men, who instantly turned and ran off along the Rose Bushes Wood, towards Epsom, and before he could get to the brow of the hill, they were out of sight. One was about 5 feet 10 or 11 inches high, and the other half a head shorter. Upon going to the place where he heard the exclamation, he found a horse and gig standing still near the top of the hill, and by the near side the deceased was lying on his back, with his head towards the descent of the hill. The deceased, on his attempting to raise him, heaved a deep sign, and immediately expired. He placed him in his cart and had him conveyed to the place where the body now lies.

The precise spot where the murder was committed has been marked out by the villagers, they having cut away the turf of the embankment on that side of the road which separates the carriage road from the foot-way, so as to form a rude cross.

Mr. Peake, surgeon, of Epsom, proved that a pistol ball that rested against the bone of the right shoulder had perforated the lungs and that the wound thus inflicted was the cause of death.

The Coroner briefly addressed the Jury, stating he thought, as the Magistrates of the vicinity were searching into the matter with the greatest diligence, it would be better for the ends of justice that he should pursue the investigation no further, but leave it to the Jury to return, as they safely might do on the evidence adduced, a verdict that the deceased was murdered by two men, whose names were unknown.

The Jury coincided in the view taken by the Coroner and returned a verdict accordingly.[12]

**The Murder of Mr Richardson, Near Epsom**

The tragedy continued with the loss of a still born child and the death of Mrs Richardson the mother.

We regret to be under the necessity of announcing, that the strong hopes which existed of the immediate apprehension of the murderers of this unfortunate gentleman, had not, up to a late hour last night, been realised, but it is believed that a clue has been obtained which must, before long, lead to their detection. It was yesterday morning currently reported at Epsom and the neighbourhood, that Mrs Richardson, who is in the sixth month of her pregnancy, had, from the shock she had received, been prematurely seized with the pangs of labour, and had, after giving birth to a dead infant, died in the course of the night. The account was said to have been brought by Mr Perkins Shepherd, in the first instance, and was so strongly corroborated by other persons in the course of the morning that it was generally believed, even by the magistrates and surrounding gentry, to be undoubtedly true. About four o'clock in the afternoon, Mr Trotter, the magistrate, who is nearly related to John Perkins, Esq, of Bletchingly, determined on sending over his groom on horseback, to make inquiries, and Mr. Joseph Richardson, of Ashtead, near Epsom, the brother of the deceased, also started on horseback near the same time. The latter returned first and brought with him the gratifying intelligence that the rumour was wholly false, and that Mrs Richardson was as well as, under the cruelly painful circumstances of her recent bereavement, could be hoped.

The Magistrates and Gentry have made, and are making, extraordinary exertions to apprehend the murderers. On the Wednesday night, within an hour after the fatal intelligence had reached Epsom by express, messengers were sent off to all the neighbouring towns and villages, with instructions to caution the shopkeepers not to change any notes for strangers; but if any were offered, either to stop the party or give immediate information to the nearest constable or Magistrate.

Posting bills were ordered to be printed immediately, and by daybreak on the following morning they were stuck up in conspicuous places for 20 miles round. By three o'clock in the morning full information of all the evidence, taken up to a late hour the preceding evening, was in the possession of the Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police, having been sent up by the Magistrates; and it was thence rapidly spread through all the ramifications of that numerous and active body, the new Police. On the Thursday afternoon, as soon as the Magistrates had learnt from Mr. Stone, maltster, of Leatherhead, the number of the £5 Bank note he paid the deceased, a second express was sent up to London, with instructions to stop payment of the note at the Bank of England, and every London banking-house: fresh bills were also issued, notifying this fact, and likewise that the reward had been increased to £200.

[12] The Morning Chronicle, Friday, 28 February 1834

At the interview, Baron Tessier, the Chairman of the Magistrates acting for the Epsom division of the county, had on Thursday afternoon with Lord Melbourne, his Lordship, after hearing an official statement from the Baron of the circumstances of this atrocious murder and of the general feeling of alarm and of personal insecurity which it had produced, promised to recommend to his Majesty the granting a free pardon to the accomplice upon the usual conditions. It is also confidently hoped in the neighbourhood that the Government will add to the reward already offered.

The deceased, it is clear, must have been dragged out of the gig after the fatal wound was inflicted, and so eager were his assassins to possess themselves of this property, that, instead of unbuttoning his breeches pockets, they literally tore them open down the side seams, while he was lying on his back on the road. The gold he had in a silk net purse, and the notes in a large red merchant's pocketbook. The purse emptied of its contents was found in the small coppice wood, known as the Rose Bushes, into which the murderers were seen to go by Mr West the carrier, but of the pocket book no trace has been discovered. The deceased had a silver watch in his fob worth about £6, which the murderers did not meddle with, probably being disturbed by hearing the approach of West's cart. The deceased, it was yesterday ascertained, usually carried two pairs of loaded pistols about him. One pair large, and such as are generally used for duelling, in his outer coat pockets, and a smaller pair in his waistcoat pockets. One of the large pair the assassins are known to have possessed themselves of, and it was thought they had also taken the smaller pair, but on the return of Mr. Joseph Richardson from Bletchingly last night, it was ascertained he had left the smaller pair at home, a thing very unusual for him to do.

In compliance with the request made by Baron Tessier at his interview with Lord Melbourne, an experienced Bow-street Officer has been sent down, and, at a late hour yesterday afternoon, was pursuing a scent, which is believed to be the true one; and if this happily should prove to be the case, there is little doubt but that the men will be in custody within twenty-four hours. Beckley, the toll-taker at the Tadworth Gate, states that he is confident he can identify the two men he saw pass through, from off Walton Heath. The Magistrates are anxious to ascertain whether any shopkeeper may have recently sold a horse pistol to a stranger, as information on that head might, in their opinion, led to important results. They also wish that any person offering a duelling pistol for sale may be stopped, unless able to give a good account for its possession.

The direction that the men took after the murder is unknown, West having only traced them as far as the Rose Bushes Wood, when he turned back; being afraid to encounter two men who he had good reason to believe had loaded pistols about their persons. Batchelor, who was riding in the front of West's cart, either from fear, or apathy, never once stirred, or offered the slightest assistance towards the apprehension of the assassins. There is no reason to suppose that the dresses of the murderers are at all spotted or stained with the blood of their victim, as it appears scarcely any blood flowed from the wound, the haemorrhage having been almost wholly internal.

The deceased was a remarkably fine-looking man, standing 6 feet 2 inches high, and stout in proportion. His son, a little boy about five years old, was present at the inquest. He is a complete miniature of his father, and, happily for himself, too young to feel conscious of the full extent of the great and irreparable loss he has sustained. On Thursday night, as late as ten o'clock, in consequence of the information received, Mr. Harding, of the firm of Everest and Harding, proceeded in a post-chaise to Leatherhead, accompanied by the Bow-street officer and Mr. Everest's groom, and after much difficulty, they found the two men of whom they were in pursuit in bed at a low beer-house. After a full examination it turned out they were not the parties wanted, and they were allowed to return to their pillows.

Very many highway robberies have, within the last six months, been committed between Epsom and Reigate, and, from all the descriptions there is every reason to believe the murderers in this case have been concerned in the former outrages.[13]

**Murder of Mr. Richardson near Epsom**

The sanguine hopes which were entertained of the immediate apprehension of the perpetrators of this atrocious murder had not, when we left Epsom at a late hour on Saturday night, been realized; and we regret to state, that there does not appear at present any clue by which it may be presumed that the murderers of this unfortunate gentleman (who was much esteemed by a numerous and respectable circle of friends), will, ere long, be discovered. In consequence of the interview which Baron Tessier, the Chairman of the Magistrates acting for the Epsom Division had, on Thursday, with Lord Melbourne on the melancholy subject, a communication was received early on Saturday morning, by the authorities at Epsom, from the Home Office, which stated that his Majesty had been graciously pleased to grant a free pardon to the accomplice who should discover the actual perpetrator of the murder, and that the Government had consented to add an additional £100 to the reward already offered. Immediately on the receipt of this intelligence, placards were printed and extensively circulated for many miles round the country, offering Three Hundred Pounds reward for the apprehension of the party, the Magistrates, as has already been stated, consenting to give £100, and John Perkins, Esq., £100.

The excitement, which the murder created continues unabated at Epsom, Banstead, Ewell &c. Scarcely anyone thinks of business, the minds of the inhabitants being wholly occupied with the lamentable fate of the murdered gentleman. The spot where Mr. Richardson met his death has been viewed by almost every person from far and near. On Friday, Mr. Carter, the Coroner, issued his warrant for the burial of the deceased, which was forwarded to Mr. W. Butcher, the undertaker, at Epsom, and in the course of the day the body was removed from the Surrey Yeoman's Arms, to the house of the brother of the deceased, situate at Ashstead, a short distance from Epsom; but previous to the interment it is the intention of the Magistrates to have the ball

[13] The Morning Chronicle, Saturday, 1 March 1834

extracted. This we understand has been decided upon in order to ascertain if the ball corresponds with the one left in the remaining pistol belonging to Mr. Richardson, and if such should prove the fact, then the presumption would be that the villains wrenched the pistol from their victim's hands and shot him with his own weapon.

Such, however, one hardly be supposed to be the fact as several persons have positively stated that they distinctly heard the discharge of two pistols, and it is generally believed, and of which we are of the opinion there cannot be a doubt, that Mr. Richardson fired immediately on his money being demanded, and that the next instant he received a fatal ball at the hands of one of his assassins. The unfortunate gentleman, it appears, wore white topcoat, a black body-one, black waistcoat, and corduroy breeches, and top boots. Halfway between the wrist and the elbow, on the left arm of the great coat, is a slight graze of the ball, which passed through the under part of the muscle of the arm, and then entered the lungs. It is evident that the unfortunate gentleman must have raised his left arm, as if to shield himself from the aim of his murderer: for in no other way can the graze of the ball below the elbow be accounted for.

The breeches were apparently very strong and must have required no trifling exertion to tear them in the manner they are torn, to get at the money. The sister of the deceased, on hearing of the murder, was so dreadfully affected by the intelligence, that she has since been subject to hysterical fits, from which, it is feared, the most serious results will ensue; the unhappy lady of the deceased remains in a distressing condition. On our arrival at Epsom, on Saturday morning, we ascertained that Baron Tessier, Mr. Goss, and the other Magistrates, together with Goddard, the Bow-street officer, & several of the Police force, had from an early hour been unremitting in their exertions to find some clue by which the murderers might be apprehended.

West, the carrier, and Bachelor, who accompanied him in a cart, were again closeted with the Magistrates for some time. The examination was strictly private, but we were informed that they only have their previous testimony more minutely than at a former investigation. They it will be recollected, also saw the two assassins in the distance, but were afraid to encounter them. We understand that the Magistrates much regretted that they did not give an immediate alarm, as it was possible someone might have heard them, either at Lord Arden's or Mr. Percival whose residence were not far distant, for in all probability had they done so, assistance would have arrived, and the coppice been surrounded by the servants of the two establishments, and the villains thwarted in their attempt to escape. At the close of their examination policeman 178, of the H division, arrived with the young man, Walker, who had been remanded at Lambeth-street Office on suspicion of being concerned in the murder. It then appeared that the policeman had been to Banstead on the previous night (Friday) and had an interview with the landlord of the Surrey Yeoman's Arms, to whom he stated that he wanted someone to proceed to London in order to ascertain if Walker could be identified as one of the men who were seen to turn towards the "Rose Bushes" when the deceased was first discovered. He was referred to West's house, who was from home; the wife of West answered him from the window, to whom, it is said, the policeman asserted that he had found the duplicate of a pistol upon the prisoner Walker.

This reaching the ears of Mr. Butcher, the high constable, on the following (Saturday) morning, that gentleman instantly ordered a post chaise to drive him to town, for the purpose of seeing the pistol, and ascertaining if it was the one belonging to Mr. Richardson, and which, it was supposed, had been carried away by the murderers. Mr Butcher, however, had not proceeded far on the road before he met the policeman and his prisoner, in a cab, unable to get to the end of their journey. The prisoner was smoking a pipe and was in a disgraceful state of intoxication. Mr. Butcher lost no time in conveying them to Epsom in his chaise; but it was found impossible to proceed with anything like an examination while the man was in liquor, and he was for a time confined in the Cage but was far from sober when again taken before the Magistrates, at the dwelling of their Worships' clerks, Messrs Harding and Everett. The prisoner repeatedly exclaimed that they had better hang him at once and was exceedingly vociferous and violent. He denied all knowledge of the murder, and the Magistrates were quite satisfied that he was not the man.

A letter was then addressed to Mr. Walker, of Lambeth-street, and directions given to the policeman to convey him to London. The finding of a duplicate for a pistol on the man proved to be a fabrication; although it is positively asserted by several persons that the policeman stated such to be the fact. In reply to questions put to the policeman respecting the intoxication of his prisoner, he said that he was obliged to make the man drunk, the better to get him on his journey, as he was occasionally very obstreperous. This we believe did not satisfy the Magistrates, who expressed their sense of the policeman's conduct in their letter to Mr. Walker, of Lambeth-street. Having heard that Watts, the postman of Epsom, had communicated some facts to various persons, we made inquiries respecting them when it appeared that about ten o'clock on the morning of the murder, he saw two men lurking about Walton Heath, adjoining Banstead.

One of the men wore a round frock coat and was taller than his companion, who was dressed in a dark coat. The tall one asked him the way to Reigate, and it being the third time that the same man had made the like inquiry, he asked him the reason why he did not continue in the main road, and not wander about the country as he was then doing. The stranger then left him, and stopped and whistled for his companion, who immediately came up, and they then both disappeared. He could identify the men again, who he believed were Londoners. The description, we are informed, exactly corresponds with that given of the men who were seen by West and Bachelor. This information having, at a subsequent period of the day, reached the Magistracy, the postman was ordered to attend before Baron de Teissier, when the witness repeated the above statement.

The man Walker was brought into the presence of the postman, who was confident that he was not one of the men he saw lurking about Walton Heath. --- A woman (it is said) can also identify the men who were seen leaving the wood after the murder was committed. It was rumoured at Epsom in the course of the day that the two men had been stopped at Addiscombe, near Croydon, while endeavouring to get cash for the £5 note taken from the deceased, but we could not trace it to any authentic source. Various other rumours relating to the capture of the murderers were also afloat, but the authorities at Epsom did not credit them. Up to the time that

we left that place, they had not received any such ratifying intelligence. The missing pistol, however, belonging to Mr. Richardson, and of which so much had been said, was found by some persons at Ewell, nearly three miles from the place where the murder was committed; and the information having reached one of the Magistrate's clerks, it was speedily procured and conveyed to Baron Tessier, just as we were leaving Epsom.

From many circumstances, it is firmly believed that the murderers form part of a gang who have long infested that part of the country, among whom are included some of the "Thimble and Pea" gentry[14]. At the time of the robbery of Mr. Hart, previously alluded to, three men took up their quarters at the Eight Bells, at Ewell, where they remained several days, going out all day, and not returning till night. On the day they left the Eight Bells, they called at a public house at Epsom, where they played a game at cards, and then went away. In an hour after Mr. Hart was stopped and robbed of considerable property and the three men were never afterwards seen.[15]

**Epsom Sunday Morning March 2**

The fellow pistol belonging to Mr. Richardson was found yesterday afternoon by two women, who were picking up wood, at about half-past three, in a field within 150 yards of the Half Mile Bush, in the Epsom turnpike road. The two murderers were seen by Mrs Garcon, of Ewell, coming from the direction where the pistol was found, in a very exhausted state, about 10 minutes after seven on the evening of the murder. Where the pistol was found is about one mile and three quarters from the place where the murder was committed. Two men, answering the description, went from London on the Nottingham coach to within 30 or 40 miles of Nottingham, where they got off, and turned up a right-hand road.

**The Murder of Mr Richardson**

Yesterday at two men, named James Hill and John Reeves, were brought to this office in custody of Jefferson and Burridge, the officers, on suspicion of being concerned in the murder of Mr. Richardson, of Bletchingley. Both the prisoners live in the immediate neighbourhood of Seven Oaks, Kent, and it was reported that they were absent from their usual haunts about the period the murder at Banstead was committed. They were apprehended at Seven Oaks on Saturday. Hill, on being questioned, gave an account of his time, and said he was at the King and Queen, Tubb's Hill, near Seven Oaks, on the day of the murder. He denied that he had even been in the county of Surrey and said he did not know where Banstead was situated. He had been out of work for the last eighteen months. He admitted having been acquainted with a man, named Tilling, who was transported, for highway robbery, at the last Surrey Assizes.

[14] Possibly a reference to the Game/fraud where a pea is hidden under one of three cups.
[15] The Morning Chronicle, Monday, 3 March 1834

Mr. Warner, who is exerting himself to discover the perpetrators of the murder, said he should be able to show that Hill was at a place called Bracestead on the day subsequent to that on which the murder was committed, though he denied that fact himself. Reeves then accounted for his time and said he had not been near Epsom or Banstead. A brown smock frock, belonging to the prisoner, was produced, which had several spots of blood on the inside, and was also rent at one side, as if done in a struggle. He accounted for the marks of blood by saying that during the last summer his nose used frequently to burst out bleeding, and on those occasions, he was in the habit of wiping it away with the inside of the garment.

On examining the prisoner's hat, a part of the front underneath the crown had the appearance of being perforated by a ball, and the orifice was rudely mended by another piece of an old hat being sewn underneath the hole. In accounting for this circumstance, the prisoner said that while asleep at the King and Queen beer-shop, in leaning his head over a charcoal fire, his hat fell off and a hole was burnt in it. The smock-frock got torn while larking with some of his acquaintances.

Mr. Warner produced a piece of linen with a quantity of blood upon it, which was found concealed underneath a hurdle in the back of the premises where the prisoners were apprehended. The linen was wrapped up in an old waistcoat, and the blood had all the appearance of being recently upon it. The prisoners disclaimed any knowledge of either article. - A woman, named Raffey, who lives with the prisoner, partly corroborated Hill's statement and partly contradicted it. In reply to Mr. Warner, she said that she did not say to a man in Mr. Blackman's employ that she knew the man who did it, and that there were spots of blood visible in the front part of his smock-frock if it was turned inside out. Neither did she state in a conversation with any person, that she had shot a man herself at a fair held in Sussex, three or four years back.

Mr. Warner said that he should be prepared with evidence to prove that the woman Raffey had made those statements voluntarily since the murder of Mr. Richardson, although she now thought proper to deny the facts. The three prisoners were then remanded until Friday. Although the two male prisoners may not have been concerned in the late murder at Banstead, yet it is strongly suspected that they form part of a gang who have been committing highway robberies and other depredation in the counties of Kent and Surrey.

In the course of the day Thomas Cottrell was sent from this office to Epsom, on suspicion of having been one of the two men who attacked and murdered Mr. Richardson. The prisoner, who is known to be a desperate fellow, was taken into custody to Mr. Superintendent Dixon of the G Division and two policemen, at a house in Bradfont Place, Hoxton. He made a resistance, and swore that they should not take him alive, at the same time rushing towards a table upon which some knives were lying; he was, however, secured. He answers the description of the taller man in the handbills offering the reward; and it was stated that he was one of the parties concerned in the robbery of the clergyman's house in Surrey, a few years back, when the servants were locked up in the coal-cellar. There were marks of blood on a handkerchief found in his possession when taken.

During the whole of Sunday, the parish of Deptford was thrown into a state of excitement, in consequence of two men having been lodged in the Cage upon suspicion of being concerned in the murder of Mr. Richardson, at Epsom. It appears that a parochial constable named Brown, had received intelligence that the two men (who are well known in Deptford as collectors of bones, rags &c., and suspicious characters) had borrowed a cart to proceed to Epsom, on Wednesday, and had not returned the vehicle. On enquiry being made of these men's wives, it was ascertained that their husbands had not returned to their homes. Brown immediately repaired to Croydon - where the men, it was said, were gone - and he succeeded in tracing and taking them in their beds. They were immediately conveyed to Deptford, and yesterday (Monday) taken before Mr., Gordon and other Magistrates holding a Petty Sessions at the Swan Inn. It was then stated that Thomas Hill, a lock-man on the Croydon Canal, saw the prisoners early on Thursday morning. They requested a light of their pipes, and an hour afterwards by Burgess, a constable at New Cross.

The men answered the description of the murderers, and it was thought they had crossed the country from Ewell and Cheam to Croydon and then come down the canal, upon the banks of which they had slept. The men denied the accusation and told the Magistrates that they could give a satisfactory account of where they had been, and what they had been doing. It was ultimately decided that the men should remain in the custody of Mr. Thomas, an Inspector of Police, until inquiries should be made into the truth of their assertions. [16]

On Sunday morning, in consequence of information received, Mr. Harding, the Magistrate of Surrey, accompanied by Goddard, the Bow Street officer, went in search of a man of the name of Cheesely. They searched several houses between Epsom and Merstham, but without success. They then waited on Sir Wm. Joliffe, Bart., who instantly summoned his keepers, and from the clue they gave Mr. Harding and Goddard succeeded in securing Cheesely, at half-past two o'clock in the afternoon. He was found in a hut, down a path leading to Merstham, where he was discovered in bed, having been out all night. Nothing has however, transpired to fix upon him any share of this dreadful murder.[17]

Yesterday a man named John Woodhill was charged at Union Hall, by policeman Plant, on suspicion of being concerned in the above murder. Plant said that the man Cottrell, who was apprehended on Saturday and sent to Epsom, said, on being taken into custody, that if he was guilty of the murder, so also was John Woodhill. It appeared that they were close companions, but Woodhill denied having been at Epsom since the races. The Magistrates directed that he should be taken to Epsom.[18]

[16] The Morning Chronicle, Tuesday, 4 March 1834
[17] The Morning Chronicle, Wednesday, 5 March 1834
[18] The Morning Chronicle, Thursday, 6 March 1834

It is much to be regretted that up to a late hour on Saturday no clue had been obtained nor information received by the authorities at Epsom, which could at all lead to the supposition that the murderers of Mr. Richardson would soon be discovered and brought to condign punishment. All the exertions of the magistracy and gentry, aided by the zealous co-operation of many of the London and local officers, have hitherto failed in bringing the villains to justice; and it is now much feared that nothing but some fortuitous circumstance, or the impeachment of an accomplice, will bring the party to light. A report reached Epsom on Saturday morning that a man had confessed to the murder at Croydon, and afterwards terminated his existence by shooting himself; but the information could not be traced to any authentic source, nor was it in the slightest degree credited by the authorities.

The magistrates, Baron Tessier and Messrs. Gosse and Trotter, who have been indefatigable in their endeavours to trace the murderers, appear now to have given up all hopes of success. A communication to such effect, it is understood, was forwarded to the Home Office, and since then all the London officers have been recalled to their respective duties in town. Epsom and its vicinity have consequently resumed their former quiet state; but the atrocious deed, committed upon an individual so universally respected and esteemed, still forms the subject of deep regret and conversation among all classes. The widow and five children of the murdered gentleman have now become the objects of consideration, and a subscription has been commenced for their relief. Subscription books have been left at Mr. Bailey's, draper, at Epsom and at Messrs. Ladbrooke and Co.'s bankers in London, also at Ewell, and other places. It is said that about £50 has already been raised at Epsom; and sanguine hopes are entertained that a sufficient amount will be collected to place the family beyond the reach of want. The funeral of Mr. Richardson took place on Tuesday, at Ashtead Church, in the presence of nearly one thousand spectators.

The body was conveyed from the house of the brother of the deceased, and between twenty and thirty persons, relations and friends, joined in the mournful procession. On the coffin being conveyed into Ashtead Church the edifice became instantly crowded, and during the solemn service numbers were observed to shed tears. The unhappy widow remained at the house of her brother-in-law, at Ashtead, during the performance of the last rites to her late husband, where she still continues. Her grief, it is said, on the body being removed, was excessive. On the London officers leaving Epsom they were desired by the Magistrates to continue their exertions in town, as it was not improbable that the murderers were concealed in London.

The man Cottrell who was apprehended on Saturday week and conveyed to Epsom, underwent an examination at the Spread Eagle, which lasted several hours, and although nothing transpired to confirm the suspicion that he was concerned in the murder, yet there was sufficient evidence to warrant his detention on other charges of highway robbery, and he will be re-examined next Tuesday. His examination gave a clue to others concerned in numerous highway robberies, and one man who was present when Mr. Hart was stopped and robbed, has been so clearly described, that his apprehension by Tuesday is considered almost certain.

A man was apprehended at Portsmouth on suspicion of the murder. On being conveyed before a Magistrate, the prisoner stated that on the night of the murder he slept at Leatherhead, about four miles from Epsom, and was so ill in the course of the afternoon of that day, that he retired to bed by six o'clock. This was communicated to the Epsom Magistrates, who instituted inquiries at Leatherhead on Friday, and ascertained the man's statement to be perfectly correct. Several other men have been examined both by the London and Epsom Magistrates; but after strict and patient investigations, they were believed not to be the real persons, and they were discharged. Two or three well-known characters, however, still remain in custody at Horsemonger Lane on suspicion of being concerned in the murder, although it is feared they are not the men; but another examination is deemed necessary before they are allowed to go.[19]

The police have been very active in their efforts to detect the murderers. **Several other persons** have been apprehended on suspicion. One named John Walker after being remanded several times was discharged. Three other individuals Cheesley, Clarke and Leyer are still in custody as are also James Hill, John Reeve, Cummings and Churchill.[20]

**Apprehension of the Supposed Murderers**

During the last month the Magistrates at Epsom have received several anonymous letters relative to the above murder, the whole of which pointed out two men of the name of Child as being the parties who actually perpetrated the dreadful dead. No attention was for some days paid by the Magistrates to these communications, but, at last, from the pertinacity with which these anonymous letters were persevered in, they thought it their duty to notice them. Goddard, the Bow-street officer, was accordingly desired to make inquiries respecting the two Childs, and, in consequence, after a considerable search, he succeeded in taking them into custody; but from their statements, and the inquiries he made of the parties to whom he was directed by them, the proof was not considered strong enough against them, and they were liberated. The writers of the anonymous letters still persisted in pointing them out as delinquents and detailed a number of additional facts in their letters to the Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police, to whom, as well as the Magistrates, they had been sent, as to determine the former to direct their instant apprehension, but on inquiry being made after them, it was found that they had deserted their usual haunts.

On Sunday last, in consequence of information received by Inspectors Grossmith and Barefoot, of B division who have been indefatigable in their exertions to discover the real perpetrators of the horrid deed, proceeded in company of Inspector Marchant and Sergeant Reynolds, of the T divisions, to West Bedfont, near Staines, and succeeded in taking them both into custody. At first, they were denied, but, after a search, Harry Child was discovered hid behind one of the doors, and his brother John was taken at a house in the neighbourhood, to which he had fled on hearing of the officers being in search of him. Grossmith immediately informed Sir John

[19] The Morning Chronicle, Monday, 10 March 1834
[20] The Examiner Sunday March 9 1834

Gibbon the nearest Magistrate, of their capture, who ordered them to be taken to Epsom. A cart was accordingly procured, and they were conveyed there that evening.

On reaching Epsom, it was considered prudent that they should be separately confined, and John Child was taken to Leatherhead, where he was confined for the night. On Monday morning they were taken to Messrs Everest and Harding's offices, before Baron de Teissier and --- Gross, Esq, for examination, when the officers stated, that on going to the house of a Mrs Yates, at West Bedfont (where they had received information the prisoners were to be found), and inquiring for them, they were told Harry had not been there, and that John had gone out half an hour before. Not believing this, they proceeded to search the house, and on moving a door near them, they found Harry Child behind it, within three feet of the spot they were standing on when they made the inquiries.

On laying hold of him, he at first made a violent resistance, but was soon overpowered. During their search they found a smock-frock with the right sleeve clotted with blood. Having heard the name of Lacy mentioned, they proceeded to a house close by, kept by a person of that name, where they found John Child in a small back room quietly combing his hair, although he afterwards acknowledged that he had hid himself there on hearing of the officers being in the neighbourhood. West and Bachelor, the carriers, Budge, and the other persons who saw the two men both before and after the commission of the murder, attended Grossmith and Barefoot, the officers, also stated that on the afternoon of the 26th of February, the day on which the murder was committed, they were returning towards town from Reigate, and when within a mile and did not observe their chaise until they were close to them, when they immediately rose and came towards the chaise.

Suspecting them to be after no good, the officers, for the purpose of noticing them, asked them how far they were from Bletchingly. The smaller one answered, " I don't know; but the taller one immediately said, "a mile and a half." The officers then proceeded on their way and thought no more of it until the following morning, when, hearing of the murder, they felt satisfied, from the description of the two men seen by West and the others, that the men they had seen were the murderers. On taking the prisoners into custody, they immediately recognized them to be the two men they had seen in the lane between Nutfield and Bletchingly; and on making John repeat the words "I don't know," they were satisfied he was one of the men. Harry, on being told to say, "A mile and a half," did so, but evidently not in his usual tone of voice, and they, therefore, could not swear to his voice. When asked by the Magistrates where they were on the day of the murder, they said that they were the whole of the day in the neighbourhood of Staines and Egham, and mentioned the names of several persons who, they said, had seen them there; more particularly a person of the name of Jordan, of whom they said they had purchased some turnip-tops on that day; they also denied that they had ever been at Epsom, or in the neighbourhood, in their lives.

This latter statement was contradicted by Mr. Everest, the solicitor, who said, that immediately on seeing Harry, the taller one, he recognised him as having been at the last Epsom cattle fair with a small black pony, which he offered for sale, and which Mr. E. inquired the price. After

some equivocation, he acknowledged that he was there and also that the statement made by other persons, that they were both in August last camped on Banstead Downs and Smithen's Bottom, was true. Mr. Goss, the Magistrate, asked them whether they had been lately near Brighton? They said they had not, but their brother William, who is not in custody, had lately been in that neighbourhood. This is an important circumstance, as the only note (for £5) yet traced for those taken from the deceased, has been paid into the house of Wigney and Co., the bankers, at Brighton. After some consultation, the Magistrates remanded them for re-examination yesterday, and directed the officers in the meantime, to make inquiries of the parties and at the places mentioned by the prisoners as to the truth of their statement, and the officers immediately started for that purpose.

At nine o'clock yesterday morning, the Magistrates again assembled, when Grossmith and Barefoot stated that they had made inquiries into the truth of the prisoners' statements, and found that they were totally false, as they had not been on that day at the places named by them, and that the purchase of the turnip-tops took place three weeks previous; also, that before that time the prisoners had been very short of money, but that within the last six weeks, the prisoners, when tipsy, had offered to pay several persons a few shillings due to them, and that in doing so had displayed a number of sovereigns.

On hearing the statements of the officers, who also mentioned several important facts, which it would not be prudent at this stage of the investigation to make public, the Magistrates determined on postponing their re-examination until Saturday next, when they will be publicly examined at Union Hall Police-office[21], when it is hoped the writers of the anonymous letters will come forward and redeem the pledge made by them --that "If they were apprehended, and examined in public, such evidence would be produced as would leave no doubt on any mind of their being the murderers." The prisoners, who treated the charge with great levity, are about thirty years of age, and have the appearance of men who would not hesitate at committing any desperate act; they were both dressed in smock frocks and wore knee-breeches and high-lows. At twelve o'clock the officers to Horsemonger-lane prison, for security, conveyed them. Upwards of thirty persons have been taken into custody, and examined by the Magistrates, to whom the greatest praise is due; as also to Messrs Everest and Harding, for their indefatigable exertions in endeavouring to trace the murderers. The statement made in some papers, that a subscription was collecting to defray the expenses, is untrue, as three or four of the Magistrates in the neighbourhood have defrayed the whole of the expenses, which are very considerable, and Messrs Everest and Harding have rendered their valuable assistance gratuitously.[22]

**Saturday**

**Examination and Discharge of the Supposed Murderers of Mr Richardson**

[21] Southwark with a responsibility for the whole of Surrey
[22] The Morning Chronicle, Wednesday, 9 April 1834

**Union Hall:** At an early hour this office was crowded with persons to hear the examination of Henry and John Childs, who were charged on suspicion of having murdered Mr. Richardson, at Banstead, near Epsom. Mr Gosse, one of the Epsom Magistrates, took his seat on the left of Mr. Murray, and there were several other gentlemen present in the commission of the peace. At the conclusion of the usual morning's proceedings, the prisoners, who had been brought from Horsemonger-lane Gaol, were placed at the bar. Their presence excited considerable attention from all present, the public firmly believing, from the accounts published, that the men were the perpetrators of the murder. The prisoners did not appear to heed in the slightest degree the manner in which they were scrutinized by every eye. Henry Childs is much taller than his brother, but both have fair complexions, with little or no whiskers; they were attired as countrymen, Henry having on a smock frock, and the other wearing a kind of jacket waistcoat.

Mr Murray asked the prisoners if their name was Child or Childs.
The prisoner, John replied that he believed it was Childs.
Mr Murray then inquired if the prisoners knew the nature of the charge preferred against them.
They said they were told the reason of their being taken into custody when they were at Epsom on Tuesday.
Mr Murray informed them that they had been remanded on suspicion generally.
Mr. Grossmith an Inspector of the B Division of Police, was asked what evidence he had to bring forth in support of the charge, and he replied that he had several witnesses in attendance who saw two suspicious looking persons, resembling the prisoners, near Epsom, on the day of the murder. John Patrey, the toll-collector at Banstead, was then called and sworn. On being desired to look at the prisoners, the witness stated that he never saw them before to his knowledge.
Mr Murray: Have either of the other witnesses seen the prisoners since they were taken into custody? Grossmith: I believe not.
Mr Murray: Then let the door be closed, and remove the prisoners, that they may mix, indiscriminately among the other persons in the office, so that the witnesses may not see them at the bar. This was complied with, and by the desire of Mr. Murray, the prisoner Henry pulled off his smock-frock, and they both put on their hats.

A man who gave his name John Walters, was then called in, and on being asked if he knew of any circumstances connected with the murder, said, that on the day previous to the commission of the act the saw two suspicious-looking men going towards Bletchingly, and on the same day he observed one of the men proceeding in the direction of Reigate. He should know them again if he saw them. Mr Murray desired the witness to look among the persons in the office, that he might see if the men were present. The witness having complied with the wish of the Magistrate stated that he could not see them. Mr. Pound, solicitor for the prisoners, here observed that he should have no objection for the witness to see the prisoners. Mr Murray remarked that the witness merely said that he saw two men under suspicious circumstances, but he did not then recognize them in the office.

Mr Gosse said that the prisoners must be quite aware that the account they gave of themselves was given voluntarily; and as their assertions had been proved to be false, they would see the necessity for a full investigation. It now appeared there was no further evidence, and they were discharged.
Mr Murray also observed, that there was good reason for their detention until that day. The solicitor said that in the agitation of the moment the men had given a wrong account of where they were on the day of the murder. He had seven witnesses in attendance, who could satisfactorily account for their time on that day. Mr Gosse considered that the men had brought their present situation entirely upon themselves, by not stating facts. John Childs said that the police never went to the parties he referred to at all. He considered it a hard case to be thus treated.

Mr Murray observed that the characters of the prisoners would not suffer for there was no evidence whatever to substantiate the charge. The accounts, which had appeared respecting their apprehension were erroneous. There was, however, ample ground originally for suspicion. The prisoner John asked what were the grounds of suspicion? Mr Murray said that they arose out of the circumstances that took place at the time the prisoners were captured. Grossmith here produced the bloody smock frock. John Childs stated that he was hit on the head with a staff, and the blood flowed profusely on to the smock-frock and other parts of his dress.

Mr Murray inquired how the prisoners obtained their living. They replied that they bought potatoes, carrots, and other vegetables, at different markets, and then sold them. They added, that they were gathering turnip-tops on the day of the murder.

Mr Murray; Don't let me be mistaken; you are discharged without suspicion of being concerned in the murder. John Childs: I have one favour to ask, and that is, where did the anonymous letters come from? Grossmith: That is what we wish to know.
Mr Murray: I received one this morning and, as far it goes, it is in your favour; but I regard such letters as mere wastepaper. The writer of the letters to which you allude has never had the courage or the honesty to come forward.

John Childs: we have been most harshly treated since we have been in custody and were obliged to pay for everything we had. Mr Gosse: It must, sometimes happen that men will be put to certain inconvenience for the ends of justice. You are now discharged.
John Childs. Thanks to you, gentlemen; you are now satisfied we are not the men?
The prisoners then left the office, but in a few minutes returned, when John Childs (who had been spokesman throughout the examination) told the Magistrates that they were twenty miles from home without a farthing in their pocket. Mr Murray said he would order them half-a-crown out of the poor box to help them on their way.

The Clerk then handed over the money to Childs; but previous to the departure of the men, Mr. Murray gave them to understand, that had their character stood in a more respectable light than it really did, suspicion would not have attached itself to them. The necessity therefore of having

a good character was fully apparent. The men assured the Magistrates that they obtained their living in an honest manner, after which they left the office, and joined their friends at a public house in the vicinity.[23]

## The Murder of Mr Richardson
## (From a Correspondent)

**The Times, 1 August 1834**: The mystery that has hitherto concealed the circumstances and perpetrators of the murder of Mr John Richardson, of Bletchingly, has at last been removed by the confession of the ferocious harden villain John Young, who by this time has, in all human probability, yielded his life for a burglary, committed by him with another (whose life is to be spared) upwards of two years ago. Our readers will doubtless remember reading the details of the trail at the assizes just concluded at Winchester, when the hardened expressions and admissions of this villain, before the trial was even ended, must have prepared them for the full confession that he has since made of being one of the murderers of Mr. Richardson. There are circumstances in the career and apprehension of the villain which seem to mark a peculiarly retributive Providence in the fate which as at length overtaken him.

Six years ago, at the Kingston Summer Assizes, he became witness for the Crown, and was the means of convicting three of his associates in a burglary, two of whom were hanged. He is now himself hanged on the evidence of an accomplice with him on another burglary. The case of burglary in which he was admitted approver, was of the most aggravated kind. They had broken, at the dead of a winter's night, into the retired residence of the Rev. Mr. Woodroofe, at Moulsey, dragged the clergyman and his wife from their beds, tied their hands behind, and then thrust them, with nothing but their night clothes on, into the cellar. The domestics were afterwards, in the same way, dragged to this dark chilly place of imprisonment. The application for some clothing for protection from the cold was met with unfeeling ribaldry.

At last, one (and Young did not dare take credit himself) tossed them down a bed and some blankets. The burglars left the family there and they did not obtain release till accidentally discovered the next morning. It was the one who had shown this trifling mark of humanity whose life was spared. The writer was present at the trial, and well remembers hearing this villain give his evidence; the daring callousness and effrontery he evinced; the indifference with which he admitted himself to have been the leader and most ruffianly of the party, and that he had been long associated with burglars. The whole court was filled with horror at the thought the ends of justice could only be perfected by letting such a monster loose again upon society.

The indignation throughout the town reached to such a pitch, that it was necessary to send a strong constabulary body to protect him from the fury of the mob, who discovering him in his progress down the High-street to Hampton-wick, he was hooted at, pelted with all manner of filth, his clothes torn, and when on Kingston-bridge a daring attempt was made to hurl him over. It was with extreme difficulty he was saved. Had the attempt succeeded, the consequences

[23] The Morning Chronicle, Monday, 14 April 1834

would have been serious to those engaged in thus riotously displaying their sense of the deep infamy of this monster's character, for a barge was passing at the time, and he must have fallen upon its deck.

To such a pitch did the riot extend itself, that numerous persons were committed, and it was found necessary to re-convey the fellow to the town gaol for security. There is also another point in which justice has been peculiarly retributive in this case. The burglary, for which by this time he has been hanged, was committed two years ago, and it is entirely owing to his apprehension as to the suspected murderer of Mr Richardson, and the searching investigation then made into his character and haunts, that the facts were elicited and evidence obtained which lead to his conviction.

He has since his conviction been twice visited by Mr Richardson, (sic) and his admissions, as far as they are presently known, and that he and another made the attack on Mr Richardson, and that it was his hand which fired the deadly shot; but he denies that murder was premeditated. It was because of the bold front which Mr Richardson presented, and the discovery he was armed, that he fired, conceiving he had no alternative but to shoot or be shot. He says only two were actually engaged in the attack, but he says a third party was concerned, although not on the ground, a story extremely improbable. If West, the carrier, had pursued him, he declared he should certainly have fired on him. It has not transpired as yet whether he disclosed the names of his accomplices, but it is to be hoped that he may, in the last moments of life, have made some further communication, which the ends of justice may require to be kept secret. [24]

**John Young.**
**This courtroom sketch was found in a different publication.**

[24] The Times, 1 August 1834

# The Sussex and Surrey Burglars

**1845 March 11:** Some particularly daring burglaries have been committed in this neighbourhood of late and if suspicion proves correct by a distinguished gang of thieves. The first two were perpetrated on Tuesday night the 25th ult., but we forbore to mention them last week because some clue having been obtained as to the whereabouts of the burglars it would have been injudicious to do so. On the night in question the thieves broke into the house of Mr Boughton, Shamley Green in the parish of Wonersh and succeeded in getting off with a quantity of eatables amongst which was three stones of bacon. They also took a copper kettle and other articles. Nearly a mile from Shamley Green they entered the house of Mr Smithers and were helping themselves when that gentleman heard them and making some noise induced them to make off with only a pair of boots. Mr Smithers saw them going off and shot at one of them but though he is confident he hit his man all three escaped. On Saturday night the first instant, or early on Sunday morning two other houses were entered and apparently by the same gang, as a glove stolen from one of the previously robbed houses was on one of these occasions left behind.

Mr Sparkes of Gosden also in the parish of Wonersh was this time one of the sufferers. The thieves got in and succeeded in making off with a flat silver snuff box, a gold ring with an amethyst set in the middle and a garnet on each side, a Macintosh cloak and coat, a cloth great coat, a hat and several bottles of Marsah wine brandy and gin. It is supposed that the burglars made rather free with the latter articles for though they found their way up stairs they fortunately passed by unobserved a basket of plate, which had been forgotten by the servants on one of the landings. On going upstairs, they turned the handle of one of the doors and the noise woke Miss Sparkes who gave the alarm and the thieves took flight.

At a considerable distance from the residence of Mr Sparkes a house was broken open and a great quantity of miscellaneous property stolen, amongst which we may name sundry articles of wearing apparel a college gown, a set of chimory (sic) ornaments, tea and ???? service, spouts etc., and a quantity of provisions besides several gallons of old ale. The house is that which was recently occupied by Major Stapleton and is now undergoing alterations and improvements for an agricultural college school to be opened shortly by the Mr James Abbot AM, to whom the property belonged and who has offered a reward of £20 for the apprehension and conviction of the offenders.

Intelligence of these several robberies were immediately communicated to the police who have every reason to suppose that the perpetrators are none other than the notorious "Sussex Burglars." As yet they have not been captured but the police are actively engaged in tracing the depredators. (Pre Surrey Constabulary) There are several; handsome rewards offered for the apprehension of the men; amongst the rest the sum of £50 by Her majesty's government and there is little doubt they will shortly be in custody. The man Longhurst is a native of Wonersh, and if he is one of the gang engaged in the robberies detailed he must have concealed

himself since his escape from Brighton somewhere in the neighbourhood. I will be in the remembrance of most of our readers that we stated in the gazette of the 18th ult., that Longhurst and two other men answering the description of Patching and Burgess were seen passing through Wonersh on Sunday evening the 1st of February so that it is possible that they have ever since been in the neighbourhood.

**Further Particulars; Apprehension of the burglars.** Since the above was written the notorious "Sussex Burglars" have been captured and the suspicion stated above is found to be correct that they are the parties who have been engaged in all the robberies there detailed, and two others which were reported in the Advertiser a few weeks since; one at the house of Mr Norris at Shalford Common and the other at Mr Green's at Bramley.

At an early hour on Sunday morning 2nd inst., information of the burglaries at Wonersh during the previous night was conveyed to that very active officer chief constable Biddlecombe of Godalming, and shortly after intelligence reached him that three men who were strangers in the neighbourhood had been seen near Busbridge within half a mile of the town, very early that morning. They were described as being all tall men and each having in his possession a large bundle. Mr Biddlecombe immediately started on horseback accompanied by a couple of assistants likewise mounted and speedily reached the place where the men were said to have been seen. Here he made inquiry and found that the intelligence he had received was correct and further, the men had stopped at a little cottage on the top of the hill and requested permission of the old woman who occupied it to cook some bacon for which permission they gave her a slight gratuity. She stated to the police officers that they had a large quantity of bacon and also pointed out a copper kettle which they had sold her; and both these facts tended to convince him that the men were the same who had entered the house of Mr Boughton of Wonersh, as described above, from whence they must have taken the bacon and kettle; while the direction from which they came that morning, as was evident by their tracks, connected them with the two robberies on the previous night. It would appear that the men on leaving the cottage still kept on in the same direction across the country, and the officers immediately set out in pursuit towards Hambledon.

All trace of the thieves was here lost and though their pursuers scoured country in all directions throughout Sunday, no clue whatever could be found of the fugitives. Mr Biddlecombe was however too sanguine as to the identity of the Surrey and Sussex burglars, to be easily daunted in his important undertaking; so accompanied by assistants as before he still persevered in riding about from place to place throughout the whole of Monday and Tuesday going down as far as Plaistow in Sussex, and taking the whole of the wild country homeward to Wonersh and Godalming. Success however did not attend his exertions and Tuesday night found him still without tidings of the burglars. He arrived at Godalming late on that night and gave up the pursuit as hopeless unless he was able to obtain some further clue. Luckily this clue was not long wanting, for about noon on Wednesday intelligence was received that three men answering the description of the burglars were seen some time on the afternoon of Sunday making towards Headley in Hampshire.

Mr Biddlecombe immediately prepared to set forth again determined not to return without the men no matter what time or expense he might require to come up with them. He forthwith procured the assistance of two men named Miles and Woods of Hambledon and all three set out well mounted and proceeded at once to Headley. No tidings of the burglars however welcomed the pursuers on their arrival at Headley so without loss of time they set out for Liphook and finding no satisfactory trace there they returned through Headley to Farnham. All this time they were still off the right track but Mr Biddlecombe fully determined to persevere still held on and last succeeded in getting scent of the burglars at a little village about three miles from Farnham. Here he learned that three men answering the description of those he sought had breakfasted on Monday morning early and that on leaving the village they took the road towards Blackwater and Windsor.

Off the pursuers set in that direction but after travelling some ten or a dozen miles and gaining no information as to their men they took circuitous route back again to Odiham in Hampshire from thence on to Hartley Row but still without being able to recover trace of the burglars. Wednesday night had now become Thursday morning and still the pursuit continued and at length the persevering officer succeeded in learning at a village some eight or ten miles on the road to Reading in Berkshire, that three men had been there the day before passing themselves off as smugglers, corresponding precisely with the men sought for, but the officer found they had changed their apparel when comparing the present with the previous descriptions of their dress. On leaving the village it seems as if the three fugitives took the road to Newbury whither their pursuers at once proceeded but learning nothing of them there they kept on for Reading. From Reading where they could obtain no tidings Biddlecombe and his assistants set out for Maidenhead but there they were also at fault.

On Friday morning Mr Biddlecombe got again into the neighbourhood of Reading and at a village about four miles from the town on the road to Basingstoke he learned that three men still pretending to be smugglers had been there the previous day and were disposing of some brandy as before, they had taken the road to Basingstoke and thither in all haste pursued them. On arriving at Basingstoke, he found that they had been there on the previous evening and on further enquiry that they had slept there and changed their clothes, quitting the town that (Friday) morning about nine o'clock; they still kept up their assumed character as smugglers. All this was highly satisfactory, but strange to say, no clue could be obtained as to what road they had taken on leaving the town. Fortunately, this time Mr Biddlecombe took the right direction for on proceeding about twelve miles on the road to Alton he found the soi-disant [25] smugglers were only about three hours ahead of him. Biddlecombe at once called in his assistants whom he had from time to time during the pursuit dispatched by different roads always fixing some central point as a rendezvous all three set out in hot pursuit towards Alton.

At a village called North Wanborough the joyful information was obtained that the long sought for party were only about half an hour in advance. On the pursuers sped and speedily caught sight of the three men near the public house known by the sign of the Golden Pot about three

[25] So called

miles from Alton. The Chief Constable now cautioned his assistants to keep the men closely in view and determined when turning off the high road himself and by taking a circuitous route getting before the burglars leaving instructions with his two men to close upon them as soon as they saw him advancing in the opposite direction. This movement was quickly and by this stratagem the burglars were safely apprehended. When secured and handcuffed Biddlecombe called them by their several names and informed them of the charges against them. They each of them carried a bundle and the great proportion of the missing property belonging to Mr Sparkes and Mr Abbott was found in their possession as well as some nine or ten shillings in silver, and a small quantity of eatables. They were dressed in long smock frocks, buttoning before and appeared to have disposed of very little of the property taken the previous Saturday night except the wine and spirits.

They were all three armed with long knives and had they been aware of the charges against them or the mission of the officer, they would doubtless have used them to the danger of him and his assistants. They had no firearms in their possession. The Chief Constable at once procured a vehicle and conveyed his prisoners to Godalming where he arrived with them late on Friday evening.

The excitement created by the report that the notorious Sussex and now equally notorious Surrey Burglars were captured kept the town in ferment throughout the whole evening and it is still the talk of the whole neighbourhood. In Guildford the capture has been as fully canvassed and seems to have afforded quite as much satisfaction as in Godalming. Before concluding this notice of the apprehension of these very daring and successful burglars we must add a few words of commendation to those through whose exertions a period has been put to their career of crime. Certainly, all praise is due to Mr Biddlecombe who has laboured so energetically in pursuing them having during the week travelled about 400 miles in pursuit and from Wednesday to Friday alone little short of 250 miles being during the whole of that time scarcely out of the saddle having completely knocked up four horses. The merit of such an undertaking deserves an ample reward and we hope that in Susses and Surrey it will be fully appreciated.

What the united force of Sussex have been unable to effect one man by persevering exertion and energy accomplished in Surrey. We may add that Captain Mackay Chief Constable of the East Sussex force wrote to Chief Constable Biddlecombe on Wednesday to be on the lookout for Messrs Longhurst and Co., and then when Mr Biddlecombe returned home with the men in custody on Friday night, he found the letter in question awaiting him. The gang evidently contemplated other robberies for they asked many questions of the old woman at whose house they had their bacon cooked as before mentioned as to whether Mr Wilder's (of Busbridge) family was at home, how many servants lived in the house etc. It does not appear that they for a moment thought they were pursued nor did they know until after they were in custody whether it was for their misdeeds in Sussex or Surrey that they were apprehended. [26]

[26] Sussex Advertiser 11 March 1845

**1845 March 12: Burglary Lewes: The Sussex burglars:** 1845 March 12 The Sussex Burglars:[27] Considerable excitement has prevailed in the town of Lewes in the last 24 hours in consequence of information having been received at an early hour on Sunday morning that the three individuals connected with the Sussex burglaries, Patching, Burgess and Longhurst, had been captured in Hampshire by Mr Biddlecombe the chief officer of police at Godalming after five days hard chase. Immediately on receipt of the information we lost no time in conveying it to the proper authorities and this morning's post enabled us to lay before the same parties a full account of the proceedings adopted by Biddlecombe the active officer by whose exertions the burglars were secured, accompanied by the information that the burglars would arrive at Lewes in custody of their captor this (Monday) afternoon. In accordance with information about half past 5 this afternoon Biddlecombe with his assistant arrived in charge of the prisoners whom he lodged safely in the station house. At the moment we write they are before the magistrate Mr H Blackman. The prisoners left Godalming this morning early. They were conveyed handcuffed in carts to Guildford thence by the coach, which runs to Red Hill, where they were placed in a railway carriage and brought by train to Brighton. On arriving at Brighton, they were at once placed in a fly and driven without loss of time to Lewes. Their conduct since their capture has been perfectly quiet, and on the whole they appear little affected by their situation. This remark does not apply however, to the prisoner Longhurst who since the news of his wife's death has materially altered his demeanour. To use the expression of the officer he appeared considerably "cut up" by the melancholy intelligence. (Sussex Advertiser) **[28]**

They were examined before the Lewes magistrates on Monday and remanded for further examination till Thursday[29]

**On March the 19th 1845** the men were found guilty of burglary and transported for ten years. There is some variation in the reports on the sentencing of the women members of the gang Jane Burgess and Ann Hounsell varying between 18 months and two years hard labour. Biddlecombe was commended by the judge for showing great zeal and activity in the case and was rewarded twenty shillings in addition to his expenses and the two constables who assisted him in the pursuit of the prisoners should each receive five shillings.[30]

A further press report contains more detail of the ploy used by Biddlecombe to make the arrests. There is also a reference to links with a large number of burglaries. Operating in the 1840s across Surrey and Sussex were the Surrey based Isaac's gang who were prolific burglars and involved in at least two murders.[31]

There was considerable interest created by the fact that the prisoners were supposed to have been connected with a great number of burglaries that have been committed in the county of Surrey. The circumstances of this particular case presented nothing uncommon, except the

[27] The Times (London, England), Wednesday, March 12, 1845
[28] The Times Wednesday March 12 1845
[29] The Morning Chronicle Wednesday March 12 1845 – abridged from the Surrey Advertiser
[30] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, March 20, 1845
[31] Full details of the gang can be found at www.surrey-constabulary.com

mode of their capture. A constable named Biddlecombe was on their traces; and after travelling in pursuit of them over a very great extent of country succeeded in coming up with the prisoners at Alton, in Hampshire; and as he was at this time alone, they would have probably got away had he not adroitly hit upon the following expedient to disarm their suspicion. He told them on coming up with them that he was an officer and that a farmer a short distance off had sent him after them on suspicion of stealing some fowls the night before. The prisoners said they could easily prove their innocence of this charge for they had slept in Basingstoke. The officer then said they could no doubt easily prove this to the satisfaction of the complainant if they would go back with him, and for "forms sake" they had better have on the handcuffs. The prisoners consented and very quickly allowed the officer to handcuff them, and he told them the real nature of the charges against them. [32]

When secured and handcuffed, Biddlecombe called them by their several names and informed them of the charges against them. They each of them carried a bundle and the great proportion of the missing property belonging to Mr Sparks and Mr Abbott were found in their possession as well as some nine or ten shillings in silver and a small quantity of eatables. They were dressed in long smock frocks, buttoning before, and appear to have disposed of very little of the property taken on the previous Saturday night except the wine and spirits. They were all three armed with long knives and had they been aware of the charges against them or the mission of the officer, they would doubtless have used them to the danger of him and his assistants. They had no firearms in their possession. The chief constable at once procured a vehicle and conveyed his prisoners to Godalming, where he arrived with them late on Friday evening. They were subsequently conveyed to Lewes, examined before the magistrates on Monday and remanded for further examination. On Thursday the three male prisoners, Amos Patching, Thomas Burgess and John Longhurst and two female prisoners, Mary Ann Houndsell and Jane Burgess were brought up for further examination. Five cases were gone into viz, those of Sir Page Dicks of Preston, the Rev WB Staveley of Falmer, Mr Napoleon Baker junior of Edburton, the Rev H Fearon of Cuckfield and Mr George Goldsmith of Bevendean. After the first or second witness had been called, Houndswell became greatly affected and agitated; she was suffering from St Vitus's Dance to a great degree, so much so that the worthy magistrate ordered her to be taken into the yard; she shortly after returned but some time elapsed before she became calm and collected. The prisoners were fully committed for trial at the assizes, which commenced on Monday (yesterday).[33]

[32] The Derby Mercury Wednesday March 26 1845
[33] The Derby Mercury Wednesday March 26 1845