Surrey Constabulary History
'An in depth history of policing in Surrey'

May 2025
www.surrey-constabulary.com

Editor Robert Bartlett MA (Cantab) CF
938at938@gmail.com

Surrey Constabulary History 125

1950 PCs John Boxall and Sid Warren on patrol in Guildford in a Humber

Contents

September – 1975 was International Womans Year and the year that Surrey Police adopted the 'third degree'.
Mr. Matthews welcomes the third degree, WPC Melloney Kaye, B.A. (Laws) watched by WPC Denise Born, B.A. (Linguistics) and W/Supt. Peggy Sandford, LLb.

Photo – Jerry Coombes HCP

Fifty years ago

Observer Corps

Observer Corps and the Special Constabulary

Email from KV during March 2025 to Editor

I am looking for some information of the early years of the Observer Corps, as some of the early posts were set up by Surrey Constabulary in the mid-1920s.

My apologies if I am going over material you are familiar with. 2025 marks the 100th anniversary of the Observer Corps. As you may well know, these first posts were manned by members who were Special Constables. The whole organisation was operated by police forces in the South East to start with. It is that early period I am interested in. Do you think you may be able to help me? Are there are any relevant old records available to your museum?

As way of background, I was a spare-time officer in the Royal Observer Corps with No 4 Group at Colchester up to stand down in 1991. Now I write and publish on military aviation topics. A UK publisher has asked me to write a couple of books on the history of the Corps to mark the centenary of its formation, which is why I am contacting you.

18 April 2025 I have been at The National Archives at Kew this week wading through files about the early Observer Corps period from 1924. There is a great deal of general material and about county and borough chief constable's meetings with the Home Office and early OC commanders. (More Essex and Kent than Surrey and Sussex).

Martin Stallion Police History Society – police historian Essex

I cannot help with the early period that the enquirer is asking about. The online article was written by Alan Cook, who is also a member of the PHS.[1]

Ronald Seth's book The Specials: the story of the Special Constabulary in England, Wales and Scotland (Gollancz 1961) has a footnote on page 143:

The Observer Corps was originally attached to the Special Constabulary organisation, and though its members did not undertake police duties but concentrated on the recognition of aircraft, plotting and range-finding, they were enrolled as Specials. Shortly before the War began, it was formed into a separate organisation under a Commandant and came under the control of the RAF…

One Colchester OC member kept a diary which has been published: E J Rudsdale's journals of wartime Colchester, ed by Catherine Pearson. History Press, 2010 with 2022 reprint. ISBN 978-0752458212

Finally, I undertook a transcript of Southend Borough specials' and war reserves' declarations of their oaths of office, from 1938 to 1949 (held at the Essex Record Office). Of the roughly 1500 names only 8 were specifically for the Observer Corps

Robert Simonson, Surrey History Centre

I have undertaken a search of our catalogue but cannot find anything obvious. We do have the minutes of the Standing Joint Committee, 1889-1965 (ref. CC767/11/), which was responsible for the administration of the Surrey Constabulary, and described in our catalogue as:

"Although the Local Government Act, 1888, transferred to County Councils the general administrative functions of the County Justices in Quarter Sessions, the control of the police and the execution of certain functions relating to the administration of justice were not removed entirely from the purview of the Justices, but provision was made for the exercise of such functions through the Standing Joint Committee which was composed of an equal number of representatives of the County Council and the Quarter Sessions. In Surrey the Committee consisted of nine members from each side. (Surrey County Council - General Reference Book, 1962 (p121))

The proceedings of the Committee did not require confirmation or approval by the County Council or Quarter Sessions, nor could the County Council refuse to make provision for payment of expenditure determined by the Standing Joint Committee to be necessary. The expenditure of the Committee was met by the County Fund. (ibid (p121))

[1] By kind permission the editor British Police History www.admin@british-police-history.uk – copyright Alan Cook

The Committee was responsible for the administration of the Surrey Constabulary and acted on behalf of the Council as a licensing authority in relation to betting facilities on race tracks.

Under the Police Act, 1964, the Standing Joint Committee was replaced by a Police Committee which assumed all powers and duties of the former Committee in relation to the administration of the Police. The powers and duties relating to the licensing of betting facilities on race tracks was transferred to the Public Control and Licensing Committee. For signed minute books of the Police Committee, 1965-1974, see CC767/12/1-2". These minute books might contain information on activities of the Observer Corps and the Special Constabulary in Surrey.

On-line British Police History extract:[2]

Observer Corps Special Constabulary

1925 - 1941

When is a Special Constabulary medal not a Special Constabulary medal? While at first this may seem a strange question, recent research into a Special Constabulary group of medals brought about an unexpected answer. The group in question was awarded to Walter E Rowles, a resident of Colchester, Essex during the first half of the twentieth century. His medal group and associated items were sold at auction in Ipswich during 2009.

The lot consisted of a group of three medals, WWII Defence Medal, 1937 Coronation Medal and George VI Special Constabulary Long Service Medal. None of the medals were mounted for wear and, as would be expected, only the Special Constabulary medal was named. The clue linking the group to Colchester came in the form of a WWI period Specials lapel badge; also in the lot were an Observer Corps badge and a Colchester Hospital carnival pin. A check of the census records provided the final reassurance by confirming that Walter Rowles was a Colchester based motorcycle engineer.

British Police History

[2] With kind permission of British Police History April 2025 https://british-police-history.uk/f/observer-corps author Alan Cook


Major General E B Ashmore

When Zeppelin LZ38 bombed the East End of London on the night of May 31 1915 it brought home the realisation that air defences in the UK were virtually non existent. Despite some minor improvements things did not radically change until 1917 when responsibility for the defence of London was given to Major General E B Ashmore CB CMG MVO RA. Just when his new systems had a chance of making a difference the armistice was signed and air defences were demobilised. However, the lessons learnt during the war were not forgotten and in 1929 the Air Ministry took over from the War Office and became responsible for creating "a highly organised system essential for the rapid collection and distribution of information and intelligence regarding movements of hostile and friendly aircraft throughout the whole area of possible air operations".

In August and September 1924 Major General Ashmore carried out a series of trials in the Weald of Kent. With the support of the Kent Chief Constable Special Constables were used to man nine observation posts, and a temporary control room at Cranbrook. These trials proved successful in giving an accurate record of flights that established the principle of an air defence network.

As a consequence of this success the Observer Corp was formed in October 1925. Although Ashmore created a grid system to extend over th country it was the vulnerable counties of Kent and Sussex that were the first to be brought into service with operation centres at Maidstone an Horsham. Ashmore continued to use the services of the local Chief Constables to recruit Special Constables to perform Observer Corps duties There was a great deal of secrecy involved in this new work and volunteers were not allowed to tell families what they were doing. The origina volunteers numbered 300 and they were all enrolled as Special Constables under very specific conditions of service.

The terms and conditions for service were laid down as follows:

- The Observer Corp shall consist of volunteers, enrolled as Special Constables, who undertake to carry out observation work in the air defence of Great Britain as part of their constabulary duties.
- Enrolment may be for observation work only, and without acceptance of the general responsibilities of the Special Constabulary.
- Upon ceasing to be Special Constables, members cease to belong to the Observer Corp; but members who so desire may, at the discretion of the Chief of Police, be retained for observation work only after the normal retiring age of the Special Constabulary to which they belong.
- The duties are local, and members incur no obligation to carry out observation duties beyond the district of the local Special Constabulary.
- Members undertake not to resign from the Corps after they have been called out for observation duty in connection with a war emergency until either they are released from duty or a week has elapsed after an outbreak of war.
- Members will act under the direction of the Chief of Police, and such Special Constabulary officers as he may appoint, as regards attendance for duty at posts and centres and all matters of administration, but for matters of technical training and in operations they will act under the observer group assistants and higher officers of the Observer Corps, and the authorities responsible for air defence.
- Service in the Observer Corps will rank as approved Special Constabulary service, and duties performed in connection with the training or work of the corps will rank as police duties for the purposes of the award of the Special Constabulary Long Service Medal.

Jenny Tuffs Observer Corps

The members gave their services voluntarily and were enrolled as Special Constables. Their primarily function was to take part in home air defence organisation. I cannot find anything specific to Surrey but have put together a few things from 1920's. The organisation later became The Royal Observer Corps, but it was still Observer Corps when under police supervision until at least 1938. In April 1941 Sir Archibald Sinclair, Air Minister told the Commons that in recognition of the valuable services rendered by the Observer Corps the King had approved that the Corps should henceforth be known as the Royal Observer Corps. It seems to have finished in 1995.

TERRIER AIRMEN.

Co-operation with R.A.F. at Watchet.

CAMP FIXTURES.

The annual camps of the Territorial Air Defence formations in co-operation with the Royal Air Force will be held at the Anti-Aircraft Practice Camp at Watchet in Somerset, and at the Searchlight Training Camp at Manston in Thanet. The dates of commencement for the camps at Watchet are:—52nd A.A. Brigade, July 12th; 51st A.A. Brigade, August 1st; 53rd and 54th A.A. Brigades, August 22nd; and 55th Brigade, August 29th. For those at Manston the dates of commencement are:—Essex Searchlight Group, latter half of July; 27th Searchlight Battalion (London Electrical Engineers), July 25th; Kent and Middlesex Group, August 8th; and 26th Searchlight Battalion, August 22nd.

The Observer Corps of Special Constables in the counties of Suffolk, Essex, Kent, Sussex, Surrey, and Hants are to carry out an extended series of exercises with the Royal Air Force during July. The 1st Searchlight Battalion of the Regular Army from Blackdown will provide a lay-out of searchlights in Surrey and Kent, with headquarters at Biggin Hill, during July and August, for work with formations of the Royal Air Force.

30th June 1926 Exeter and Plymouth Gazette

The Observer Corps of Special Constables in the counties of Suffolk, Essex, Kent Sussex, Surrey and Hants are to carry out an extended series of exercises with the Royal Air Force during July. The 1st Searchlight Battalion of the regular army from Blackdown will provide a layout of searchlights in Surrey and Kent with HQ at Biggen Hill during July and August for work with formations of the RAF.

LESSONS OF THE AIR RAIDS

LONDON THEORETICALLY IN RUINS

Grim "Fight" Over Croydon

Experienced observers make the startling confession that had real bombs been carried in the Royal Air Force manœuvres vast areas of London would be in ruins.

During Tuesday night and the early hours yesterday no fewer than 20 "air raids" were made on the Metropolitan area. In 5h of these the searchlights were at work, and the attackers would all have been destroyed in real warfare. Many tons of bombs were, however, dropped by the other raiders.

Lessons of great value in the aerial defence of London have already been learned. Weaknesses are being discovered, but the wonderful efficiency of our searchlights as an aid to the destruction of enemy machines has been triumphantly established.

Theoretically London was laid in ruins, but the "enemy" lost heavily. Five machines could not get home because of the weather. They would have been captured in time of war.

There was a grim "fight" over Croydon, in which three enemy planes would have been shot down, but Croydon at 11 a.m. would have been wiped out by the unloading of bombs.

One airman thrilled the watchers by coming down the beam of a searchlight to within a few hundred feet. He could have bombed the searchlight station.

A Handley-Page bomber had an actually thrilling escape. The machine developed engine trouble when 15,000 feet up over Clacton, and it made a rough landing at Mistley, in Essex.

Six Raids.

The manœuvres were continued yesterday, when six raids were made on London districts. On the whole the weather has been favourable to the raiders.

Of the six raids three of them were intercepted by fighter patrols. One raid was destroyed on its homeward journey after bombing London. Two of the raids bombed their objectives without being intercepted, while one raid coming from a south-west direction had to return home owing to bad weather before it had crossed the coast.

Useful work has been accomplished at night by the 500 special constables of the Observer Corps stationed at listening posts spread over Sussex, Surrey, Suffolk, Essex, Kent, and Hampshire. As hostile 'planes were discovered by the observers the information was telephoned to the nearest air centre and passed on from there to defence headquarters. This enabled instructions to be issued for dealing with danger. The Observer Corps has been training for two or three years under Major-General E. B. Ashmore, Commander of Ground Defences.

28th July 1927 Dundee Courier

BOMBING LONDON

Air Attack to Last Six Days—Civilian Observers to Aid Defence

London will be bombed from the air for six days this month!

But there is no need for alarm or flight. It is just that the annual exercises of the Air Defence of Great Britain are about to begin.

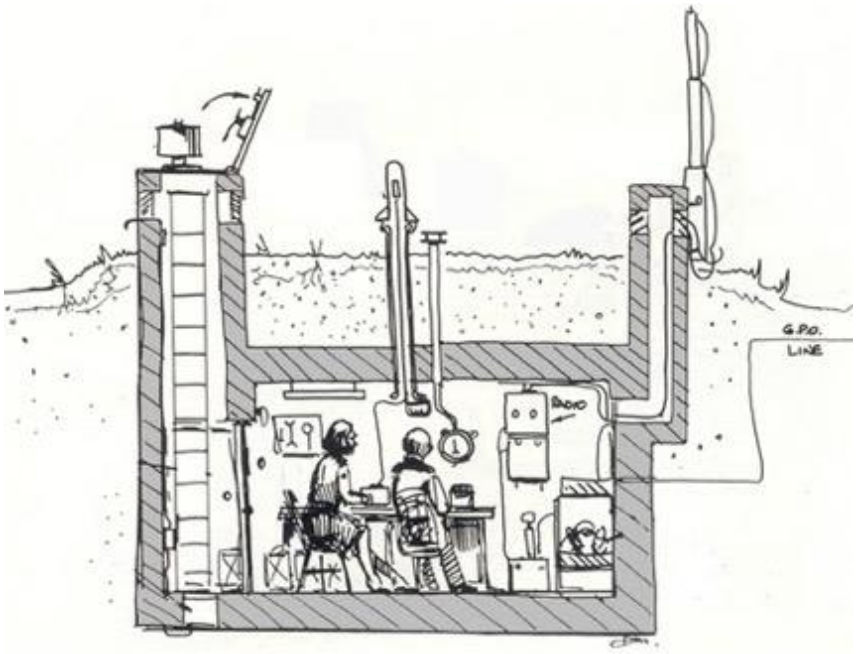
The "enemy" will consist of the units of the Wessex Bombing Area. They will include five squadrons of twin-engined night bombers and six squadrons of high-powered long-distance day bombers.

The guns and searchlights of the Anti-Aircraft Territorial units, reinforced by a few Regular units, will lie hidden round London.

The exact system of communications and warning of the enemy's approach is a closely guarded secret, but a good deal depends on the work of the volunteer civilian Observer Corps.

Clerks, schoolmasters, clergymen and farmers, organised by the special police and equipped with the telephone service, will be there to help in the defence.

6th August 1928 Daily Mirror



1929 The Evening News 18th July- At the Aero Exhibition at Olympia in 1929s Major General E B Ashmore, London's Wartime Air Defender said that 5 years ago he began organizing a system to insure that at all times the position of any aircraft flying across the coast

or country was known instantly to the authorities controlling the defences. The Observer Corps then started. The same week marked the beginning of the observer exercises for the year. This vital work was neither exciting nor spectacular.

An extract from his speech that day explains the role of the Observer Corps:

Five years ago I began the organisation of a system to achieve this object. The Observer Corps, then started, was a much-improved copy of my organisation of the London Defences at the end of the war.

This week, that sees the opening of the Aero Exhibition, by a coincidence, marks also the beginning of the observer exercises for the year. This vital work has nothing about it of the exciting or spectacular. It is as far removed as the poles from the thrills of Hendon, or the thronged interest of Olympia.

Any evening during the next fortnight a keen onlooker, touring about the counties between London and the coast, might see in some quiet field a little knot of civilians busy round a curious tripod arrangement, one of them wearing the head-set of a telephone operator.

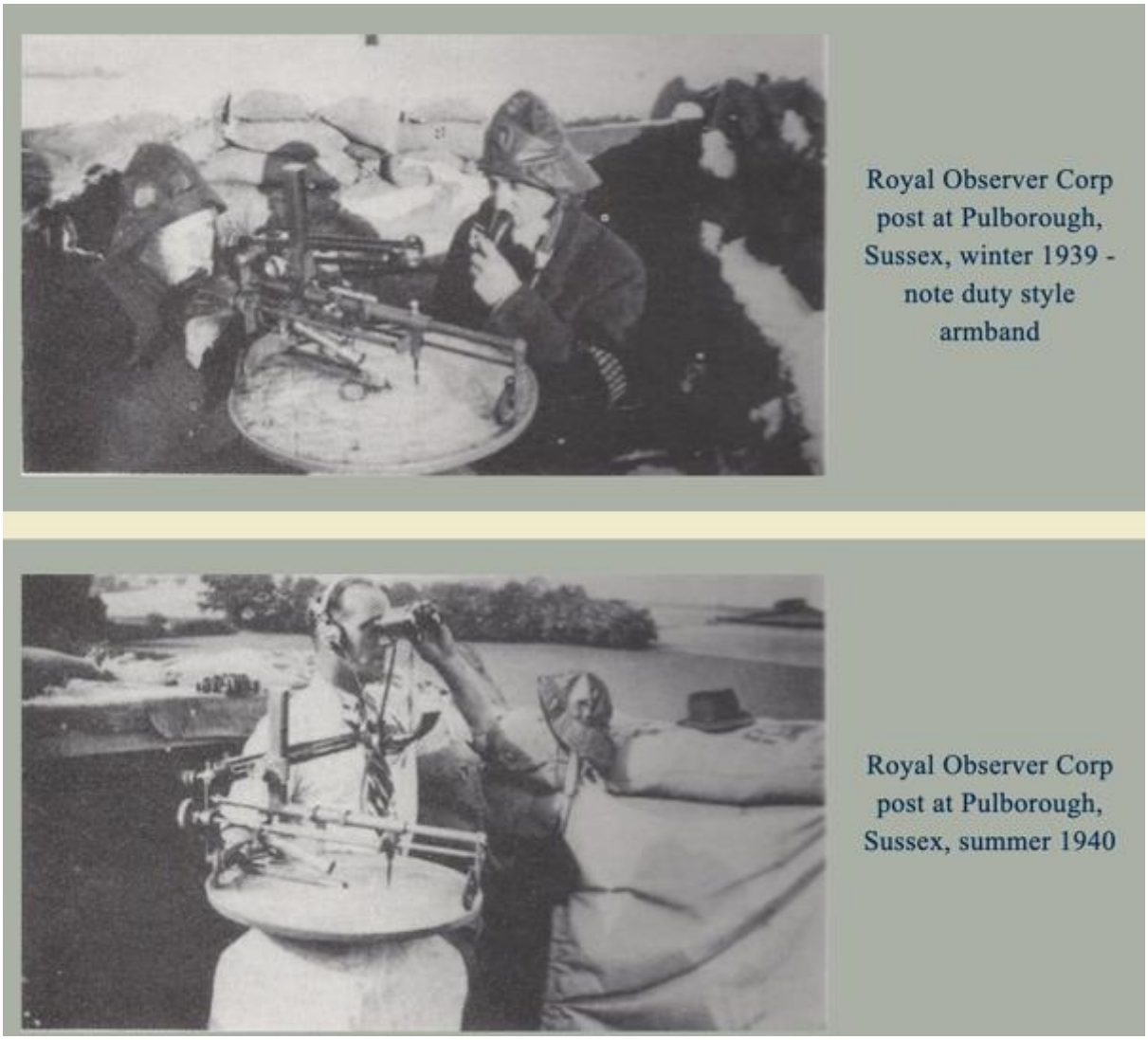
A big bomber at a great height, and some miles off, hardly visible, sails across the sky; the telephonist murmurs a string of figures into his mouthpiece. Nothing much appears to be happening, certainly nothing at all exciting.

Follow up the telephone wire from any one of these Observer Posts—there are about a hundred such posts—and we find ourselves in a quiet room in some provincial town. Here are more civilians, a dozen or so of them. Some, with telephone head-sets on, are sitting round a table that a large squared map completely covers.

The headphones are "through" all the time to the posts we saw in the open country. Again nothing exciting appears to be happening. But across the map are creeping several serpent-like lines of coloured counters. As the head of each serpent makes a move forward, a telephonist, who is looking on, whispers a few words and figures into his telephone. The proceedings are very tame, even dull and monotonous.

Again, tucked away "somewhere," is a larger room with a larger map, and more serpents of counters creeping across it. These serpents bear a remarkable likeness to the serpents we saw in the provincial town; their heads move forward at practically the same instant.

The serpents are the eyes and ears of the Air Defence. They show, instant by instant, the actual position and course of all aircraft flying over England. Wireless to the leaders of the fighter patrols does the rest.



From British Police History

Inspector John Buxton
Born May 1926 Died 2017
Surrey Constabulary and Wartime Commando

Editor: A lifetime ago I had a discussion in Dorking with my then inspector John Buxton who told me he had been an army commando during the war. I recall the conversation because of his comment that smaller, slight men have more stamina than the bigger, tougher looking men.

Tony Moore a retired Metropolitan Police superintendent and author of an excellent book on Rowan and Mayne is researching army commandos from the Second World War who had served in the police. I sent in John Buxton's name.

From Tony Moore: I have found the briefest mention on the Commando Veterans website of a Lance Corporal J. Buxton who served with 1/5 Commando. 1 Commando and 5 Commando

were both in Burma 1944-1945. After the war 1 Commando merged with 5 Commando on 23 March 1946 to form 1/5 Commando.

The entry on the Commando Veterans website claims that at some time after World War II he was a member of the Commando Association living at Chobham in Surrey.

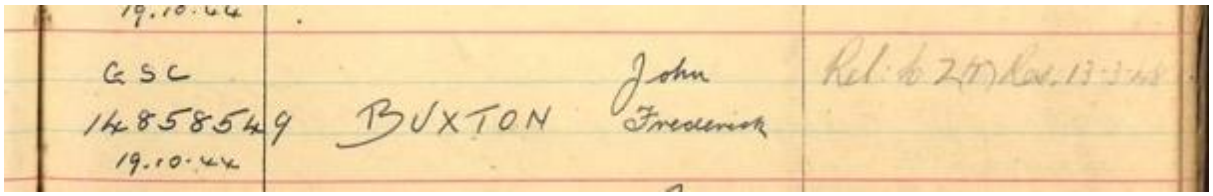
Unfortunately, there is no mention of his army number nor which regiment was his parent regiment. As I am sure you are aware, each commando had a regiment/corps for administrative purposes.

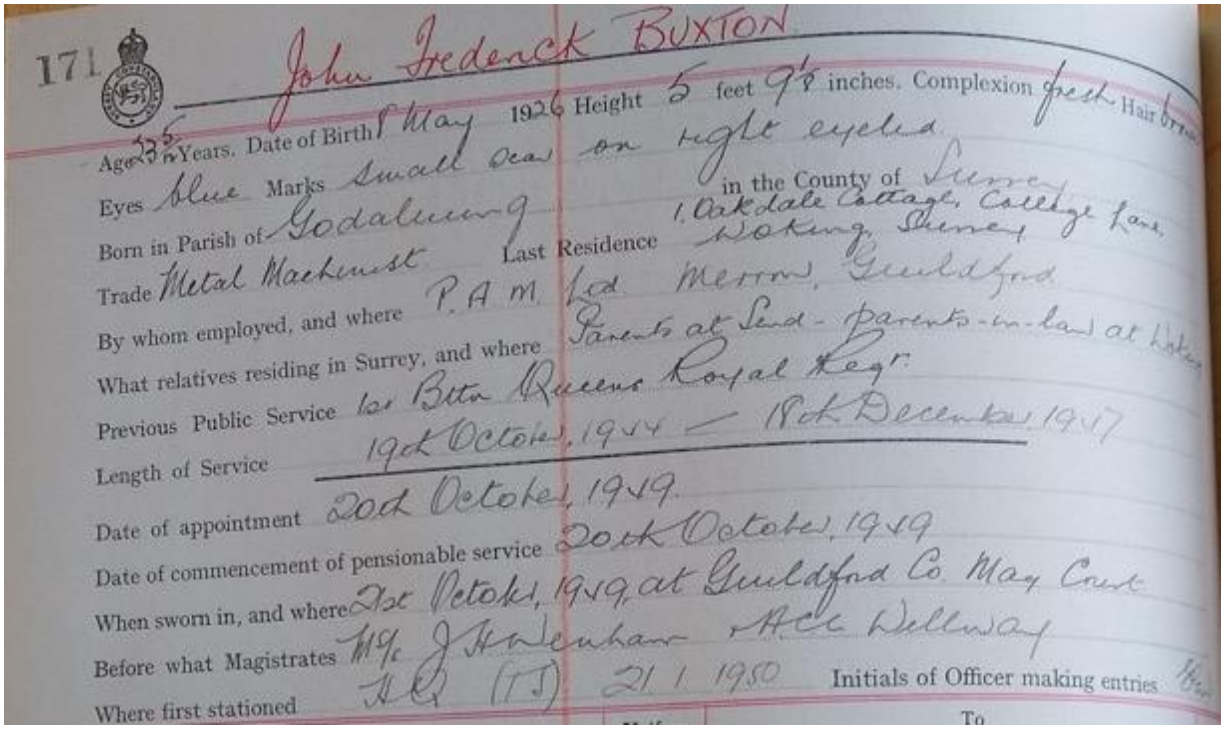
As a matter of interest, I lived and went to school in Hong Kong for a year from 1947 to 1948. My father was the RSM of the resident battalion, The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment).

Robert Simonson Surrey History Centre: The entry for John Buxton from the appointments book, ref. 9152/1/2/1/6 is attached. I see he was in the 1st Battalion, Queen's Royal Regiment, which was one of the Surrey regiments, and there is a J Buxton listed in a photograph of the Sergeants Mess of the 1st Battalion at Singapore in 1947, catalogued as:

'Sergeants' Mess, Singapore 1947. L-R 4th Row; Sgts E Smith, J Lambert. 3rd Row; C/Sgt J Munro, Sgts M Smith, T Barnes, D Jones, J Davis, F Tilbury, F Lowery, J Turpin, M Rigby. 2nd Row; C/Sgt J Cover?, Sgts H Shearman, K Watt, **J Buxton**, R Hunter, C Page, W Leach, S Smith, D Johnson, C/Sgt T King. Seated; CSM J R Puddephant, [Capt [unnamed], CSM W [unnamed], Lt Col D L A Gibbs, RSM J Kemp, Maj A R C Mott, RQMS F Wickam, CSM G Bolton, CSM F Boham?' (ref. QRWS/2/13/1/package3/112)

His enlistment record is in one of the registers of transfers in (book 18 [General Service Corps]), in the regimental archives, (ref. 7791/1/2/16), available on the Ancestry family history website – see attached image.





171 John Frederick BUXTON

Age 23 Years. Date of Birth 8 May 1926 Height 5 feet 9½ inches. Complexion fresh. Hair brown

Eyes blue Marks small scar on right eyelid

Born in Parish of Godalming in the County of Surrey

Trade Metal Machinist Last Residence 1, Oakdale Cottage, College Lane, Woking, Surrey

By whom employed, and where P.A.M. Ltd Merrow, Guildford

What relatives residing in Surrey, and where Parents at Send - parents-in-law at Horsell

Previous Public Service 1st Bttn Queens Royal Regt. 19th October, 1944 — 18th December 1947

Length of Service

Date of appointment 20th October, 1949.

Date of commencement of pensionable service 20th October, 1949

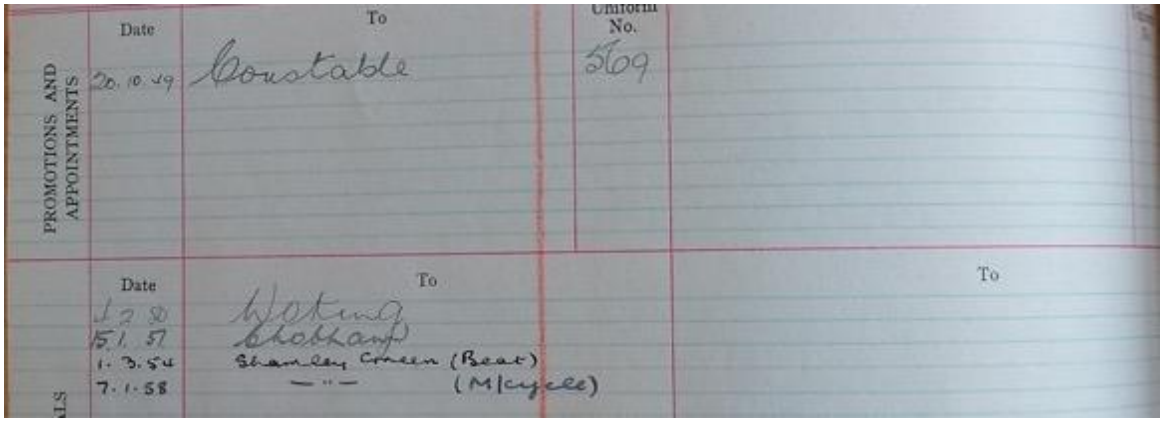
When sworn in, and where 21st Octobr, 1949, at Guildford Co. May Court

Before what Magistrates Wm J Hardenham Actg Dellway

Where first stationed A.G. (TS) 21.1.1950 Initials of Officer making entries

To

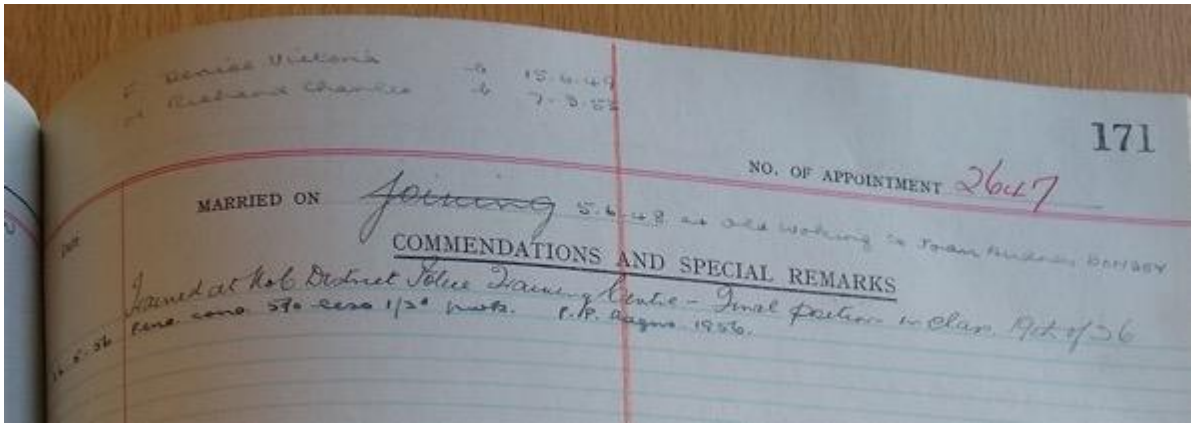
System change – initial career entries



PROMOTIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

Date	To	Uniform No.
20.10.49	Constable	569

Date	To	To
1.2.51	Woking	
1.3.54	Shamley Green (Beat)	
7.1.58	" " (Mcycle)	



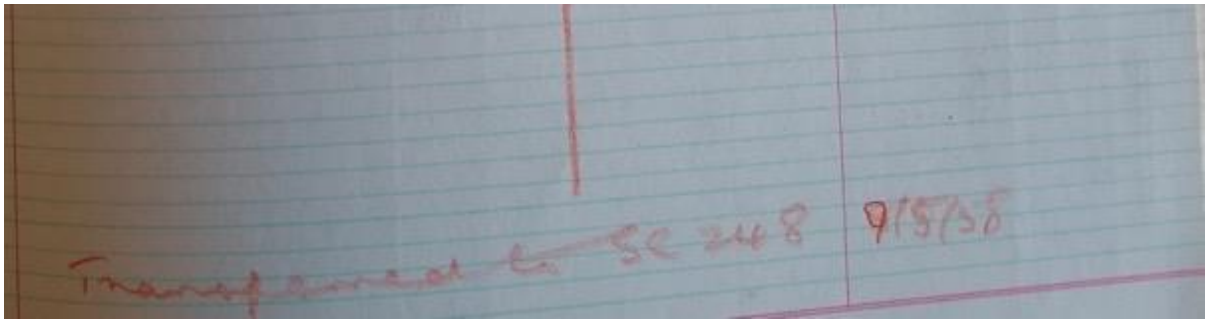
171

NO. OF APPOINTMENT 2647

MARRIED ON

COMMENDATIONS AND SPECIAL REMARKS

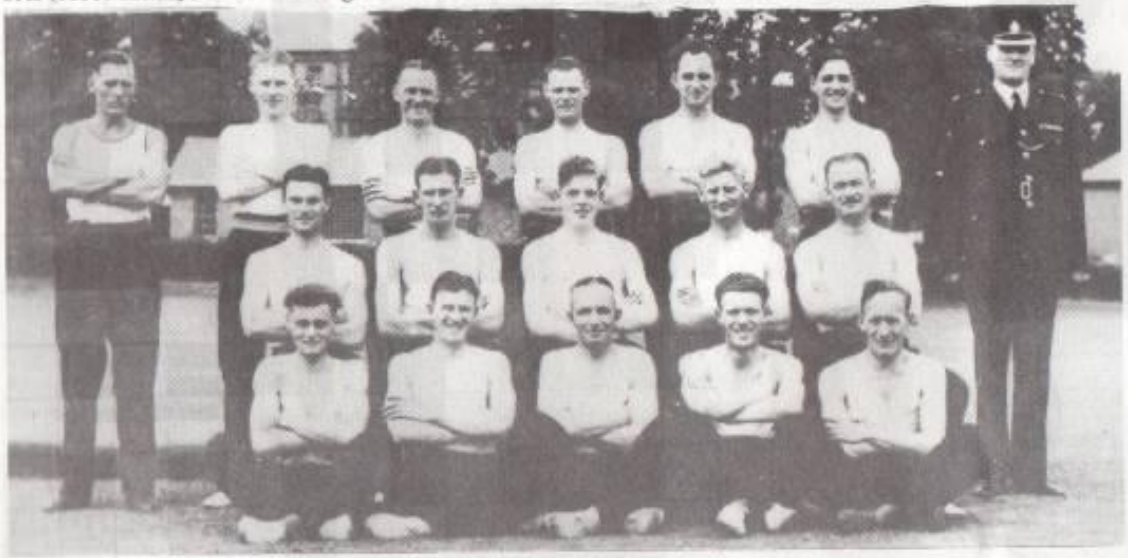
Joined at No 6 District Police Training Centre - Final position in class 4th of 56



Move from appointments register to form SC248 9 May 1958

Served at Merrow as a member of the **Police Messenger Service** during the war before he was called up becoming an Army Commando.

D.S. Dusty Miller sent us this photograph of the Woking Divisional P.T. Team taken in June 1951. The picture was taken at Inkermann Barracks where they attended for training prior to giving a display at The Sports (force family) Dav. Training was undertaken for half a day a week.



To the best of Dusty's recollections the names are as follows:
Back row: PT Instructor, Tim Healy, Ron Blason, late John Evans, John Griffiths, Peter Green, and Superintendent Collis.
Middle Row: Eric Washington, Peter Woods, Dusty Miller, late George Lock, Joe Last.
Front Row: ?, Peter Millson, PC Besch, PC Phelan, John Buxton.

June 1951 John Buxton front right

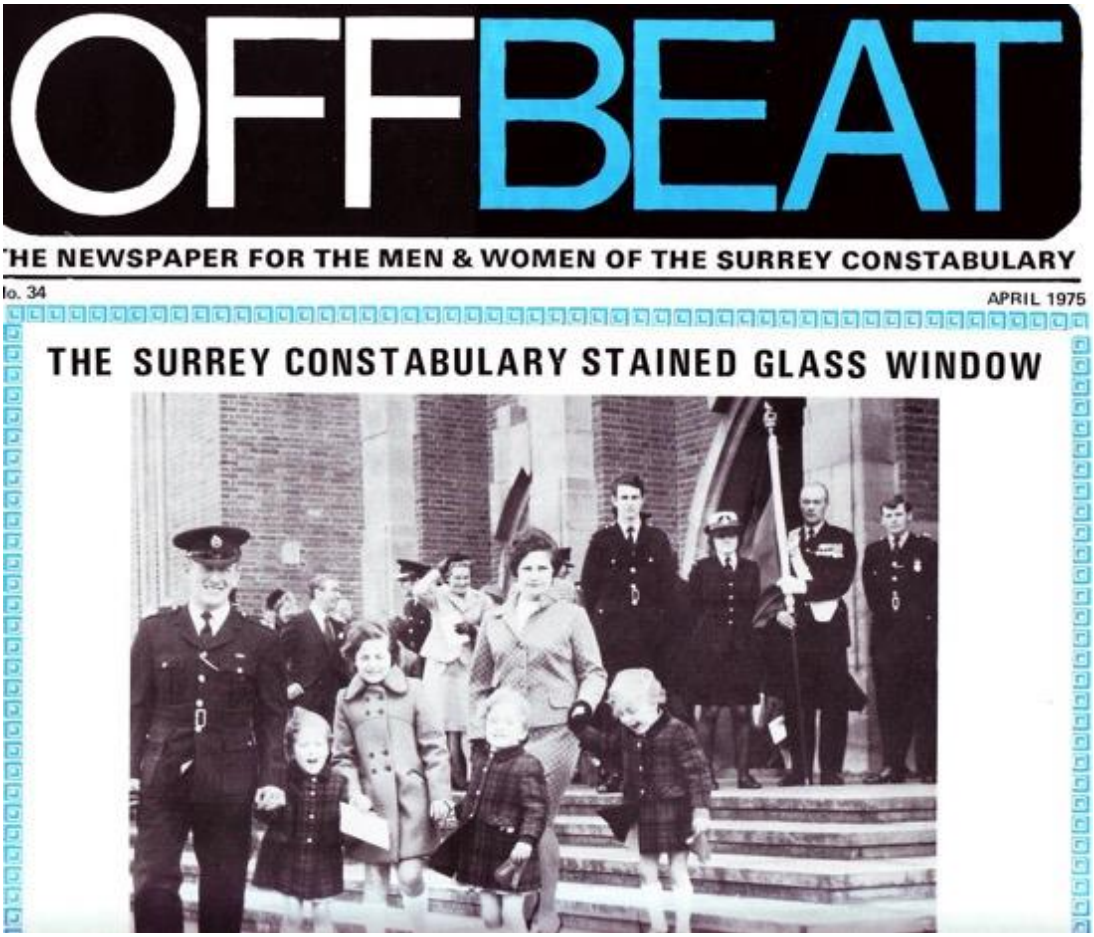
Off Beat

Inspector John Buxton lives in his own house at Guildford with his wife Patricia and their four daughters. An ex-Commando Mr. Buxton joined the Force in 1949 and has served at Woking three times, Chobham, Godalming, Headquarters Training Department, Dorking and has been working in the Control room for six months. He spends a lot of time on Do-it-Yourself and says his days of leisure are gone!
If you think you see John in Guildford Town and he completely ignores you don't jump to the conclusion that he's being stand offish—it could well be his twin brother—they are very often mistaken for each other!

Control Room about 1970

As one shift leaves, the new shift is briefed on the events of the previous 8 hours to ensure that the officers are aware of all incidents that have taken place during that time.
Left to right are: Peter Morgan, Kelvin Harper, Ted Stevens, Edward Bellingham, John Wright, Ken Halls, Sgt. Ray Lee, Inspector John Buxton, Sgt. George Fortescue, Inspector Ivan Bushnell, Peter Bradley, Graham Young, Ron Hill, Ken Strudwick, Howard Unsworth and Richard Eveleigh.

Woking early 1970s – John Buxton standing left



April 1975

Guy Riots in and around Guildford

Robert Bartlett May 2025 – previously published in Journal 30 April 2017

Every November 5, between 1820 and 1865, Guildford shopkeepers closed their businesses early, barricaded their shop fronts and prepared buckets of water to put out fires. The rioters, who called themselves the "Guys", gathered outside the town early in the morning, wearing outlandish costumes and masks. Carrying clubs studded with hobnails, lighted torches and bundles of wood, they then marched into Guildford like an invading army. A witness described their chilling "cry": Their cry will never be forgotten by anyone who ever heard it. It was a thrilling, piercing note of peculiar intensity, and was a warning for all peaceable citizens to be on their guard. [3] For the rioters, Bonfire Night was an opportunity to avenge themselves against fellow citizens who had offended them in any way. Opposite Holy Trinity Church, the Guys built a huge bonfire, piling up gates, railings and doors ripped from the houses of their enemies. Writing in 1912, the folklorist Charlotte Burn described a typical Bonfire Night: Fireworks were let off; the rioters danced round the fire, and went up and down the street, insulting those they met, breaking windows, and doing other damage. It is known that many otherwise

[3] GC Williamson, Guildford In The Olden Time, 1904

peaceable citizens took part in the riots, and more than once a disguised rioter found to his horror that some of the woodwork he was helping to destroy came from his own premises.[4]

Suppressing the rioters: Magistrates made repeated attempts to suppress the Guys and in 1843 two ringleaders were fined, their payments raised by public subscription and they were led from prison by a cheering crowd. In the 1850s, when the police tried to prevent rioting, the Guys blew horns to summon reinforcements. The year 1863 saw two riots, when the Guys took to the streets not just on Bonfire Night but also on March 10, to celebrate the Prince of Wales's wedding day. On Bonfire Night, the Guys attacked a local magistrate's house and demolished the whole front wall with hammers and axes. Yet Guildford was becoming increasingly prosperous, and the growing numbers of middle-class townsfolk had little sympathy with rioters. In 1863, they elected a new Mayor, P W Jacob, who had promised to break the power of the Guys. Jacob brought in more police to confront the rioters. This led to increased rioting. An even bigger riot took place in 1865, when a policeman was almost killed. Jacob's response was to arm the police with cutlasses, and send for a detachment of Lancers, who cleared the streets. This was the last serious riot. When the Guys tried to retake the town, in 1866 and 1868, they were quickly dispersed by cavalry. By 1870, according to a report, there was "scarcely a squib" in the whole of Guildford.

A further view of events came from Charlotte Burn[5]. The Guys were often joined by normally otherwise peaceful, Guildford citizens, who often found to their horror that some of the woodwork they were helping to destroy, came from their own premises! The rioters called themselves "Guys", and caused absolute chaos in the town, ransacking buildings, letting off fireworks, insulting anyone they came across and burning their “spoils” on the bonfire. Rioters wore masks. In 1854, the wooden racecourse grandstand on Merrow Downs was pulled down and burned outside the church. The rioters were fearless and even attacked the magistrate’s house!

1851 Guy Riots: A large-scale disturbance between the Guys and Police occurred at the bottom of the High Street near the Mount where heavy fighting took place with casualties on both sides forcing the police to withdraw to the county police station in Woodbridge Road. [6]

Guy Riots: Every November 5, between 1820 and 1865, Guildford shopkeepers closed their businesses early, barricaded their shop fronts and prepared buckets of water to put out fires. The rioters, who called themselves the "Guys", gathered outside the town early in the morning, wearing outlandish costumes and masks. Carrying clubs studded with hobnails, lighted torches and bundles of wood, they then marched into Guildford like an invading Army. A witness described their chilling "cry": Their cry will never be forgotten by anyone who ever heard it. It was a thrilling, piercing note of peculiar intensity, and was a warning for all peaceable citizens to be on their guard. [7]

---

[4] Charlotte Burne, Folk-Lore, December 1912
[5] Charlotte Burn Folk-Lore, 1912
[6] They Guarded Guildford by Richard Ford Surrey 1969 internal publication Surrey Constabulary
[7] GC Williamson, Guildford In The Olden Time, 1904

For the rioters, Bonfire Night was an opportunity to avenge themselves against fellow citizens who had offended them in any way. Opposite Holy Trinity Church, the Guys built a huge bonfire, piling up gates, railings and doors ripped from the houses of their enemies.

Writing in 1912, the folklorist Charlotte Burn described a typical Bonfire Night: "Fireworks were let off; the rioters danced round the fire, and went up and down the street, insulting those they met, breaking windows, and doing other damage. It is known that many otherwise peaceable citizens took part in the riots, and more than once a disguised rioter found to his horror that some of the woodwork he was helping to destroy came from his own premises."[8]

Suppressing the rioters: Magistrates made repeated attempts to suppress the Guys and in 1843 two ringleaders were fined their payments raised by public subscription and a cheering crowd led them from prison. In the 1850s, when the police tried to prevent rioting, the Guys blew horns to summon reinforcements.

• This picture is reproduced from the centenary supplement of the Surrey Advertiser.

(**Ed:** As a cadet in probably 1963 on New Year's Eve I was with PC Stan Warren close to the clock in the High Street as seen in the drawing. We were cut off from our comrades and Stan for the only time in his service blew his whistle for assistance. Never used it before or again before he retired. No radios!)

During the **1852 Bonfire Night** troubles, several hundred people congregated in the town, many armed with bludgeons, their faces blackened. For several hours they rampaged through the streets. Afterwards, two Guildford clergymen wrote to the town council to complain, demanding compensation for damages to their properties, which, they said, were caused by the mob. When the council refused, they took the case to the Home Office, which in turn demanded an explanation from the Mayor of Guildford, William Taylor. Guildford was told to put its

[8] Burne, Folk-Lore, December 1912

house in order and stop the riots forthwith. And although the town council was as keen as anyone to rid the streets of the Guys, tackling the problem was going to be a difficult one as there were few policemen. There was a plan to enlist special constables to boost the town's regular force, which in 1851, numbered just three constables and a superintendent. There may have been plenty of volunteers that year, but many failed to turn up for duty when the trouble was about to begin. [9]

1854: Guy Fawkes: The wooden racecourse grandstand on **Merrow Downs** was pulled down and burned outside the church by the Guys

PC 88 Charles Carpenter 1857 Chertsey
Surrey Constabulary Appointment 259
May 1856-July 1859
Blinded on Duty during a Guy Riot

During the 1857 riots the Guys lit a bonfire outside St Nicolas Church. The police charged and were met by a hail of stones. In the mêlée one officer lost an eye. Missiles hit two bystanders and another was flattened by a group of policemen, although he was only trying to get his children out of the danger zone![10]

1857 November 7 West Surrey Times: Guy Fawkes – most prominent desire of both police and the mob appeared to be the indiscriminate breaking of sculls by both and destruction of property by the latter. We regret to say that owing to the apparent want of courage to attack men in their prime, old men and children fell victim to the staves of the policemen and missiles of the populace. The shops in the town were closed about 6 o'clock, and the mob began to congregate. About twenty of the County Constabulary under the immediate command of Captain Hastings, the chief constable, who had offered them as an additional protection to the borough also commenced parading the town. Nothing of importance took place other than the letting off of a few squibs, to which an additional relish was imported if they could fire under

[9] http://st-caths-web.co.uk/?p=11643
[10] http://st-caths-web.co.uk/?p=11643

the nose of the police, until 9 o'clock when fire balls were started and a fire lighted in front of St Nicholas church. This being considered a sort of challenge the police made an indiscriminate charge knocking down all who came in the way, both disorderlies, orderlies and evidently had the worst of it, for besides being pelted with large stones by the mob they were reprimanded by the Mayor for their impetuosity.

Serious injuries were received by several of the police among whom were PCs Charles Carpenter, an intelligent, inoffensive, young man who had his eye literally driven out of its socket by a large stone. Roger Parks and Robert Bucket who both had their heads broken by similar missiles.

Several of the mob were also seriously injured. John Jelly a poor man about 60 years of age, and who had come for the purpose of taking his children away was knocked down by a policeman and could not reach home without assistance. A man named Downes, a foreman to Messrs Loe, was quietly returning home from his work when he was struck across the face by a policeman and had his upper lip mutilated dreadfully thereby. A man with his child in his arms was struck down, and two or three children became severe sufferers in the general melee. A pensioner named Linegar received injuries so severe that he was removed to the Greyhound Inn and a surgeon sent for immediately. A mason named Ede was knocked down three times. Stones and other missiles too flew so thick that very few escaped injuries of some kind.

Attacks were made by police upon the mob and the mob upon the police at intervals up to eleven o'clock when a general charge of the populace took place and the whole of the police were driven like rabbits up the High Street, down Market and North Streets to the County police station where they took refuge and the infuriated mob after breaking a few windows, returned to the fire which was replenished with gates and hurdles, railings and boards containing "cautions to trespassers" upon till one o'clock yesterday (Friday) morning. The county police did not show themselves again that night.

The Mayor and Town Clerk, whom Mr Superintendent Vickers attended as a bodyguard, continued however till between twelve and one o'clock.

1857 November 14 West Surrey Times: It would appear that with the exception of a few squibs in the street all was passing off very quietly until about nine o'clock when a mob of 50-100 were seen emerging from Mount Street and other places with faggots etc., which they proceeded to pile up in the centre of the road near the church and speedily ignited them. The police on duty endeavoured to stop them but failed in doing so being assailed with flints and other large stones which knocked down two of the constables as mentioned in our last edition. Instructions were sent off for reinforcements of police which shortly after arrived making a force of between 3930 and 40 men under the direction of Mr Superintendent Parr. This officer led his men round by Quarry Street, Mill Lane, through the Bury Fields to the Portsmouth Road thence to the top of Mount Street the mob, meantime having increased to nearly a thousand people.

The police having formed at the top of Mount Street charged down upon the mob below indiscriminately knocking down all who came in their way, and such was the force of the charge that for a moment all that were around the fire were dispersed, but before the police had passed over the bridge the mob had reassembled, and several skirmishes took place, until at last, armed with large stones pursued them up the High Street, throwing their missiles with terrible force and with almost fatal aim.

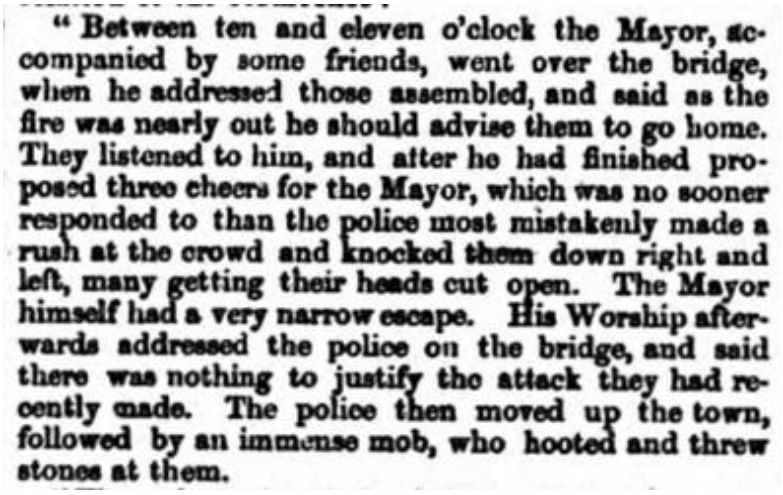
To say this was a retreat would perhaps be a misnomer, for the constables bolted helter-skelter and but for the seriousness of the matter, in a most ludicrous manner. The mob followed them, showering with stones and any other missile which came to hand, until the police station was reached, when the police took shelter, the mob contenting themselves with smashing the windows and doing other damage. Then they returned to the neighbourhood of the fire which being replenished without opposition continued until three o'clock on Friday morning at which time the mob quietly dispersed.

It was during the charge from Mount Street that PC Charles Carpenter received a blow on the left eye from a stone. Some person who happened to be next to the constable picked him up and took him to the Greyhound Inn where it was discovered that a portion of the poor fellow's eye was actually protruding from the socket. Mr H Taylor, surgeon, shortly after arrived and did all that was possible to alleviate the sufferings of the unfortunate man. Carpenter has entirely lost his left eye and the medical gentleman considers it extremely doubtful sight will be restored to the other.

Several other constables were severely injured and it is indeed astonishing, considering the severity of the conflict that no fatal results ensued.

Several of the mob also received severe contusions from the staves of the policemen and in one case a poor fellow who had been fearfully cut about the head has since died, but whether from the effects thereof or otherwise, has not been clearly proved. **(Ed:** Nothing further on this alleged death)

1857 November 7 West Surrey Times



"Between ten and eleven o'clock the Mayor, accompanied by some friends, went over the bridge, when he addressed those assembled, and said as the fire was nearly out he should advise them to go home. They listened to him, and after he had finished proposed three cheers for the Mayor, which was no sooner responded to than the police most mistakenly made a rush at the crowd and knocked them down right and left, many getting their heads cut open. The Mayor himself had a very narrow escape. His Worship afterwards addressed the police on the bridge, and said there was nothing to justify the attack they had recently made. The police then moved up the town, followed by an immense mob, who hooted and threw stones at them.

"Throughout the whole of Friday the leading topic of conversation was the proceedings of the over night. As in other instances some were of opinion that sufficient force ought to have been provided or nothing done in the matter; but most certainly the prevailing feeling was, that but for the County Police all would have passed off very quietly. The attack made by them when the Mayor was addressing the people was most unjustifiable; and if anything is wanting to prove this, the rebuke given by the Mayor on the bridge almost immediately afterwards is a complete answer, his worship observing there was not the slightest provocation for it, and that if they did so he could not wonder at the people retaliating. Our reporter was close to the Mayor when these remarks were made, and so he was when the attack was made, and he heard (as did several others) loud cries of "Murder and help" on the part of the people. For a short time the scene was a fearful one. The inquiry everywhere is, Who gave the orders for this attack? but no one can give the answer. We are informed, and upon the best authority, that Superintendent Parr made himself very active, and was seen to knock one man down, and strike three children; and report says that in order that he should not be recognised he doffed his uniform, and appeared in a white slop frock and fisherman's fantail hat; in which state he was addressed, and, we believe, reproved by the Mayor near the White Lion Inn. Our reporter was standing by, but did not hear what was said. The Superintendent advanced to our reporter, and, in a most insolent manner, said (we can quite understand why), "We want no listeners." The Mayor, however, cut the comb of the Superintendent by desiring him to be quiet, adding that our reporter had witnessed what had taken place, and from this observation we have little doubt but that the worthy Mayor had been complaining in some way or other. At this moment stones flew in all directions, and the police, with their disguised Superintendent, beat a hasty retreat and made the best of their way to the County Police-station, followed by the mob, who broke a number of the windows."

Guy Fawkes at Great Bookham

1857 November 21: Epsom Magistrates: **Guy Fawkes:** Charles Poulter the son of a carrier from Great Bookham was charged with **assaulting John Reid of the Surrey Constabulary** in the execution of his duty at Great Bookham on the 6 November. PC Reid was on duty on the 5th November in Great Bookham at half past twelve when there were **150 people** assembled armed with sticks and were throwing fire balls in every direction in the public highway. The officer attempted to take names for the purpose of summoning them but he was attacked with stones and was obliged to retire. About one o'clock the officer heard the mob were to bring a tar barrel set it on fire and throw it into a faggot stack. Upon hearing this he hid himself under a faggot stack. While he was there about 30 persons came up the road and about ten of them went into the garden close to where the officer was and began pulling a faggot stack to pieces in the adjoining garden. He made an attempt to get over the palings to see who the party were and saw Charles Poulter and went up to him. Poulter struck the officer in the face very hard and used very bad language towards him. The prisoner then put himself into a fighting attitude and called the others present to pitch into the police officer. They all began to throw stones at him and would nearly killed him had he not taken shelter in a house nearby. After he had got in the house those outside threw stones at the door and nearly broke it to pieces.

Inspector Law said the **parish constable had also been very severely assaulted.**

Fine of £2 and £1 costs or one month in prison; the prisoner asked for time to pay but when he was refused, he with the greatest nonchalance produced a cheque for £20 and asked for the change. He was told get the money or go to prison.

1857 November 21: Epsom Magistrates: **Guy Fawkes:** Charles May a witness for the defendant Poulter in the case above and Edward Boswell were charged with assaulting George Cobden Surrey Constabulary during the same disturbance at Great Bookham. Boxall pleaded guilty and both were convicted and Boswell fine £1 3s or two weeks in prison. Both defendants asked for time to pay, which was granted. The men were told by the chairman if they were brought before the bench again upon similar charges they would be sent to prison as the magistrates were determined to put down the dangerous practice of letting off fireworks in the public thoroughfares.[11]

1857 November 21: Epsom Magistrates: **Guy Fawkes:** Charles Sawyers, James Grout and George Sawyers were convicted of **throwing fireballs and fireworks** in the public highway in Great Bookham and the two former, were fined 6s 6d and the latter 2s 6d.[12]

1860: **Guy Riots:** Over the years the situation in Guildford did not improve. Although many people feared for their own safety and their property, it was as if, on the whole, the town encouraged Bonfire Night and all its traditions. The crowd cheered the 45 Guys who made their appearance in 1860. They wore a multitude of disguises and some were armed. One wore a

[11] 1857 November 21 The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[12] 1857 November 21 The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser

helmet-shaped white hat with horns; another wore a sugar-loaf hat made of tin foil. A simple black mask covered the face of another, while one Guy's mask consisted of tufts of wool. One even dressed as a woman! The Surrey Times newspaper estimated that there were 1,000 spectators who watched the bonfires while suffering the indignities of Guys rushing up to them and demanding money. The event continued until 2am when a lighted tar barrel was kicked around the High Street.[13]

1863 Guy Riots: The year 1863 saw two riots, when the Guys took to the streets not just on Bonfire Night but also on March 10, to celebrate the Prince of Wales's wedding day. On Bonfire Night, the Guys attacked a local magistrate's house and demolished the whole front wall with hammers and axes. Yet Guildford was becoming increasingly prosperous, and the growing numbers of middle-class townsfolk had little sympathy with rioters. During the evening of March 10, 1863, when the town, like the rest of the country was celebrating the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra, a gang of Guys lit a bonfire outside Holy Trinity Church and smashed the windows of a house in the town. The news of this unprovoked event and that of a drunken riot at St Catherine's Fair in October, when about 30 people were injured, spread further afield. The Times newspaper printed a savage attack on Guildford.

1863 October 3: A letter to the Times regarding the Guildford Riots from "Once a Special" ---- insist upon means for putting down with a strong hand these disgraceful riots and inflicting heavy punishment on the savages concerned."[14] The mayor was advised to bring in troops from Aldershot to prevent that year's November 5th celebrations dragging the town down further. Under the command of Lt Col Grey, 150 men of the 37th Foot, and 50 men of the 1st Royal Dragoons, were dispatched. It seemed to do the trick and the Guys soon dispersed.

Every November 5, between 1820 and 1865, Guildford shopkeepers closed their businesses early, barricaded their shop fronts and prepared buckets of water to put out fires. The rioters, who called themselves the "Guys", gathered outside the town early in the morning, wearing outlandish costumes and masks. Carrying clubs studded with hobnails, lighted torches and bundles of wood, they then marched into Guildford like an invading army. A witness described their chilling "cry": Their cry will never be forgotten by anyone who ever heard it. It was a thrilling, piercing note of peculiar intensity, and was a warning for all peaceable citizens to be on their guard. [15] For the rioters, Bonfire Night was an opportunity to avenge themselves against fellow citizens who had offended them in any way. Opposite Holy Trinity Church, the Guys built a huge bonfire, piling up gates, railings and doors ripped from the houses of their enemies. Writing in 1912, the folklorist Charlotte Burn described a typical Bonfire Night: Fireworks were let off; the rioters danced round the fire, and went up and down the street, insulting those they met, breaking windows, and doing other damage. It is known that many otherwise peaceable citizens took part in the riots, and more than once a disguised rioter found

[13] http://st-caths-web.co.uk/?p=11643
[14] 1863 3 October: The Times:
[15] GC Williamson,Guildford In The Olden Time, 1904

to his horror that some of the woodwork he was helping to destroy came from his own premises.[16]

Suppressing the rioters: Magistrates made repeated attempts to suppress the Guys and in 1843 two ringleaders were fined, their payments raised by public subscription and they were led from prison by a cheering crowd. In the 1850s, when the police tried to prevent rioting, the Guys blew horns to summon reinforcements. The year 1863 saw two riots, when the Guys took to the streets not just on Bonfire Night but also on March 10, to celebrate the Prince of Wales's wedding day. On Bonfire Night, the Guys attacked a local magistrate's house and demolished the whole front wall with hammers and axes. Yet Guildford was becoming increasingly prosperous, and the growing numbers of middle-class townsfolk had little sympathy with rioters. In 1863, they elected a new Mayor, P W Jacob, who had promised to break the power of the Guys. Jacob brought in more police to confront the rioters. This led to increased rioting. An even bigger riot took place in 1865, when another policeman was almost killed. Jacob's response was to arm the police with cutlasses, and send for a detachment of Lancers, who cleared the streets. This was the last serious riot. When the Guys tried to retake the town, in 1866 and 1868, the cavalry quickly dispersed them. By 1870, according to a report, there was "scarcely a squib" in the whole of Guildford.

A further view of events came from Charlotte Burn[17]. The Guys were often joined by normally otherwise peaceful, Guildford citizens, who often found to their horror that some of the woodwork they were helping to destroy, came from their own premises! The rioters called themselves "Guys", and caused absolute chaos in the town, ransacking buildings, letting off fireworks, insulting anyone they came across and burning their “spoils” on the bonfire. Rioters wore masks. In 1854, the wooden racecourse grandstand on Merrow Downs was pulled down and burned outside the church. The rioters were fearless and even attacked the magistrate’s house!

1863 3 October: The Times: A letter to the Times regarding the **Guildford Riots** from “Once a Special” ---- insist upon means for putting down with a strong hand these disgraceful riots and inflicting heavy punishment on the savages concerned.”

1863 Guildford Riots: There were two riots the first on March 10 the Prince of Wales’ wedding day and the other on the 5 November the usual day for a riot. County officers assisted the Borough i.e. one superintendent one sergeant and seven constables.[18] The mayor called on military support.[19]

1863 6 November: The Times: Guy Fawkes Day at Guildford: (A report on the 5th before the events of the day) Steps had been taken to prevent the previous years rioting but the “Guys” had resolved not to be deprived of their accustomed bonfire and procession. The mayor had

[16] Charlotte Burne, Folk-Lore, December 1912
[17] Charlotte Burn Folk-Lore, 1912
[18] Durrant page 69
[19] The Times 3 October 1863 – refers to military support two years before

arranged for: fifty Dragoons who came by road and one hundred and fifty men who came by special train from Aldershot and then marched to their quarters in various public houses in the town. Upwards of one hundred and fifty special constables and two local corps of the Rifle Volunteers the 13th and 24th were ordered to be ready to assist the public peace. The County Constabulary under Superintendent Parr and Mr. Inspector Barker have had supplementary forces to prevent any outbreak beyond the jurisdiction of the borough authorities. Today the town is in a state of great excitement.

A brave policeman faces the rioters[20]

1863 29 December: The Times: Guy Riots: PC William Sutton of the Guildford Borough Police standing at Tunsgate close to the police station entrance was approached by three or four men in disguise who knocked him down. He got up and endeavoured to defend himself with his staff but was knocked down again and struck on the body and head. "I heard one of the men say "Murder the ---". I then became insensible and remember no more." PC James Marshall found three bludgeons, formidable weapons, spokes from a cartwheel weighted at one end.

1864 Guildford Riots an officer from Guildford Borough was badly injured**.** County officers assisted the Borough. in Guildford.[21]

1864: Guy Riots: On **Boxing Day** about **20 Guys** entered the town and **attacked PC Stent.** He ran up the High Street, but they gave chase, knocked him to the ground and savagely beat him with sticks and clubs. More officers arrived and further scuffles took place. Four Guys

[20] Picture from 'The Guildford Guy Riots' by Gavin Morgan
[21] ER Chamberlin 1982 edition published by Phillimore, ISBN 0 85033 457 8. Reports a policeman died – this is thought to be not so.

were arrested and later appeared at **Kingston Assizes**. Two were found guilty of rioting and causing bodily harm and each was sentenced to three months' hard labour. [22]

PC Stent was attacked and seriously hurt on Boxing Day a Sunday and the last and most serious of the Guy riots. Four men were sent for trial. County officers assisted the Borough in countering the rioting. This was the last serious disturbance/riot PC Stent was brutally attacked in a determined attempt to murder him. About 14 other officers armed with cutlasses who initially formed a line outside the White Lion rescued him. There was a violent battle during which PCs Davis, Watts, Marshall and West were injured but the police won the day. Three rioters William Nugent, George Stevens and Edwin Reeves were sent to prison for their part in the riot. PC Stent a former Royal Marine Artilleryman recovered from his injuries but did not remain long in the force. Several years later at the age of 61 he was found drowned in the River Wey near his home in Stoughton.

1864 Reigate 5 November Riots: Superintendent authorised to buy a new hat to replace the one damaged on the night.

1865 4 October: The Times: "Tap Up" Sunday at Guildford Fair at St. Catherine's Hill. The Sunday preceding Bonfire the term Tap Up believed to come from the right for anyone to set up a tap and dispense beer. From this event disturbances develop culminating in the Guy Riots.

1865 Guildford Riots: PC Stent was attacked and seriously hurt – four men sent for trial. County officers assisted the Borough. This was the last serious disturbance/riot

1865 26 December: The Times January 6 1866: Guildford Police Court: PC Stent was on duty at 8.20 pm on the bridge at the lower end of the town when "I saw fifteen or twenty men disguised, with bludgeons approaching. They saw me and shouted. "That's he" and pelted me with stones, some of which struck me. I made up the High Street as fast as I could and they rushed after me still pelting me with stones. The prisoner Rowe rushed in front of the others and struck me two violent blows on the head with a bludgeon knocking me down. The remainder of the band then rushed me and beat me with their bludgeons. I heard one shout "Murder the ----."" PC Castleman corroborated PC Stent's evidence. PC Watts attended and faced the Guys with other constables. One of the Guys hit him with a heavy blow with a pole and he struck the Guy with his cutlass. A second man rushed at him and his disguise came off. PC Marshall took part in the fight and was attacked by Reeves. Acting Sergeant John Titley and PC Daves with other officers formed a line across the street and encountered the Guys when a shower of stones was flying. Daves was attacked by a Guy with a long pole but he knocked it out of his hand and the Guy fled. Four prisoners were committed for trial at the next assizes.

1865: An even bigger riot took place in 1865, when another policeman was almost killed. Jacob's response was to arm the police with cutlasses, and send for a detachment of Lancers,

[22] 1864 December 20 Sussex Advertiser Surrey Gazette

who cleared the streets. This was the last serious riot. When the Guys tried to retake the town, in 1866 and 1868, the cavalry quickly dispersed them. By 1870, according to a report, there was "scarcely a squib" in the whole of Guildford.

A further view of events associated with the Guys came from Charlotte Burn[23]. “The Guys were often joined by normally otherwise peaceful, Guildford citizens, who often found to their horror that some of the woodwork they were helping to destroy, came from their own premises! The rioters called themselves "Guys", and caused absolute chaos in the town, ransacking buildings, letting off fireworks, insulting anyone they came across and burning their “spoils” on the bonfire. Rioters wore masks. In 1854, the wooden racecourse grandstand on Merrow Downs was pulled down and burned outside the church. The rioters were fearless and even attacked the magistrate’s house!”

1865 December 26: Guildford Police Court: PC Stent was on duty at 8.20 pm on the bridge at the lower end of the town when “I saw fifteen or twenty men disguised, with bludgeons approaching. They saw me and shouted, “That’s he” and pelted me with stones, some of which struck me. I made up the High Street as fast as I could and they rushed after me still pelting me with stones. The prisoner Rowe rushed in front of the others and struck me two violent blows on the head with a bludgeon knocking me down. The remainder of the band then rushed me and beat me with their bludgeons. I heard one shout “Murder the ----.”” PC Castleman corroborated PC Stent’s evidence. PC Watts attended and faced the Guys with other constables. One of the Guys hit him with a heavy blow with a pole and he struck the Guy with his cutlass. A second man rushed at him and his disguise came off. PC Marshall took part in the fight and was attacked by Reeves. Acting Sergeant John Titley and PC Daves with other officers formed a line across the street and encountered the Guys when a shower of stones was flying. A Guy with a long pole attacked Daves but he knocked it out of his hand and the Guy fled. Four prisoners were committed for trial at the next assizes. [24]

1866 January 3: Guy Riots Wednesday: An officer lies at the point of death with four men in custody but some of their number are still at large. In fact, Surrey police seem unable to successfully cope with these vagabonds[25]

Walton on Thames

1866 February 8: Surrey Quarter Sessions: Police officer John Foster of the Surrey Constabulary was charged with Grievous Bodily Harm with alternative charges following violence on Guy Fawkes at Walton on Thames on 6 November 1865 under the order of Superintendent Murtell a well-known and highly esteemed officer of the Surrey Constabulary called out following representations from respectable inhabitants to put down the nuisance arising from the practice of celebrating the anniversary of Guy Fawkes day by bonfire, fireworks and the discharge of fireballs. It was found that a mob of persons were assembled, a

[23] Charlotte Burn Folk-Lore, 1912
[24] The Times January 6 1866
[25] 1866 January 3 Exeter Flying Post

burning tar barrel was being rolled down the High Street of the village, and a bonfire was burning on the village green. The police interfered and the theory of the prosecution was that the defendant struck with his truncheon the complainant, a youth employed as an under gardener causing a severe scalp wound requiring six weeks medical care. The defence made the case that the village was in a state of riot and extreme confusion and responded when remonstrated with by throwing stones and other missiles. Several officers were wounded including the defendant PC Fraser whose helmet was cut through and wounded on the forehead. The jury returned a verdict of Guilty for inflicting actual bodily harm. Mercy was sought as the officer was an able and most efficient man to which the chairman concurred sentencing the defendant to be fined 20s and to keep the peace for six months – now that is a little odd as it was his job! [26] [27]

1866 April 3: Surrey Assizes Kingston: Guy riots Guildford: William Nugent 29, painter, George Stevens 28, painter and Edwin Reeves 26 a cooper were arraigned for the assault on PC John Stent Guildford Borough Police at Guildford on the 26 December. John Pearson was discharged by the grand jury. The indictment was assaulting Stent with intent to murder, or with intent to disable or to cause grievous bodily harm. The charges were not proceeded with but replaced with a misdemeanour charging with assaulting Police Constables John Stent, Joseph Watts, James Marshall and John Davis; the second charge was assaulting the officers in the execution of their duty; the third with common assault; and fourthly with riotous assembly. They pleaded not guilty. At about 8 o'clock in the evening of the 26 December a number of rough fellows, some of whom wore cocked hats, others having crape over their faces and all of whom were disguised made their appearance at the entrance of Guildford on the Godalming Road. They were armed with bludgeons of a formidable description and evidently bent on mischief. Stent saw them approaching and retreated towards the Town Hall and the mob commenced pelting him with stones and when he had gone a short distance he was knocked down and beaten with the bludgeons. He was much injured and was obliged to keep to his bed for three weeks. The mob then proceeded up the town and a number of other constables formed themselves across the road and attempted to stop their progress and a desperate struggle ensued during which several of the constables were severely beaten and maltreated. The facts are not disputed the only question raised is were the prisoners involved in the affray and they all seem to have been clearly identified by the witnesses for the prosecution. The jury after a very short deliberation found the prisoners reeves and Nugent Guilty of the whole charges contained in the indictment and Stevens guilty of riot only. The prisoners were taken down whilst the Judge decided what was to be done with them.[28]

1866 November 5: The fifth of November was duly celebrated in Godalming on Monday last. The shops were all closed at an early hour and preparations duly made for any emergency or accident that might arise. There were an unusually large number of squibs discharged in the streets and the proceedings of those connected with them were protracted to a much later hour than usual. The special constables were on duty and with the aid of the police succeeded in

[26] Morning Post 8 February 1866 Daily News February 8 1866
[27] 1866 February 10 Surrey Advertiser
[28] 1866 April 3 The Sussex Advertiser

preventing any damage or wilful injury in the borough, and that there appeared to do so for the conduct of the mob were in all respects orderly. A party of Guys, said to be from Guildford made their appearance in the town about nine o'clock and succeeded in lighting a fire near the old railway station, the materials for which they procured from the fences adjoining, they also pulled down a large piece of paling belong to Mr Murray Marshall but did not succeed in taking it away. Several accidents occurred during the evening owing to the incessant discharge of the "serpents." One woman was burnt rather severely owing to the explosion of a squib, which ignited her dress. A man named Fry was also much burnt about the face from a similar cause and there were other instances wherein personal injury was sustained. Several of the houses also suffered much by broken windows and several others had their frames broken by the flight of fireworks through them. Taken altogether the 5th passed peaceable although so large a number of fireworks in the streets had not been witnessed for many years.[29]

1866 November 5: Ripley. The lads of the village had their **usual bonfire** on the 5th but it was a very tame affair, the greater part of those who usually go to witness this fun having gone to see the brilliant display of fireworks which was given by Ryde House School[30]

1866 November 10 Surrey Advertiser letter: Send 5th November: last evening was the most disgraceful scene occurred in Send. About 11.30pm a gang of **ruffians with their faces** blackened and otherwise disguised assembled in front of the New Inn and commenced a bonfire in the middle of the road; when this was burnt out they went to a public house whence they emerged about1.30 this morning powerfully refreshed and commenced another bonfire by tearing up palings, (note: fence made from pointed wooden posts) hurdles (note: normally a temporary fence) etc., (they had twelve of my hurdles). The policeman resides within 100 yards of the place where the bonfire was lighted. The hootings, firing of guns and noises kept the usually quiet village fully awake until 4am. No policeman ever interfered but he promises to interfere next 5 November. On mentioning this disgraceful affair, I am informed that other villages are so badly off but if reports speak correctly our policeman is frequently two miles and more away from the centre of his district, having a very large area of ground to travel over. I am sir, your obedient servant, An Inhabitant of Send November 6 1866. [31]

Editor: The proceedings referred to by our correspondent are very disreputable but the inhabitants themselves should take precautions against their occurrence, as this is not the first-time complaints have been made. The authorities would doubtless swear in special constables if application were made to them. The policeman stationed at Woking cannot expected to be everywhere nor could he be expected to make much "headway" against the "gang of ruffians" referred to had he interfered. The residents in the district should take the matter in hand another year or they may have to regret a greater destruction of property. Such proceedings gather strength by being unchecked.[32]

[29] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser
[30] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser
[31] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser
[32] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser

1866 November 5: Chertsey: The night of the 5th was a very exciting one in Chertsey from about six to half past ten fireworks were continually being fired in all parts of the town. Many of the respectable inhabitants were seen occasionally amongst the crowd of lookers on. The most exciting performance of the evening was the lighted tar-barrels. We are pleased to say the evening passed without any serious casualty. [33]

Farnham

1866 November 5: Farnham: On Monday afternoon the town presented an extraordinary appearance. Shortly after 4 o'clock preparations were made for shutting up most of the shops and boarding upper windows. Carpenters and others were engaged in all directions and it seemed as if some enemy was expected to attack the town. Darkness set in long before the preparations were completed. Between six and seven there was a fire kindled in Castle Street and squibs etc., were let off in earnest. At about eight o'clock a procession started from Castle Street in the following order. The town band assisted by many friends of the Alton band; a large car on which were several persons seated attired in various fancy dresses, amongst whom were two excellent full sized figures representing Guy Fawkes and Stephens, the head centre (sic) of the Fenians. Then followed a large number of persons carrying various flags and banners. The procession passed up West Street and Downing Street, through East Street and at various distances red and blue lights were show, which had a pretty effect. The procession returned to Downing Street where the figures were placed outside the bell and Crown Inn with the band playing "Rule Britannia." Before burning old Guy his head and various parts of his body were perforated with swords. ----- The scene whilst the bodies continued to burn was an extraordinary one, Caste Street being nearly filled with people and red and blue lights, rockets and fireworks being continually discharged. Until half past twelve. The damage done was very trifling not amounting too much more than £3 for broken windows, which were repaired on the following day. [34]

Dorking

1866 November 5: Dorking: Guy Fawkes: Celebrated in an unusually quiet way. During the morning effigies of the Pope and Fawkes in grotesque attire were carried in procession through the principal streets of the town and in the evening a bonfire was made on Cotmandene. There was a rather inferior display of fireworks and the demonstrative reminiscences of that eventful period is hereabouts gradually being consigned to oblivion. Bonfires in every direction were visible from this charming eminence. and to our thinking the only feature of interest or attraction during the night was the crimson tint which were given by the numerous fires around the leaden clouds as they were wafted along by the breeze to more distant parts. There was a strong force of police perambulating the streets to prevent an infringement of the privileges

[33] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser
[34] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser

accorded to the public on this occasion, and we were glad to note that their services were not called into requisition. The proceedings terminated at an early hour. [35]

Chobham

1866 November 5: Guy Fawkes Chobham: The "bonfire boys" determined that t year 1866 should not be behind its predecessors and they fulfilled that intention most favourably. About six or seven years ago it was gradually getting to be the custom at Chobham (in imitation of what was done at Guildford) to celebrate the 5th by various little excesses which were exceedingly annoying to the staider inhabitants. Among other things it was considered to be quite the thing to light a huge fire in the centre of the road, opposite the church. Rumour, or tradition, says those who took part in these proceedings were not particular about the laws of meum and tuum [36] in regards to the materials burnt; but any persons garden palings or fagots which might be handy were seized upon forthwith and together with any sugar hogsheads which might be standing about, consigned to the flames. Of course, the owners did not care for the actual loss. As for the filching of them, tradition says that "Once upon a time a well known and respected pub not far from Chobham Street looked out of his house and then went in rubbing his hands and said, "They are just working somebody's fagot stack; I saw some fellows dragging them away as fast as they could." The joke of the affair was that the said pub was the winner and, in the morning, he saw a vacant spot where had stood a comely pile of fuel the day before. In the year 1862 there was an attempt to burn down the stocks, and the "round house" (Note: could be the lock-up) by way of a bonfire. In 1863 a committee of the young men of the place was formed, subscriptions collected and the first gala of Chobham Bonfire Boys passed off with considerable éclat. No act of damage occurred and everyone was pleased. The committee held themselves responsible for any damage that may be done and have always preserved the "peace, law and order." This year a larger crowd than ever assembled and the streets were crammed. The boys were liberally supplied with squibs or crackers when they met the procession headed by the Wokingham Band. There were 60-70 guys dressed in excellent costume and about 50 capital torches blazing. The effigies of the Pope and Fawkes were hoisted on an immense pile of fagots and light was set. From a platform close by there was a display of fireworks the rockets being particularly good, this display varied by the private fireworks. Everything passed quiet and well and the street was quite clear by midnight. [37]

Godalming

1866 November 10: Godalming before the Mayor: John Christmas cow driver, was charged with **lighting fireworks** in High Street on Tuesday 30 October. Not guilty with several witnesses but the case was dismissed. The mayor said: as I see such a number of respectable persons present, including many young men I take this opportunity of stating that on the 5th November the inhabitants of this town appear not to object to fireworks in the street, so long

[35] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser
[36] Mine and thine: used to express rights to property
[37] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser

as no injury is done to persons or property. Now although this is the case the magistrates cannot countenance it, and it cannot be permitted as an excuse at law; I hope however that good feeling will prevail and the 5th pass over without any disturbance (bravo). I will also remark that on Sunday evening last, persons returning from church were annoyed by squibs. I hope this will not occur again and that the Sabbath will be respected. I am informed that these persons are not inhabitants of Godalming. I am very glad to hear it (hear, hear). [38]

1868: Guildford Riots. The last of the serious disturbances

The Guildford Guy Riots (1842-1865)[39]

Gavin Morgan

The bonfire night celebrations in Victorian Guildford were a far cry from those familiar to Guildfordians today. The events connected with this night were known as the Guy Riots and resulted in a serious breakdown of law and order. An account of a typical scene on November 5th was written by Henry Peak in his "Recollections and Activities as Mayor of Guildford." He recalled how on November 5th, 1851, he came across a huge crowd assembled round a bonfire outside Holy Trinity church in the High Street. Some of the crowd were letting off enormous fireworks which soared into the sky and sometimes entered the upstairs windows of houses. The leaders of the assembly were known as the Guys and they disguised themselves by wearing fantastic costumes. Each time the bonfire burnt down they led the crowd to the home of an inhabitant, tore down the fence in front of his house, carried it back to the High Street and threw it on the bonfire. Guildfordians had been celebrating November 5th in this way for many years by 1851 but in succeeding years the festivities developed into riots. Battles took place between the mob and the police. Instead of just fences and gates being thrown on the bonfire larger items such as carts were burnt. The Guys used November 5th as an excuse to carry out acts of terrorism on unpopular citizens. It was not until the 1860s that the town authorities took determined steps to put down the riots.

The scenes described by Peak were not peculiar to Guildford. R D Storch has shown that similar incidents took place in towns all over southern England. The demonstrations in these towns had their own characteristics but the basic theme of celebrations involving a large number of townspeople, centred on a bonfire in a fixed spot and led by a disguised gang like the Guys could be found in many places.

How did the situation described by Peak develop? Storch has put forward some general explanations. Most 18th century incorporated towns held official celebrations on November 5th. Gradually fear, first of fire and then public order when the French wars began, made the

[38] 1866 November 10: Surrey Advertiser
[39] http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archiveDS/archiveDownload?t=arch-379-1/dissemination/pdf/vol_76/surreyac076_061-068_morgan.pdf

authorities and upper classes wary of patronising celebrations. As the Fifth became an excuse for attacking local figures this withdrawal became permanent. Since the upper classes no longer organised the celebrations bonfire gangs, like the Guys Society, were formed to take their place. Demonstrations frequently became riotous, with prolonged struggles with the magistrates and the police. Attempts to stop the riots evoked violence and threats.

There is not enough evidence to prove that Guildford fits this explanation but it is likely that it did. It seems the Mayor patronised November 5th in the early 18th century. In 1704 and 1706 the Mayor's accounts had an entry for 'wine on Gunpowder Treason'. By the late 18th century, however, the Town Corporation had become wary of patronising the celebrations. It is not known whether this was through fear of fire or of disturbances. The authorities forbade the use of fireworks on November 5th in 1776, 1795, 1799, 1800, 1802, 1803, 1807, 1809, from 1812 to 1815 (these were all years during which the country was at war), in 1828 and 1829. The authorities did not, however, succeed in stamping out the use of fireworks.

In 1803 someone pushed a firework through the mayor's window. In 1827 great damage was done by men letting off fireworks. Although fireworks were forbidden on November 5th, they were permitted on certain occasions up to 1805 to celebrate victories and treaties in the Napoleonic Wars. After 1805, however, although the celebrations on these occasions took place, fireworks were not permitted. Hence it is possible, though not certain, that the permanent withdrawal of patronage by the upper classes that Storch talks about occurred in Guildford around the turn of the 19th century. It is not known when the Guys Society was formed nor when the celebrations first took the form described by Peak.4

By the second quarter of the 19th century, the bonfire was usually outside Holy Trinity church. The identities of the Guys are hard to discover. One Guildfordian said that most came from the 'rougher parts of the population'. Four Guys were arrested in 1865. At least three were in their twenties. (Two were painters, one a cooper and one a coachsmith's labourer. Some Guys were sons of well-to-do tradesmen but in general it would seem that they were young and from the artisan and labouring classes. Those who formed the crowds of spectators came from a wide cross-section of society. Reference can be found to women, children, old men, young men, tradesmen and labourers, but the gentry do not seem to have taken part.8

In the period 1842-1852, the level of violence was not increasing from year to year. The damage done was only a few broken windows and stolen fences. It does not seem from the accounts in the newspapers that fences were taken from specific people who were unpopular and even if they were, the deliberate attacks on unpopular citizens that occurred in later years had not yet begun. In 1843, 1844 and 1845 references were made in the Sussex Advertiser to a subscription raised by the mob and intended to be used to pay for the damage done. This makes the celebrations look as if they were meant to be just good fun and the writings of some inhabitants seem to confirm this view. John Mason, a native of the town, remembered that 'Guildford boys were born with the uncontrollable habit of celebrating Guy Fawkes Day in the way that their fathers had done. To non-Guildfordians this savoured of insubordination - the newspapers, in some cases, even calling the proceedings riotous! This was not intended when I took part in it-

it simply meant keeping up an old custom handed down for generations.' P W Jacob, the Mayor who eventually put down the riots, remembered that 'Up to 1863 [the last year of the riots] there were many people, even some of wealth and influence, who thought that the November 5th ought to be observed and who rather than give up the old custom were willing to put up with - to connive at - a certain amount of riot, mischief and damage to property.'

Today it is perhaps hard to believe that such damage to property could be part of celebrations. Riots and destruction are usually associated with protest. People in the mid-19th century however, thought otherwise. In 1867 the Surrey Advertiser when speaking of November 5th in Godalming stated that the evening 'passed off very calmly in our town as far as regards the proceedings of the people, although the number of fireworks fired in the town was fully equal to previous years. There was no attempt at riot or wilful mischief, and every precaution had been taken by the authorities by employing a body of special constables in addition to the police to maintain as much order as possible.' Apart from a couple of people who were injured the paper claimed that the evening 'passed off without any noteworthy incidents.' But the events described by the paper would seem to us well worthy of note. From 6pm to 8pm a crowd paraded the town discharging fireworks. At around 8pm more young men arrived and from then until midnight the discharges were almost continuous. A crowd round the George Inn disappeared in a cloud of smoke in what the paper described as 'mimic warfare'. During the evening one or two tar barrels were lit and dragged through the town.

An event at St Catherine's Hill fair held each year in October gives another illustration of the types of people who lived in Guildford at this time. At one time the fair became infested with gangs of Thimble Riggers (swindlers) to the annoyance of the people of Guildford. Instead, however, of complaining to the authorities and leaving it to them to take action, the inhabitants took the matter into their own hands, gathered a force and in a vicious battle resulting in injuries on both sides, they drove the Thimble Riggers across the river. Hence in the 19th century behaviour that would be regarded as riotous today was accepted as boisterous fun and the events of each November 5th may simply have been boisterous celebrations.

One last feature of this period, 1842-1852 was the inactivity of the town authorities. It has been seen that the attempts made by the authorities to stop the use of fireworks down to 1827 were unsuccessful. In the fourteen or fifteen years preceding 1843 no-one was arrested for using fireworks. The police did try to stop the demonstrations in 1843 and some people were arrested but in the following year the police offered no opposition to the Guys. In 1846 the police tried to prevent fences from being taken, but between 1844 and 1852 no direct attempt was made to stop the bonfires.

The attitude of the authorities can be seen in a letter written by the Mayor to the Home Office in 1852. In the letter he said that the riots had received the anxious attention of his predecessor but that at present the law was not sufficient for him to prevent the nuisance. He wrote, 'sometimes public meetings have been held to take measures for putting down the fireworks and bonfires and many of the inhabitants have been made Special Constables but who on interfering were overpowered by the mob. At other years prosecution has been undertaken but

the offenders generally escape punishment. Just before the last November 5th some discussion took place between some of the borough magistrates and the Chief Constable of Surrey . . . as to the propriety of taking precautionary measures but it was concluded that no great force could be spared from the towns and places of the county there was no chance of successfully opposing the mob . . . I much fear that with such local powers as small boroughs now have, the nuisance cannot be put down."

This would suggest perhaps that the authorities were apathetic. In theory the law was sufficient to enable them to put down the demonstrations. As will be seen, the Mayor who put down the riots after 1863 used facilities that were available in 1852. The town had four main weapons that it could use against rioters. Firstly, there was the Borough Police Force formed in 1836. In 1853 it consisted of only three policemen but that number could have been increased as it was in 1863. Secondly the inhabitants could be enrolled as Special Constables. Thirdly, police from the County Constabulary could be drafted in (they were, however, often needed in towns without a police force on November 5th). Finally, if all else failed the army could be called in. The events of the years following 1863 proved that these instruments were adequate for putting down the riots.

In practice, however, the situation was not as simple as it might seem. It is possible that even if the Corporation had not been apathetic, it would still have been inactive. It was all very well the Home Office saying, as it did, that the riots should be suppressed. Police and soldiers could stop the demonstrations one year but what about the next year? In the past attempts to stop the celebrations one year had brought greater violence the next. In 1827 considerable damage was done by fireworks and a number of people were arrested. The authorities planned to patrol the town and stop the use of fireworks in 1828 but the mob were determined not to be defeated, they plotted to turn out the gas supply to the street lamps. The town would be plunged into darkness and the mob would be able to riot.

Storch argues that middle class support of the celebrations delayed the suppression of the attendant riots. Not until the middle classes withdrew their support could the disturbances. be stopped. It would seem that this was true in Guildford. In 1852 the Borough Coroner said the main problem was that at present 'too many persons of respectable position were found to approve of the practice.' Their approval, he claimed, hampered the authorities. Often when Special Constables were summoned to help the police, many failed to turn up. Those people who were charged for taking part in the demonstrations were not successfully punished. In 1843 and 1847 a subscription was taken to pay for the fines of the men charged. 'We want', said the coroner, 'the impulse of a co-joint action between the inhabitants and the authorities. At present the magistrates of the borough can do nothing. They can't go and seize 100 men disguised with blackened faces or otherwise. The only force at their command is three policemen.'

It seems probable then that the celebrations were, until 1852, supported (or at least not actively opposed) by many in the town, and it is possible that men on the Town Council also thought the celebrations were a good custom.

In 1852 a clergyman, the Reverend Henry Shrubb, was among the Guys' victims. He complained to the Home Office which responded by writing to the Mayor asking him to explain the situation. The Mayor replied in the letter already quoted that the law did not provide him with enough powers to put down the disturbances. The Home Office replied that the Mayor should have asked it for advice before November 5th and that if the civil police were not enough then the army should be called in 'as such a forcible defiance of the law year after year ought no longer to have been permitted.' That year also a boy was killed in an accident playing with fireworks, and the inquest jury called 'upon the public authorities to suppress such illegal proceedings."

During the next five years (1853-1857), the authorities tried to suppress the demonstrations. The fact that the Home Office was now aware of the situation in Guildford seems to have prompted the authorities into taking action, for attempts, more determined than ever before, were made to put down the riots. The army was not summoned in 1853 but the three borough policemen were supplemented by 300 Special Constables. The town applied to the Home Office for fifty Metropolitan policemen to lead the inexperienced Special Constables. It seems that only ten were sent but on November 7th a letter was sent to the Home Office to inform it that 'perfect order was maintained' on November 5th.

The Corporation's problems however were far from over. The rioters reacted against these attempts to put down their celebrations. In 1854 they visited the homes of certain principal inhabitants and smashed their windows. Eventually the Riot Act had to be read. In 1855, 1856 and 1857 the authorities took steps to put down the riots and these resulted in clashes between the mob and the police. In 1855 the police and Special Constables paraded the town on November 5th. Fireworks were let off but there were no major disturbances. Only one man was arrested and was fined heavily as an example, no doubt. The lack of rioting in this year may suggest that the behaviour of the mob on bonfire night related not just to the events of the previous November 5th but to factors that occurred at other times during the year.

For whatever reason, in 1856 the mob decided to take on the police. A bonfire was lit outside Holy Trinity church but the police soon put it out. Another fire was then lit outside the Star Inn on the corner of Quarry Street and, once again, the police easily put it out. A third bonfire was lit on the town bridge but when police went to put it out the mob resisted and there was a battle on the bridge.

In 1857 an event occurred which brought about another change in the policy of the Town Council. The mob lit a bonfire by St Nicholas church, near the town bridge. When the police arrived upon the scene they were assailed with stones. They called for reinforcements (about forty policemen) who went down Quarry street, across the river and down the Portsmouth road to the top of Mount street. They then charged the mob. In the melee that followed a number of people (including old men and children) were injured. One man died the next day. (**Ed:** This needs confirmation!)

It is not clear at the moment why this incident occurred, but what was important was that it proved to be a great source of embarrassment to the police and the authorities. The West Surrey Times had a field day describing the police as rogues beating up innocent people. Instead of representing the forces of law and order fighting against anarchy, the police and the authorities appeared the aggressors. It is quite probable that it was for this reason that the police were nowhere to be seen in 1858.

From 1858 to 1862 the Town Council took no steps to prevent the celebrations and the town was left at the mercy of the Guys. The nature of the riots reverted to that described by Henry Peak in 1851. The Guys arrived and lit a bonfire in the High Street to the delight of the assembled crowd of spectators. Each time the bonfire burnt down the crowd marched off to plunder the town for firewood. The damage done to property, however, was more serious than in 1851. A contemporary said in 1866, 'If these meetings had been going on for 9 or 10 years it was exceedingly discreditable to somebody. The riot had become more riotous, the tumult more tumultuous, the attacks on individuals more violent and mischievous.' Whereas in earlier years only fences had been taken and a few fireworks had gone through windows, now the houses of unpopular inhabitants were visited and fireworks deliberately thrown through their windows. The situation should not, however, be seen as a continuing state of open war between the Guys and the authorities and unpopular inhabitants. A comparison between the years 1859 and 1861 demonstrates that this was not so. In 1859 fireworks were deliberately thrown through the windows of certain inhabitants. Two policemen were found and assaulted. They escaped and were followed to the police station where the Guys challenged the police to come out and fight. In 1861, however, the West Surrey Times said about November 5th, 'We understand that the leaders amongst the movement upon this occasion had determined to do as little damage as possible, to wreak no vengeance upon anyone however unpopular and to discountenance anything approaching to malicious or even wanton mischief.' The mob still took fences but they were selective. For example, they nearly took a paling from the home of Mr R.J. Sheperd in the London Road but were deterred by the cry amongst their ranks of, 'Good man." Again, it would seem that the demonstrations were just celebrations that were getting increasingly out of hand.

In 1862 however, one Mark Dowlen wrote to the Home Office and complained of the disturbances. The Home Office wrote back to the Mayor asking for a comment. The Major replied by saying, as in 1852, that he did not have sufficient powers to stop the riots: 'The Constabulary Force of the Borough is utterly inadequate to put them down and on former occasions the County Constabulary and members of the Metropolitan Police have been employed to render them aid in putting them down but all these arrangements have failed and then the disturbances could only have been stopped by calling in the Military which would necessarily have led to Bloodshed."

Nonetheless, this pressure was one factor in persuading the authorities in Guildford to adopt a repressive policy. A second factor was the Guys' seeming extension of their area of authority. In March 1863 there were celebrations all over England for the Prince of Wales' wedding. Most towns had bonfires as part of their celebrations. Guildford had a procession, a dinner for

the elderly, and poor children, athletic sports and fireworks, but no bonfires. The Guys decided to put this right. They came out and lit a bonfire in the High Street. The fact that the Guys had come out on an occasion other than November 5th alarmed many townsfolk. A third nail was hammered in the Guys' coffin in October at the St Catherine's Hill fair. According to the Chief Constable of Surrey there was a tradition that on the Sunday preceding the fair the villagers occupied themselves by throwing chestnuts at each other. It was usually a harmless affair but this year it got out of hand and several passers-by were pelted with chestnuts. News of the incident reached the Times newspaper which presented a much more violent picture of the scene. The Times also censured the authorities; 'The whole blame for the outbreaks must be laid on the local authorities and the police. The fault is theirs for all allowing the mob to get such head.' The paper then went on to mention the Guy Riots. 'We believe, indeed, that the town has for some time past been the scene of similar disgraceful outbreaks on the 5th of November; but this only shows that the authorities have for some time past been disgracefully lax... we cannot conceive of any excuse sufficient to exonerate the authorities. They have ample powers to put down any such breaches of the peace.'

Between the publication of this article (September 30th 1863) and November 5th, five letters are known to have been written complaining about the situation. This was quite a large number of complaints compared to previous years. Two letters were sent to the Times and three to the Home Office of which one was published in the Times and another was mentioned in the West Surrey Times.

The letter from the Home Office in 1862, the demonstrations in March and the publicity in the autumn made the authorities take action. This was the beginning of the end of the riots. On October 14th, 1863, the Mayor wrote to the Home Office saying that he was determined to stop these riots. A large number of Special Constables were enrolled. Some troops were stationed outside the town. November 5th passed fairly quietly. The Town Council knew, however, that as soon as the troops pulled out Guys would strike, and it was hoped that the troops could be kept until the town had organised resistance. The Home Office could not give the town enough time and the troops were taken away. Sure enough the Guys came out. They threw a brick through the window of Mr Weales' shop (one of the magistrates who called in the troops) and raided the ex-Mayor's house. They nearly killed a policeman when they dumped him on the bonfire.

The Town Council remained determined to put down the riots. Mr PW Jacob, a respected citizen of the town, was invited to become Mayor until the riots were stopped. The Guildford Borough Police Chief Constable resigned and was replaced by JH Law. The size of the police force was increased by six and the police were armed with cutlasses. A good indication of the determination of the Town Council can be seen by the amount of money they spent on the police. From 1851 to 1863 it never exceeded £500 per annum. In the year ending August 4th 1864 however, £958 10s 7d was spent.

In 1864 and 1865 November 5th passed quietly. On Boxing Day 1865, however, there was the last and most serious riot. In the evening a crowd entered the town and assaulted a policeman,

seriously injuring him. More police came to the scene, engaged the mob and arrested four men. One was given three months' hard labour while the rest received twelve months. Confidence was restored in the authorities and witnesses came forward and identified some of the ringleaders of the Guys. After 1865 the troubles on November 5th ceased.

The moves to put down the riots marked a dramatic change in the attitudes of the authorities but there had also been a change in the attitudes of the inhabitants. Writing in 1868, PW Jacob said that up to 1863 many people, including some of wealth and influence had supported the behaviour of Guys. After the trouble of 1863, 'when a number of misguided men came out suddenly, not for a lark, not for anything that could possibly be called fun, or amusement, but to do as much mischief as possible; when they attacked and greatly damaged the houses of two men, who so far from being the objects of hatred and dislike, were greatly respected both for their private character and good which they have been doing in the town for many years that those persons felt they could no longer countenance men who were guilty of such abominable outrage and instead of thwarting and opposing the efforts of the magistrates to put down the riots were rather inclined to assist them.'

It may be that fear limited the number of complaints made before 1863. Mark Dowlen finished his letter to the Home Office in 1862 by saying 'I must ask you as a favour you will not let my name be known to the authorities here or my house will not be safe from attack by the mob." Possibly the inhabitants thought, until 1863, that their complaints would have no effect on the authorities but that they might put their property in danger. In 1863 when the article in the Times put pressure on the authorities to take action, the inhabitants probably thought it wise to voice their complaints and thereby keep the pressure up.

After 1863, although the Guys still came out, the terrorism ceased. Many people, it seems, felt that the riots were a problem solved rather than a reflection of the need for a larger police force to maintain law and order generally. In 1865 on November 1st the Guys lit a bonfire in the High Street but fled when the police came. The Mayor, PW Jacob, took this to be a sign that the Guys had still not been crushed and that given the slightest opportunity they would create a riot. He therefore argued that the police force should continue at its present strength. However, the councillors appear to have disagreed with this line of reasoning and wanted the police force to be reduced within three months. They said that too much money was being spent on the police and claimed that the electorate felt the same. If eight policemen could not stop the riots then sixteen would not and the extra eight men would be a waste of money.

After 1865 there were no more riots. The stern measures of the authorities probably deterred people. It is also possible that there were many people in the town who sympathised with the Guys or enjoyed the bonfire and took part in the spectacle, but who were not directly involved with the damage done to property. There were also probably many who would not riot on their own but who would follow the lead given by the Guys. Hence while there were riots people would follow the Guys, but once the Guys had been crushed the town was quieter. Changes in society may have been a factor in making sure that the riots did not occur again once they had been suppressed.

It has been shown elsewhere that the introduction of the police, regular hours in the factories and the work of the Working Mans' Institutes were making society more disciplined.The Surrey Advertiser suggested that the working men of Guildford were now more mindful of the self-respect that was expected of them in the progressive days of the 1860s As a result, it said, they turned a deaf ear to those who called for disturbances. The paper said that these working men thought that the riots in 1863 were disgraceful and that it was wicked that some townsmen had to pay £163 for damaged caused that year. Storch also points out that the campaign to suppress the riots unfolded just as Guildford was experiencing a building boom which attracted outsiders who had shallow roots in the area and opposed the riots. The Guys had lost the support that had once enabled them to operate.

It is probable that this article was published by the Surrey Archaeological Society – date unknown.

Inspector Donaldson

Henry Pelham

Just after the Donaldson memorial last July, I was contacted by a Scottish reporter who was very interested in the Donaldson saga and wanted to write an article for a magazine called 'Discover Scotland' which has in the last few months ceased temporarily due to the editors sickness, the reporter has in the meantime created an online magazine 'Scottish Echoes' and has included his piece in the first issue. You will appreciate it is written by a reporter so may not be exactly historically factually correct and a bit tongue in cheek, but is pretty close, and should suit his readership who know nothing of the story anyway, and at the very least gets William's story to a wider public. I have attached the link, the story is one pages 11,12,13.
Scottish Echoes: https://heyzine.com/flip-book/9139294eee.html

Who What When and Why?

The following photograph is of Surrey Constabulary police cadets on day release ie educational studies at the Guildford Technical College probably in 1967.These must have been some of the first girl cadets.

John Wright: In the front and carrying the briefcase is Ian King, unfortunately no longer with us. To his right as we look at the picture is Gerry West, I don't think he went on to become a PC. Moving right again is Bill Doherty who appears to be smoking. The female half head behind him is Janet Porter.

Jan Radley (cadet 101 Porter) Definitely not 1970 I'd be 20 by then and I was 17 in this photo so 1967.

From the left Mick Tuffs, Colin Edwards? Colin Bridger Possibly Tony Grant behind him. Martin (Dougal) Field, Mick Bagley at the rear. Two in the front names have gone??
Keith Clarke, Jock ?, Janet Porter, Cecelia Hessian, Jane Spratt glimpse behind, Sue Baker, Jill Anders or Andrews and Claire Wheildon.

Jenny Tuffs' 'Mick Tuffs believes it is him extreme left ,the one next to him looks like Eamonn Priestley but unsure if he was a cadet. Front row right with rollup- Jock Docherty, behind him Janet Radley and left front row Paul King. In the gap behind Jock Docherty is Tony Hounsome. He does not know for sure if the names are correct as it was a while ago.


GUILDFORD
COUNTY

Late 60's cadets leaving Guildford Tech' after day-release classes. Nigel Collis, John Stewartson and Tony Hounsome who died earlier this year.

This appears to be a course photograph

Mostly fishing photos from Jim Findlay April 2025

Fishing: Bob Garland, Dick Elliott ,Roger Hawkins, Jim Findlay, ?, Dave North, Pixie Parks, Keith Deadman-Nichols.

Bowls late 1980s Paul Fagan, Ron Hill, Ben Casey, Ray Alsop, Ray Burn, Arnie Lewis, ? Joe Lester, Jim Findlay.

Woking police station March 1986 Back Bob Sanderson, Graham Ewsden, Dave Stark, Ian Moran, Fred Jackson, Ossie Osgood, Des Flanders, Front Peter Lewis, Trevor Rashford, Jim Findlay

Charlie Frost, Jim Findlay, Peter Evans, ?, Course fishing 1982

Sea fishing 1980s ?, Pixie Parks, Keith Dedman Nichols, ?, Simmonds, Jim Findlay, Paul Holt

Wiltshire Police

Information from Martin Stallion PHS

The family history website *Find my past* have recently uploaded records for Wiltshire Constabulary officers from 1839 to 1926.
https://www.findmypast.co.uk/discover/education-and-work/occupations/wiltshire-police-officers-appointed-1839-1926?utm_source=Iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=campaign_13108835

Mount Browne Memories

1960s Heather Webster (nee Bartlett no relation to the editor):

I worked at Mount Browne way back in the 60's in the office next door to the Chief Constable's office, (then Herman Rutherford,), with two other 'girls', Pattie Pocock and Julie Dodds. More or less all of my family have worked at Mount Browne at one time or another right from my Grandparents who lived at The Ridges to my many aunts and cousins and also my immediate family. My father nearly lost his life there whilst digging out, by hand, the footings for the houses. He was saved by his colleagues after the trench collapsed in on him. My Auntie Elsie worked for many years in the kitchen along with Joan, (who was married to George Ball), and Brenda, (Loolie), her sisters.

Chief Constable Rutherford

During my time there I transferred to Godalming Police Station and worked in the small office with Jan, typing for the station. I am still in close contact with Jeff Hemmings and Ted Austen from those days.

Whilst going through my photo albums I came across the following pics and wondered if they would be of interest to you, (may bring back some memories for a few). The photo with the Chief then - who was my cousin's father-in-law - is of my Auntie Elsie with her husband Ray on her retirement I believe, (there is nothing on the back of the photo about it but I feel that is the occasion). The other photo with Miss Nash is the same day but I can't remember the name of the lady with the fair hair. The third photo is Miss Nash's retirement I believe, (again, nothing written on the back). Lots of faces on there that I remember, my Auntie Elsie is next to Miss Nash with Mrs. Corkery.

Some of the names in that photo pop back to you, Bill Redwood, Timber Woods to name a couple. I really enjoyed my time at Mount Browne, so many memories - it's so very different to how it is nowadays. I was a very young 17 when I first worked at HQ and life and friends there were very good. The dances we used to have on a regular basis in the beautiful dining room - walking past Miss Nash's, (Basher Nash), domain in the hall - always very carefully in case she cast her wary eye in your direction - occasionally seeing a PC or two standing outside the Chief's office waiting to have their wrists slapped over some misdemeanour - lots of great but simple memories.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy the photos - it will be so interesting to see who remembers them and interesting to know that they will be archived at Woking. I took my exams at Woking police station back in the day to become a WPC and passed with flying colours but unfortunately didn't take it up as I was 'going out' with a PC at the time and he wasn't keen for me to join the job so I let myself be talked into not following it through - I wouldn't let that happen these days.

Chief Constable Brian Hayes with Elsie and Husband Ray

Ray, ??, Elsie and 'Basher' Nash

Retirement of 'Basher' Nash, Elsie right of Miss Nash with HQ Staff and Dog Section from left, Fred Booker, John Tyrell, Ian Mundell, Chris Procter, Roger Martin, Roly Bowers and Pete Morley.