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William Biddlecombe

Surrey's first and finest detective?

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Originally he was plain police constable like themselves, but by dint of perseverance and exertion he attained the position, which he had, the honour of holding in the Surrey Constabulary.

I have only to add that it is the wish of each one before you that you may enjoy the blessings of good health through a long and prosperous life.

William Biddlecombe to his men on retirement from the Surrey Constabulary 1858

This is the story of William Biddlecombe who became a full time police officer as policing evolved from the amateur to the professional. He was very good at his job receiving numerous plaudits for his work and was the first to be appointed to the new Surrey Constabulary in 1851 when he was given the role of chief superintendent. He retired early still highly respected and regarded as the superintendent Chertsey division to became a publican, clerk to the local racecourse and private investigator.

History has not been kind to the memory of those who policed before a professional and recognisably modern constabulary was established in 1851. There are however, examples of exceptional policing in Surrey given the constraints of the time; the lack of understanding, limited or no medical or scientific support, little obvious means of communication and almost no transport beyond a horse until the trains came in the 1840s. Yet, if there was a serious crime such as the double murder at Fetcham in 1826, the robbery and murder on the road through Banstead in 1834, the work undertaken in 1850 following the murder of the vicar of Frimley, there was a very professional response identifiable to modern officers as "police work". Before the micro-borough police forces in Farnham, Dorking, Guildford and Godalming began forming in the 1830s, law enforcement was a partnership mainly between magistrates and the annually appointed parish constable, a man who was most likely to be a local artisan or tradesman with little learning, awareness or enthusiasm for the position he found himself for the year.

The more experienced the constable was the more likely the investigation had a chance of success with evidence being found and recorded. The professionalism came with men such as Inspector Donaldson at Dorking who served in the Metropolitan Police and Biddlecombe a full time police officer who transferred from Southampton Borough to the Hampshire Constabulary and then Godalming where he was known as the chief constable. Another formidable cast member was Charles Hollington, again former Metropolitan Police who was the head constable in the Guildford Borough Police and normally referred to as an inspector.

Experience officers undertook detailed examination of the scene of the crime and recovered evidence of footprints, bleeding, torn clothing and marks from tools. There was always a detailed examination of a victim's body by the magistrate and police officers and the parish constables. The coroner was informed and would often within hours, certainly within days, hold an inquest in the local hostelry after a local doctor would undertake the post–mortem examination. The bodies if found in the open were normally removed to the local public house for the PM or if found in a building, they remained there probably for a PM by the local doctor until viewed by the coroner's jury then taken for burial. It was not unknown for the scene of a gruesome murder to become a great attraction and people would visit the premises from far away to view the murdered body. A very detailed report of findings was made with any enquiries directed by the local magistrate and comprehensibly reported in local and national newspapers. Information was posted widely on bills offering rewards for information, and containing details of suspects and their descriptions. Even in 1850 a "hue

and cry" could be raised, as it was when the Surrey based Isaac's gang members attacked PC Pocock at Copthorne with one hundred men joining the chase.

In January 1836 Godalming council took advantage of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 to establish a police force, which was in 1851 incorporated into the Surrey Constabulary.[1] In 1841 William Biddlecombe became the head or chief constable in Godalming a very small borough, that could be referred to as a micro police force with a staff of two constables where crime reports were reduced to nil and his expertise sought across West Surrey, Sussex and into Hampshire. He was one of the first of the professional police officers to operate in Surrey, along with those in the other micro police forces of Dorking, Guildford and Farnham. Biddlecombe developed a considerable reputation as a police officer and detective, which ensured he was asked by the Frimley magistrates to come the scene of the murder of the Reverend George Hollest in 1850. There was no local police in or near Frimley and the parish officials were out of their depth and recognised that fact, not too proud to seek help. Working alongside Biddlecombe was a sergeant from the detective department of the Metropolitan Police, sent at the request of the Home Secretary and Head Constable Hollington an inspector of Guildford Borough Police.

In 1841 a police station was built in Godalming and the two regular policemen (Biddlecombe and a constable named Lindsey) lived on the premises. The station house was in Moss Lane and contained three cells capable of handling nine prisoners. The borough then petitioned to have its own court, which was granted in 1847. Records for the 12 months to the end of November 1848 showed that 63 cases had been dealt with involving 87 prisoners. Biddlecombe is described in the newspapers as "extremely active", shorthand for a good detective,[2] and amassed a wealth of experience through a wide range of investigations.

William Henry Biddlecombe the new Head Constable was in 1841 aged 36, and described as 5ft 10 tall. He had been born and raised in Gatecombe, Newport on the Isle of Wight. Serving first in the police on the island, in the Southampton Police then later the Hampshire Constabulary before moving to Godalming. He was to serve in the Surrey Constabulary from January 1851 until 1 May 1858 when he resigned to become the licensee of the Swan Inn at Chertsey, setting a trend followed by many an ex-police officer. There is no reference in the County Police Committee minutes for 1858 of Biddlecombe and why he left. It is not a surprise as then, as now, police authorities were more concerned with finance, capital projects and the maintenance of the estate including sinking a well at Guildford police station than the loss of an individual no matter what his contribution. It may be as simple that he left because he was to be moved and that he and his family liked being where he was and he knew he could make a good living without all the constraints on his life being a senior police officer brought. It is possible that he became disenchanted with his duties as he dealt with a number of murders, manslaughter and infanticide many involving small children. It can only be speculation.

[1] The Force was re-established in1858 and again amalgamated within the county on the1 April 1889
[2] The term was not yet in use

In his new life in addition to being the licensee of the Swan Inn who rented out horses and carriages, Biddlecombe became the clerk of the course at Chertsey racecourse and was to become a private detective again establishing a future trend being the first generation of ex-police officers to move into the security industry. Biddlecombe worked on some influential cases including being retained by the Titchbourne family, his actual client being Lord Onslow, to find the true identity of the claimant (Orton), which he did but was unable to persuade Onslow.

There are some bald facts about his life that can be found within the Family History indexes and the records of the Hampshire Constabulary:[3]

William Biddlecombe served in the Isle of Wight Constabulary and Southampton Police before joining Hampshire on 18th March 1840. His combined service in the Isle of Wight and Southampton was 4 years. [4]

Two cases have been found in local newspapers from Biddlecombe's time in the Southampton Police in 1840. They are examples of the level of violence faced by the police and their robust response.

Charles Reeves aged 24 as indicted for assaulting PC Biddlecombe on the night 29 November. The prisoner was making a great disturbance at a house in Mount Street; Biddlecombe was called in to suppress the disturbance, when the prisoner made several stabs at him with a knife and retreated upstairs; he was followed by Biddlecombe and the prisoner having obtained a poker and was in the act of striking the policeman when he was struck down and taken into custody. Two witnesses Brice and Scorey corroborated the policeman's evidence and the jury having found the prisoner guilty the Recorder in consideration of the violent blow, which had received sentenced him to six weeks imprisonment with hard labour.[5]

A second case involved George Hookey, Charles Morgan and Henry Meatcher who were indicted for assaulting PC Biddlecombe in the execution of his duty. From the evidence of Biddlecombe and other witnesses, it appeared that the prosecutor was called in by the landlord of the Ship and Anchor to quell a disturbance, in which he succeeded; some time afterwards the above parties with others came out and Morgan knocked a sailor down for which Biddlecombe attempted to take him into custody. The mob then rushed upon him, and the defendants were the most conspicuous in maltreating him.

The verdict was guilty.

From it appearing that Morgan was the worst of the three and having at a subsequent time uttered threats, he was sentenced to six months imprisonment, and at the expiration of that time to be further imprisoned until he could find two sureties of £25 each, and himself in £50

[3] John Molyneux February 2011
[4] Clifford Williams Hampshire Constabulary 8 June 2011 – email to author
[5] Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian Saturday January 4 1840

to keep the peace for twelve months towards Biddlecombe. Meatcher and Hookey were sentenced to four months imprisonment and hard labour. [6]

There is some very basic detail available on the life of William Biddlecombe.

On joining Hampshire Police Biddlecombe was posted to Petersfield on the 3rd May 1840 when he was described as: 5' 10'', fair complexion, blue eyes, light brown hair, good build, single, born at Gatecombe, Newport, Isle of Wight. He was described as a labourer living in Southampton.[7] This indicates it was not a straight transfer from Southampton to the county police; there was a resignation from Southampton followed by a period as a labourer.

Biddlecombe's served in Hampshire for just under six months resigning on the 14th September 1840 'having been appointed High Constable and Inspector of Police at Godalming in Surrey'.[8] [9]

In the1841 census taken on 6 June 1841, William Bidelcome (sic) is living in Ockford Road, Godalming where is shown as a policeman, living with his wife Harriett both aged 25 years.

The 1851 census, taken on 30 March 1851, has William H. Biddlecombe living on Reigate High Street with his wife, daughters Kate 6, Mary 4 and son Alfred John 1,[10] all born in Godalming. Living with them are Ruth Biddlecombe, his 67 year old mother, and Esther Trigg their 15 years old housemaid. He is shown as 'Chief Supt of Surrey Constabulary, born in Gatcombe, Hants. His wife and their maid were both born in Liss, Hants. [11]

By the 1861 census Biddlecombe is innkeeper of the Swan, Windsor Street, Chertsey aged 45 and living with his second wife, Elizabeth, 34 born at Araton, Isle of Wight. Daughters Kate and Mary are still living at home together with their 7 year old sister Alice, who was born at Reigate.

The son of W H Biddlecombe is to be found in the 1861 census as a boarder together with 52 other scholars at 83 Pescod Street, New Windsor that of course is not far from where his parents were living in Chertsey. In the 1871 census he is a merchant's clerk, boarding at 18 Judd Street, St. Pancras, Marylebone, London. He is Alfred John Biddlecombe.[12]

The death index for the second quarter of 1855 records the death of Harriett Biddlecombe (Chertsey, book 2a, page 17). This is probably the right one but without the death certificate, it is not possible to be certain. [13]

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[6] Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian Saturday January 4 1840
[7] Ch. Inspector Clifford Williams Hampshire Constabulary8 June 2011 – email to author
[8] Ch. Inspector Clifford Williams Hampshire Constabulary8 June 2011 – email to author
[9] Godalming Borough Police was formed in January 1836 and incorporated within the county in 1851. The Force was re-established in1858 and again amalgamated with the Surrey Constabulary on the 1 April 1889
[10] There was an Alfred Biddlecombe who joined the Surrey Constabulary in 1858 retiring in 1890 – not the son as he would only be 9
[11] Liss is close to Petersfield where he was stationed.
[12] From retired Surrey Constabulary officer John Molyneaux
[13] Research undertaken by family historian and retired police sergeant Surrey Constabulary John Molyneux

Operationally Biddlecombe was very effective and in the term used in national newspapers when his cases were reported, “extremely active”. From all the evidence it is obvious that he was an able man and a brave, careful and successful detective.

Policing Godalming and environs

In the time just before Biddlecombe arrived in the county Godalming Borough Police were responsible for an area larger than the town and included villages as distant as Shere where sheep stealing was rife during the years 1830 to 1840. The parish constables were not able to cope with investigating these thefts nor were they able to stop horses and sheep disappearing in the south of the county, most of which were taken to London.

One of the gang’s meeting places was The White Horse Inn in the centre of Shere village where it was not uncommon to see a great deal of poached game on the premises as the men enjoyed themselves. They appeared immune from punishment but then two of the gang took to housebreaking at a large house at Wonersh. A constable from Godalming believed to be Biddlecombe traced the men concerned to an inn in Sussex. Enlisting the help of local harvesters they came across the suspects and joked with them and somehow Biddlecombe persuaded them to allow him to handcuff them. Once handcuffed the men were arrested for breaking into Squire Spark’s house, taken to Guildford where they were convicted.

In addition to the Shere mob there were gangs at Elstead and a team known as the Hut Men at Peper Harow which were beyond the resources of and were possibly outside the Godalming police area that were broken up soon after the Surrey Constabulary formed. [14]

Parish constables sometimes undertook duties for longer than the normal period of a year. For example James Stedman at Pirbright from 1812-1837. There were paid constables at Shere,

[14] Durrant page 1 and 2

Thomas Williams, with Peter Pearce at Shamley Green both supervised by Superintendent Biddlecombe of Godalming. There were also paid constables stationed at Farnham, Dorking, Chertsey, Chobham, Thorpe, Windlesham and Nutfield who in time joined the Surrey Constabulary not that many survived very long within a disciplined service.[15]

The first murder investigation to involve Biddlecombe occurred on the 28 March 1844 when a gamekeeper was killed at Wonersh.[16] This was the hungry forties[17], a time of agricultural depression and population growth. There was much distress in the countryside as evidenced in this case where the father of six was without food in the house and went poaching.

The Inquest[18]

Murder of gamekeeper near Guildford: On Tuesday an inquest (adjourned from Monday) was held at the Jolly Farmer, Bramley near Guildford, before Mr CJ Woods coroner for West Surrey, on view of the body of James Edwards aged 48, principal keeper of the Right Hon Lord Grantley. On Monday the jury proceeded with the coroner to the club-room to view the body, which presented a frightful spectacle, there being upward of a dozen wounds on each side of the head, evidently inflicted by some blunt instrument, in all probability the blunt end of a gun.

Joseph Head being sworn deposed as follows, "I reside in the parish of Bramley, near Guildford. I am bailiff to the Right Hon Lord Grantley. On the morning of Saturday I was informed that the deceased was missing. After making inquiries about him of everyone I saw, I rode out on horseback along the side of the river Wey. Whilst proceeding along the bank my horse all of a sudden started at something in the water. I dismounted and saw the deceased in the river. There is a furze field called Lyne-Ersh adjoining the spot. It is Lord Grantley's property and in his lordship's occupation. I observed that the deceased was seriously bruised or injured about the head. I searched the furze field. About five yards from the river I found a pool of blood and there had recently been a struggle at this point. I found the hat and stick, which I now produce. The hat belonged to the deceased."

E Walker stated as follows, "I am a gamekeeper in the service of Mr Sparks and knew the deceased. On Friday evening last I went to the Jolly Farmer public house; it was then a little

[15] Durrant page 3
[16] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, March 28, 1844
[17] A period in the early 1840s when Britain experienced an economic depression, causing much misery among the poor. In 1839 there was a serious slump in trade, leading to a steep increase in unemployment, accompanied by a bad harvest. The bad harvests were repeated in the two following years and the sufferings of the people, in a rapidly increasing population, were made worse by the fact that the Corn Laws seemed to keep the price of bread artificially high. In 1845 potato blight appeared in England and Scotland, spreading to Ireland later in the year and ruining a large part of the crop. The potato blight returned in 1846, bringing the Irish Famine.

[18] 1844 January 13 Reading Mercury

before seven o'clock. I saw the deceased there. I was with him in company for only a few minutes. As near eight o'clock as possible deceased observed to me persons were come into the house whom he did not like, and mentioned the names James Elsey and young Vickery. Deceased said he should be gone for half an hour or three quarters and desired me not to leave the place."

Charlotte the wife of Henry Brown of Bramley, " on Friday night about eight o'clock whilst sitting with my three sons, I heard the report of firearms which appeared to proceed from Lyne-Ersh. It was at the time raining fast, but moonlight. A quarter of an hour subsequently I heard another report which appears to come from the same direction.

John Turrell of Bramley also heard the report of firearms on the night in question and went into his stable and whilst listening heard someone say "Oh dear!" It appeared to come from the direction from where the body was found. Did not take any particular notice of it, thinking it might be bargemen passing through the lock.

Charles Jenkins Inspector of police produced portions of a gunstock and a ramrod with portions of a gunlock and two screws and a piece of waxed thread. Upon comparing them the several portions previously correspond.

Mr WH Biddlecombe, "I am chief constable of the borough of Godalming. On Saturday last the 6th instant about three o'clock in the afternoon I went in company with the last witness and apprehended James Elsey at Run-common. The same afternoon I went to the prisoner's house and found the smockfrock (now produced) with a great deal of blood on it. The same evening I went to the prisoner's house alone, and in an iron grate of the bedroom I found the shirt, which I now produce with some old rags thrown over it. The front of it was torn and there were marks of blood on the sleeve. On the right wristband there were several marks of blood. The left wristband had the appearance of having been in dirty water and afterwards dried. I then searched a wood house standing within a few yards of the prisoner's house when I found the velveteen-shooting jacket (also produced) rolled up and concealed behind some straw; the jacket was very wet and much torn; a part of the right cuff of the jacket was torn off. I also found the pistol I now produce in the kitchen loaded and the gun barrel I now produce. I also found on the mantelpiece in the same room, the piece of horn now produced, which to me appears to correspond with the ramrod found when the deceased was murdered."

Charles Hollington being sworn deposed, "I am inspector of police at Guildford. On Saturday evening last between nine and ten o'clock the prisoner James Elsey was brought into the station-house at Guildford by Joseph Jenkins. On Sunday afternoon the prisoner expressed a wish to see me. I went to the station house and he appeared very uneasy in his mind, and said he wished to speak to me. I cautioned him that whatever he might say I should take down and that it might afterwards be used against him. On the following night about seven o'clock I understood that the prisoner wanted to see me again. I went to him, and he made the following statement:

" On Friday evening I went home and took supper, but on entering the door I saw my son eating some victuals. I said to him "Where are you going to Bill?" He said "I am going to the raffle, and father will you come down to take a part of a pint of beer James Sherlock is going to give me?" I ate my supper and took a pint and a half. My son and me went home together and when we got indoors he asked my wife for some victuals; she said, "What do you mean by that? You had your victuals before you went out." She cut him a piece and gave it to him and as soon as he had undone his shoes he went to bed. When he was gone I said, "How hard it was for us to be in such distress; we have neither butter nor cheese, nor sugar; and whether also she had even tea. I am uncertain for when we had our supper we had a piece of bread each with a little tea without sugar and milk, and I had spent the last 2d we had; so we were destitute and it hurt my feelings. So I said to my wife, "I will go an get a bird or two if I possibly can, for I can't bear to see us in such distress." I went and shot a brace of birds and I thought if I could get a sale for them I would get a little tea and sugar. I was coming to the river when I met the keeper and he said, "D—n you I have got you now." He then put up a stick and said, "D—n your eyes, I'll kill you," and he was going to strike me, but I pushed and threw him down, and I said and I said, "We will fight, life for life." I struck him with the but end of a gun several times; the last time he fell into the river. I then went away and left him. On going home my wife said, "Have you got anything?" I said "yes." She then replied, "I hope nothing will happen from this." I said, something had already taken place."

The Coroner then summed up with great minuteness and the jury without the least hesitation returned a verdict of "Wilful murder" against James Elsey.[19]

Elsley was arrested and taken to Guildford where Inspector Charles Hollington the officer in charge of the Guildford Borough Police detained him on the Saturday night. Hollington left an unemployed labourer to watch over the prisoner who on the Sunday confessed to him the killing of James Edwards – he had hit the gamekeeper with his rifle but and kicked him into the river. The labourer did not tell anyone of the confession and when on Monday Hollington saw the prisoner, he again confessed. The inspector then went to Elsey's home and recovered two pheasants from where the prisoner had said they were. [20]

The confession of James Elsey written down by Charles Hollington [21]

[19] 1844 January 13 Reading Mercury
[20] The Standard (London, England), Wednesday, January 10, 1844
[21] The Standard Wednesday 10 January 1844

"On Friday evening I went home and took supper, but on entering the door, I saw my son eating some victuals. I said to him, 'Where are you going to, Bill?' He said, 'I am going to the raffle?' I said, 'What is the use of your going to the raffle?' He replied, 'James Sherlock is going to give me a pint of beer, father, will you come down and take part of it?' I told him I would, as soon as I had eat my supper. I went down as soon as I had eat my supper, and took part of a pint of beer, and called for another, and after that me and my son went home together, and my son had something to eat and went to bed. When he was gone I said to my wife, 'Oh, how hard it is for us to be in such distress; we have neither butter, nor cheese, nor sugar,' and whether she had any tea I am not certain, for when we were at supper, we had but a piece of bread each of us, with a little tea without sugar or milk, and as I had spent the two pence for the beer, we were quite destitute. It hurt my feelings; so I said to my wife, 'I will go and get a bird or two, if I possibly can; for I cannot bear to see us in such distress;' and I took the gun and went and shot a brace of birds, and I thought if I could get sale for them, it would get a little tea and sugar. I came away from the premises directly, hoping that I should return safe; but when I got to the river side, I saw the keeper coming towards me. I stood on one side, behind a furze bush, but he saw me, and said, '—— you, I've got you now.' He appeared to me to be a little the worse for drink. He put up his stick and tried to strike me, saying, '—— your eyes, I'll kill you.' I replied, 'Don't do that, good man,' and as he was going to strike me I jumped in and threw him down. He got up again, and used the same expressions. I threw him down again, and he held me, and repeated the third time, "I will kill you.' I then said to him, 'We will fight—life for life.' He replied, 'I will,' and directly he got up he struck at me with his stick, and I warded off the blow with my gun. I then struck him with the but end of the gun, and, as near as I can tell, it was near the side of the temple. He rose again, and I saw the blood running down his face. He seemed fully bent to come at me again, and I struck him again with the but end of the gun, and he fell down. Whether I struck him once or twice afterwards I am not certain, but the last time I struck him on the ground he rolled into the river. I then went away and left him, and saw him no more. I then went home, and my wife said to me, 'Have you got any thing?' I showed her what I had got, and she said, 'What shall we do with them.' I said, 'I don't know.' I could not say any thing more to her then, but went to bed. She hung my wet clothes to dry by the fire, and got up the next morning, and brought them to me.

(Signed) "JAMES ELSLEY."

Spring Assizes Home Circuit Kingston, Wednesday March 27 Crown Court (Before Mr. Baron Alderton.) Murder Of Lord Grantley's Gamekeeper

At the Surrey Spring Assizes in Kingston on the 27 March James Elsley was charged with the wilful murder of James Edwards a gamekeeper, in Wonersh by the Wey and Arun Canal. The body was discovered in the canal the following morning and the alarm was raised. Good local information was soon uncovered leading to Charles Jenkins, described as an Inspector of Police stationed at Shere (more a parish officer than a professional police officer) accompanied by Chief Constable of Godalming William Biddlecombe and most likely Jenkins supervisory officer, went to the home of the suspect. He was detained and taken to the Jolly Farmer at Bramley. The officers returned to the house and searched it recovering a newly washed smock with what appeared to be blood on it and other clothing. Both the officers undertook a detailed examination of the prisoner and could find no evidence of him having been involved in a fight.

James Elsley, aged 38, was indicted for the wilful murder of James Edwards. There were four counts in the indictment. The first charged the prisoner with shooting the deceased; the second with shooting him and also beating him to death; the third with beating him only; and the fourth charged the murder to have been committed by casting the deceased into the water, and thereby suffocating and drowning him. Mr. Clarkson with Mr. Locke, conducted the prosecution, and Mr. Charnock appeared for the prosecution, and Mr Charnock appeared for the prisoner. The case seemed to create a good deal of interest, and the court was crowded during the trial, which lasted seven hours. Mr Clarkson stated the case for the prosecution, which he said was instituted by Lord Grantley, in whose service the deceased was employed as a gamekeeper. The learned counsel then proceeded to the state the facts of the case as they afterwards appeared in evidence, and also the upon the subject, concluding by calling the following witnesses:

Joseph Head: I am bailiff to Lord Grantley, and live at Bramley. I knew the deceased James Edwards. He acted as gamekeeper, to Lord Grantley. I recollect the 6th of January, and on that day I went along the Wey and Arun Canal towards Wonersh. I know the Lock, which separates the canal from the Lynarsh field. (A plan of the neighbourhood was here produced and proved to be correct.) I was on horseback by the side of the canal, about 9 o'clock in the morning, when I saw something in the water, which at first thought was apiece of tarpaulin. I dismounted and threw stones for my dog to go into the water, but he would not do so. I made some enquiries and obtained assistance, and returned to the spot.

At this time the body was out of the water, and I recognised it to be that of the deceased, who was in his usual dress. He appeared to be have been very much beaten. The head was wounded in several places. I examined the ground near the canal, particularly on the Lynarsh side, and on that side it rises up to the edge of the canal from a distance of two feet. I observed a large pool of blood, and from the spot it is five or six yards to the edge of the canal. There is some furze about two yards from the canal, which is used as a preserve for game. I examined these furze bushes, and saw some small portions of human flesh on parts of them, and a pool of blood lay on the ground below the furze. I also saw the marks of heels and toes of shoes near the bank of the canal; and a few yards nearer to the lock of the canal I saw other marks of the same size and description; and I there found the hat and stick of the deceased, which I now produce. (The hat bore an indentation on one side, evidently occasioned by a very violent blow. The stick was a very slight one.) Cross-examined: It is dead water in the canal except when the lock is let off. At the place where the body was found there is about three or four feet of water. The furze may be about two or three yards from the bank of the canal. At the open part of the furze a person might easily get into the canal. There is a good deal of traffic at times on the canal

Charles Jenkins in evidence said: "I am the inspector of police stationed at Shere, near Guildford. On Saturday the 6th of January in consequence of what I heard I went to Bramley and from there thence to a place called Rim Common where I found the prisoner working for a person named Tickner, and took him into custody. I conveyed him to the Jolly Farmer at Bramley and left him in charge of a parish constable whilst I searched the prisoner's house. I

found in the house a short smock-frock with spots of blood upon it and which appeared to have been partly washed and hung to the fire to dry. The blood was upon the breast and upon both the sleeves. I took the frock back to the prisoner and he told me in answer to a question I put to him that it was his own frock. I then told the prisoner I should take him on suspicion of the murder of the keeper and he replied, "Thank God I am innocent!" Shortly after this I searched the prisoner and found a powder horn and a clasp knife in his pockets. I then examined the prisoner's person but could not discover any bruises or other marks of violence. I made a further search at the house of the prisoner on the next day and found a large quantity of chisels, planes and tools of every description."

Mr Charnock then addressed the jury for the prisoner saying it a melancholy thing that in order to enable persons in the position of Lord Grantley to enjoy their pleasures and preserve their game the lives of the poorer classes were to be sacrificed and he expressed his opinion that it would be much better if there were no game and that such lordly pleasures should be altogether abolished, rather than that such dreadful cases as the present assizes should have taken place. He then went on to contend that the statement of the prisoner was the real truth of the transaction and that the violence had been done upon the unfortunate deceased under the impression entertained by the prisoner that his own life was in danger; and that under such circumstances the offence would only amount to manslaughter.

Mr Baron Alderson summed up, and went minutely through every portion of evidence, commenting in his usual clear and admirable manner upon the more important points as he proceeded, concluding by leaving the matter in the hands of the jury. The jury retired, and, after being absent about 20 minutes, returned into the court and delivered their verdict, finding the prisoner Guilty of manslaughter. The prisoner was immediately called up for judgement, and the learned Judge, after observing that the prisoner had reason to be extremely grateful for the lenient view the jury had taken of the case against him, sentenced him to be transported for life.[22] [23]

The jury took twenty minutes to find the prisoner not guilty of murder but manslaughter and this was transported for life. [24]

Juries did not like to convict for murder if they could find a realistic alternate verdict as they did in Elsey's case. As the judge said, he was a lucky man but his family suffered with his wife almost a widow with five or six children. Murder and manslaughter were not unknown nor was burglary but when large houses or prominent people were involved the press wrote in great detail about the crime and the resulting enquiry.

A Godalming crime investigated by Biddlecombe took him to Woking which then was little more than a village, at a time when the railway was being built.

[22] The Times. March 28th 1844 (Pages 7 And 8)
[23] Elsey was a Married man who was a father of five or six children
[24] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, March 28, 1844; Issue 22841. 19th Century British Library Newspapers: Part II.

1845 February 25 Felony: [25] Police Office Saturday 22 inst., before three county magistrates Charles Wells a master wheelwright and William Chapman labourer were brought in custody by Chief Constable Biddlecombe of Godalming charged with having feloniously in their possession at Woking a large number of deal and elm boards the property of George Marshall Esq., of Godalming as well as certain sheep nets the property of the Rt Hon Earl of Lovelace. Mr Biddlecombe said he did not wish to go at length into the evidence as the case was not quite complete and he should therefore request that both prisoners be remanded until next Saturday. Mr Biddlecombe said that acting on information received on Thursday 20 inst., he proceeded to the premises of the prisoner William Chapman who lived in the parish of Woking and on searching the house found a number of concealed elm boards, which were identified as the property of George Marshall. Remanded until next Saturday. The case excited considerable interest in consequence of the extent of the alleged felony and the respectability of the prisoner Wells who for some time has been in business as a carpenter and wheelwright. (See below for court appearance and committal)

Sussex and Surrey Burglars

The Sussex burglars were a notorious gang who were finally caught in 1845 the case was reported on the 12 March when they were taken to Lewes following their arrest in northeast Hampshire. There was considerable excitement in Lewes when news broke that Biddlecombe the chief officer of Godalming police had arrested the three Sussex burglars in Hampshire. This active officer's exertions led to the arrests. The handcuffed prisoners were conveyed from Godalming then by cart to Guildford and finally a coach to Redhill before taking the train to Brighton followed by a transfer to a fly for the final part of the journey to Lewes. [26]

The following press report did not contain the full story, as possibly it was not yet know. The gang committed a number of crimes in the Bramley, Wonersh and Shamley Green area of Surrey making off through Godalming. This is how Biddlecombe became involved and the search began. The first report as published will tell the narrow story to be expanded by later reports.

The newspaper reported that the hunt for the so-called Sussex burglars caused considerable excitement in Lewes particularly when news broke of their arrest in Hampshire by Biddlecombe described again in the newspapers as "this active officer's[27] exertions led to the arrests."

The three individuals named Patching, Burgess and Longhurst accused of committing several burglaries in different parts of Sussex recently made off from Brighton and were subsequently captured in the village of North Wanborough, Hampshire after a close pursuit of five days.

[25] Sussex Advertiser 25 February 1845
[26] The Times
[27] Over the years a term frequently used to describe him

The head constable [28] Mr Biddlecombe for four days rode about the country accompanied by two armed and mounted assistants, sometimes hearing of the men and sometimes losing all trace of them. On Friday morning he came onto the neighbourhood of Reading and a village about four miles from that town, on the road to Basingstoke, he learned of three men, still pretending to be smugglers had been there the previous day, and were dispensing some brandy as before; they had taken the road for Basingstoke and thither in all haste he pursued them. On arriving at Basingstoke he found he found that they had been there on the previous evening and on further enquiry that they had slept there and changed their clothes, quitting the town that (Friday) morning about nine o'clock – they still kept to their assumed character of smugglers. All this was highly satisfactory, but strange to say no clue could be obtained as to what road they had taken on leaving the town.

Fortunately for Mr Biddlecombe this time took the right direction for on proceeding about 12 miles on the road to Alton he found he found that the soi-disant [29] smugglers were only about three hours ahead of him. Biddlecombe at once called in his assistants whom he had from time to time during the pursuit despatched by different roads always fixing some central point as a rendezvous. All three set out in hot pursuit for Alton. At a village called North Wanborough the joyful information was obtained that the long sought for party was only about half an hour in advance. On the pursuers sped and speedily caught sight of the three men near a public house known as the Golden Pot about three miles from Alton. The chief constable now cautioned his assistants to keep the men closely in view and determined when turning of the high road himself, and by taking a circuitous route, getting before the burglars, leaving instructions with his two men to close up upon them, as soon as they saw him advancing in the opposite direction. This movement was quickly effected and by this stratagem the burglars were safely apprehended.

When secured and handcuffed, Biddlecombe called them by their several names and informed them of the charges against them. They each of them carried a bundle and the great proportion of the missing property belonging to Mr Sparkes and Mr Abbott was found in their possession as well some nine or ten shillings in silver, and a small quantity of eatables. They were dressed in long smock frocks, buttoning before and appeared to have disposed of little of the property taken on the previous Saturday night, except the wine and spirits. They were all three armed with long knives and they had been aware of the charges against them or the mission of the officer they would doubtless of used them to the danger of him and his assistants. They had no firearms in their possession. The chief constable at once procured a vehicle and conveyed his prisoners to Godalming where they arrived with them late Friday evening.

After appearing before the local magistrate the prisoners were conveyed in handcuffs from Godalming by cart to Guildford, coach to Redhill before taking the train to Brighton followed

[28] Godalming Police
[29] Self-styled; so-called

by transfer to a fly for the final part of the journey to Lewes. [30] They were examined before the Lewes magistrates on Monday and remanded for further examination till Thursday[31]

On March the 19th 1845 the men were found guilty of burglary and transported for ten years. There is some variation in the reports on the sentencing of the women members of the gang Jane Burgess and Ann Hounsell varying between 18 months and two years hard labour. Biddlecombe was commended by the judge for showing great zeal and activity in the case and was rewarded twenty shillings in addition to his expenses and the two constables who assisted him in the pursuit of the prisoners should each receive five shillings.[32]

A further press report contains more detail of the ploy used by Biddlecombe to make the arrests. There is also a reference to links with a large number of burglaries. Operating in the 1840s across Surrey and Sussex were the Surrey based Isaac's gang who were prolific burglars and involved in at least two murders.[33] It is not known if these three men were a part of that gang but they certainly operated within their area though they were not violent as were the Isaacs's men.

This report contains considerable detail of how police officers of the 1840s operated and shows the determination of Biddlecombe no doubt encouraged by the level of rewards available for detecting burglaries. There was money to be made to supplement the policeman's pay!

There was considerable interest created by the fact that the prisoners were supposed to have been connected with a great number of burglaries that have been committed in the county of Surrey. The circumstances of this particular case presented nothing uncommon, except the mode of their capture. A constable named Biddlecombe was on their trace; and after travelling in pursuit of them over a very great extent of country succeeded in coming up with the prisoners at Alton, in Hampshire; and as he was at this time alone, they would have probably got away had he not adroitly hit upon the following expedient to disarm their suspicion. He told them on coming up with them that he was an officer and that a farmer a short distance off had sent him after them on suspicion of stealing some fowls the night before. The prisoners said they could easily prove their innocence of this charge for they had slept in Basingstoke. The officer then said they could no doubt easily prove this to the satisfaction of the complainant if they would go back with him, and for "forms sake" they had better have on the handcuffs. The prisoners consented and very quickly allowed the officer to handcuff them, and he told them the real nature of the charges against them. [34]

The three individuals named Patching, Burgess and Longhurst accused of committing several burglaries in different parts of Sussex recently made off from Brighton and were

[30] The Times
[31] The Morning Chronicle Wednesday March 12 1845 – abridged from the Surrey Advertiser
[32] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, March 20, 1845
[33] Full details of the gang can be found at www.surrey-constabulary.com
[34] The Derby Mercury Wednesday March 26 1845

subsequently captured in the village of North Wanborough, Hampshire after a close pursuit of five days.

The newspapers reported: The head constable [35] Mr Biddlecombe for four days rode about the country accompanied by two armed and mounted assistants, sometimes hearing of the men and sometimes losing all trace of them. On Friday morning he came onto the neighbourhood of Reading and a village about four miles from that town, on the road to Basingstoke, he learned of three men, still pretending to be smugglers had been there the previous day, and were dispensing some brandy as before; they had taken the road for Basingstoke and thither in all haste he pursued them. On arriving at Basingstoke he found he found that they had been there on the previous evening and on further enquiry that they had slept there and changed their clothes, quitting the town that (Friday) morning about nine o'clock – they still kept to their assumed character of smugglers. All this was highly satisfactory, but strange to say no clue could be obtained as to what road they had taken on leaving the town.

Fortunately for Mr Biddlecombe this time took the right direction for on proceeding about 12 miles on the road to Alton he found he found that the soi-disant [36] smugglers were only about three hours ahead of him. Biddlecombe at once called in his assistants whom he had from time to time during the pursuit despatched by different roads always fixing some central point as a rendezvous. All three set out in hot pursuit for Alton. At a village called North Wanborough the joyful information was obtained that the long sought for party was only about half an hour in advance. On the pursuers sped and speedily caught sight of the three men near a public house known as the Golden Pot about three miles from Alton. The chief constable now cautioned his assistants to keep the men closely in view and determined when turning of the high road himself, and by taking a circuitous route, getting before the burglars, leaving instructions with his two men to close up upon them, as soon as they saw him advancing in the opposite direction. This movement was quickly effected and by this stratagem the burglars were safely apprehended.

When secured and handcuffed, Biddlecombe called them by their several names and informed them of the charges against them. They each of them carried a bundle and the great proportion of the missing property belonging to Mr Sparkes and Mr Abbott was found in their possession as well some nine or ten shillings in silver, and a small quantity of eatables. They were dressed in long smock frocks, buttoning before and appeared to have disposed of little of the property taken on the previous Saturday night, except the wine and spirits. They were all three armed with long knives and they had been aware of the charges against them or the mission of the officer they would doubtless of used them to the danger of him and his assistants. They had no firearms in their possession. The chief constable at once procured a vehicle and conveyed his prisoners to Godalming where they arrived with them late Friday evening.

[35] Godalming Police
[36] Self-styled; so-called

After appearing before the local magistrate the prisoners were conveyed in handcuffs from Godalming by cart to Guildford, coach to Redhill before taking the train to Brighton followed by transfer to a fly for the final part of the journey to Lewes. [37]

1845 March 11: The Sussex and Surrey Burglars: Some particularly daring burglaries have been committed in this neighbourhood of late and if suspicion proves correct by a distinguished gang of thieves. The first two were perpetrated on Tuesday night the 25th ult., but we forbore to mention them last week because some clue having been obtained as to the whereabouts of the burglars it would have been injudicious to do so. On the night in question the thieves broke into the house of Mr Boughton, Shamley Green in the parish of Wonersh and succeeded in getting off with a quantity of eatables amongst which was three stones of bacon. They also took a copper kettle and other articles. Nearly a mile from Shamley Green they entered the house of Mr Smithers and were helping themselves when that gentleman heard them and making some noise induced them to make off with only a pair of boots. Mr Smithers saw them going off and shot at one of them but though he is confident he hit his man all three escaped. On Saturday night the first instant, or early on Sunday morning two other houses were entered and apparently by the same gang, as a glove stolen from on of the previously robbed houses was on one of these occasions left behind. Mr Sparkes of Gosden also in the parish of Wonersh was this time one of the sufferers. The thieves got in and succeeded in making off with a flat silver snuff box, a gold ring with an amethyst set in the middle and a garnet on each side, a Macintosh cloak and coat, a cloth great coat, a hat and several bottles of Marsah wine brandy and gin. It is supposed that the burglars made rather free with the latter articles for though they found their way up stairs they fortunately passed by unobserved a basket of plate, which had been forgotten by the servants on one of the landings. On going upstairs they turned the handle of one of the doors and the noise woke Miss Sparkes who gave the alarm and the thieves took flight.

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

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

[37] The Times

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

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

At an early hour on Sunday morning 2nd inst., information of the burglaries at Wonersh during the previous night was conveyed to that very active officer chief constable Biddlecombe of Godalming, and shortly after intelligence reached him that three men who were strangers in the neighbourhood had been seen near Busbridge within half a mile of the town, very early that morning. They were described as being all tall men and each having in his possession a large bundle. Mr Biddlecombe immediately started on horseback accompanied by a couple of assistants likewise mounted and speedily reached the place where the men were said to have been seen. Here he made inquiry and found that the intelligence he had received was correct and further, the men had stopped at a little cottage on the top of the hill and requested permission of the old woman who occupied it to cook some bacon for which permission they gave her a slight gratuity. She stated to the police officers that they had a large quantity of bacon and also pointed out a copper kettle which they had sold her; and both these facts tended to convince him that the men were the same who had entered the house of Mr Boughton of Wonersh, as described above, from whence they must have taken the bacon and kettle; while the direction from which they came that morning, as was evident by their tracks, connected them with the two robberies on the previous night. It would appear that the men on laving the cottage still kept on in the same direction across the country, and the officers immediately set out in pursuit towards Hambledon. All trace of the thieves was here lost and though their pursuers scoured country in all directions throughout Sunday, no clue whatever could be found of the fugitives. Mr Biddlecombe was however to sanguine as to the identity of the Surrey with the Sussex burglars, to be easily daunted in his important undertaking; so accompanied by assistants as before he still persevered in riding about from place to place throughout the whole of Monday and Tuesday going down as far as Plaistow in Sussex, and taking the whole of the wild country homeward to Wonersh and Godalming. Success however did not attend his exertions and Tuesday night found him still without tidings of the burglars. He arrived at Godalming late on that night and gave up the pursuit as hopeless unless he was able to obtain some further clue/ Luckily this clue was not long wanting, for about noon on Wednesday intelligence was received that three men answering the description of the burglars were seen some time on the afternoon of Sunday making towards Headley in Hampshire.

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

Off the pursuers set in that direction but after travelling some ten or a dozen miles and gaining no information as to their men they took circuitous route back again to Odiham in Hampshire from thence on to Hartley Row but still without being able to recover trace of the burglars. Wednesday night had now become Thursday morning and still the pursuit continued and at length the persevering officer succeeded in learning at a village some eight or ten miles on the road to Reading in Berkshire, that three men had been there the day before passing themselves off as smugglers, corresponding precisely with the men sought for, but the officer found they had changed their apparel when comparing the present with the previous descriptions of their dress. On leaving the village it seems as if the three fugitives took the road to Newbury whither their pursuers at once proceeded but learning noting of them there they kept on for Reading. From Reading where they could obtain no tidings Biddlecombe and his assistants set out for Maidenhead but there they were also at fault.

On Friday morning Mr Biddlecombe got again into the neighbourhood of Reading and at a village about four miles from the town on the road to Basingstoke he learned that three men still pretending to be smugglers had been there the previous day and were disposing of some brandy as before, they had taken the road to Basingstoke and thither in all haste pursued them. On arriving at Basingstoke he found that they had been there on the previous evening and on further enquiry that they had slept there and changed their clothes, quitting the town that (Friday) morning about nine o'clock; they still kept up their assumed character as smugglers. All this was highly satisfactory, but strange to say, no clue could be obtained as to what road they taken on leaving the town. Fortunately this time Mr Biddlecombe took the right direction for on proceeding about twelve miles on the road to Alton he found that the soi-disant [38]smugglers were only about three hours ahead of him. Biddlecombe at once called in his assistants whom he had from time to time during the pursuit dispatched by different roads always fixing some central point as a rendezvous all three set out in hot pursuit towards Alton.

At a village called North Wanborough the joyful information was obtained that the long sought for party were only about half an hour in advance. On the pursuers sped and speedily

[38] So called

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

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

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

What the united force of Sussex have been unable to effect one man by persevering exertion and energy accomplished in Surrey. We may add that Captain Mackay cc of the East Sussex force wrote to Chief Constable Biddlecombe on Wednesday to be on the look out for Messrs Longhurst and Co., and then when Mr Biddlecombe returned home with the men in custody on Friday night he found the letter in question awaiting him. The gang evidently contemplated other robberies for they asked many questions of the old woman at whose house they had their bacon cooked as before mentioned as to whether Mr Wilder's (of Busbridge) family was at home, how many servants lived in the house etc. It does not appear

that they for a moment thought they were pursued nor did they know until after they were in custody whether it was for their misdeeds In Sussex or Surrey that they were apprehended. [39]

1845 March 12 The Sussex Burglars:[40] Considerable excitement has prevailed in the town of Lewes in the last 24 hours in consequence of information having been received at an early hour on Sunday morning that the three individuals connected with the Sussex burglaries, Patchig, Burgess and Longhurst, had been captured in Hampshire by Mr Biddlecombe the chief officer od police at Godalming after five days hard chase. Immediately on receipt of the information we lost no time in conveying it to the proper authorities and this morning's post enabled us to lay before the same parties a full account of the proceedings adopted by Biddlecombe the active officer by whose exertions the burglars were secured, accompanied by the information that the burglars would arrive at Lewes in custody of their captor this (Monday) afternoon. In accordance with information about half past 5 this afternoon Biddlecombe with his assistant arrived in charge of the prisoners whom he lodged safely in the station house. At the moment we write they are before the magistrate Mr H Blackman. The prisoners left Godalming this morning early. Hey were conveyed handcuffed in carts to Guildford thence by the coach, which runs to Red Hill, where they were placed in a railway carriage and brought by train to Brighton. On arriving at Brighton they were at once placed in a fly and driven without loss of time to Lewes. Their conduct since their capture has been perfectly quiet, and on the whole they appear little affected by their situation. This remark does not apply however, to the prisoner Longhurst who since the news of his wife's death has materially altered his demeanour. To use the expression of the officer he appeared considerably "cut up" by the melancholy intelligence. (Sussex Advertiser)

They were examined before the Lewes magistrates on Monday and remanded for further examination till Thursday[41]

On March the 19th 1845 the men were found guilty of burglary and transported for ten years. There is some variation in the reports on the sentencing of the women members of the gang Jane Burgess and Ann Hounsell varying between 18 months and two years hard labour. Biddlecombe was commended by the judge for showing great zeal and activity in the case and was rewarded twenty shillings in addition to his expenses and the two constables who assisted him in the pursuit of the prisoners should each receive five shillings.[42]

A further press report contains more detail of the ploy used by Biddlecombe to make the arrests. There is also a reference to links with a large number of burglaries. Operating in the 1840s across Surrey and Sussex were the Surrey based Isaac's gang who were prolific burglars and involved in at least two murders.[43]

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[39] Sussex Advertiser 11 March 1845

[40] The Times (London, England), Wednesday, March 12, 1845

[41] The Morning Chronicle Wednesday March 12 1845 – abridged from the Surrey Advertiser

[42] The Morning Post (London, England), Thursday, March 20, 1845

[43] Full details of the gang can be found at www.surrey-constabulary.com

There was considerable interest created by the fact that the prisoners were supposed to have been connected with a great number of burglaries that have been committed in the county of Surrey. The circumstances of this particular case presented nothing uncommon, except the mode of their capture. A constable named Biddlecombe was on their traces; and after travelling in pursuit of them over a very great extent of country succeeded in coming up with the prisoners at Alton, in Hampshire; and as he was at this time alone, they would have probably got away had he not adroitly hit upon the following expedient to disarm their suspicion. He told them on coming up with them that he was an officer and that a farmer a short distance off had sent him after them on suspicion of stealing some fowls the night before. The prisoners said they could easily prove their innocence of this charge for they had slept in Basingstoke. The officer then said they could no doubt easily prove this to the satisfaction of the complainant if they would go back with him, and for "forms sake" they had better have on the handcuffs. The prisoners consented and very quickly allowed the officer to handcuff them, and he told them the real nature of the charges against them. [44]

When secured and handcuffed, Biddlecombe called them by their several names and informed them of the charges against them. They each of them carried a bundle and the great proportion of the missing property belonging to Mr Sparks and Mr Abbott were found in their possession as well as some nine or ten shillings in silver and a small quantity of eatables. They were dressed in long smock frocks, buttoning before, and appear to have disposed of very little of the property taken on the previous Saturday night except the wine and spirits. They were all three armed with long knives and had they been aware of the charges against them or the mission of the officer, they would doubtless have used them to the danger of him and his assistants. They had no firearms in their possession. The chief constable at once procured a vehicle and conveyed his prisoners to Godalming, where he arrived with them late on Friday evening. They were subsequently conveyed to Lewes, examined before the magistrates on Monday and remanded for further examination. On Thursday the three male prisoners, Amos Patching, Thomas Burgess and John Longhurst and two female prisoners, Mary Ann Houndsell and Jane Burgess were brought up for further examination. Five cases were gone into viz, those of Sir Page Dicks of Preston, the Rev WB Staveley of Falmer, Mr Napoleon Baker junior of Edburton, the Rev H Fearon of Cuckfield and Mr George Goldsmith of Bevendean. After the first or second witness had been called, Houndswell became greatly affected and agitated; she was suffering from St Vitus's Dance to a great degree, so much so that the worthy magistrate ordered her to be taken into the yard; she shortly after returned but some time elapsed before she became calm and collected. The prisoners were fully committed for trial at the assizes, which commenced on Monday (yesterday).[45]

Fatal accident involving a child in Godalming

Though not named, Biddlecombe would have dealt with this case acting on behalf of the Coroner. Godalming **Saturday 1844 January 18:** Fatal accident: Last week a fatal accident

[44] The Derby Mercury Wednesday March 26 1845
[45] The Derby Mercury Wednesday March 26 1845

occurred in Bridge Street, Godalming when a girl named Johnson, aged about six, clothes caught fire as she was trying to lift a pot of potatoes off the fire. She was badly burnt dying later that day. Her mother was at the time gossiping at a neighbours house and on hearing screams ran in doors but was too late to render any effective assistance. An inquest was held and a verdict of accidental death returned. The Coroner censured the conduct of the mother very much. She had been in the habit of neglecting her children and only two weeks before a child two years younger than the deceased had a great portion of its clothes burned again when the mother left the child without proper protection.

1845 January 21 Sussex Advertiser: Daring Outrage: on Thursday last three young men and a boy named severally John Brown, William Johnson, Thomas Pegg and William Pegg were brought up in custody at the town hall before the mayor, WE Holland and Richard Balchin charged with breaking the windows of Mr Clark the relieving officer for the Godalming district. Mr Clark on being sworn deposed that all four prisoners came together to his house about two hours previous to the examination and demanded relief. He offered them the usual mendacity ticket on the Guildford Union, but they refused it, and said they were tramping in an opposite direction namely to Portsmouth. As they would not take the ticket or go away Mr Clark proceeded to the house of the chief constable Biddlecombe (a few doors off)with a view of ordering them to tramp and on returning, not being more than a minute absent the prisoner Thomas Pegg was engaged in demolishing his windows having taken off his shoe for that purpose. He smashed 22 squares – none of the other prisoners were seen by Mr Clark breaking the windows. Mr Biddlecombe deposed to his having seen the four prisoners together during the day, in the town begging, and having ordered them to go away if they did not wish to go into the cage. The prisoners, particularly Thomas Pegg only persisted in begging and seemed anxious to be locked up. The prisoners were all four, wretched looking objects – the Peggs alleged they were brothers. The magistrates being anxious to make a severe example conceited the prisoner Thomas Pegg under the Godalming Town Act, which enacts that for such offences as the one named and proved against him a fine of £5 may be levied or in default a committal of six months in the county gaol. The prisoner was accordingly committed to the gaol at Kingston upon Thames for six calendar months. The other three were committed under the Vagrant Act for one month each to the Guildford house of correction[46] [47]

Stolen building materials in Woking

1845 March 4 Sussex Advertiser: **Petty Sessions** Saturday 1 March Magistrates present: The Right Honourable the Earl of Lovelace, Chairman, G Best, H Drummond, F Mangles, E Bray, S More Molyneux Esqrs and the Rev A Onslow.

Felony: Charles Wells and Thomas Chapman brought up on remand from the Police-office charged with felony. Mr Henry Marshall of Godalming appeared as the principal prosecutor, Mr George Marshall and Mr Neale attended on behalf of the prisoners.

[46] Sussex Advertiser 21 January 1845
[47] Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian (Southampton, England), Saturday, January 18, 1845

Thomas Luxford deposed, " I am a sawyer and I live at Wisburn Green in Sussex. At present I am in the employ of Mr George Marshall of Godalming and lately have been working for that gentleman at Woking. I have been engaged with my father in cutting elm boards and on the night 19th of February several of these boards were stolen from the sawpit. I saw them safe on Wednesday night and missed them on Thursday morning. All the boards were race-marked (sic) with G.M., Mr Marshall's initials. We missed a great number, eleven out of one lot. On the afternoon of Thursday the 20th February I went with constable Biddlecombe in search of the boards to the house of the prisoner Charles Wells, and was present when five of them were found in his turf stack. The elm boards now produced are some of those found in the prisoner's house and belong to those I missed from the sawpit. I assisted to cut them, and I know by peculiar marks upon them that the work is mine."

James Luxford the father of the first witness deposed "I am in the employ of Mr George Marshall as a sawyer and have been working with my son at Woking. I know the boards produced to be the property of Mr Marshall, my employer and I know them to be from the first stock I cut for him at Woking. I know we left the boards safe on Wednesday evening the 19th February and then on Thursday morning they were gone."

William Henry Biddlecombe chief constable of Godalming deposed, "On Thursday 20 February I received information of Mr Marshall having lost some elm boards and I obtained a search warrant and proceeded to search the house of the prisoner Charles Wells who lives at Woking about twelve miles from Godalming. In a turf heap on his premises I found five elm boards one of which I produce and on comparing these boards with the one I have brought with me from the sawpit find the correspond in every particular, (the witness here matched the boards and the resemblance was perfect as regards knots, spokes etc. On the following day Friday I went again to Well's premises and on going into his bedroom I found 24 boards, 9 feet long, of fir deal, beside six in his pig sty of the same dimensions, making in all 30 boards and 240 feet of timber.

Committed for trial at the Assizes[48]

1845 March 4: Sussex Advertiser: Second Charge: Mr JB Dalby superintendent of the South Western Railway police now came forward to press a second charge of felony against the prisoner Thomas Chapman, deposed: From some information I received I proceeded to the house of the prisoner Thomas Chapman to search there for some nails, which had been stolen from the railway. The nails were of a peculiar construction and were known a galvanised clout nails and used solely in erecting the apparatus connected with the electric telegraph between Nine Elms and Gosport Stations. On searching the garden I found a jar of nails concealed under a heap of wood. In answer to a question from the Chairman Mr Dalby stated that Mr **Biddlecombe** the Godalming constable had informed him in the first instance of the nails being on the prisoner's premises. Thomas Rann from Poplar was engaged in erecting the telegraph and gave evidence that several thousand nails were lost all in the parish

[48] Sussex Advertiser 4 March 1845

of Pirbright (Woking). Mr Dalby added that several of the nails were driven into boards and walls in the prisoner's house. Committed to the assizes his legal adviser declining as before to say anything. [49]

1846 January 13 South Eastern Gazette: Trial for Theft: Thomas Cowdery aged 20 was charged with stealing a coat the property of Richard David Kidd at Godalming on the 22nd December. Mr Locke conducted the prosecution.

Charles Hollington Chief Constable of Guildford deposed he went to the shop of Mrs Butcher in High Street, Guildford when he saw the prisoner exchanging the coat, which he for some shoes; knowing it to have been stolen, he took the prisoner into custody.

Richard Driver Kidd, being a Quaker, affirmed that himself and some friends went to the house of Mr Keene at Godalming on the evening of Monday 22 December last, he left his coat and hat in the hall; when about to depart they were both missing. The coat produced was his property. Six months Hard Labour.

1846 January 13: Edward Smith a sickly looking youth was charged with stealing a coat the property of Frederick Smallpiece and a hat the property of Richard Driver Kidd from the house of Mr Keene at Godalming on 22 December last. The case was very similar to the last, the hat belonging the prosecutor in the last case and the coat to Mr Smallpiece. They were stolen from the hall of Mr Keene where the prosecutors had been visiting on the night in question.

William Henry Biddlecombe Inspector of police deposed that having received information of the robbery he went to the house of the prisoner's father who kept a marine store shop at Leatherhead. Saw the prisoner and his mother who denied they had such a coat or hat in their possession Upon looking round the room however he discovered the hat and on searching the bedroom fond the coat concealed in the bed clothes. He took the prisoner into custody. Cross examined: Leatherhead is 17 miles from Godalming.

Charles Hollington corroborated the evidence and Messrs Smallpiece and Kidd identified the coat and hat as their property. The defence was that Smith was at home on the night of the robbery and the coat had been purchased by way of trade by his father. The Chairman commented that after hearing the evidence the charge should have been receiving and the jury acquitted the prisoner.[50]

Burglary plus sheep stealing by a gang

1846 October 27 South Eastern Gazette:[51] Biddlecombe – burglary Ash plus theft of sheep: William Glazier, William Smallpiece and Charles Dawes for having on the night of

[49] Sussex Advertiser 4 March 1845
[50] 1846 January 13 South Eastern Gazette
[51] 1846 October 27 South Eastern Gazette

13th October feloniously stolen in the parish of Ash and Normandy a pair of pincers and a quantity of nails, the property of John Stedman the elder.

Superintendent Biddlecombe said he had a clear charge of burglary against the whole of the prisoners, who were a part of a gang of seven thieves well known to him. The case of burglary did not come under his notice until last evening, and he had no opportunity to prefer a bill of indictments previous to the discharge of the Grand Jury. Three months hard labour

William Glazier, John Paine and Charles Denyer for having on the 14th October feloniously stolen at Worplesdon one ewe sheep the property of John Collins. Transported fifteen years.

The following case is very interesting as it shows that in 1846 Biddlecombe was active in northwest Surrey from where the Isaacs gang were to come to prominence. It is interesting to consider that from this time Biddlecome and Hollington were aware of the formation of the gang and followed their activities locking them up when the opportunity arose.

1846 November 10: Mayford: Biddlecombe and Hollington stolen copper and gang of sheep stealers[52] Mayford – on Wednesday last Mr W H Biddlecombe, superintendent of the Godalming borough police, in consequence of information he had received, searched the river running from Mayford to near Guildford and by the aid of sticks and poles pointed with iron, he found one of the large coppers recently reported to have been stolen from the premises of Mr John Marratt and for the discovery of which a reward of £15 was offered. On the morning of the following day Mr Biddlecombe accompanied by Mr Constable Hollington, superintendent of Guildford police proceeded to Farnham and searched the broker's shops there. They succeeded in finding several parts of the other copper but the greater part had been forwarded to Southampton. Mr Biddlecombe is in possession of information which implicates some persons already undergoing punishment for another offence; and to who a a portion of clothing was found which had been taken from a shop at Bisley which was entered and the articles in question, with a quantity of provisions stolen.

They also formed a party belonging to a regularly organised gang of sheep stealers of whom three were tried at the last Kingston Sessions and convicted, and all of them were sentenced to fifteen years transportation. They had long infected the neighbourhood of Woking, Weybridge, Worpleson and the western parts of Surrey, and by the confession of one of the parties implicated they had stolen two sheep every week for the last eight weeks before their apprehension by Mr Biddlecombe. In fact this fellow has confessed that half the stolen sheep in the county of Surrey were stolen by this gang. Great credit is due to Mr Biddlecombe for his activity in searching out these midnight depredators, who were a pest to the farmers of Surrey.

1847 February 16 Sheep Stealing: [53] William Pollard 33 was indicted for feloniously stealing at Cranley[54] one ewe sheep the property of Thomas Killick. Mr Locke appeared for

[52] South Eastern Gazette *10 November 1846*
[53] South Eastern Gazette 16 February 1847

the prosecution. Thomas Killick the son of the prosecutor deposed that on Monday evening the 1st February there were seventy sheep in his father's field and on the following morning one was missing. At the lower corner of the field he saw footmarks, which he traced to a ditch where he found the entrails, skin and head of a sheep, also marks of corduroy trousers, as though some person had been kneeling there. The skin had the same mark as his father's sheep.

John Whitburn deposed that he saw the prisoner come out of his house on the night in question; he went towards the well and appeared to have something under his frock, which did not appear to be the case when he returned. Street deposed that he saw the prisoner and three others going towards prosecutor's farm on the night of the 1st February. Prisoner had a sack. A witness named Crewsley deposed finding the mutton in prisoner's well also the footmarks corresponding with the prisoner's shoes.

Mr Biddlecombe chief constable of Godalming searched prisoner's house on the 4th February found a round frock with blood on the sleeve and front, also a chopper with a quantity of mutton fat on it. On going upstairs he found a small screw on the riser of the eighth stair. On drawing out the screw he discovered a secret cupboard under the stairs and over the oven; in it was some mutton fat, wool, and small pieces of flesh, also marks of blood. He then procured "grapples" with which he drew the hind quarters, neck, ribs and two shoulders of a sheep from the well. They matched the skin produced. Prisoner had a pair of corduroy trowsers (sic) on, on the front of which were spots of blood.

The jury immediately returned a verdict of guilty. Fifteen years transportation. The chairman complimented Mr Biddlecombe for his setivity (activity?) and tendered the thanks of the county to him for his exertions. [55]

9 March 1848 Burglary at Abinger (Note the dates as published are inconsistent) William Munday (27) and George Fain (22) were charged with burglariously entering the dwelling house of George Elmes, at Abinger, and stealing a variety of grocery articles. Mr Robinson appeared for the prosecution and Mr Channock for the defence

Mary King, wife of Jarman King, and daughter of prosecutor, fastened up her father's shop on the night of the 18th March (This should probably read 9 March) next morning she saw the shop had been broken open during the night, and some cheese and tea stolen. She identified the cheese produced before the court. On being cross-examined Mrs King said she was the last in the shop on Wednesday night. Mr King said he came down on the Thursday morning at 5 o'clock and saw a hole in the window large enough for a man to get into or out.

[54] Now Cranleigh
[55] South Eastern Gazette 16 February 1847

Superintendent Biddlecombe in evidence said that on the 10th March he examined the tracks near the shop; compared the prisoner's shoes with the tracks, and they corresponded. (He produced the shoes, and showed several marked particulars in the nailing of the shoes, by which they could be identified with the tracks. The impression was traceable with a few intervals from Abinger to Guildford, by a circuitous route, being two or three miles longer than the common road. About halfway the two persons were joined by a third person. Witness examined prosecutor's premises – the bolt of the shutter was cut round, the lead from the panes had also been cut, some glass removed – and two bars had been wrenched out. On the window frame were marks of blood, and there were also marks on Munday's clothes, and one of his fingers had recently been cut. On Fane (Note: previously in same piece spelt Fain) a knife was found broken at the tip. The cuts in the lead work were exactly the size of the top of the knife. On being cross-examined Biddlecombe said he did not put the shoes in the tracks but made parallel impressions. The way to the prosecutor's shop was through a small orchard.

Two witnesses Truel and Saxby gave evidence as to the track. On the Monday morning following, they went to the wood where the tracks went in, and Saxby saw the hounds, and Colonel Sumner gave him a bundle, which contained in a red handkerchief. He found the cheese now produced and which Mrs King identified.

Colonel Sumner in evidence said that he was hunting on Monday 10 March on finding hounds drawn towards the wood on Hawkhurst downs he went in and found under a heather bush some things tied in a red handkerchief. He gave them to Saxby.

A labourer named Sherlock in his evidence said that on the Thursday morning in question at about half-past seven he saw the two prisoners with another man pass Scotland Farm, which is in the course of the track spoken of. Two of them had bundles

Police Constables High and Williams[56] gave evidence of apprehending the prisoners at the Rose and Crown, Guildford. Scotman of the Rose and Crown deposed that prisoners lodged at his house. On Wednesday 9th of March in the forenoon they let the house and did not return till Thursday morning.

The principal point in Mr Charnock's address for the defence was the fallacy of the evidence depending on footmarks. The prisoners were found guilty and were sentenced to ten years transportation.[57]

The Surrey Quarter Sessions, Commission of the Peace, the decision making body for many aspects of local government before the county council, had decided as late as 1840 that there was no need for a rural police. The larger town of Guildford formed a force in 1836 and was very similar in status and organisation with Farnham, Dorking and Godalming. This was all to change extremely quickly with Biddlecombe playing a significant role.

[56] Most likely members of the Guildford Borough Police as the Surrey Constabulary not yet formed.)
[57] From Mrs. Jean Pelham descendant of Inspector Donaldson, March 2016

Murdered in his vicarage – the formation of the Surrey Constabulary

On the 26th September 1850 the Reverend George Hollest was murdered in his bedroom. Burglars entered the house at night in Frimley and shot the vicar who later died. George Hollest fired at the fleeing burglars with a loaded pistol he always kept close to his bed during the night, as there was a significant fear of burglars, particularly in vicarages.

There was no local police force so Superintendent Biddlecombe was summoned by the magistrate from Godalming Police to help the local magistrates. Men were arrested and sent for trial at the Assizes where two of the four were acquitted and two hung in Southwark. This is an important crime in the history of policing in Surrey as the outcry that followed led to the formation of the Surrey Constabulary. It is clear from the careful actions of Biddlecombe at the scene that he was aware of the principles established by Vidocq a French former criminal who was the founder of the French Surete who valued data and records and is credited with encouraging early studies in fingerprinting, ballistics and crime scene analysis. In 1845 Vidocq's book "Memoirs" in English translation had been the talk of London and it is very likely that his work had an influence on an ambitious detective such as Biddlecombe. Vidocq wrote:

"The minute exactitude had been observed in removing the body. Nothing had been neglected which might lead to the discovery of the assassins. Accurate impressions were taken of the footmarks, buttons and fragments of paper dyed in blood were carefully collected."

Not relevant at this stage of the life of Biddlecombe but of interest. In the Surrey Constabulary Library at HQ in 1864 was "Memoirs of Fouche", Minister of the French Police in 1825 – two volumes. The book was available to all members of the force to borrow and would be sent using the internal postal system.

In more detail this case gives an indication of policing in the county before the formation of the Surrey Constabulary and does show that there was a level of co-operation between local forces and the Metropolitan Police. Serious crime was not unusual but murder remained rare.. However rare murder may have been this one impacted on the higher social levels of the county and sent shivers down the spines of the establishment. On the 9th October 1850 The Times reported the inquest where Sergeant Kendall of the London detective police said he was involved in the case but had arrived after Inspector (sic) Biddlecombe of the Godalming Police. Superintendent (sic) Biddlecombe gave evidence, which included details of the crime and suspects. Inspector Charles Hollingworth (sic – should be Hollington and he styled himself superintendent) of the Guildford Borough Police arrested the suspects and it was reported that Inspector (sic) Kendall had noted blood stained footprints in the doorway of the vicarage and, when searching the suspect's premises blood stained stockings were recovered. (Rank seems to be arbitrary!) As a result of this case it is reported that Kendall was promoted Inspector in the Metropolitan Police and he was later to marry Mrs Hollest the victim's wife, which raises questions of crossing class boundaries.

Biddlecombe told the Coroner that he had been directed by the magistrates to go to Frimley where he arrived at about 5pm on the Saturday evening. He examined the Hollest house and found entrance had been gained into the house by breaking a pane of glass in the scullery window then cutting away an iron bar. He found two holes that had been cut with a centre bit in the scullery door opposite a bolt, which had been forced back with a crooked instrument, and entry gained to the kitchen. In the kitchen he found two cupboards had been broken into. He compared a screwdriver which he received from the deceased's man servant, Richard Gyles, with those marks found on the cupboard and had no doubt they were caused by this instrument. He found one of the double doors from the kitchen to the dining room had been forced, as had a door from the dining room to the front passage. There were marks of the same screwdriver on these doors. Biddlecombe found two right shoeless footmarks in the gravel drive and found traces of someone having been standing under a tree in the drive from where he recovered a piece of blue worsted. There were also marks in the gravel thought to be from an arm where someone had fallen.

Mrs Caroline Hollest said that on the 27 September 1850 at three in the morning "I noticed an increase of light in the room but could not perceive how it was occasioned". There were curtains around the bed but they were open at the foot. Reaching from her bed to ring for the servant she was grabbed by a masked man. As she tried to scream a second man grabbed the Rev and the men were warned by the armed men to be silent or they would have their brains blown out. However both continued to struggle.

Mrs Hollest was forced to the floor in the narrow space between bed and wall. Unable to see her attacker she was struck by his distinctive squeaky voice. She then heard a pistol fired and she struggled to reach her husband whilst one of the burglars hung onto her around the waist pushing a pistol into her side. The burglar caught his food on the washstand and tripped and Mrs Hollest was able to ring the bell and raise the alarm and the intruders began to flee.

Reverend Hollest went to his dressing room to fetch his handgun, which he always kept loaded there and pursued the intruders out through the front of the house. Mrs Hollest watched from an open window as the three men ran out to join a fourth – one turned and looked directly at her and she took fright and withdrew slamming shut the window. A few minutes later her husband returned and calmly informed her "The fellow has shot me" Mrs Hollest saw that he was bleeding from the stomach and her servant Giles was dispatched to fetch both the local surgeon and constable. [58]

Dr Davies found the Reverend in bed, in good spirits not fearing he would die. He discovered a gunshot wound about an inch below the navel and realised the injury was very serious indeed and the doctor stayed with him until he died at 1pm the following day. Dr Davies undertook the PM and recovered a marble from the abdomen.

An insight to the protocol of using officers from other parts of the county is usefully revealed in a newspaper report of October 181850: "In Surrey which is a county only partially

[58] That was a brave act of Giles given there were armed and very dangerous criminals close to the house

protected by police a county magistrate Mr Austin was at Frimley soon after the murder and there saw superintendent of the Godalming police and he asked him if he was making any enquiries into the matter. His reply was that he was a private officer paid by a committee from a private fund and that he had no authority or jurisdiction. Mr Austen being on the committee immediately gave him instructions to act in the matter and he then took the necessary steps; but the want of proper authority on the spot was that 16 hours elapsed before any policeman was engaged in endeavouring to detect the guilty parties."

Grove Cottage in modern times, scene of the murder[59]

Good and persistent detective work, no doubt helped by the £150 reward, meant four men, well known local criminals and members of the Isaac's gang were arrested in Guildford by Hollington on the Sunday after the burglary. The two Harwood brothers Levi 25 years and Samuel 29, James Jones and Richard Fowler also known as Hiram Smith. Smith turned Queen's evidence and so much was learnt. (There was a large reward on offer for the arrest and conviction of the burglars that the officers would have been aware of even if the details of that reward had not yet been made public. Borough officers were eligible to claim the money. This entitlement ceased once the constabulary was formed and any rewards eventually went in to the pension fund.)

At the resumed inquest reported on the 30 October 1850 The coroner's jury after a few minutes deliberation unanimously came to the verdict of Wilful murder against Hiram Smith, Levi Harwood and James Jones." There was in the jury's view insufficient evidence to justify a verdict of wilful murder against Samuel Harwood. The jury also declared that there had

[59] Photo from Ken Clarke retired Surrey Constabulary officer and local historian

been no evidence to show who of the three prisoners fired the fatal shot. The Coroner drew up the formal inquisition and warrants of committal were placed in the hands of Superintendent Biddlecombe by the coroner with instructions to lodge them with the governor of the Guildford House of Correction where the prisoners were confined.

(It is interesting that Hollington arrived at the scene uninvited and was to fall out with Biddlecombe to the point they did not speak which was to be very awkward as when the new constabulary was formed they would both join and Biddlecombe was to be the senior.)

The criminals were to go to a prize fight at Frimley and decided to call at the vicarage Grove House, on the way there on the pretext of selling plates. The housemaid bought nothing and refused them food when asked at which point the men became angry. Later that week the four men met in Guildford and travelled independently to Frimley about ten miles away. The Harwood brothers brought the pistols and close to the house loaded them with a stone marble, and the men all put on masks. This was Isaac's gang standard operating procedure: masks and loaded guns. It should be remembered that these men were hardened and very experienced and violent criminals with at least one other murder thought to have been committed by them along with a very large series of extremely violent burglaries. The attack on the vicarage was one of a series where reverend gentlemen's houses were attacked at night.

The house was entered via small scullery window squeezing the smallest though bars and that man then drilled out the central bar. The house was searched for desirable property, took food from the pantry, a gold watch, several silver items, coins, clothing and anything else they thought would receive a reasonable price. They drank wine and even filled a decanter and took it outside to one of the gang who was on watch.

The men then moved upstairs where the Hollests were attacked from where they were drive off after opening fire. As the men ran off they dropped much of the stolen property but managed to keep hold of a bag of coins. The coins were from a collection for the local school and contained some recognisable tokens.

Reported as Inspector Kendall (Metropolitan Police detective sergeant) had also been to the scene and noted blood stained footprints on the doorstep of the vicarage. On searching the prisoner Levi Harwood's lodgings a blood stained stocking was found and his right foot had several small cuts. It was confirmed by Smith that they had taken their shoes off before entering the house. (Another Isaac gang tactic)

Eventually the case came before the Assizes in Kingston where Charles Hollington gave evidence and said: "In September last I was superintendent of the Guildford police. I heard of the burglary at Mr Hollest's the next morning and immediately made some enquiries about Levi Harwood, Jones and Smith. I saw Jones about the middle of the day in High Street, Guildford. Biddlecombe and I went on Sunday morning to Mr Hollest's and when we returned we took Smith, Jones and Levi Harwood into custody. I told them I wanted them on suspicion of burglary at Mr Hollest's at Frimley and asked them to account for their time on

the Friday night as I had learned they were out. Harwood said he went to London that night and Jones said he went up on the downs to set a few wires to catch a rabbit."

"On the 30 September I took Samuel Harwood into custody and on this day Levi Harwood told me he would account for his time on Friday night and he said that he came down from London. I told him he was right about that and that he arrived at about eight o'clock to which he replied, "You know as much as I do." I searched the prisoners at the station. Upon Levi Harwood I found two sovereigns, one shilling, a sixpence and a knife. Upon Smith I found half a crown, a tobacco box, a knife and a piece of string. Upon Jones I found a cloth, a piece of sealing wax, and the token penny, which has been produced. I afterwards searched Levi Harwood's lodgings and found a pair of stockings, on the foot of one of which there was a mark of blood and also a "stony" marble. I had previously examined Levi Harwood's feet. And found that the right one was cut in several places and there was blood between the toes. After Levi Harwood was in custody I examined his shirt and found some marks of gravel upon his left sleeve."

"On the 2nd October I searched Samuel Harwood's lodgings at Hyfield-green and found a box at Mrs Catt's which belonged to him and from which I took a corduroy jacket. I had seen Levi Harwood wear a similar jacket. It appeared to me as though it had been recently washed. Levi Harwood afterwards claimed the jacket to be his."

On questioning by the court Hollington responded, "I was not engaged on the matter. I engaged myself. I don't remember having heard of any paper or wadding which was supposed to have been discharged from the pistol, being found by the side of the bed. I may have heard of such a thing but I don't recollect it. I don't know that any paper was compared with any paper found in possession of some of the prisoners.

There was a little rivalry between Biddlecombe and me upon the subject of the case and we have never acted together since. I did not give the prisoners any caution before I put the questions to them. Smith made a statement to me and I have no doubt he told me that it was their intention to have done the robbery on the Tuesday. What he said was "We arranged to commit the robbery on Tuesday." I believe a person named Macy was examined as a witness before the magistrates. I cannot say if he has been before the Grand Jury or not. I heard some man state that Smith had said something about the person being a tight fit, and that he would not give him any "chuck." Some persons named Penny, Blackman and a broom maker were also examined I believe. I don't know if any of these persons are here today.

Biddlecombe and I used to be friends and we have quarrelled about this case. I wanted all the prisoners and Biddlecombe wanted them too but I thought I had the best right to them. I am on very good terms with Biddlecombe now because we never speak (laugh). I know there is a reward of £150 offered on the case, which is to be paid on conviction of the parties. Smith asked me the meaning of the word accomplice and I believe he also asked me if I thought they would fulfil the promise contained in the bills if he was to "peach?" I have no doubt he

used the word "peach".[60] The prisoners were not allowed to have any professional advice until after Smith had made a statement of which he represented to be the circumstances of the robbery."

Jeremiah Campbell a constable in the Guildford Borough Police gave evidence that on Wednesday morning after the prisoners had been apprehended, Levi Harwood told him that on the night of the burglary he left his home about twenty minutes to five and went down the Woodbridge Road till he came to Mr Mayler's at Stoke and he then turned to the right and went to London and remained there nearly all day and came back to Guildford by the twenty minutes past five train. He saw all the prisoners together on the Sunday morning after the burglary. He had not given evidence before the magistrates. He had told Mr Hollington who had been his inspector at the time – there must have been some reason why he was not called. It was probably because there was some disagreement between Hollington and Biddlecombe that he was not examined.

Two of the men were found guilty and hung at Horsemonger Lane gaol which was in The Borough just south of the Thames and was Surrey's principal prison and place of execution up to its closure in 1878.[61]

Just before he was executed Levi Harwood confessed to pulling the trigger.

The grave of Reverend Hollest in Frimley churchyard[62]

[60] Give evidence against his co-defendants on behalf of the crown

[61] It was a common gaol, housing both debtors and criminals, with a capacity of around 300 inmates. In total, 131 men and four women were executed there between 1800 and 1877, the gallows being erected on the flat roof of the prison's gatehouse.

[62] Photo from Ken Clarke retired Surrey Constabulary officer and local historian

Reverend George Edward Hollest [63]

The county needs a police force!

Such was the outcry just a few weeks following this horrendous crime that on the 25 October 1850 the Rural Police Committee met at Reigate taking evidence from Superintendent Biddlecombe and the chief constable of Hampshire. Biddlecombe told the enquiry that he was responsible for an area of 28,940 acres with a population of ten thousand one hundred and twenty six with only one felony in his district reported over the last twelve months, stealing faggots to the value of sixpence. However he had been sent for to deal with twelve burglaries in surrounding districts in the last six months. There had been no cases of felony in Godalming itself during the last five years. Considering how long it would take to establish it is worthy to note at this early date Biddlecombe put in a bid for plain-clothes officers as detectives.

Acting at high speed the new Surrey Constabulary was established on the 1 January 1851 and incorporated the smaller forces within the county and covered all parts of Surrey not within the Metropolitan Police District. William Henry Biddlecombe was appointed to the new force as one of five superintendents, designated chief superintendent, and a few weeks later On the 15 February 1851, Hollington was appointed a superintendent.

Old enmities come to the surface as the aggrieved former chief officer of the Borough took exception to Biddlecombe receiving credit for resolving the Frimley Murder where he thought it was not due. Interestingly, Hollington refers to Biddlecombe as “detective”.

On the 26 April 1851 in a letter to The Times[64] Superintendent Charles Hollington Superintendent of the Guildford Borough Police wrote, letter dated 24 April by which time he was in the Surrey Constabulary and the Guildford Borough Police had ceased to exist. [65]

[63] Photo from Ken Clarke retired Surrey Constabulary officer and local historian
[64] The Times on line Article CS50889882

Superintendent Hollington felt aggrieved that "that the whole credit of breaking up the "Frimley Gang" was due to Mr Biddlecombe." Hollington asserted he arrested six of the men.

"Levi Harwood. James Jones alias Burbage (hung for the murder of Mr Hollest) Samuel Harwood, Hiram Smith alias Trowler (the approver[66] in the Frimley case) Thomas Toots alias Morgan and John Hillyer – the two latter were transported for life for the Uckfield burglary. These men I arrested entirely on my own suspicions.

"How is it the whole credit is due to Mr Biddlecombe that he did not apprehend some of them as it was well known that one of the rendezvous of the Uckfield gang [67] was Hindhead a little below Godalming where Biddlecombe was located?

The man Levi Harwood I had convicted nine years ago; he then had one year's hard labour; since which time I have had several summary convictions against him for assaulting the police etc. I also apprehended Jones on March the 13th 1850 on suspicion of a burglary at Mr Horne's linen draper Guildford (whose house was broken into on the 14th February in the same year) and found property belonging to Mr Horn's housekeeper upon him. He was committed to the Guildford borough sessions, but owing to a month having elapsed between the burglary and apprehension, and the prisoner stating he had bought the property, the jury ignored the bill. At the same time I apprehended a man named George Brisk, a companion of both Levi Harwood and Jones, and found property in his house the produce of several burglaries in the county. He was committed to the assizes at Kingston, where he was tried and sentenced to seven years transportation.

I beg further to state that I have on several occasions named these men to Biddlecombe, detective, and other officers, as the ones I had suspected to have committed burglaries in Surrey and elsewhere.

By inserting this you will greatly oblige your most obedient servant Charles Hollington

Some weeks later, Moreten a superintendent at Tunbridge Wells, a key player in the unravelling of the Isaac's gang, also writes to the newspaper. He is also aggrieved that Biddlecombe is receiving credit when it was not totally justified. Moreton who was not in a constabulary but a small town police force in Kent, was entitled to rewards. Moreten was, along with Hollington and Biddlecombe, heavily involved in the investigation and arrests of a large gang of desperate criminals operating in Surrey and Sussex some of who broke into the Frimley parsonage and murdered the Reverend Hollest.

9 June 1851: The Standard Monday: To the editor from Superintendent Morten:

Sir, In justice to myself I beg leave to trespass on your most valuable time, as well as to be allowed a small piece in your column to contradict an assertion in your paper last April which is calculated to injure me in my profession as superintendent of police, it being well known

[65] The force was to be reconstituted as was Godalming
[66] Informant/Queen's evidence
[67] These men were a part of the Isaacs's gang

that character and testimonials are of great importance to most men, but more in particular to persons who hold the responsible situation as superintendent of police. It is calculated to injure me by taking away that credit which is due, and the more in consequence of the extensive circulation of your paper which is well known to be read in most parts of the world.

The statement I allude to is under the head of the "Frimley Gang"; the paragraph concludes with the following words: "At the last sitting of the magistrates the chairman of the bench publicly stated that the whole credit of the capture of these daring men and the exposure of their system were due to Mr Biddlecombe the superintendent of Surrey Police."

Now sir, being present at that sitting at Horsham I beg to give the exact words. Mr Dickens said: "The magistrates are desirous of expressing their active satisfaction with the persevering and praiseworthy conduct which you have manifested throughout these proceedings and they have felt great pleasure in acting upon your suggestions." The conversation was at the committal of Samuel Harwood, James Hamilton and John Isaacs. That compliment was paid to Mr Biddlecombe for having so well got up the case then before them; and I beg to inform you that it was entirely through me that the case was brought forward.

I waited the two days at the trial of Samuel Harwood, Levi Harwood, and Samuel Jones charged with the Frimley murder, to have apprehended them all three if they had been acquitted of the murder of Mr Hollest, upon a charge of burglary, with extreme violence at the house of Mrs Stoner, Kirdford, Sussex, there being no other person in attendance although others were in possession of the same information as I was. I made the case known to Superintendent Biddlecombe who agreed to assist me if all three were acquitted. Samuel Harwood being the only one acquitted I gave the case to Superintendent Biddlecombe. I was the cause of the apprehension of John Isaacs the captain of the gang; I was the cause of James Hamilton, alias Butcher, being detained on a charge of burglary at Miss Farncombe's with violence; as well as John and James Smith alias Hones, both of whom were transported for life.

Joseph Carter alias Cockman I apprehended in a hut on Woking Common; and William Brooks alias Hayler I apprehended on the Right Honourable Lord Norton's barn at Woodhams, Chertsey, Surrey, both of whom were transported for life. Oliver alias Cockman I also apprehended, who is transported for being a receiver in the above offence, for 14 years, and two others named Edwards were apprehended charged with being receivers by Mr Dudson, constable of Tunbridge Wells who was connected with me in the affair. So you will perceive that I have been the cause of detaining and apprehending eight of that gang of desperate characters who have so long infested the counties of Surrey and Sussex and other counties. I think the following rewards and gratuities, which have been received by men in conjunction with Mr Dudson will, I trust, be sufficient to suffice and to show to whom the credit is due.

In addition to a reward we received from the judge at the trial a subscription was raised in my district and the sum of £45 was presented to me and £25 from the Uckfield Prosecution Society; £25 from the Reverend Owen Emerie Vidal of Upper Dicker, Horsebridge near

Hailsham, Sussex; £5 from the Misses Farncomb (sic) of Uckfield, in addition to the reward they offered through the society; £5 from Mrs Hurat of the Five Bells Inn, Chorley; £2 from Mr Wood, butler to the Misses Farncomb (sic) who it will be remembered was so near to being murdered by the gang; £2 from Mr Baker of Portslade, Sussex who also was a sufferer; and £1 from Captain Wetherall of Forest House, Hartfield, Sussex and a promise of other rewards from societies that have not yet had their meetings.

The above are facts that cannot be denied. I have not done this to come in contact with Mr Biddlecomb (sic) who I have known for some years to be a good officer but at the same time I feel it my duty to beg of you to allow the statement to be contradicted, to claim that which every man is entitled to, the merit his perseverance deserves.

It having been argued by several persons who have not been thoroughly acquainted with the circumstances, that Mr Biddlecombe was entitled to the whole of the credit which I feel bound to deny, trusting you will insert this so that the public may be in possession of the true facts.

I remain Sir, your obedient servant **W M Morten, Superintendent of Police,** Tunbridge Wells, Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells, Kent June 6 1851

1851 January 1: The Surrey Constabulary became operational with an establishment of seventy police officers, including five superintendents. The first chief constable, Captain Hastings, was aged thirty-eight years.

The chief constable required the men to be honest and sober, less than thirty years of age and at least five feet seven inches tall. There was no minimum age - one constable was appointed at the age of fourteen and another at fifteen. The first county headquarters was in the old Guildford Borough Police Station at the Corn Market House but this was only until the new headquarters was completed in Woodbridge Road in 1854. County police stations were established in Bagshot, Chertsey, Dorking and Farnham and new stations were built at Egham, Godstone, Guildford, Haslemere, Hersham, Leatherhead, and Reigate. The original station at Chertsey was sold because of its poor condition and a new one built. Five superintendents were stationed at Reigate, Dorking, Godalming, Farnham and Headquarters.

There was no rank of sergeant, which does not appear in the records until 1865. There were four classes of constables with newly appointed officers starting at class four and moving through the classes on promotion. They were required to work seven days a week and granted twelve days leave a year, which had to be taken in summer as no leave was permitted during the winter. It was not until 1853 that an Instruction Book was provided to give guidance on policing matters, although the system of General Orders began on 30 January 1851. The first order related to the taking of leave.

1851 spring, Guildford Borough Police numbered just three constables and a superintendent numbers had dropped and was to become a part of the newly formed constabulary.[68]

It is not hard to speculate the independent entrepreneurial Biddlecombe with all his freedoms as the head of policing in Godalming, the constraints of a Chief Constable and being a part of a bureaucratic organisation would be hard to adapt to. Many of those constraints are established with a very early general Order fro the county Chief Constable to the force: **1851 January 31: GO 6:** Superintendents on receiving information of a **robbery or any other serious offence** having been committed are required immediately to communicate the same with the chief constable. (**Note:** The term robbery is used as a generic term for crime and is interchangeable with burglary, larceny etc.) [69]

1851: On formation the headquarters was not to be Dorking but in the Guildford Borough police station at the Corn Market House; the **Woodbridge Road HQ** was completed and moved into in 1854.[70] William Henry Biddlecombe the Head Constable of Godalming aged 36 was appointed to the new force as a superintendent and was number one in the appointment book.[71] Of the first seventy men appointed only five served long enough to receive a pension; twenty-nine were dismissed before they served a year and a large number of the others were dismissed or resigned over a short time. There was no shortage of recruits although as always, the pay was poor, seventeen shillings a week, and the conditions harsh. Men worked seven days a week but twelve days a year leave was granted in the summer as no leave was permitted during the winter. No instruction was given to the men and it was not until 1853 that an Instruction Book was provided. At the time of formation there were police stations at Bagshot, Chertsey, Dorking and Farnham which passed to the county and new stations were built at Egham, Godstone, Guildford, Haslemere, Hersham, Leatherhead, Reigate and at Chertsey where the original one was found to be unhealthy.[72]

Kirdford Burglary Horsham Magistrates Court

Following the acquittal at the Frimley Murder trial more members of the Iassac's gang appeared before Horsham Court for the final act of unravelling of the band. The crimes being considered by the Horsham magistrates in April 1851 included what was referred to as the Kirdford burglary.

In 1850 on the night of the 4th June a burglary was committed in Sussex in the village of Kirdford.[73] The full details of this offence were revealed in 1851 when a number of men were taken before the court charged with the burglary. These were desperate men one of who was Samuel Harwood, one of those charged with the murder of the Reverend George Hollest and

[68] http://st-caths-web.co.uk/?p=11643
[69] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[70] Durrant page 4
[71] Durrant page 5
[72] Durrant page 7
[73] Daily News (London, England), Wednesday, April 9, 1851

who was acquitted on Tuesday 1st June at Kingston Assizes. Harwood was brought before the magistrates at Horsham charged with James Hamilton, one of the Uckfield burglars by Mr Biddlecombe, described by the papers as "the active superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary," with having broken and entered the dwelling house of Mrs Harriet Stoner of Kirdford, Sussex on the 4th of June 1850, together with James Jones, Levi Harwood (now under sentence of death in Horsemonger-lane Gaol for the Frimley murder) John Hones alias Smith (transported for life for the Uckfield burglary) and John Isaacs.

Mrs Stoner gave evidence at Horsham court that that on the 4th June her house was entered at about three o'clock in the morning by six men aged from 20-30 years, each with a mask on and five with their shirts outside their other clothes. One wore a dark round frock another had a pair of dirty yellow trousers with a dark stripe up the outside seam. Two of the men held Mrs Stoner down in the passage each holding a pistol to her head threatening to blow her brains out unless she gave up her money. The mask fell off one who was of sallow complexion, about 28 years of age. Mrs Stoner gave them her pocket (purse) in which were two canvas bags containing £7 10s in gold and £4 in silver, after which they left the place.

In order that the magistrates could consider whether they would accept Hamilton as an "Approver" [74] against Harwood, the enquiry was adjourned.[75] They men were again on Saturday examined before the magistrate at Horsham with the town hall crowded to excess and in addition to the burglary of Mrs Stoner it was believed that the death of Mr Griffith[76] by the roadside between Horsham and Brighton in 1849 would be investigated. [77]

Mr W Biddlecombe, chief superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary requested an adjournment of the case in consequence of a communication he had received that morning that John Isaacs had been apprehended in Somersetshire, whom he believed to have been concerned in the Kirdford burglary and also the Uckfield burglary. If a remand were granted he should be able to place Isaac in the dock with other prisoners. The statement of Hamilton was then read which fully corroborated the evidence of Mrs Stoner and disclosed the evil doings of himself and his associates. The man Isaacs is one of the eight men who entered the house of the Misses Farncombe and it is stated he was one of the gang involved in the Frimley murder.[78]

James Hamilton one of the prisoners was to turn Queen's Evidence (known at the time as "an Approver") against the gang and from him details of how the gang worked was uncovered. On this court appearance Hamilton made the following statement having been previously cautioned by the bench.

"Last spring was the first time I met with Isaacs. I met him on Farnham-common. He has no regular residence but lives in a travelling wagon. He came to me there. He had two donkeys. I

[74] Turn Queen's Evidence for a reduction in his sentence
[75] Daily News (London, England), Wednesday, April 9, 1851
[76] Mr. Griffith was shot dead during a robbery outside Brighton
[77] 1851 14 April: Morning Post Monday
[78] The Derby Mercury (Derby, England), Wednesday, April 16, 185

bought one. He told me it was stolen. I afterwards sold it. He then planned it out to make a robbery at Kirdford near Petworth. He went to Guildford for two men to help and brought back three, Levi Harwood, and the prisoner James Jones. Isaacs told me to meet them at a place called Hidings Ball[79] in Godalming and bring their old clothes and a lanthorn (sic).

They all five came and met me there making six of us. We agreed to go two at a time and meet in a wood between Ridford and Ball's Cross. We all six met there. When night came two of us went forward to watch the place we intended to rob; the other four of which I was one remained behind until the two came back to us. We then all stripped and disguised ourselves and put on masks. We all went to the house on Kirdford Common, the residence of Mrs Stoner.

The Guildford men broke through the shutters and took out the whole frame of glass when one went in and let the others in. We all looked about to find the money but did not find any. They then went into the kitchen and found the stair-foot door fastened. Mrs Stoner heard us then and said, "Who is there?" Several of them burst upon the door and we all ran upstairs. Mrs Stoner screamed and ran into another room. Isaacs took hold of her to stop her noise when his mask slipped off. She then gave one of the men her pocket. I only had 3s 6d. We parted and I did not see the Guildford men anymore. This was the first time I was led into it"[80]

Yet another court appearance Kirdford burglary

On the 19 April 1851 again at Horsham Court, which was densely crowded with gypsies. At twelve o'clock the prisoners were placed at the bar: John Isaacs (captain of the gang) (six of whom were at the late Sussex Assizes transported for life), Samuel Harwood (brother of Levi Harwood who was executed at Horsemonger Lane gaol for the murder of the Reverend Hollest) and James Hamilton the Approver in the case of the Uckfield Burglary. Harwood was implicated in the murder but it was shown he was not in the room at the time when the shot was fired, was acquitted but re-arrested on a charge of burglary.

The prisoners were charged with breaking into the dwelling of Harriet Stoner at Kirdford Common and stealing monies and other property the following evidence was given:

Mr William Henry Biddlecombe, chief superintendent of the Surrey Police stated that he took the prisoner Samuel Harwood into custody on this charge of burglary after he had been acquitted at the Kingston Assizes for the murder of the Rev. Hollest. He told him that he was charged, with five others, in breaking into the house of Harriet Stoner at Kirdford Common. He read to him his description in *Hue and Cry*. He replied he knew nothing about it, he was innocent and that at the time he was working for Mr Pewters at the paper-mills. He added that he was employed on night work. Harwood had no questions of Biddlecombe – stated it was right and true.

[79] Probably now known as Hyden Ball
[80] The Derby Mercury (Derby, England), Wednesday, April 16, 185

A statement from Hamilton was read out and the men were committed for trial.

Hamilton appeared downcast which amused Isaacs and Harwood. Isaacs was also charged with the Uckfield burglary and the police have a further serious case to bring forward against him if necessary but the detail was not revealed. [81] It might, just might have been the murder of Mr Griffiths at Pyecombe the previous year.

Confessions and Execution of the Frimley Murderers April 1851[82]

Seven to eight thousand people were present for the execution of Levi Harwood and Samuel Jones alias Burbridge at Horsemonger-lane Gaol. The executioner Chalcraft had to pull their legs to complete the execution. The Reverend W S Rowe the chaplain informed the press that both men made a full confession.

Jones: There was in the room at the time of the murder, Smith, myself and Levi Harwood. I had Mrs Hollest around the waist. I had a pistol in my hand and might have shot her but never intended to do it. I believe Mr Hollest was stooping to pick up the poker and Levi Harwood was the man who fired the shot. I am certain of that. Smith and Levi Harwood both ran from the room leaving me the last person in it, I followed as soon as I could get away from Mrs Hollest. I immediately left the room and overtook them just on the other side of the turnpike gate. All four namely Levi Harwood and Samuel Harwood, Smith and myself came together. After I had left the premises and got to the main road, I heard the sound of firearms as from the house of Mr Hollest. The account given by Smith of what happened in the room is quite true and Mrs Hollest is mistaken in swearing as to her belief it was Levi Harwood who held her as it was me. ---------- In the Rose and Crown, Levi Harwood was with Mary Crowder the lady he lived with. Jerry Campbell a policeman had previously looked in and had gone out again and in ten minutes Hollington came with three policemen and apprehended us.

Levi Harwood was seen by the governor and told what Jones had confessed but Harwood insisted he knew "nothing whatever about it." The following day an hour before execution Harwood sent for the governor and said, "The truth has been spoken by Smith. What was done was never intended to be done." Governor "You mean the murder was not contemplated?" Harwood "Yes that is what I mean."

Hiram Smith the Approver (Queen's Evidence) will be tried for a burglary at Farnham where he committed the offence in company with Samuel Harwood and the parties who were executed. Smith has been confined amongst remand prisoners. The prison governor visited Smith and told him Harwood had confessed supported by Jones "just before they departed this earth." It is thought that the government will offer no evidence against Smith regarding

[81] The Standard Monday April 21, 1851:
[82] Leeds Mercury Saturday April 19 1851

the Frimley murder. However there will be evidence connecting Smith and Samuel Harwood, together with the two executed men, in a robbery (burglary). [83]

1851 19 April Saturday: The Approver Smith has been confined amongst remand prisoners; his two accomplices were executed Tuesday morning. [84]

Hamilton's full confession to a series of crimes with the Isaac gang

A full and detailed confession of a gang member gives an insight into the ruthless activities of this dreadful criminal gang. The newspaper reported on 22 April: 1851 from Lewes: Since the committal of James Hamilton (the magistrate having refused to take his evidence on behalf of the Crown) he has made a full confession of all the burglaries which he and the gang have been engaged in during the last twelve months. Some of the revelations allowed the police to trace the receivers allowing for a great amount of the stolen property to be recovered. The document is of a very extraordinary character and shows the immense amount of daring possessed by these men.

The gang consisted of himself, Levi Harwood and Samuel Jones (both hung for the Hollest murder) Samuel Harwood, John and Edward Isaacs, William Brooks, Joseph Carton, John and James Hones (Jones), alias Smith, Hiram Smith, Thomas Toot alias Morgan, William Hillyer, John Brooks, Mary Crowder, Sarah White and James Jones (alias Samuel?). John Isaacs was duly elected captain and all the others acted under his direction. They were all sworn to obey the orders of the captain and if anyone attempted to back out or refused to take any part in any robbery or murder if necessary, he or she would instantly be shot, and if anyone left the gang without the consent of the captain he or she were to be followed and if overtaken to be shot.

After giving particulars of the burglary at Kirdford which has already been published he goes on to say: "The second day after this Isaacs and John Hones came to me at Farnham Common and agreed for me to meet them at Dorking, Homwood [85] Common. Isaacs' brother Ned came to me also John Hones and James Hones.

We all went to an old man's house (a farmer near Horsham.) They heard he had a good deal of money. We all went two at a time from the Holmwood. Six of us met in a wood near Mr Broadwood's lodge and we went from there to the farmer's house one got through the window and let the rest in through the back door. We all went into the kitchen. The old man heard us and hallooed out and we all left the house.

Four of us, myself, W Brooks, and J and E Isaacs went down to the house on Hayward's Heath near the Brighton station where two or three ladies of the name of Kennard lived. The robbery was planned by William Brooks who knew the place. There was a manservant who was ill, and a maidservant who slept in the same room to watch him. Her bed was right

[83] 1851 19 April: Hampshire Telegraph Saturday:
[84] 1851 19 April: Hampshire Telegraph Saturday
[85] Holmwood

against the window where the light was. The servant burnt a light all night because the man was ill. They found a long ladder; put it up to the window. It was a sash window, which moved on one side. We all got into the window. The female servant was lying close to the window and we fell over her. They went into the ladies' room disguised with masks. After pacifying the two servants they left me to mind them. The ladies' room was locked but they broke open the door. They collected all the property that was there. They threatened to blow out the brains of the ladies if they gave any alarm. We were there two hours during which time I sat in a chair with the two servants and kept talking to them all the time. It was just getting daylight when we left the house.

We came back two at a time until we got to Copthorne. There we looked the property over and shared what money there was £4.5s each was shared. There was a deal of foreign money, which I took to be French. This was put amongst the plate and 111guineas in gold, and that gold was put with the gold watches. There were three gold watches and two silver ones. One gold watch had a gold case and steel hands the other had a white face. Of the silver watches two were small plain ones and the other was a double hunting watch with a silver chain. There was a double-barrelled gun taken from the house and we had two guns with us. There were a great many rings and brooches and trinkets, which were put among the gold and plate all of which John Isaacs took away to Guildford to give to one of the Guildford men (Levi Harwood) to go to London with him to sell, for which the Guildford man was to get a share, as Isaacs did not know where to go and sell them. There was also some clothing brought away, two pairs of trousers one pair of cord breeches and a large shawl.

These were all hid and lost when the policeman came after it. Three guns were hidden by the roadside. My three companions went together to London and they gave me some money to take back to their women at Copthorne Common where we had four tents. About an hour after I had left the men and had returned to Copthorne Common and was packing up my things, two policemen came along; they knew Brooks' wife and enquired after Brooks and they came and asked me where I was going. I told them I did not know, as I was a stranger to the country. They searched the tents but they did not search me although I had the money on me I had shared. This was the same morning as the robbery at Hayward's Heath. Whilst the men were sharing the money the women hid the clothes and that was why the policemen did not find them. The policemen knew the women and watched them and talked to them for half an hour.

I then moved to a place called the Chestnuts by myself and I had one tent with me. J Isaacs' wife then came there. The two Brooks and John Isaacs and myself each had one wife and one tent and I had a little girl with my wife. John Isaacs was to meet me at the Chestnuts after he had sold the property. He was gone a week or better. When he came back he said there was only 30s each besides the guineas of which he had only sold one with the other gold to see what it would fetch, keeping the others back so that the Guildford man should not have his share of them. He took the guineas again to sell and gave me a sovereign down, on a promise to pay me the remainder but he did not give me any more money. There was a quarrel

amongst us over a large quantity of plate which some of them said Isaacs had concealed and bought his wagon with.

Shortly after this I fell in with Tom Brooks again near Shenfield in Sussex, and I and Ned Isaacs went back again with Brooks. We all three met in Wareham-lane near Shenfield and went from there to a place called Hambledon, Surrey to break open a shop there. Brooks and Ned Isaacs broke it open whilst I watched in front. They got in and took out two whole cheeses, a quantity of tobacco and a quantity of tea and about a pound weight of snuff, a loaf of bread and a pound of new butter. They drank what wine they liked and brought me out some in a quart pot and then filled a three quarter bottle to bring away.

We then returned back to Wareham-lane again and I and Ned Isaacs did not meet John Isaacs at the time expected. We afterwards went to Copthorne Common for a few days. I think we stayed there a week. On the afternoon of Tuesday the 31st December last we, James Hamilton, John Isaacs, Joseph Carter alias Cockman, John Smith alias Hones, James Smith alias Hones, Thomas Toot alias Morgan, William Hillyer and William Brooks – after various messages and communication between ourselves, I (Hamilton) and Brooks and his wife and James Smith came on from Edenbridge to Crowborough at a barn there just outside. These five men went to break open a public house of Mr Kennard's called the Old Tye. These five men met us out of Groombridge next morning just about daylight. Brooks went to look after them and found them in the corner of the wood close to the road. They gave us a plum cake a bottle of wine, some whisky and tobacco done up in pennyworths. I (Hamilton) had four, James Smith had four.

The same three men and woman went in again having agreed to meet the five men the same afternoon (Wednesday) just off Crowborough Common on the Uckfield side. Three of us Isaacs, Carter and myself went into Miss Farncombe's house and got there between 8 and 9 o'clock to lay in front of the house to see how many lights and watch them to bed. We saw the butler fasten the front door. When the house was dark and quiet we were to go back to some haystacks close by where we eight were to meet until it was time to go back. We all met at the haystack at the pay-gate and the house on the opposite side to Miss Farncombe's. We all went to Miss Farncombe's house and as were going we met a women and either two or three men in the road. We were all eight together then. We had left Brook's wife at her uncle's at Crowborough. There are two gates to Miss Farncombe's house, one for the foot road leading to the back door and one on the carriage road. We left James Smith just outside the little gate to watch. Some of us went down to the big gate leaving me, Hamilton, to watch there in case anyone came along the road and to give notice if anyone should. Three or four men came along soon afterwards. I watched them quite away and did not give an alarm to those in the house. In a little while two more men came along and passed. I think they were gamekeepers. Just before they got into the house one of them came out to me and said "I am going to stand near that little bush." Thomas Morgan desired me to give him notice if any one came and he would let them know.

When the two gamekeepers came along I went to tell Morgan but did not find him and soon after Morgan came to me and brought me a bottle of wine. He said they had got in and were rummaging below. Morgan went back to the house and a little while afterwards he returned to me again and he said "They be all come out, and they think they heard somebody." They all came out up to the little gate and there they all stripped and pulled off their clothes and shoes and put on their masks and said, "We will go up." We all eight were together there. I left the gate to meet them and after talking about leaving someone outside we all agreed to go into the house together. We all eight went in first through the pantry window, but Morgan who was first ready, ran forward to the house and got a light though there was somebody coming down, Isaacs with an oath said "Oh, come along, follow me. Give me the pistols and I will go and fix him." When we got to the house we found it was Morgan with the light. Then we all went in through the pantry window to the kitchen or front parlour where we found the butler's coats and some of the female bonnets.

Brooks put one of the bonnets on and Carter put on another and we put the butler's coats on and I put one on handed to me by Morgan. We all searched about the house. We found the canisters. Four of us went up one set of stairs and four the other. Isaac, John Smith and myself and another went up one staircase. In the room we went into there were two ladies. Isaacs gave me the candle. I followed him. There was no violence in that room. Isaacs broke open everything that was broken open and I held the candle to him. Isaacs asked the ladies where the plate was. The ladies said, "That is in the pantry down stairs." Isaacs and the others took all the valuable things in that room. They went to another room leaving me behind holding the candle. I did not take anything in that room. They left me there to mind the doors and the ladies begged of me to go outside for they would be still. I had a mask on all that time. I went outside holding the door in my hand. I never left the door but once in all the time. The rest were rummaging about the house and that was while they were going into another room where there was I believe, only one lady. I heard the lady scream and ask, "Is that you William?" I said, "Yes it is William, marm, don't be frightened, nothing is the matter." Carter was at the door with a pistol in his hand and when I made answer "It is William" he turned round and was going to shoot me only I sung out "It's all right." Then I returned back to the door again to mind the two ladies and there I remained until they were ready to leave the house. Isaacs returned to the room where I was and said, "Take that little box under your arm." The ladies had before that begged that it might not be taken because it belonged to their grandfather, I think they said. I took the box down stairs and we all went away together. This was between 4 and 5 o'clock in the morning.

When we came out we turned to the left and went up the road. We all eight kept together until we came to Crowborough Common, nearly the same road as we came. We turned off the main road at the top of the hill to the left and went across the common and a wheat field and down into a wood, and there all eight sat down and had some breakfast with what we had brought from the house, consisting of some hare, veal, roast mutton and I think some hog's meat, some loaves of bread, two whole cheeses and two raw hams. We all shared this after breakfast with a sovereign and 7s each in money, but there was a deal more money smuggled

amongst ourselves. I had a £5 note also which I got out of a pocket book when Isaac gave me as we went along to carry and put it into my pocket. There were a great many more notes in the book. I gave him the book again, because the other knew I had got the book. He said he would give me half of what he got for the notes. This was going along before our breakfast.

After breakfast and after sharing the money, we looked the plate over and broke up what we thought was not silver. There were two gold watches and two silver ones. The two gold ones were along with the plate and the silver plate that came from the Old Pye public house was put along with it. The two silver watches were up amongst us for those who would give most for them. Carter was the highest bidder at eleven shillings for the small watch and the other one a double cased one was taken by Morgan for 25s. The trinkets were all tied up together and put with the plate. Isaacs took all the plate etc., in a flag basket. A cutlass was taken from the house and a tree chopped with it. Hillyer took the cutlass. We stood in the wood to nearly 10 o'clock in the morning. We parted at the wood that Thursday morning. I and James Smith and John Smith came away and parted from the other five, we went another way up through the wood. We agreed to meet at another place and before Isaacs took the plate to London, we were all eight to meet at Warlingham on the Friday night.

We three went on to Groombridge and John Smith was so tired that we could not get him along the road. We went into a public house at Groombridge where we had a good deal of beer. We three got tipsy. I dropped a sovereign and John Smith picked it up and put it in his pocket and took a shilling out of another pocket and offered it to me. I had him taken by the constable. The sovereign I dropped had been given me in the wood. The constable took John Smith into custody upon my charge to Tunbridge Wells that Thursday afternoon. I slept at Groombridge that night in the inn and James Smith was put in the stable. When I was tipsy the landlord took 18s 6d from my pocket to take care of it. In the morning when I got up I asked the landlady for my money which she refused to give to me until she had seen the constable. I went to the constable and told him I would rather lose the sovereign and pay his expenses than go on with it. The constable told me the expenses to make it up would be a sovereign and if so I thought I ought to leave the 18s 6d in the landlady's hands and get away as fast as I could rather than go to the Wells. I and James Smith started on the road for Tunbridge Wells and turned into a wood and after we had gone two miles half a dozen people were after us and took us.

At the beginning of all this I was living at Woking Common with my wife and Hillyer lodged with me. About a week before Christmas a man named Thomas Gaines came to me with a message from Isaacs to send Hillyer after Tom Toot alias Morgan, to Shotter's Mill at Sarsams. Hillyer started away the day after Christmas day for Toot and was to return with Toot to my house on the Saturday, and Isaacs was to come himself by the first third class train from Reading to Woking and I was to meet him. I met him there. He came to my house the same Saturday afternoon expecting to find Hillyer and Toot that night. They did not come. Isaacs stayed with me all Sunday night. Isaacs went alone on Sunday morning to Edenbridge and on the road met the two Hones (alias Smith) and asked them to be of the

party. Toot and Hillyer were there before us. Brooks and Carter were there also. That made eight."

It is estimated that the amount of property stolen by the gang during the last two years was £1,500. When Moreton arrested Isaacs in Frome he was in possession of valuable property stolen from Misses Farncombe.

The Frimley gang is now completely broken up. Great credit is due to the police officers who have had the case in hand; indeed at the last sitting of the magistrates the chairman of the bench publicly stated that the whole credit of the capture of these daring men and the exposure of their system was due to Mr Biddlecombe, the superintendent of the Surrey Police. [86]

Horsham Magistrates Spectator 25 April 1851

The Horsham Magistrates on Saturday finally examined three men charged with burglary at Kirdford Common, near Petworth. It is stated that six were engaged in it, Levi Harwood and Jones, who were hanged last week; John Jones a man who has been convicted of burglary and the three prisoners. The latter consist of John Isaacs, the captain of the Sussex' gang so recently broken up; Samuel Harwood, who was acquitted of the Frimley murder and James Hamilton, the approver in the Uckfleld case, who how offers evidence against his companions in this burglary. If his statement is true, it fully makes out the charge against the prisoners; and other witnesses strongly corroborate it. Mrs Harriet Stoner, a grocer, occupied the house that was robbed and both she and her servant declare that Isaacs and Harwood were a portion of the gang. Harwood stood 'over Mrs Stoner with a pistol, and demanded her money, with a threat to blow her brains out: all the men were masked; Mrs Stoner recognized Harwood by his voice, but she saw Isaacs's face, his mask having fallen off. Two of the men had pistols; Isaacs had a chisel; Mrs Stoner was thrown down in the pas- sage, and treated with brutal violence. She gave up her money. Witnesses deposed to having seen six men walking along the road from Guildford to Kirdford on 'the night of the robbery; and they identified Hamilton and, Harwood as two of the party. All three were fully committed for trial. Hamilton has made a long statement to the Police respecting the gang of which he was a member. The gang consisted of fourteen men and two women John Isaacs was "elected captain," and the others all swore to obey his orders. If any one attempted to leave the gang, to refuse to rob, or to murder, if necessary, the recusant was to be shot. Hamilton gave a long detail of divers burglaries in which he wee engaged. It seems that the thieves cheated each other, privately appropriating plunder instead of putting it in the common stock one robbed another of a sovereign, and was given into custody by his brother burglar. This formidable gang is now completely broken up. The Police, especially Superintendent Biddelcombe, have gained much credit by the achievement. [87]

[86] Morning Chronicle Wednesday April 23 1851
[87] 26 April 1851 The Spectator

On formation of the Surrey Constabulary in 1851 the headquarters was not to be Dorking as originally planned, but in the Guildford Borough police station at the Corn Market House. A new HQ was built in Woodbridge Road in the heart of the town centre and occupied from 1854.[88] William Henry Biddlecombe the Head Constable of Godalming aged 36 was appointed to the new force as a superintendent and was number one, the first entry in the appointment register.[89] Biddlecombe and the other superintendents and inspectors had previous police service and so they no doubt advised and helped the new chief constable in forming the new force.

The first uniform adopted by the Surrey Constabulary was that of the Metropolitan Police until in 1867 when a new local style was adopted.

1850s Metropolitan Policeman Tom Smith – smaller version of this uniform adopted!

Biddlecombe moved to Reigate

In March 1851 Biddlecombe and his family were posted away from his old haunts and was posted to the Reigate Division living in Reigate but there is a general order dated 10 July 1851, Superintendent Biddlecombe is posted to the Chertsey Division.[90] The force appointment register shows his pay and allowances:

1 Jan 1851: Superintendent at £170 per annum, including forage for the county horse and allowance for clothing.

For Biddlecombe the micro management of the county chief constable, Hastings must have been a continuing frustration. An ex-soldier he ran the police like a military unit. Hastings had been a lieutenant in the East India Company army in India and adopted the style captain.

[88] Durrant page 4
[89] Durrant page 5
[90] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-

A typical general order covering the horse that Biddlecombe would be responsible for and use at his station: **1851 April 29: GO 35**: **County horses** are not being cared for and were not to be ridden at a greater speed than 6mph.[91] There were many messages about horses which received a great deal of attention and were not allowed out in the wet! If sick the horses were taken to HQ they had to be walked. From Reigate the horse would be led to Dorking and then a luckless Dorking officer would have to walk the horse to Guildford and then presumably walk back.

One month and six general orders later the chief constable is again venting his spleen many men resigned early into their service and it may be, just may be, that the chief constable had the management of a police force and men all wrong. They were not soldiers and their work required considerable discretion but at every move they came up against the control of senior officers. **1851 May 26: GO 41:** The chief constable has observed with displeasure that certain members of the Force are in the habit of **wearing plain clothes** as if they were ashamed of their uniform. Such practice is extremely objectionable and altogether at variance with the regulations of any service in which uniform is provided. The chief constable therefore calls upon superintendents in particular to set an example to their men under them in this, as well as in all other respects and trusts he will not be called upon again to notice such irregularities.[92] An example of this was on the first of April 1851; PC John Lawrence was severely reprimanded for being in plain clothes. [9394]

Biddlecombe had responsibility for a wide area and would have used the county horse probably on a daily basis not just to visit his staff but also to attend incidents and to travel to meetings with the chief constable. **June 1851 Surrey County Constabulary**: Advert for six strong horses about 151/2 hands high and fit for saddle or draught, with saddles for same, are proposed to be taken upon job for the purposes of above mentioned force, and kept by and at the expense of the said Force in different parts of the county; it is also intended to hire upon job for the like purpose six new and substantial Whitechapel carts with harness for the same persons desirous of supplying the above mentioned articles upon job are invited to deliver tenders on or before Wednesday 23rd instant at the office of the Clerk of the peace hereunder mentioned, specifying the price of each article for six and also for twelve monthly. Woronzow Greig Clerk of the Peace, Record office, North Street Lambeth June 13 1851[95]

As a divisional superintendent Biddlecombe would have spent a significant proportion of his time enforcing discipline and dealing with the process when men were discharged. It is not known how this was managed but it is inconceivable that the superintendent did not play the most significant role. **1851 June 18: GO 51: Discipline.** Since the Force was formed

[91] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[92] Surrey Constabulary General Orders 1 1851-
[93] Durant Surrey Constabulary 1851-1951 page 15
[94] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[95] Lloyds Weekly Newspaper

seventeen men have been disciplined with drunkenness forming a significant number of the offences.[96]

The Chief Constable complains **in 1851 June 19: GO 52:** that insufficient use is being made of the **county cart** for the carriage of prisoners.[97] There were the carts and the divisional horse otherwise it was for most constable, just hard walking for twenty miles a day!

1851 July 1: GO 53: Superintendent Biddlecombe is posted to the Chertsey Division possibly the busiest of the divisions. [98] This was not long after his move to Reigate and the designation chief superintendent appears to have been dropped to superintendent.

On of Biddlecombe's senior officers on his division was promoted from constable to inspector as there were no sergeants until 1864 in the Surrey Constabulary at this time. [99] **1851 July 27:** Constable **John Page** 1st Class Constable and acting inspector at Chobham is appointed inspector at twenty three shillings a week. (Joined January 18 1851 aged 32 when living in Worcestershire and having served in the Birmingham Police for 18 months and the Worcestershire Constabulary for 6 years from 1845. He was to retire on pension 30 September 1873. He died November 24 1878.)

A number of press cuttings have been found making reference to Biddlecombe. These are mainly chance discoveries as little structured research has been undertaken of the court or newspaper records. However limited the references they act as an excellent guide to the nature of the work Biddlecombe undertook. Most of the crime was dealt with by the inspector or superintendent, as there were no detectives. The chief constable had a concern that the senior ranks were dealing with most of the crime so that more junior officers were denied learning and experience. The reason for this may well be because the micro management of the cc gave little room for error without criticism and discipline so it was probably considered easier and best to do the work oneself!

Daily News Tuesday October 21 1851: Attempted burglary Addlestone: T. Collier 25 and J. Tovey 25, were indicted for attempting to break into the house of Sarah Willis 72, who lived alone in near the Addlestone railways station. Mrs Willis lived on an annuity that was passed to the hand of a lady for safety. On Saturday night the 20th ult., she went to bed and after about three hours she heard the sound of breaking glass. She got out of bed and struck a light and went to the window where she saw some faces. One of the men believed Collier called out "Give us some money or it will be the worse for you." She told them to go about their business but they refused to do so and they started to force the door open. She put a piece of iron against the door to prevent them breaking it open. She noticed a knife coming through the shutter and took up a candlestick and pushed against it to stop it coming any further. With one hand she held the candlestick and with the other the shutter. She told them to remember the Frimley murder and to go about their business. They again demanded a

[96] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[97] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[98] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[99] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-

sovereign, a half sovereign or half a crown and she told them she had none but offered a shilling if they would go away. Mrs Willis threw out a shilling and some bread and cheese. She was positive she knew Collier as he lived with his parents in the next cottage. Mrs Willis "You bad boy Tom; go away." They said "No we shan't, we want more. "She then threatened them with a dagger and they went away.

Walter Ayling one of the Surrey Police said he watched the prisoners from a beer-shop on the night in question to the prosecutrix. They crossed a hedge and went to the back of the house where he followed them and hid in an outhouse close by from where he could observe all their actions. He then saw then trying to break open the door when Mrs Willis came to the window and asked them what they wanted. "Money and if she would not make a noise they would not hurt her." They then broke several pains of glass when the old lady told them to go round and she would give them some money. The police officer followed them but they ran away but he chased and captured Tovey whom he took to Collier's house. While standing there Collier came home and having sent for the superintendent they were both taken to the police station.

Superintendent Biddlecombe of the Surrey police said he examined the old lady's house afterwards and found the back door broken very much as if the thieves intended to force the lock back by wrenching it off the bottom board. The shutters were also very much cut and the marks corresponded with the knife found on Collier. The verdict of Guilty was returned. A former conviction against Tovey having been proved he was sentenced to 10 years transportation and the other prisoner to 12 months hard labour

The chairman told them that had it not been for the courageous old lady they would have entered her house and might have succeeded in committing a crime similar to that in another part of the county for which two men suffered recently.

Biddlecombe along with all members of the Surrey Constabulary were instructed in **1852 March 1: by GO** which addressed attendance at Divine Service seen as a very important part of a man's duty.[100] Even the officer's off duty time was not his own.

More discipline matters occupied the senior ranks as reported for ten months by the 1852 May 1: GO 78: Between 1 June 1851 and 30 April 1852 thirty-one **men were punished** mostly for drunkenness and neglect of duty.[101] The churn of men must have been a constant concern for the superintendent. As soon as some experience was gained men were lost. At this time it was not possible to fine officers.

1852 June 5 GO 83: A constable was sentenced to **fourteen days in prison** with hard labour at the magistrate's court for not surrendering all his police clothing when he left the Force.[102]

[100] Durant Surrey Constabulary 1851-1951 page 9
[101] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[102] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-

In 1852 July 14 GO 84 records that at 0930 on the 17th inst., seven superintendents, six inspectors and sixty-four constables had to be at HQ in Guildford. No reason was given but this may well have been the **first major operation** of the Force.[103] This was of course the vast majority of the force and included most if not all the superintendents and inspectors.

Death by duelling

Within Biddlecombe's new division there was to be a case that attracted international publicity showing that even in the early days of the constabulary co-operation between police forces was effective. On the 17 October 1852 the last duel in England took place on Biddlecombe's division. On a Tuesday in October, on Priest Hill walking towards Egham, Dr. Hayward of Egham when he met a Frenchman coming out of a field. In very basic English the man asked for help, saying his friend had had a shooting accident. Dr Hayward found the man, Frederic Cournet, an exiled French naval captain, lying on his back in the grass, bleeding from a wound in his side. Cournet was taken on a makeshift stretcher to the Barley Mow Inn, half a mile away, where he died more than four hours later. Superintendent of Surrey Constabulary William Biddlecombe found that a pistol ball passed through the victim's several layers of clothing before entering his chest, and was satisfied he Cournet was shot from some distance. Biddlecombe searched the body finding a pistol ball. Searching the friend who had alerted the doctor, Edmund Allain, a Frenchman, he found a powder flask, nine bullets and some percussion caps. William Biddlecombe then arrested one of the Frenchmen.[104] The Metropolitan Police on arriving as requested at Waterloo railway station found a group of French émigrés who were aware of the duel. As the train arrived the police detained three more Frenchmen, along with two swords, a pistol case and knife on which there appeared to be blood. The pistols were eventually recovered – they had been hired. An inquest was opened at the Barley Mow Inn, and it was found that six Frenchmen had been involved.

Four Frenchmen appeared at Kingston Assizes where they were found guilty of manslaughter although one was later hung after committing two murders. The victim Courner was buried in Egham Churchyard.[105] Durrant records in his book an interesting list of property, a powder flask, nine bullets, some copper caps, paper and seals, two swords and three keys. Four Frenchmen appeared at Kingston Assizes where they were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to two months in the County Goal.[106] One was later hung after committing two murders. [107] The victim Cournet was buried in Egham Churchyard.[108]

The duel involved Emanuel Barthelemy aged 29, Admund Allaun 36, Etienne Barronnet 46 Eugene Phil Mornet 42 described as natives of France. The men were charged on the 17 October "Feloniously having in the Parish of Egham wilfully and with malice aforethought

[103] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[104] 28 Oct 1852 The Times
[105] Janaway P 83 and Durrant page 13
[106] Durrant P 13
[107] Durrant P 13
[108] Janaway P 83 and Durrant page 13

killed and murdered one Frederick Cournet." A remarkable duel perhaps the last ever fought in England - took place at Old Windsor on October 14th 1852, in a part of the Beaumont estate off Priest Hill. The protagonists were both Frenchmen, and both had fought several duels before. They were a formal naval captain named Cournet and a civil engineer named Barthelemy. Accompanied by their seconds, they took up their positions in a field behind a hedge, and aimed their pistols. Cournet fired first, and missed. This allowed Barthelemy to take his time about shooting, but when he did so the gun misfired. He pulled the trigger again and the same thing happened. Instead of taking advantage of this, Cournet offered his own pistol to his opponent, who accepted it and fired. Cournet fell wounded, while Barthelemy and his two companions made off. The unfortunate Cournet was taken to the Barley Mow inn at Englefield Green, where he died of his wounds. Meanwhile the landlord of the Bells of Ouseley, Mr. Heywood, had got to hear of the incident. He rode at full gallop to Windsor, where the police dispatched a telegram to Waterloo: "Detain three foreigners travelling from Datchet." The train was met and the men arrested by the Metropolitan Police. There was a suggestion that one of his seconds had tampered with the gun he used in the duel, to prevent it from firing. If so the manoeuvre was foiled by the excessive chivalry of his opponent.[109]

Barthelemy, an extremely questionable individual (responsible for at least two murders by 1852), manipulated Cournet into challenging him (supposedly over comments Cournet made about Barthelemy's girlfriend), and chose pistols for the weapon. He killed Cournet, and was subsequently arrested for murder. However Barthelemy managed to convince the jury that it was not a homicide as in the normal sense of the word, and was acquitted. Barthelemy was widely suspected of being a spy for the new French regime of Emperor Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III). In fact his bullying of other refugees had led to the confrontation with Cournet. However three years later, he was engaged in a crime in London, possibly involving a blackmail attempt that did not work out. Two men were killed, and Barthelemy was arrested. Despite giving an image of bravado in court, this time he was convicted, and subsequently hanged. Most criminal historians and writers feel he was a totally repugnant character, but to be fair he had one odd defender: Victor Hugo, who wrote a small panegyric to his memory in one of the later sections of Les Miserables[110]

Wilful murder of female illegitimate child

This murder was a more difficult affair but was to give grounding for a greater tragedy during the following year. On the 21 March 1853: The Times reported that Mary Ann Temple aged thirty six was charged with the wilful murder of her female illegitimate child by suffocating it. When the child was born she tried to have a Mrs Humphries take over the child but she was unhappy with the story given by Temple and said "No". Biddlecombe, Superintendent of Chertsey became aware of the attempt to part with her child and visited Temple and found the child dead. She was found guilty of manslaughter and transported for fifteen years. The Judge: "The crime of infanticide was greatly on the increase- judges go to any county and find two or three cases on their list." Therefore he sentenced more harshly. There had been

[109] http://devcentral.f5.com/weblogs/dan/archive/2005/02/12/357.aspx
[110] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Englefield_Green#The_last_duel_in_England

another murder of a child from Albury in Guildford during April 1851 when the father of the illegitimate child was hung professing his innocence and the guilt of the mother.

Pitch and hustle on the highway

21 May 1853 Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Bath was charged on the information of Chief Superintendent Biddlecombe with playing a game of chance, pitch and hustle on the highway from Bagshot to Chobham. The superintendent said he was riding from Chertsey to Chobham on the 8th inst., at about 4 pm when he saw the defendant and seven other men with a crowd around them. Biddlecombe went over to Bagshot because Inspector Burridge had informed him that complaints had been made of this nuisance but officers in the immediate neighbourhood being well known, could not get near them. A fine of 14s penalty and costs [111]

Metropolitan Police were moving on to Chobham Common

June 14 1853 The Morning Post reported that the Metropolitan Police were moving on to Chobham Common. There was to be a large gathering of the army on Chobham Common and was going to be a great public spectacle that would draw large crowds which in turn would attract the villain.

"Yesterday morning instructions were received by the Commissioner of Police from the Home office to send a number of efficient constables immediately to Chobham to perform duty near the military camp now forming in that locality. In consequence of such instructions the superintendents of the various divisions received orders to send without delay 20 men and two sergeants from the reserve force of each division who will be under the direction of three inspectors. The men mustering at one o'clock yesterday afternoon with all their clothing and necessaries at their respective station houses and after being inspected by their superintendents marched off to the South-Western railway station where a special train was in readiness to take them to Chertsey from which station they were taken to Chobham in covered vans. Lodgings have been procured for the men and temporary police stations erected around the encampment so that every precaution has been taken to prevent the light fingered corps from following their avocation with much success. On field days and review extra men belonging to the detectives will do duty with them. The Secretary at War has issued orders that all men so employed shall have extra pay. The inspectors 4 shillings a day the sergeants receiving two shillings and the constables one shilling a day in addition to their regular pay. They will remain on duty at Cobham until the encampment is broken up. The Surrey Constabulary under Mr Superintendent Biddlecombe attached to that district will also be reinforced and assist the Metropolitan Police in preserving order and protecting property. A number of mounted police will patrol both day and night.[112]

Biddlecombe has a further mention in the national press in a report on the 25 Aug 1853 covering the races at Egham. The course was well kept by a small detachment from the

[111] 1853 21 May Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[112] 1853 June 14: The Morning Post

Surrey Constabulary under the direction of Superintendent Biddlecombe and Inspector Holmes.[113]

At the Surrey Adjourned Session[114]on September 12 1853 Superintendent Biddlecombe in evidence following a trial said that William Pantlin aged 22 years convicted of stealing wood was a very bad character. He was sentenced to six months.

It was not all crime although arson was considered but on Boxing Day 1853 there was a very large fire at the Royal Paper Mills in Esher close to the station causing the trains to be stopped. Damage of £100,000 pounds was caused and 250 people thrown out of work. Mr Superintendent Biddlecombe and Inspector Murtell with a body of police rendered great assistance by keeping the idlers out of reach of danger. [115]

1853 December 17: Fire: PC Collett Surrey Constabulary, was on his rounds in Esher when he saw flames in the farmyard occupied by Mr Woodhatch. The officer with the assistance he procured succeeded in releasing a quantity of fat beasts and pigs confined on the premises, which had they remained a few minutes more would have been destroyed. The estimated damage is between £3-400 and it would have been greater if not for the timely arrival of the parish engine and one from Claremont. From enquiries made by Mr Biddlecombe it appears this was an act of incendiary. We are sorry to say this is the second incendiary fire in Surrey in the last ten days. [116]

Again the chief constable expresses concern in a general order that young and inexperienced officers were being deprived of the opportunity to learn by gaining experience. It is easy to have sympathy here for both sides. Many of the recruits were from simple backgrounds with little education so may not be suitable for dealing with anything too complex. **1852 December 9: GO 88:** The chief constable has observed with much dissatisfaction the evident inclination on the part of superintendents and inspectors to deprive constables under one specious plea or another of cases which have rightly belonged to them. Several instances of this have recently occurred and the chief constable desires superintendents and inspectors to bear in mind that it is their duty to bring forward and encourage as much as possible all young constables instead of dampening their zeal, and hindering their advancement by keeping them in the background. In order to put a stop to this, the chief constable has determined in future not to allow any expenses to those who have mixed themselves up in a case in which they had no business and which the constable could perfectly well have conducted himself.

It was a significant move in 1853 for an Instruction Book to be issued to every member of the Force. It was carried in a brown leather case attached to the belt and contained all sorts of advice including format for charges and summons.

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[113] ***The Morning Post*** (London, England), Thursday, August 25, 1853; pg. 5; Issue 24860
[114] 1853 September 13: The Standard
[115] The Morning Post (London, England), Monday, December 26, 1853; pg. 4; Issue 24965
[116] 1853 December 17: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

More men were lost. It may be because of the rigid, inflexible nature of the chief constable that men were dismissed in such numbers. It may also be that discipline options once charged were limited and did not include at this stage the possibility of a fine. **1853 December 31 GO 105:** Between 1 May 1852 and 31 December 1853 twenty-three men were **dismissed** with drunkenness predominant.[117]

Robbery in Farnham

Although stationed at Chertsey Biddlecombe became involved in the investigation of a robbery in Farnham on the 13 March 1854. At the Spring Assizes in Kingston on 28 March 1854 Frederick Mathews was indicted for highway robbery with violence in Farnham upon Caroline Payne and stealing a gold watch, £5 banknote, a gold chain and silver money of the value of £2 15s 9d.The injured person was walking in Farnham Park not far from the town when she received a blow with a stick rendering her unconscious and whilst in that condition was robbed. The prisoner was seen going towards the park not long before the robbery and Biddlecombe and Everett searched the suspect's room and found the stolen property. The man was arrested found guilty and sent to prison for fifteen years. [118]

First multiple murder enquiry

1854: 10 June: The first multiple murder enquiry undertaken by the Surrey Constabulary, Superintendent Biddlecombe

Most police officers attend some horrendous crimes during their service but few can match the horror that awaited Biddlecombe at Esher on the 10 June 1854 the first multiple murder enquiry undertaken by the Surrey Constabulary when their mother murdered six children.

George Brough announced to Mary Ann his wife and mother of his children that he was leaving her because he suspected she had been cheating on him. He also said he intended to take their children away from her, setting into motion a series of terrible events. On June 10, the day after her husband confronted Mary Ann, a man walking by their home spotted a bloody pillow in the window. He raised an alarm and neighbours found Mary Ann inside, still alive, but with her throat slit. Bodies of six of her children lay scattered throughout the house their throats cut open. Mary Ann survived and was charged with six counts of murder. She confessed, telling investigators that she had used a razor on each child, one at a time. One child had protested and another had struggled, but she killed them all before attempting suicide.

The Esher Tragedy: Mother, Nurse, and Murderess

"…. I saw her throat was cut, and her hands and face were covered with blood and her hair hung about her face. She was making a whistling noise, apparently from the wound…. the blood was spurting from her throat." With this horrific description, Henry Woolgar testified in one of the most sensational murder trials of Victorian England. The case of Mary Ann

[117] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[118] 1854 April 1: Saturday: Reading Mercury, Oxford Gazette, Newbury Herald and Berks County Paper

Brough was a tragedy for some, a scandal for others, and an important and interesting psychological case for the new medical men known as 'alienists'. This 1854 familicide, almost unknown today, was widely reported on by the press at the time. Indeed, it was still infamous in 1873 when James Greenwood described his encounter with a tableau depicting the tragedy in the Birmingham Wax Works:

"But the crowning horror was in the further room. As you approached the half-open door, you could see a bedstead foot; that was in no way startling…You put your head in at the door and you saw a sight that was almost enough to make you scream "Police!" There was a bed…exposing six children, each one with its throat cut …Gore on the little waxen faces, gore on the sheets, and on the hands that had been thrown up to protect their tender lives; and there was the murderess – she had left the razor in the windpipe of her last victim – with her throat cut as well, standing upright in her sprinkled nightdress, to welcome you with a label round her neck that provided the edifying information that this woman was nurse to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales…."[119]

Inaccurate in almost all its details, the wax tableau got one fact right: the murderess had indeed served as the wet nurse to Albert Edward, Prince of Wales after his birth on November 9th, 1841. As was traditional for women of her class, Queen Victoria hired wet nurses for each of her children. A wet nurse was a lactating woman who would breast feed her employers' infant sometimes instead of, other times in addition to, her own child. The selection of a good wet nurse was vital: in addition to excellent physical health, a wet nurse needed to be morally virtuous. Many physicians believed that these moral qualities were transmitted in the breast milk to the suckling child.

Thus, the revelation of Mary Ann Brough's previous position as a royal wet nurse added to the magnitude of the scandal and created consternation at the Royal Court. At the time of the murders Brough had been married to her husband, George Brough for approximately twenty years, according to her neighbours' testimony. (Her niece testified at trial that the Broughs had been married "nearly thirty years and had a numerous family" but this cannot be correct as most sources put Brough's age at 42 or 43 at the time of trial.)

[119] Victoria M Lord http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/mary-ann-brough.html

Claremont House in 1860 Leopold lived there for years after Princess Charlotte's death

In all likelihood, Mary Ann obtained her position in the royal household through her husband: George Brough had been in the service of Prince Leopold, the widower of Princess Charlotte of Wales, and uncle to Queen Victoria, during Leopold's years at Claremont House. By 1854, George Brough worked as keeper of the ponds and park at Claremont, situated about a mile away from Esher, the scene of the tragedy. Although Mary Ann served as wet nurse for the Prince of Wales from his birth, she ultimately lost her position. The reasons for this are unclear. In a report on the trial, the Tasmanian newspaper, *The Courier* claimed that: "…she was discharged for disobeying orders, first in receiving visits from her husband, and next for being caught in the act of drinking ardent spirits." However, in her excellent biography, *Queen Victoria, Born to Succeed*, Elizabeth Longford explains, "…Mary Ann Brough…had become morose and 'stupid'…" Whatever the reason, the Queen dismissed her in late 1841 or early 1842, and despite Mary Ann's astonishing fertility (she went on to have at least six more children after her dismissal), Victoria never used her again.

The years after her dismissal from the royal household appear to have been calm ones for Mary Ann and her husband George. They lived in a cottage in Esher, just 14 miles outside of London. There, they came to know and be known by many other villagers. Mary Ann continued to bear children and build their family.[120]

In September of 1852, when she would have been about forty years old, she had yet another child. Eight days after the birth of this infant, Mary Ann suffered what her physician, Mr. Izod, described as an'attack of paralysis'. Sarah Weller, a neighbour, testified during the inquest that after this paralysis, Brough lost the use of one side. Her speech became slurred and was never clear again. "She has constantly complained to me of her head since she had the fit, and she has told me that she felt a heaviness in her head – a 'tumbling' like when she was stooping as if she must fall and a 'swimming'." Brough's physical difficulties after this episode were well known to her doctor and included violent pain over her eyes and frequent

[120] Victoria M Lord http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/mary-ann-brough.html

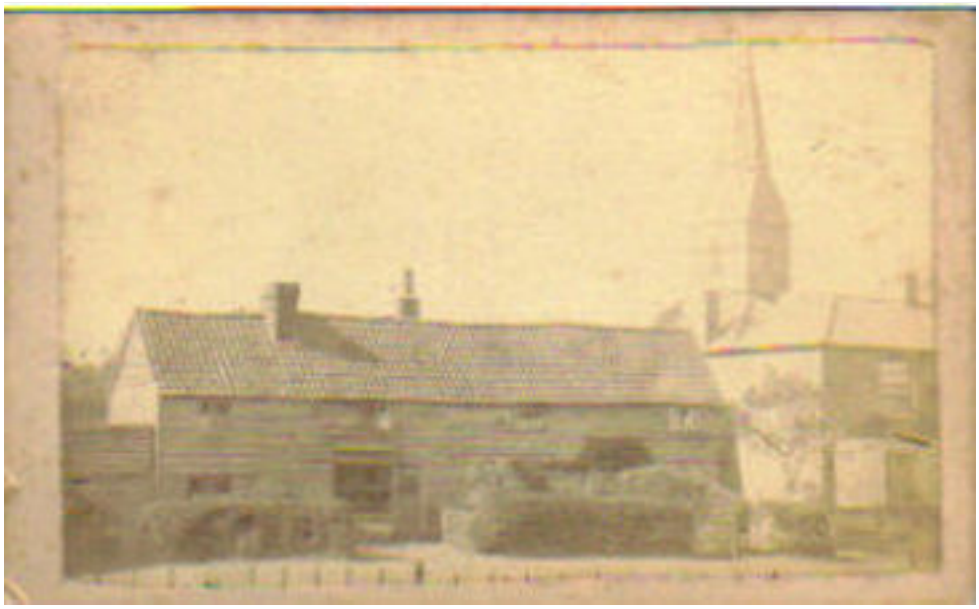
heavy nosebleeds. Mr. Izod also seemed to be aware of a psychological component to Brough's misery. His admonishments to the patient to avoid excitement and strain make it clear that he was concerned about her emotional state.

Yet in the week leading up to the Esher tragedy, Brough was under almost constant strain. Her children all had the measles, which meant sleepless nights for Mary Ann as she tended to them. Worse, her husband, who suspected her of infidelity, had declared his intention not only to leave her, but also, to gain custody of the children.

Her confession makes it clear that she was distressed and agitated. She claims that she spent much of the previous day in bed. She wanted to see Mr. Izod to get medicine to relieve her agitation but he was unavailable. On the night in question, her children too, were restless, calling for barley water and not falling asleep until nearly midnight.

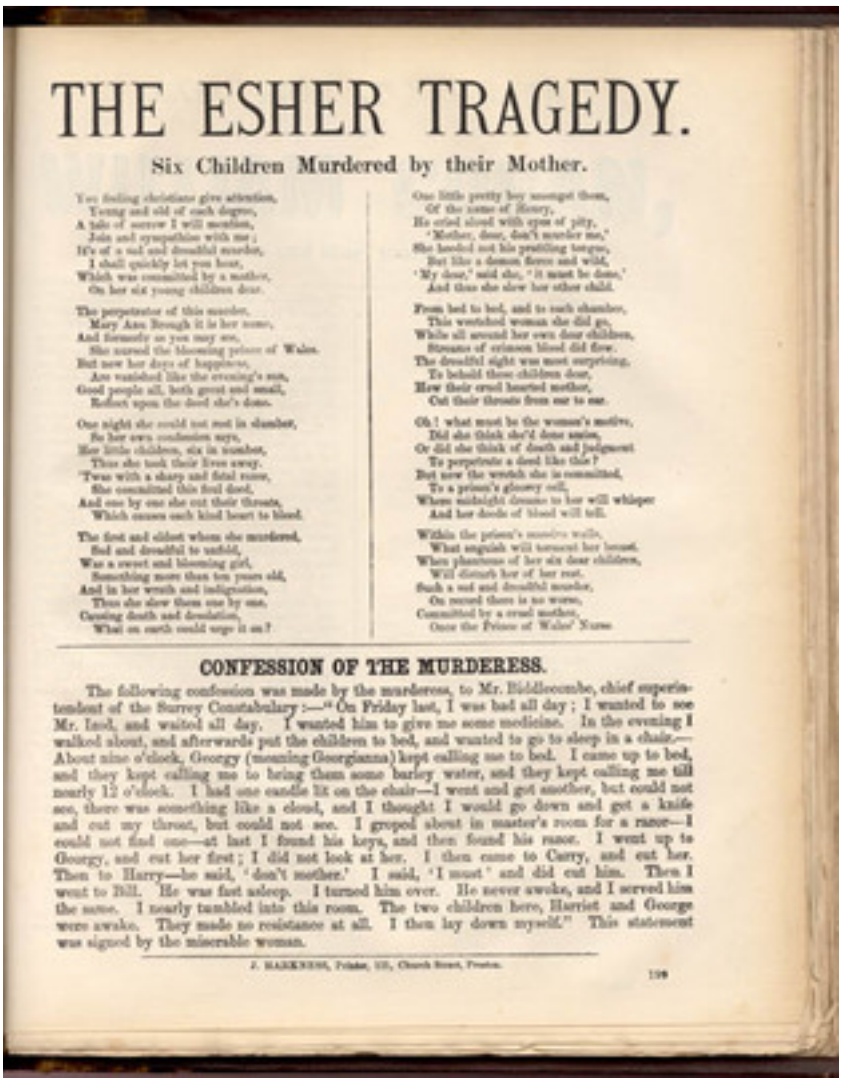
At that point, Mary Ann herself settled down to sleep in a chair. At some point, she realized she wasn't going to be able to rest. Instead, she went to her husband's box and took out his razor. Moving swiftly toward her oldest daughter still living at home, Georgina, called Georgy, Mary Ann slit her throat. From there she moved methodically through the house severing the windpipes of each of the six children who remained at home.

Her description is specific and gruesome, including details of which children struggled and which slept through the assault. Finally, she used the razor on her own throat. Bleeding heavily, she passed out. Coming to sometime later, she was able to walk through the house and realize what she had done. She then took a blood-spattered pillow and placed it on the outside sill of the window facing the well-travelled road. There it was spotted by Henry Woolgar at about 5:45 a.m.



Early photo of Esher cottages on a Carte de Visite, 19th c

He enlisted the help of another man, Peastly, and the two rang the bell of the cottage. When no one answered, Woolgar, believing he saw a person moving about inside the cottage, got a ladder and climbed in through a window. There, Mary Ann Brough, covered in blood, motioned for him to come in. While Woolgar went from room to room discovering more and more bodies of small children, another neighbour ran for the doctor and for the authorities. The scope of the tragedy was horrifying, made worse by the realization of every witness, that Brough, the mother, was also the murderess.[121]



THE ESHER TRAGEDY.

Six Children Murdered by their Mother.

You feeling christians give attention,
Young and old of each degree,
A tale of sorrow I will mention,
Join and sympathise with me;
It's of a sad and dreadful murder,
I shall quickly let you hear,
Which was committed by a mother,
On her six young children dear.

The perpetrator of this murder,
Mary Ann Brough it is her name,
And formerly as you may see,
She nursed the blooming prince of Wales.
But now her days of happiness,
Are vanished like the evening's sun,
Good people all, both great and small,
Reflect upon the deed she's done.

One night she could not rest in slumber,
So her own confession says,
Her little children, six in number,
Thus she took their lives away.
'Twas with a sharp and fatal razor,
She committed this foul deed,
And one by one she cut their throats,
Which causes each kind heart to bleed.

The first and eldest whom she murdered,
Sad and dreadful to unfold,
Was a sweet and blooming girl,
Something more than ten years old,
And in her wrath and indignation,
Thus she slew them one by one,
Causing death and desolation,
What on earth could urge it on?

One little pretty boy amongst them,
Of the name of Henry,
He cried aloud with cries of pity,
'Mother, dear, don't murder me,'
She heeded not his prattling tongue,
But like a demon fierce and wild,
'My dear,' said she, 'it must be done,'
And then she slew her other child.

From bed to bed, and to each chamber,
This wretched woman she did go,
While all around her own dear children,
Streams of crimson blood did flow.
The dreadful sight was most surprising,
To behold these children dear,
How their cruel hearted mother,
Cut their throats from ear to ear.

Oh! what must be the woman's motive,
Did she think she'd done amiss,
Or did she think of death and judgment
To perpetrate a deed like this?
But now the wretch she is committed,
To a prison's gloomy cell,
Where midnight dreams to her will whisper
And her deeds of blood will tell.

Within the prison's massive walls,
What anguish will torment her breast,
When phantoms of her six dear children,
Will disturb her of her rest.
Such a sad and dreadful murder,
On record there is no more,
Committed by a cruel mother,
Once the Prince of Wales' Nurse

CONFESSION OF THE MURDERESS.

The following confession was made by the murderess, to Mr. Biddlecombe, chief superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary:—"On Friday last, I was bad all day; I wanted to see Mr. Isod, and waited all day. I wanted him to give me some medicine. In the evening I walked about, and afterwards put the children to bed, and wanted to go to sleep in a chair.—About nine o'clock, Georgy (meaning Georgianna) kept calling me to bed. I came up to bed, and they kept calling me to bring them some barley water, and they kept calling me till nearly 12 o'clock. I had one candle lit on the chair—I went and got another, but could not see, there was something like a cloud, and I thought I would go down and get a knife and cut my throat, but could not see. I groped about in master's room for a razor—I could not find one—at last I found his keys, and then found his razor. I went up to Georgy, and cut her first; I did not look at her. I then came to Carry, and cut her. Then to Harry—he said, 'don't mother.' I said, 'I must' and did cut him. Then I went to Bill. He was fast asleep. I turned him over. He never awoke, and I served him the same. I nearly tumbled into this room. The two children here, Harriet and George were awake. They made no resistance at all. I then lay down myself." This statement was signed by the miserable woman.

J. HARKNESS, Printer, 123, Church Street, Preston.

199

Mary Ann's confession was printed alongside ballads.

"Then you may tell them that I did it." With these simple words, Mary Ann Brough assured Inspector Martell that she was both the mother and the murderess of the six dead children lying in her cottage. This confession was not her first. From the moment Henry Woolgar entered the cottage and made his grisly discovery, Mary Ann had made it clear that she was

[121] Victoria M Lord http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/mary-ann-brough.html

guilty. By the time of the inquest on June 12th, 1854, Mary Ann Brough had confessed to at least five separate people.

With a slit throat and severed windpipe from her suicide attempt, initially, Mary Ann could not speak. But by 7:00 a.m. of the morning of June 10th 1854, Mr. Charles Mott, a surgeon from nearby Walton-on-Thames, had arrived. Mott was familiar with Mary Ann: she was a regular patient of his partner, Mr. Izod. In fact, Mott occasionally attended Mary Ann when Izod was not available. Now, he sewed up her throat and checked on the bodies of her children.

Sarah Weller, a close neighbour, sat with Mary Ann during this ordeal. Weller explained in her testimony that once the doctor had sewn up Brough's throat, she was "able to speak quite as distinctly as usual." Weller seized the opportunity to ask Mary Ann whether the children had struggled or fought back. Mary Ann, tacitly admitting to the murders, said that only one had struggled. William Bidser, whose official title was Constable of the Parish of Esher, lived about two hundred yards from the Brough cottage. He was the first police official to speak to Mary Ann. To him, she acknowledged her role in the tragedy in some detail.

Bidser, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, summoned a number of his superiors, among them Superintendent Biddlecombe who first visited Brough at about 11:00 a.m. on June 10th. The Superintendent made the only known written record of Mary Ann's detailed confession, a confession she signed in front of witnesses, including Mr. Charles Mott. Biddlecomb claims that he twice cautioned the prisoner, warning her "…to be careful what she said for it would be my duty to take down everything she said, and produce it in evidence against her…. but she persisted in making a statement, which I took down in writing." Concerned for the accuracy of the statement and the jeopardy of the prisoner, Biddlecomb took the added precaution of returning the next day. At that time he read the statement back to her, advising her that if she wanted to retract any part of it she should do so. Mary Ann declined, reaffirming her guilt.

CONFESSION OF THE MURDERESS

The following confession was made by the murderess, to Mr. Biddlecombe, chief superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary: "On Friday last, I was bad all day; I wanted to see Mr. Izod, and waited all day. I wanted him to give me some medicine. In the evening I walked about, and afterwards put the children to bed, and wanted to go to sleep in a chair. About nine o'clock, Georgy (meaning Georgiana) kept calling me to bed. I came up to bed, and they kept calling me to bring them some barley water, and they kept calling me till nearly 12 o'clock. I had one candle lit on the chair. I went and got another, but could not see, there was something like a cloud, and I thought I would go down and get a knife and cut my throat, but could not see. I groped about in master's room for a razor. I could not find one; at last I found his keys, and then found his razor. I went up to Georgy, and cut her first; I did not look at her. I then came to Carry, and cut her. Then to Harry, he said, 'don't mother.' I said, 'I must' and did cut him. Then I went to Bill. He was fast asleep. I turned him over. He never awoke,

and I served him the same. I nearly tumbled into his room. The two children here, Harriet and George were awake. They made no resistance at all. I then lay down myself." The miserable woman signed this statement. J. Harkness, Printer, 121, Church Street, Preston.[122]

Inspector Martell also showed some concern for Mary Ann's imperilled state: "I told her to remember I was not asking her any questions and she went on to make a statement." Each of these confessions included the same details. Police Constable Peter Thomas Collet received the most pitiable of them. Collet testified, "The prisoner told me that if the doctor had come it would not have happened and she said she wished she had taken his advice, as it would have been a great deal better for her." Collet further explained that Mary Ann had asked repeatedly for her children. On the night of June 10th, she asked if it was her child crying? "No child was crying. Collet's chilling words paint the picture of a pathetic, confused woman.

1854 June 13: Inquest before a coroner and jury at The Chequers Tavern, West End into the deaths of the six Brough children. Mr. Biddlecombe, chief superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary said following information from Inspector Martell he went to the house of Mrs Brough. On entering the back door and going into a room he found under the table a pair of woman's boots and bloody stockings. He went to the door and found that the bolt on the inside was all over blood as if handled with a bloody hand. He went upstairs and found a boy aged seven years on the bed with his face covered with blood. He was dead and his throat was cut. The wound was extensive and incised. There were lying at the foot of the bed Harriet and George both dead each with incised wounds to the throat. He passed to another room and found three more dead children with extensive wounds to the throat. In a third bedroom he saw Mrs Brough in bed and attended by a medical man. He could not speak with her but a few days later Mrs Brough called him back and he took her statement.[123]

Brough's neighbours, and at least one relative, testified about her abilities as a mother. Surprisingly, all of them agreed: Mary Ann Brough had been a good mother. Henry Woolgar, the man who made the gruesome discovery, might be expected to have harsh words for Mary Ann. He did not. He told the jury, "I have frequently seen the prisoner with her children, and she always appeared to be very good and kind to them." Sarah Weller described Mary Ann as "… very kind to her children, almost too kind. She was a most indulgent mother."

Constable Bidser, the first official on the scene, felt compelled to testify, "I have known the prisoner for some years, and lived about two hundred yards from her, and I considered her as good a mother as ever lived. She kept her children well dressed and clean and acted in every way like a mother."

This type of testimony fills the record. Tradesmen and neighbours recalled that Mary Ann frequently bought or sent for treats such as cakes or biscuits for her children. Given an

[122] Source: Curiosities of Street Literature, London, Reeves and Turner, 196, Strand, 1871
[123] 1854 13 June: The Times

opportunity to vilify a woman who admitted slitting the throats of six of her own children, these witnesses chose to praise her skill as a parent. How was it possible that Mary Ann Brough could be both an excellent mother and a filicide?

Dr Forbes Benignus Winslow hoped to give an explanation when he testified at Mary Ann's trial. Winslow was a medical doctor of a special sort: he was an alienist – an early term for a psychiatrist or psychologist. He was also Victorian England's greatest expert on 'lunacy'.

Winslow examined all the evidence from the case and interviewed the prisoner at length before the trial. He reminded the jurors of Brough's difficult pregnancy and childbirth just 21 months before the 'incident'. He explained that her nasal haemorrhages indicated pressure on the brain; pressure that was relieved by the haemorrhages. He explained the concept of temporary insanity, highlighting the common belief that women were particularly susceptible to this. He praised Mr. Izod for his alertness to the patient's state, describing Izod's prescription to avoid excitement as most appropriate for a woman with a disordered brain.

Given her history of a stroke following childbirth, nasal haemorrhages and on-going headaches, Winslow argued that Brough had committed her crime while temporarily insane. Her mental stability, never strong, had collapsed under the onslaught of several stressful incidents. In the weeks leading up to the murders, the Brough children had taken it in turns to succumb to measles. Several neighbours testified that Mary Ann had spent sleepless nights caring for her sick children.

The Monday just prior to the murders, Mary Ann had gone up to London on the train. Unbeknownst to her, George suspected her of infidelity. He paid Henry Field, a self-described detective, to follow Mary Ann. Field testified at the inquest that he had done so and witnessed Mary Ann meeting with a man.

Newspapers took this testimony as evidence that Mary Ann had indeed been unfaithful, asserting that she had accompanied the unknown man to a brothel. Field however, never testified to anything of that nature. He only claimed to have seen her meet a man.

George assumed the worst and on Wednesday, June 7th, he told Mary Ann that he intended to separate from her and gain custody of the children. He even went so far as to move out of the house and into a nearby hostelry, The Wheat Sheaf.

These stressful events, Forbes Winslow argued, led directly to the bout of temporary insanity that ended in the deaths of the Brough children. Mary Ann's own confession demonstrated her terrible mental state. Despite having spent days awake tending to her ill children, Mary Ann was agitated and unable to sleep the night of the murders. She had complained all day of a severe headache. She had tried to see Mr. Izod and get medicine. She paced. She considered suicide. Finally, 'a black cloud' blinded her and she used the razor first on her children and then herself.

Dr Daniel and Dr Ingledew, also experts in 'lunacy' agreed with Forbes Winslow's assessment. Mr. Izod and Mr. Mott, the two surgeons who were familiar with Mary Ann's years of suffering after her 'paralytic attack', also concurred. Altogether, five different medical authorities contended that Mary Ann Brough was suffering from temporary insanity when she committed the murder of six of her children.

The recommendation of all these experts, combined with the testimony of neighbours, relatives, and police, swayed the jury. Mary Ann Brough was acquitted of murder and consigned to the insane asylum at Bethlehem, commonly known as Bedlam. There she was detained at Her Majesty's pleasure. Just seven years later in March of 1861, Mary Ann Brough died, still resident at Bedlam.

Brough's familicide was a tragedy for her family, a scandal for Queen Victoria and the royal court, but a career making case for Forbes Winslow and his fellow alienists.[124]

1854 17 June: The Coroner's Jury did not learn all the facts in connexion with the case, as reported in the morning journals. George Brough, formerly in the service of Prince Leopold and now keeper of the ponds and park at Claremont, lived at West End with his wife and six children. They had been married many years; but latterly Mr. Brough suspected that his wife made assignations in London, and at last, by means of detection, which he adopted, traced her to a public house with a male companion. Under the feelings, which this discovery induced, he resolved to separate from his faithless wife, and left his home.

Last Saturday morning, Henry Woolgar, a labourer in Claremont garden; was passing Mr. Brough 's cottage, and saw a pillow stained with blood hanging out of the window. Thomas Beasley came up, and they rang the bell violently; no one answered it, but they thought some one moved, and presently a woman waved a towel. Seeing this, Woolgar got a ladder and mounted to the window, and saw Mrs Brough coming up the staircase with "her hair hanging down and her body all over blood." "As she reached the top," continued the witness, "- she turned towards the window, and I saw a wound in her throat, and she made a whistling noise."

Woolgar slipped down the ladder and went for a surgeon, while a neighbour entered the house by the window. He saw Mrs Brough in one room with her throat cut, and a little baby lying in bed with its throat cut. Going from room to roam, he found the other five children murdered in the same way. Mr. Bedaer, the parish constable, and Mr. Biddlecombe, the Superintendent of Police, gave similar evidence. They entered by the front door, which Mrs Brough had crawled down stairs to open. The wretched woman, after her wound had been dressed, voluntarily gave to Mr. Biddlecombe a frightful account of the deeds she had done. "On Friday last I was bad all day; I wanted to see Mr. Izod, and waited all day. I wanted him to give me some medicine. In the evening I walked about, and afterwards put the children to bed, and wanted to go to sleep in a chair. About nine o'clock Georgy kept calling. to me to come to bed. I came up to bed and they kept calling me to bring them some barley water, and

[124] Victoria M Lord http://www.ultimatehistoryproject.com/mary-ann-brough.html

kept calling till near twelve o'clock. I had one candle lit on the chair. I went and got another, but could not see there was something like a cloud, and I thought I would go down and get a knife and cut my own throat, but could not see. I groped about in master's room for a razor. I could not find one. At last I found his keys, and then found his razor. I went to Georgy, and cut her first I did not look at her. I then came to Carry, and cut her. Then to Henry he said, “Don't, mother” I said, 'I must,' and did cut him. Then I went to Bill: he was fast asleep I turned him over; he never woke: I served him the same. I nearly tumbled into this room. The two children here, Harriet and George, were awake: they made no resistance at all; Harriet struggled very much, and gurgled. I then laid down and did myself. I can't tell what occurred for some time after that, as I found myself weak and lying on the floor. That nasty great and black cloud was gone then. I was thirsty, and got the water bottle and drank. I fell in a sitting position; got up, and saw the children, and it all came to me again. I wanted to call, but could not speak. I went to the window and put something out to call attention. I went to bed, and remained there till the bell rang. They made such a noise. I crawled on my hands and knees, but could not make them hear. It was Henry Woolgar. I went down to unbolt the door. There was only one bolt fastened, and that I undid. That is all I know. They can tell the rest. It was not quite daylight when I put the signal out. It is possible I might have said something more to the other officer. If I have, he can tell you."

The Jury returned a verdict of "Wilful murder" against the mother.

The eldest daughter of the family, Mary, aged nineteen, was at service as a lady's maid she joined her father to take a last look of the murdered children, before their burial. It was a terrible scene. Brough refuses to see his wife but Mary has visited her mother in gaol. The man who was the cause of the tragedy—a married man—has been forced to sell his business and leave the village such is the pitch of indignation against him. His wife is confined to her bed dangerously ill.[125]

The Esher Tragedy Six Children Murdered by their Mother

You feeling Christians give attention,
Young and old of each degree,
A tale of sorrow I will mention,
Join and sympathise with me;
It's of a sad and dreadful murder,
I shall quickly let you hear,
Which was committed by a mother,
On her six young children dear.

The perpetrator of this murder,
Mary Ann Brough it is her name,
And formerly as you may see,

[125] 17 June 1854 The Spectator

She nursed the blooming Prince of Wales.
But now her days of happiness,
Are vanished like the evening's sun,
Good people all, both great and small,
Reflect upon the deed she's done.

One night she could not rest in slumber,
So her own confession says,
Her little children, six in number,
Thus she took their lives away.
'Twas with a sharp and fatal razor,
She committed this foul deed,
And one by one she cut their throats,
Which causes each kind heart to bleed.

The first and eldest whom she murdered,
Sad and dreadful to behold,
Was a sweet and blooming girl.
Something more than ten years old,
And in her wrath and indignation,
Thus she slew them one by one.
Causing death and desolation,
What on earth could urge it on?

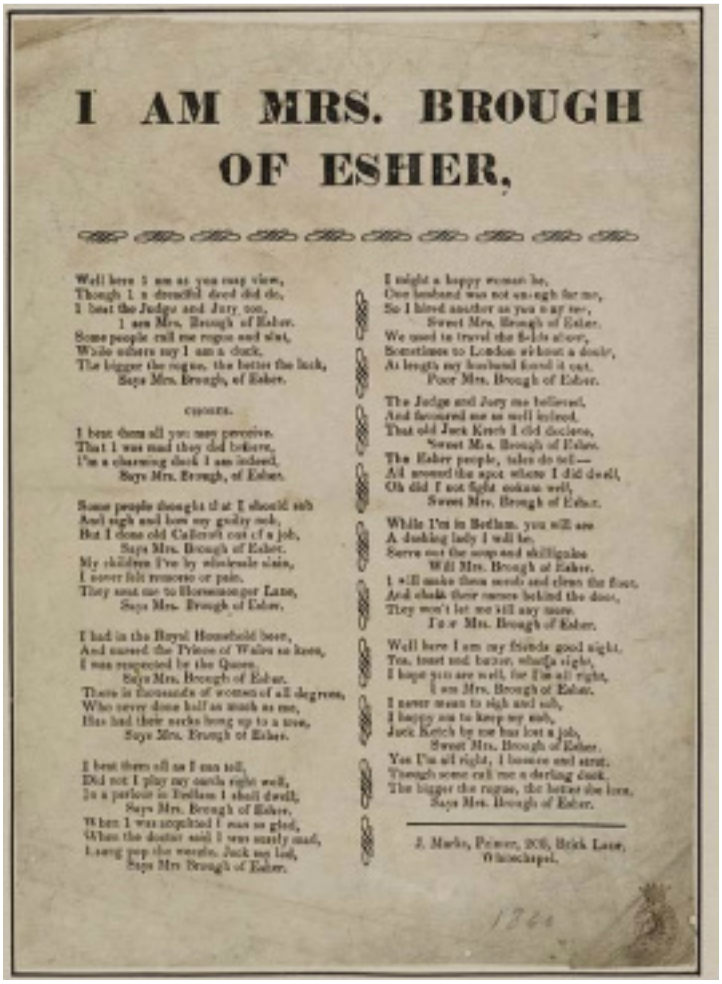
One little pretty boy amongst them,
Of the name of Henry,
He cried aloud with eyes of pity,
'Mother, dear, don't murder me,'
She heeded not his prattling tongue,
But like a demon fierce and wild,
'My dear,' she said, 'it must be done,'
And thus she slew her other child.

From bed to bed, and to each chamber,
This wretched woman did go,
While all around her own dear children,
Streams of crimson blood did flow,
The dreadful sight was most surprising,
To behold these children dear,
How their cruel hearted mother,
Cut their throats from ear to ear.

Oh! What must be the woman's motive,
Did she think she'd done amiss,
Or did she think of death and judgement
To perpetrate a deed like this ?
But now the wretch she is committed,

To a prison's gloomy cell,
Where midnight's dreams to her will whisper
And her deeds of blood will tell.

Within the prison's massive walls,
What anguish will torment her breast.
When phantoms of her six dear children,
Will disturb her of her rest.
Such a sad and dreadful murder,
On record there is no worse,
Committed by a cruel mother,
Once the Prince of Wales' Nurse.[126]



I AM MRS. BROUGH OF ESHER,

Well here I am as you may view,
Though I a dreadful deed did do,
I beat the Judge and Jury too,
I am Mrs. Brough of Esher.
Some people call me rogue and what,
While others say I am a duck,
The bigger the rogue, the better the luck,
Says Mrs. Brough, of Esher.

CHORUS.

I beat them all you may perceive.
That I was mad they did believe,
I'm a charming duck I am indeed,
Says Mrs. Brough, of Esher.

Some people thought that I should sob
And sigh and how my guilty nob,
But I done old Callcraft out of a job,
Says Mrs. Brough of Esher.
My children I've by wholesale slain,
I never felt remorse or pain,
They sent me to Horsemonger Lane,
Says Mrs. Brough of Esher.

I had in the Royal Household been,
And nursed the Prince of Wales so keen,
I was respected by the Queen,
Says Mrs. Brough of Esher.
There is thousands of women of all degrees,
Who never done half as much as me,
Has had their necks hung up to a tree,
Says Mrs. Brough of Esher.

I beat them all as I can tell,
Did not I play my cards right well,
To a parlour in Bedlam I shall dwell,
Says Mrs. Brough of Esher,
When I was acquitted I was so glad,
When the doctor said I was surely mad,
I sang pop the weasle, Jack my lad,
Says Mrs Brough of Esher.

I might a happy woman be,
One husband was not enough for me,
So I hired another as you may see,
Sweet Mrs. Brough of Esher.
We used to travel the Kent about,
Sometimes to London without a doubt,
At length my husband found it out,
Poor Mrs. Brough of Esher.

The Judge and Jury me believed,
And favoured me so well indeed,
That old Jack Ketch I did decieve,
Sweet Mrs. Brough of Esher.
The Esher people, take do tell—
All around the spot where I did dwell,
Oh did I not fight cokane well,
Sweet Mrs. Brough of Esher.

While I'm in Bedlam, you will see
A dashing lady I will be,
Serve out the soup and skilligalee
Will Mrs. Brough of Esher.
I will make them weeds and clean the floor,
And shake their canes behind the door,
They won't let me till any more.
Poor Mrs. Brough of Esher.

Well here I am my friends good night,
Yes, toast and butter, that's right,
I hope you are well, for I'm all right,
I am Mrs. Brough of Esher.
I never mean to sigh and sob,
I happy am to keep my nob,
Jack Ketch by me has lost a job,
Sweet Mrs. Brough of Esher.
Yes I'm all right, I bounce and strut,
Though some call me a darling duck,
The bigger the rogue, the better the luck,
Says Mrs. Brough of Esher.

J. Marks, Printer, 308, Brick Lane, Whitechapel.

1744

Mary Ann Brough was found not guilty by reason of insanity[127]

[126] http://www.londonancestor.com/street/str-199.htm
[127] The Encyclopaedia of Mass Murder

Another child killed by her mother

Biddlecombe was fast becoming an expert in the murder of children, which must be a sign of hard times and attitudes around agricultural shortages and illegitimacy. His next case again in 1854 on the 8 August, Biddlecombe dealt with the concealment of the birth of an illegitimate child.[128] Juries were however reluctant to convict the women of murder. Ann Berryman a well-dressed genteel looking young woman lived with her father near Chertsey where she earned a living as a dressmaker. In May it was thought by neighbours that she was in the family way and then she was back to normal. Superintendent Biddlecombe the superintendent of police at Chertsey became aware and spoke with the woman who admitted having a child prematurely and she did not murder the child but had burnt the body. Biddlecombe made a search of the garden where he found the partly burned body of the child, which were examined by Mr Sherlock a surgeon who thought the baby to have arrived at maturity. There was discussion as to whether the child was born alive and this led to a not guilty verdict by the jury after a short discussion.[129]

October 1854 after a brief period of being a part of the Surrey Constabulary the Watch Committee withdrew and decided to reform the Guildford Borough Police. This must have been a significant blow to the Constabulary not only because of the loss of ratepayers but Guildford was the key town in the county where the constabulary headquarters was situated. The Chief Constable was left in the position of having his major police building in the heart of another police area through which many of his men would have to pass every day. The breach between the Rural Police Committee and the Watch Committee was around accommodation but it is unlikely this was the only issue, probably more a trigger point, a focus for a range of frustrations and issues.

[128] The Standard (London, England), Tuesday, August 08, 1854; Issue 9361
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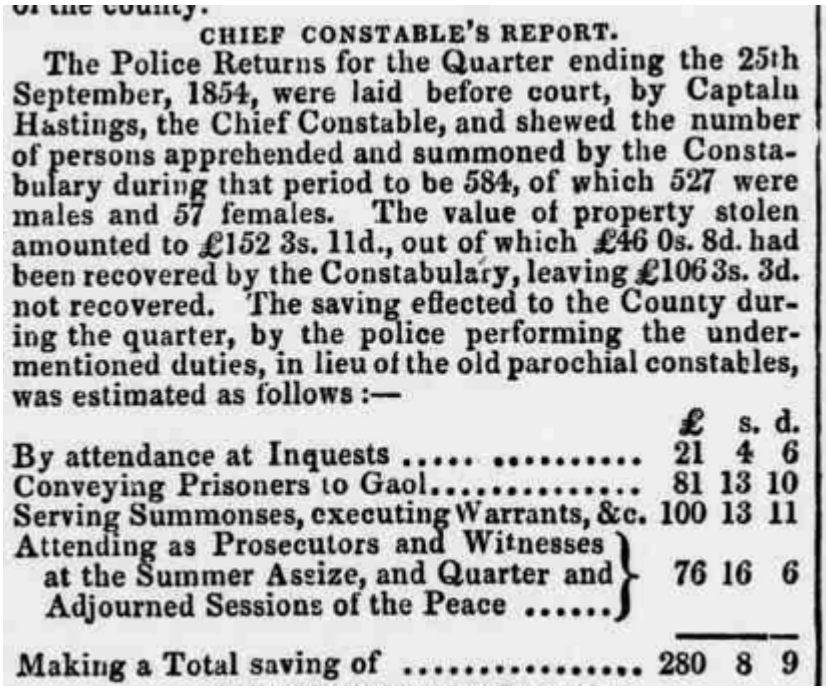

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S REPORT.

The Police Returns for the Quarter ending the 25th September, 1854, were laid before court, by Captain Hastings, the Chief Constable, and shewed the number of persons apprehended and summoned by the Constabulary during that period to be 584, of which 527 were males and 57 females. The value of property stolen amounted to £152 3s. 11d., out of which £46 0s. 8d. had been recovered by the Constabulary, leaving £106 3s. 3d. not recovered. The saving effected to the County during the quarter, by the police performing the undermentioned duties, in lieu of the old parochial constables, was estimated as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
By attendance at Inquests	21	4	6
Conveying Prisoners to Gaol.....	81	13	10
Serving Summonses, executing Warrants, &c.	100	13	11
Attending as Prosecutors and Witnesses at the Summer Assize, and Quarter and Adjourned Sessions of the Peace	76	16	6
Making a Total saving of	280	8	9

1854 October 24 The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette

1854 October 24 Constabulary: The report of the Police Committee was read from which it appeared that £365 5s 7d had been received and £1784 4s 10d expended leaving a balance of £1857. It was moved and carried that the superintendents of police be raised from 23s to 25s per week. A letter was read from the Chief Constable stating that the Borough had offered £250 to have five constables and one superintendent in the Borough but they found the amount altogether inadequate for the purpose and the Committee had now withdrawn the men altogether as they were much wanted in other parts of the county.[130]

1855 February 17: Letter from Chief Constable to the press: There are in the Surrey Constabulary 1 Chief Constable 7 Superintendents 5 Inspectors 70 Constables total 83; Guildford 11 constables, Reigate 11 and Dorking 11. It is not true that the ratepayers of the parish of Woking pay £228 per annum for the services of one constable there being two resident in the parish, one of whom lives in the town of Woking; in addition to which there are no less than six other constables, who meet and patrol together in pairs almost nightly throughout the different portions of the parish, thus affording every protection to the parish. I can give my assertion -- the amount of crime not only in the parish of Woking but throughout the county generally having greatly decreased since the establishment of the "rural police system".

1855 April Chief Constable's report to the Rural Police Committee: That depredations frequently occurring on the borders of those counties which have not accepted the Rural

[130] 1854 October 24 The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette

Police are very difficult of detection for example, in the year 1854 there were two burglaries, four sheep stolen, two horses and several cases of fowl stealing known to have been committed by thieves residing in Berkshire whom it is impossible to bring to justice from the petty jealousy and unwillingness on the part of the parish constables to give any information, so they do form the facilities afforded for the disposal of stolen property."[131]

1855 August 9: Bucks County Police Court: Burglaries at Iver and other places: Charges of burglary were heard by the court against Thomas King. PC C Dickman 103 one of the horse patrol apprehended the prisoner near the George Inn, Colnbrook. Committed for trial at the spring assizes. Mr **Biddlecombe** the Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary at Chertsey said he could adduce some evidence to connect the prisoner with eight different burglaries. The said they could not hear him as the offences were outside the county. Biddlecombe persisted and said that property found on the defendant came from a burglary at the Wheatsheaf Inn, Esher. Biddlecombe could prove that the footmarks in the garden correspond to with the prisoner's shoes. [132]

The following indicates some of the routine cases of policing undertaken on Biddlecombe's division but no doubt similar to cases across the county:

> **1856 February 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions**: Henry Shanks of Egham **trespassing in pursuit of game** fined £1 18s including costs.[133]
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> **1856 February 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions**: Sarah Gosden of Byfleet servant, charged with **stealing cakes and clothing** from her employer. William Muggleton of Byfleet a groom was charged with receiving the property knowing it to have been stolen. Gosden, who was on **improper terms of intimacy** with Muggleton 4 months in prison and Muggleton to 2 months in prison with hard labour. [134]
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> **1856 February 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions**: John Hart of Chertsey leather seller charged with weights not **in accordance with the imperial** standard fine and costs 19s. As was Thomas Elsey an ironmonger.[135]
>
> **1856 February 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions**: James Aslett and James Moss of Chertsey charged with wilfully **breaking six panes of glass** value 2s. Was settled out of court.[136]

[131] Durrant P 13
[132] 1855 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

[133] 1856 February 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

[134] 1856 February 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[135] 1856 February 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[136] 1856 February 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

1856 February 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Coombes of Egham carpenter summoned for unlawfully unfastening and **throwing open a gate** on the Staines to Wokingham Railway at Egham as to obstruct the highway was fined 17s including costs[137]

1856 February 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Hannah Perham of Egham single woman was summoned for a**ssaulting** Francis Attfield at Egham on 15 January. The case attracted considerable attention due to the well-known violence of the defendant's temper and from her having brought a **charge of assault against the police officer** called in by the complainant to protect her from Perham's violence. PC Mingay of the Surrey Constabulary said that between 11 and 12 o'clock at night on the 15 January his attention was called to the defendants' house and hearing screams of "murder." He immediately proceeded there and found the complainant's face covered in blood and her hair hanging over her face. Perham was in a most excited state and intoxicated. The officer informed the bench that his attention had repeatedly been called to the defendant's general bad conduct and ill usage of her little daughter. Convicted with the penalty of £1 with £1 9s costs or to be imprisoned with hard labour at the House of Correction for 21 days.[138]

Militarism rears again as drill continues as it was until the 1960s! In this case probably the use of cutlasses was a part of the training. **1856 March: GO 127: Drill instructions** and general training started in the force in March 1856. "It being highly essential that the constables in the different divisions should have an opportunity afforded them from time to time of being instructed in their drill, which the chief constable is aware that many were extremely deficient, he therefore considers it desirable that superintendents should send two men each rotation to headquarters for the purpose of being drilled and otherwise instructed in their duties." [139]

1855 December 4: Biddlecombe Burglary Wednesday 5 December 1855: Assizes: Home Circuit: Hertford: Sarah Baker alias White 47, Ann Williams alias White 26, her daughter, John Williams alias Goodenough 23, described as a hawker and Thomas King 25, labourer, were charged with burglary in the dwelling house of Edward Webb and stealing money and other property. The two women were also charged with receiving.

The prisoners were believed to be a part of a gang of London thieves who are in the habit of travelling about the country committing offences of this description. Another woman Catherine Hawkins was included in the indictment but she was admitted as a witness for the Crown. The prisoner King pleaded guilty. The gang left Blackfriars for Hertford where they committed the burglary. Eventually they were arrested, two by superintendents of the Bucks police, Thomas and Adams when stolen property was found in their possession. Also there was a chisel, which fitted the marks from the burglary.

[137] 1856 February 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[138] 1856 February 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[139] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-

At the Assizes the prisoners were found guilty, Goodenough for 15 years transportation and the others to six years penal servitude.

Goodenough was taken into custody for another burglary in Surrey and committed for trial. He told the court that he was innocent and that Biddlecombe the inspector of the Surrey police had got up the case, because he told him that he should like to have his neck stretched for him. As he left the dock he shook his fist at the officer and in the most threatening tone he said "I only wish I may live to come back for your sake."

1856 Manslaughter Chertsey: Following a quarrel on the 3 February between John Beauchamp a publican of the Coffeehouse in Chertsey and his wife during which Mrs Beauchamp was struck unconscious and later that day died. After the quarrel the defendant went and saw a chemist who came to the house and found Mrs Beauchamp deeply unconscious. Superintendent Biddlecombe was summoned to the house on the 5th February where he saw the prisoner and his unconscious wife and when he asked why a doctor had not been called he was informed that Mrs Beauchamp was frequently drunk and unconscious. A surgeon was called and examined her and she was still unconscious. After she died a PM revealed organ damage indicating that she was addicted to spirits. The jury after a short deliberation found the defendant guilty of manslaughter and the judge thought this was the right verdict particularly as it was known he had struck his wife before and would be sentenced to four years penal servitude. [140]

1856 March 22: Surrey Spring Assizes: Sarah Thompson 22 was indicted for the capital offence of **feloniously setting fire to a dwelling house in Egham,** her mother Rebecca Fountain being therein at the time. The mother was lying ill in a helpless state when the prisoner set fire to a kind of shed, which was used as a coal shed and which was attached to the dwelling. The object of the fire was to destroy her mother and but for timely assistance some serious calamity would have occurred. PC John Mingay Surrey Constabulary took the prisoner into custody and told her she was charged with setting fore to the cottage. "I did set fire to it. I intended to burn it down and burn my mother out. She has never been a good mother to me." A neighbour on hearing the cry of fire broke the shed door open and extinguished the fire. The jury found the prisoner guilty of an attempt to set fire to the building. The female turnkey told the judge that the prisoner had attempted to kill herself in prison and is not left alone. Sentenced to 12 month's hard labour.[141]

1856 April 15 Surrey Quarter Sessions: Mary Ann Strip 18, a spinster was charged with **stealing at Byfleet** a cash box containing about £10 in gold and silver monies, and also three petticoats the property of James Holroyd. Mary was in service with the Holroyd family and Mrs Holroyd went into Mary's bedroom and looked into her box and some of the alleged

[140] The Times March 20 1856
[141] 1856 March 22: The Surrey Comet

stolen property was found. Superintendent **Biddlecombe** was called and the room searched more carefully and Mrs Holroyd found more of her property. PC 9 Edwin Colville Moore Surrey Constabulary deposed that on Friday 20 March the prisoner was in custody at Chertsey police station and said she wanted to see Mr Biddlecombe and she wished to make a statement in which she admitted the thefts and if Mr Biddlecombe would take her to her mother's shed she would point out where the property was. Biddlecombe cautioned the girl and PC Moore who was standing by the cell door heard it being given. Superintendent William Henry Biddlecombe Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary said he was stationed at Chertsey. On March the 20th he received information and went with **Inspector Murtell** to the prosecutor's house. Biddlecombe searched inside and Murtell the outside. Something transpired and Biddlecombe went to the prisoner's mother's house and apprehended the prisoner. Inspector Murtell gave evidence of finding the cash box in Mr Holroyd's coal cellar covered in coals. Strip was found guilty but the jury recommended mercy on account of her affliction of numerous fits and her youth. The chairman said they were about to pass a **sentence of pure humanity rather than strict justice** and he hoped the public would not misunderstand it. He hoped she would get the better of the physical infirmity under which she laboured and her moral character would improve. Sentenced to one month's imprisonment.[142]

1856 April 29: **The Surrey Constabulary:** In the course of the discussion on Friday upon the Police Bill. **Lord Lovaine** said as chairman of the police committee of Surrey he wished to bear his testimony to the value of the county constabulary. Before they had the constabulary neither life nor property was safe in the county, but the magistrates were forced into action by the fact that nearly every good house in the county had been broken open, and at last a dreadful murder was committed. The consequence of establishing the county constabulary was that throughout the county there had been peace and security, which never existed before. When he first sat on the bench at Guildford there was hardly a day when the court rose before four o'clock and they generally sat till six, but now two hours were amply sufficient in which to get through the whole of the business.

Mr Evelyn complained that the noble lord who had spoken during the debate had said that life and property were not safe in the county of Surrey till the introduction of the rural police in 1851. He (Mr Evelyn) had lived in Surrey all his life and he certainly had not been conscious of danger (hear, hear). An unfair use had been made of the Frimley murder; but they might just as well argue for the metropolitan force from the catastrophe in Rupert Street (hear, hear). The truth was it was only by accident that the burglary was accompanied by murder (laughter). Every burglar was morally a murderer; and even in the Frimley case it was generally understood that the man who actually did the atrocious deed was not the most criminal of the three, for he was not the instigator of the outrage. He did not think there was much in the argument that none of the counties had agreed to discontinue its police after having once established it, There could be no doubt that the Home Secretary would refuse his assent to any resolution of that kind and therefore there was no encouragement to raise the

[142] 1856 April 15: The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette

question. He was bound in candour to admit that a majority of the Surrey magistrates were in favour of the force, but not the majority of the ratepayers (hear, hear).[143]

More cases for Biddlecombe's area:

1856 May 24: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Mary Butler of Egham was charged by PC King Surrey Constabulary, with **sleeping in a shed.** The prisoner, who had been sentenced several times for the same offence, was sentenced to three month's hard labour.[144]

1856 May 24: Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Moody was charged by PC Moore with b**egging**. Committed to hard labour for 14 days. [145]

1856 May 24: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Michael Sullivan of Egham was charged by PC Little with being **drunk and incapable**. Reprimanded and discharged.[146]

1856 June 28: On Friday afternoon of the 20 inst., an accident of a serious nature occurred to Mr Superintendent **Biddlecombe**, Surrey Constabulary, Chertsey. He had occasion to get out of his cart near Walton and while in the act of getting in again some person discharged a gun in the neighbourhood which caused the mare he was driving, a spirited animal, to start, throwing Mr Biddlecombe on his shoulder and **breaking his collar bone**. We are happy to say he is progressing favourably.[147]

Superintendents had a number of duties, which today would be associated with the role of a local authority. The role of weights and measure inspector was one such duty undertaken to save money for the county, in fact £380 in 1851 upon formation. The role entailed visiting all retailers to ensure there was no fiddling of the public by having false weights. **1856 June 28: Chertsey Petty Sessions:** James Ellis a grocer was summoned by Superintendent **Biddlecombe,** inspector of weights and measures, with having several **weights not to the imperial** standard so a fine of 1s, with costs and forfeiture of the weights. Robert Diz a butcher of Weybridge was summoned for a like offence. Three beer retailers had quart and pint measures not stamped and being less than the imperial measure a penalty of 5s with 17s costs.[148] In **1858 December 8:** The work of **superintendents as inspectors of weights and measures** was causing concern and the Count Constabulary Committee established a schedule for each division to check and stamp weights at police stations. **[149] 1891 October 12:** The chief constable reported that despite the increase in the cost of living the inspectors and superintendents had **no pay rise for nineteen years.** In fact they were receiving less because in 1880 they were relieved of their duties as Inspectors of Weights and measures for which they received an allowance.[150] At this time superintendents acted as Relieving Officers

[143] 1856 April 29 The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette
[144] 1856 May 24: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[145] 1856 May 24: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[146] 1856 May 24: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[147] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[148] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[149] SCC Archives QS5/3c/2
[150] Durrant Page 20

for the poor and the Dorking superintendent reported that the congestion at his police station by people seeking help was so great the police station could not properly be used and he asked to be relieved of the job.

A number of Biddlecombe cases:

> **1856 June 28: Chertsey Petty Sessions:** James Hall of **Chobham** a grocer was charged **with assaulting** William Gosden at Chobham on 29 May. On the night of the **celebration of peace bonfire** had been made in Chobham Street within a few yards of the complainant's house around which a crowd assembled. Fearing his premises were in danger he put his head out of the window and remonstrated with the defendant on the impropriety of the proceedings. Mr Hall who had a pole in his hand raised it to the window out of which the complainant was looking and desired him to take his head in. Case dismissed as no assault[151]
>
> **1856 June 28: Chertsey Petty Sessions:** George West a labourer of Chertsey was summoned for **assaulting** Thomas West his father but as the complainant did not appear the case was dismissed.[152]
>
> **1856 July 12: Chertsey Petty Sessions:** John Thatcher of **Egham** was summoned on the information of the **Excise officer** for concealing 15 bushels of barley in the process of making malt. Convicted of the mitigated penalty of £50 and £1 7s 6d costs.[153]
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> **1856 July 12: Chertsey Petty Sessions:** George Atkins of this town a lad of 14 years, was summoned for **unlawfully gathering three pints of peas** value 2d. Convicted on a penalty of 5s, damage 1s 8d or 21 days in prison.[154]
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> **1856 July 12: Chertsey Petty Sessions:** Four people were summoned for unlawfully **cutting turf on Chobham Common** and selling it. The Bench was of the opinion they had no jurisdiction in the matter as goods and chattels of the defendants were under the value of £5. It would therefore be useless to issue a distress warrant. An action in the county court would be the proper course to pursue. On being advised the Bench could use the power of imprisonment they adjourned for legal advice.[155]
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> **1856 July 12: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Robbing a Crimean Soldier** and recovery of the property: On Thursday July 4 a corporal of the 3rd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards who had latterly returned from the Crimea was robbed of a silver watch and about £80 in gold by a prostitute in Aldershot camp. A description of the woman was given to **PC 12 Lambert** Surrey Constabulary, stationed at Bagshot from enquiries found that the suspect had caught a train to Broomhall Station, London. He went to

[151] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[152] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[153] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[154] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[155] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

that station he determined to wait there until the evening to see if she returned which she did and Lambert had the satisfaction of seeing her get out of a carriage and he took her into custody. Upon being searched he found a quantity of clothing obviously bought in London, and a large quantity of sovereign, half sovereigns, t French dollars, some silver, a Russian gold medal and two new gold rings. A sergeant of the Hants constabulary has since recovered the watch. She was handed over to the Hants constabulary and was committed to Winchester Assizes.[156]

1856 July 19: Robbery: On the 8th inst., a **horse, cart and harness was stolen** from Dunford Mills, **Chertsey** over night and the thieves were able to get clear of the county of Surrey not withstanding the exertions of Superintendent **Biddlecombe** Surrey Constabulary, to prevent their escape. He however, put himself in communication with the police of surrounding counties and ultimately succeeded in tracing them into Bedfordshire. The horse, cart and harness are now in the custody of the police in that county.[157]

1856 July 19: Death by drowning of a four year old boy when the cart he was riding in was upset and he was trapped in a ditch in water for some minutes. Accidental death. [158]

1856 July 19:Chertsey Petty Sessions: PC Beagley Surrey Constabulary charged James Hynes of Chertsey, with violently **assaulting his wife** and with **assaulting a constable** in the execution of his duty. Bound over in own recognisance to answer the charge on the 23. [159]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: William Turner of **Chertsey** was charged on the information of **Superintendent Biddlecombe** with **trespassing in pursuit of rabbits**. The defendant did not appear and proof of service of the summons was given by PC King he was convicted in his absence with a penalty of £2 with 10s costs. A warrant was issued for his apprehension.[160]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Edward Wilson and Benjamin Adams were charged on the information of John Goodhall with **violently assaulting him** at Egham. The chairman admonished both parties as to future behaviour dismissing the charge add making Goodhall pay the costs.[161]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Hind of **Addlestone** was summoned on the information of PC Beagley with **assaulting him in the execution** of his duty at

[156] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[157] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[158] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[159] 1856 June 28: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[160] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[161] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

about 9.30pm on the 16th inst. He heard cries of murder coming from the defendant's house and went there and saw the defendants' wife coming out with a large lump on her forehead. He went into the house and the defendant immediately struck him several times and seized him by the hair of his head. He was obliged to call two persons to assist him in taking the defendant to the station house. A witness said he had never seen an officer act with **greater forbearance in** his life than had PC Beagley. Convicted in a penalty of 5s with 18s costs own recognisance of £10 with two sureties of £5 each to keep the peace for three months. [162]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: William Turner of **Chertsey** was charged on the information of **Superintendent Biddlecombe** with **trespassing in pursuit of rabbits**. The defendant did not appear and proof of service of the summons was given by PC King he was convicted in his absence with a penalty of £2 with 10s costs. A warrant was issued for his apprehension.[163]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Stephen Boylett of Weybridge was charged by PC 35 Chalwin, Surrey Constabulary, with **assaulting him in the execution of his duty**. PC Chalwin was on duty at a club feast at Weybridge on the 21st ult., when the defendant rushed at him, threw him down and kicked him several times. He was still suffering form the injuries received and produced a medical certificate to that effect. PC Beagley confirmed PC Chalwin's evidence. Penalty of £1 with 8s costs or one month in prison with hard labour [164]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Henry Gadd of Byfleet was summoned by PC Roger Parke Surrey Constabulary, for riding on a **wagon drawn by three horses without reins.** The defendant who has twice been summoned for this offence did not attend. Convicted in absence penalty and costs £1 to be paid by 6 August or one month in the House of Correction with hard labour for 21 days.[165]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Catamoir of Chertsey was brought up in custody charged with **violently assaulting his wife** a highly respectable and industrious woman, mother of five children. She appeared before the bench with two black eyes and said her husband had deserted her about four years when he went to Australia retuning about two months ago. Since his return he has treated her with cruelty. The prisoner was discharged upon promising better behaviour.[166]

1856 August 2: Chertsey Petty Sessions: William Hyde and James Johnson were charged with **desertion** from 7th Royal Fusiliers by PC37 Beagley, Surrey

[162] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[163] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[164] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[165] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[166] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

Constabulary, who met the soldiers near Chertsey when they did not have a pass. Committed to Horsemonger Lane gaol. [167]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Meakin, Thomas Salisbury and John Rennie were charged by Superintendent Biddlecombe Surrey Constabulary, with **deserting** from the 95th Regiment of Foot and were sent to Horsemonger Lane Gaol[168]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Eliza Searle charged upon the information of PC Lambert Surrey Constabulary, with **willfully damaging shed at Windlesham** and was given a 5s and 1s penalty with 20s costs or two months hard labour. [169]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Church was charged with **assaulting** James Salmon in **Windlesham** convicted with a penalty of 5s with 19s costs.[170]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Edward Beer of **Weybridge** was charged with **assaulting** Jane Leonard lodging house keeper but the case was dismissed[171]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: George Chowney of Woking **aged 8 years** was charged by Thomas Bent Superintendent of police of the London and South Western railway Company with **throwing stones at a railway carriage** near **Woking** station on 11 July last. Severe admonishment from the chairman and was fined 2s.[172]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Richard Perrin, Richard Turner and Richard Howard were charged by PC Baxter Surrey Constabulary with **riding on wagons** of which they were in charge **without reins** on the high road between Thorpe and Egham. Penalty of 1s each and 19s costs**.**[173]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: William Parrin, John Spurgeon and John J Simms were charged by PC Moore Surrey Constabulary with **desertion** from 27th Regiment. Committed to Horsemonger Lane Gaol.[174]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Thomas Gunn and Thomas Barnes were charged by PC Adams Surrey Constabulary, with **deserting** from the 7th Hussars and were sent to Horsemonger Lane Gaol.[175]

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Meakin, Thomas Salisbury and John Rennie were charged by Superintendent Biddlecombe Surrey Constabulary, with **deserting** from the 95th Regiment of Foot and were sent to Horsemonger Lane Gaol[176]

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[167] 1856 August 2: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[168] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[169] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[170] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[171] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[172] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[173] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[174] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[175] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[176] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

1856 August 9: Chertsey Petty Sessions: James Campbell McFadyen was charged by PC King Surrey Constabulary, with **deserting** from the Scots Fusilier Guards and were sent to Horsemonger Lane Gaol.[177]

The following military cases were other than on the Chertsey Division but were common across the county:

1856 August 12: Guildford County Police Business: George Wittam was charged with being a **deserter** from the 7th Regiment of Foot stationed at Aldershot having escaped from the guardroom where he had been confined on a charge of being a deserter having been transferred there from Horsemonger Lane gaol. Was committed to the county police station to await an escort.[178]

1856 August 12: Guildford County Police Business: John McGurk was charged by PC Buckett with being a **deserter** from the 42nd Highlanders and was committed to the county police station to await an escort.[179]

1856 August 12: Guildford Borough Police Business: John Pavlor was charged by PC Tickner with being a **deserter** from the Rifle Brigade. The Mayor ordered he be returned to his battalion at Aldershot.[180]

1856 August 12: Guildford Borough Police Business: John Sullivan was charged by PC John Davis with being a **deserter** from the 23rd Regiment of Foot stationed at Aldershot. He was escorted back to his regiment.

1856 August 16: Egham: James Healey and James Mc Naughton **deserters** from 19th and 82 Regiments of Foot at Aldershot apprehended by a police officer taken before the court and committed to Horsemonger Lane Gaol.[181]

The numbers of deserters apprehended by the police is said to be surprising much more so the numbers who escape detection. One of these men stated **130 men were absent** from his regiment without leave at the time he left.[182]

This is a most unusual case but again is representative of the discipline offences involving alcohol that would have occupied much of the senior office's time.

1856 August 12: Guildford County Police Business: Committal of a Police Constable Isaac (?) Jyles of the Surrey Constabulary charged by Superintendent Parr with neglect of duty by disobeying his orders. It appears that the prisoner had been ordered on the previous morning by the Superintendent to proceed by rail to Ash and from thence to Aldershot camp to institute enquiries relative to a prisoner in custody at the County Police Station, and was desired to return by rail, so as to arrive in Guildford by 5'oclock instead of which he did not make an appearance until 9 o'clock that evening and then the worst for liquor. He was

[177] 1856 August 9: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[178] 1856 August 12: The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette
[179] 1856 August 12: The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette
[180] 1856 August 12: The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette
[181] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[182] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

desired to return to his station at Ash and shortly afterwards was found by Inspector Coward drinking in a public house in the town and the Inspector thereupon conducted him to the station where his staff and handcuffs were taken from him and he was again ordered to Ash, but this order he also disobeyed and remained in Guildford during the night. The next morning he was taken into custody and was dismissed form the force by the Chief Constable Captain Hastings, by whose direction he was taken before the magistrates for neglect of duty. He was committed to the House of Correction at Wandsworth for one month with hard labour whither he was conveyed shortly after.[183]

> **1856 August 16:** James Jessop and William Harvey of **Egham** were fined 5s each for being **drunk and disorderly** the previous night. [184]
>
> **1856 August 16:** James Jessop was again apprehended in **Egham** on Sunday morning charged with **sleeping on the premises** of Mr Argent and leaving the gate open which means some of the stock entered the rick-yard and dis considerable damage. Committed to Wandsworth House of Correction for 14 days hard labour.[185]
>
> **1856 August 16**: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Emma Jones and Eliza Jones, mother and daughter were charged with feloniously **setting fire to a shed at Bagshot** causing £70 of damage. Mrs Jones was arrested and taken to Chertsey police station where the female searcher deposed that on Monday evening 4 August the prisoners were brought there by Superintendent Biddlecombe directed she be searched and placed in the female cell. Mrs Jones admitted to her that she had set fire to the shed. Superintendent **Biddlecombe** deposed that he took Emma Jones into custody and charged her with setting fire to Mrs Burchett's shed. She said she knew nothing about it. He directed PC Lambert to take the daughter into custody. The mother was sent to the next Assizes and the daughter discharged.[186]

1856 August 30: Windsor and Eton Express: Egham Races: The light fingered gentry were looked after by Superintendent Biddlecombe and a division of the Surrey Constabulary who were on duty at the course, and Inspector Bent from Waterloo station who was on the alert at Egham Station so these gentlemen were compelled to be cautious in their vocations.[187]

> **1856 August 30 Chertsey Petty Sessions:** George Daw and James Fulkner charged with **breaking two panes of glass in Newhaw.** Daw received a penalty of 1s, damage 3s 6d, costs 17s or 21 days with Fulker discharged.[188]
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> **1856 August 30 Chertsey Petty Sessions:** John Pantlin, Byfleet, was charged with **assaulting** William Foster. The case was dismissed as no assault took place. [189]

[183] 1856 August 12: The Sussex Advertiser, Surrey Gazette
[184] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[185] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[186] 1856 August 16: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[187] 1856 30 August: Windsor and Eton Express: Egham Races
[188] 1856 August 30: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[189] 1856 August 30: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

1856 August 30 Chertsey Petty Sessions: PC J Hibberd, Surrey Constabulary, charged Patrick Hynes with begging in Chertsey,. 18pence found in his pocket and sentenced to 14 days hard labour.[190]

1856 August 30 Chertsey Petty Sessions: Edward Smith and Thomas Hart charged with **gambling on the highway** in Egham the first day of Egham Races and were committed to hard labour for 21 days.[191]

1856 August 30 Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Regon was charged with being **drunk and disorderly** at Egham and was fined 5s.[192]

1856 August 30: On Tuesday afternoon Inspector James Murtell Surrey Constabulary apprehended a man named John Baker with a small **pony in his possession which was found to be stolen.[193]**

1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette: Although ever reluctant to censure the police when they deserve blame we are equally ready to justify them when their conduct is such as to warrant our so doing. All persons who have any knowledge of the difficulties of "keeping clear the course" and of discharging other duties as upon the police force engaged upon such occasions must know the labour attended upon carrying out those duties, more particularly just on the eve of the races. At Ascot the A Division of the London police manage their duties to perfection but then they are picked men and accustomed to such peculiar work. At Egham, Superintendent Biddlecombe and a body of the Surrey Constabulary were engaged and, we believe, not more than half a dozen of the men had previously performed similar duties, consequently such perfect carrying out of their instructions as by men who are fully trained for the work was not to be expected.

On the first day some complaints were made that the course was not well kept, in other words, the police were not sufficiently active in preventing the public from crossing and re-crossing it when a race was about coming off. On the second day a fracas occurred between the police and an offender by the former doing their duty. A person in running across the course having evaded snatches by one or two policemen was at last caught fast by one of the force just as he had crossed and managed to dart under the ropes. Here there was a scuffle, the man got on his legs, one of the police was struck twice, other police went to his assistance, the offender received a blow from the policeman's truncheon and in endeavouring to pull him into the course to escort him back from whence he came he fell over the ropes, whereupon there was a great cry of "Shame" against the police. But the man was eventually taken back to the side from whence he started to convince him he had no right to cross, and there he was very pugnacious and evinced a great desire to give Superintendent Biddlecombe a taste of his fistic powers. However more discreet friends that he had on the opposite side prevented him committing a second assault and thus the matter ended.

[190] 1856 August 30: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[191] 1856 August 30: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[192] 1856 August 30: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[193] 1856 August 30: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

From these circumstances the turf reporter of the Sunday Times has made the following very unfair attack upon the police:

"The only unpleasant incident which occurred to mar the satisfactory character of the proceedings was the brutal violence displayed by the local police who, in certain instances exceeded their duty so shamefully as to excite the indignation of the spectators. On Thursday so brutal attack did they make on an unfortunate fellow who was crossing the course that yells and execrations assailed from all sides and so threatening became the mob that a serious riot seemed inevitable. Had the people taken the law into their own hands and soundly thrashed the "peeler" guilty of the outrage they would have been fully justified. The slightest opposition to the authority of the police caused truncheons to be used with the most savage ferocity. Armed with their formidable weapons the fellows seemed to forget they were employed to preserve peace and order but they hustled unfortunate wights (sic) most roughly and laid about them right and left. If their duty was to smash heads without distinction they unscrupulously discharged it. The inspectors were much to blame that they did not interfere to restrain the violence of their men."

Our attention was drawn to the remarks last week and we in addition to giving the foregoing description of the affair obtained from an eye witness, in justice to the police, subjoin the following reply to our inquiries from an Egham correspondent:

" I consider the extract from the Sunday Times embodies an unfounded attack upon the police, and abounds also in gross misrepresentation. The police have arduous duties to perform in addition to the prevention and detection of crime, it is indispensible to "clear the course" and to keep it clear for the mutual safety of the jockeys, horses and the public and their instructions upon this point are explicit and peremptory. Some persons are ever too prone to frustrate their efforts by crossing the course at uncertain periods and at irregular intervals after the bell has rung and this unbecoming and dangerous practice having attained its climax at our last meeting a corresponding effort was made to abate the evil. A "gentleman sportsman" having offended in this particular and having resisted the entreaties of the police to return to the *locus in quo*, accompanied with a blow, this functionary retaliated in self-defence. The mob, resentful of interference, sympathised with the culprit, who received the chastisement, which his own foolish conduct provoked and they hooted accordingly. . There was not the slightest ground for apprehending a riot, in fine, the committee feel the police acted throughout with commendable forbearance, which would be politic upon all occasions in the public to reciprocate. [194]

> **1856 September 13: Chertsey Petty Sessions:** James Stevens of **Bisley** charged with **assaulting Police Constable** George Peters Surrey Constabulary, in the execution of his duty was convicted and fined 5s with £1 5s costs or 21 days hard labour. **[195]**

[194] 1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[195] 1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

1856 September 13: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Ann Shorter was charged with **assaulting** Sarah Clarke at Chertsey. She pleaded guilty and was fined 1s with 6s costs or 14 days hart labour[196]

1856 September 13: Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Blenheim and Thomas Johnson charged with **trespassing in pursuit of game** at Egham to which they pleaded guilty and were fined £1 with 19s costs or 21 days hard labour.[197]

1856 September 13: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Thomas Derry charged by PC King with **deserting** 82nd Regiment and was sent to Horsemonger Lane Gaol to await escort.[198]

1856 September 13: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Walter Evans the boots at the Catherine Wheel Inn, Egham was charged with stealing clothing and alcohol from his master. He pleaded not guilty and was committed for trial at Newington Sessions on September 15.[199]

1856 September 20: Forged £5 notes uttered at Egham following similar cases in Egham 12 months ago: A woman with the appearance of a respectable servant called at Egham post office and presented a not that turned out to be forged £10 note. Other notes were uttered in local towns. The loss to the postmaster was greater than his annual stipend. [200]

1856 September 20: Middlesex Sessions on Tuesday last William Weston 46 was indicted for **stealing at Egham seven half crowns**. The prosecutor and defendant are farm labourers who slept in adjoining beds at the Queen's Head, Egham. Police traced the prisoner to a farm where he was thatching and found 6 half crowns in his possession and discovered he had changed another at a pubic house. Found guilty; three months hard labour.[201]

1856 September 20: Chertsey Petty Sessions: Henry Vickers was charged by PC Moore Surrey Constabulary, with **vagrancy** in Chertsey and was committed for one month's hard labour[202]

1856 September 20: Chertsey Petty Sessions: George Thomas was charged by PC R Moore Surrey Constabulary, with **cruelty to a horse** when working it when in an unfit state. Convicted and fine 10s with costs or 21 days[203]

1856 September 20: Inquest at Railway Bell, Inn Chertsey on the body of a lad James Page, in charge of a wagon drawn by two horses slipped and two wheels going over him, **killing him almost immediately.[204]**

[196] 1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[197] 1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[198] 1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[199] 1856 September 13: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[200] 1856 September 20: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[201] 1856 September 20: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[202] 1856 September 20: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[203] 1856 September 20: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

1856 October 11: Another forged £10 note was presented at the Egham bank on Monday.[205]

1856 October 11 Chertsey Petty Sessions: Thomas Green the supervisor of Excise laid an information against Stephen Green of Egham for managing an **illegal still.** After hearing the evidence of the excise officers and PC King Surrey Constabulary, who accompanied them when they made the seizure the bench were of the opinion the proprietorship had not been established and the case was dismissed.[206]

1856 October 11 Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Hastings was charged with **assaulting** Emma Emmett of Thorpe aged 13 and was convicted and fined 3s 6d and 16s 6d costs or 21 days.[207]

1856 October 11 Chertsey Petty Sessions: Robert Ayles of Chertsey was charged with **violently assaulting** William Haslett of Newhaw on Monday 1st September. There was a fight in the White Hart Inn and as a result the injured man had been receiving long-term medical treatment. Fine £1 with 16s costs or 6 weeks hard labour[208]

1856 October 11 Chertsey Petty Sessions: Martha Shelley of Egham was charged with **assaulting** Sophia Godfrey at Egham but the complainant failed to establish her case and the prisoner was dismissed. [209]

1856 October 11 Chertsey Petty Sessions: William Hill of Lyford was charged with **stealing two faggots of wood.** PC 52 Roger Parke Surrey Constabulary stationed at Pyrford stated that from information received he watched the victim's premises on the morning of Sunday 5th and at about 5 o'clock he saw the prisoner take a faggot from the stack. The prosecutor did not press for a severe sentence and so the prisoner was to be detained in the police station for 24 hours.[210]

1856 October 11 Chertsey Petty Sessions: John Barnes of Chertsey was summoned for having **assaulted** Henry Freeman. Case was dismissed[211]

1856 October 11 Chertsey Petty Sessions: Stephen Baigent of Chobham was charged with **stealing a quantity of straw**. Case dismissed**.**[212]

1856 October 11: On Tuesday last a man named Brown aged 70 was **accidentally killed** by falling from a hay rick producing concussion of the brain and other serious injuries. [213]

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[204] 1856 September 20: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[205] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[206] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[207] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[208] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[209] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[210] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[211] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[212] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette
[213] 1856 October 11: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

1856 November 30: Old Bailey: Theft of a horse valued at £18 from George Leggat by Alfred Dowers. Police Superintendent W H Biddlecombe gave evidence that he was riding a horse from Egham and saw the prisoner about a quarter of a mile from the field where the horse was stolen. He later went to the house of detention at Osborn where he pointed out the prisoner from 140-150 others. The prisoner responded by saying that Biddlecombe "has sworn false". The prisoner was found guilty and sentenced to 18 months. [214]

Chertsey Division

1857 February 21: Surrey Adjourned Sessions: William Witnet, 20, for obtaining from Harriet Cox, 1lb of ginger biscuits at **Egham**. Three months hard labour at Wandsworth[215]

1857 February 21: Surrey Adjourned Sessions: William Desmond 27 a tailor for **stealing at Chertsey** a coat. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to two months hard labour [216]

1857 March 17: Theft Chertsey: Surrey Sessions March 16: William Taylor 21 and George Adams 20 were found guilty of stealing at Chertsey a box and 7d, the property of Thomas Cowsell in the Union. Adams sentenced to 12 months and Taylor to three months hard labour[217]

PC Carpenter Surrey Constabulary 1857

1857 March 28: Surrey Spring Assizes Kingston: Eliza Jones a fresh-coloured girl aged 11 was charged with **maliciously setting fire** to an outbuilding the property of Margaret

[214] http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18570615-708&div=t18570615-708&terms=biddlecombe#highlight
[215] 1857 February 21: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[216] 1857 February 21: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[217] 1857 March 17: Theft Chertsey: The Standard

Burchett at Windlesham. The prisoner when called on to plead said "I done it." When the prisoner was told the charge meant she intended to injure the prosecutrix she said she had no such intention so a plea of not guilty was entered. Superintendent Biddlecombe first took the mother into custody and then the prisoner. The mother denied all knowledge of the fire. At the police station the mother said her daughter had been cleaning some potatoes and went to the ditch to rinse them. The jury found the prisoner guilty of the act but without the intent so the judge said that is "Not Guilty" and the jury returned the verdict of not guilty.[218]

> **1857 June 20 Surrey Quarter Sessions:** John Wooden, before convicted of a felony, 30, labourer for stealing at Thorpe four quart pots and three drinking glasses Six months hard labour.[219]

1857 July 11: Chertsey: On Sunday morning last Alfred Burton for who a reward of £2 was offered for **stealing a watch and money** belonging to a fellow Chertsey workman, was apprehended at Enfield and on Tuesday **Superintendent Biddlecombe** went there to bring him to Chertsey. On their arrival at Chertsey on the half past nine train, upward of a 100 persons were assembled at the station and accompanied him to the police station, and so strong was the feeling against the prisoner although guarded by the superintendent and two constables they had much trouble in preventing the mob from exercising "Lynch-law' on him. Their questions "Where is the watch?" The prisoner did evidently not relish "What o'clock" and similar queries. On Wednesday he was committed for trial. None of the property or money has been found but two new suits of clothes, a new parasol and a formidable life preserver found in his possession.[220]

> **1857 July 11: Chertsey Magistrates**: Samuel Snelling was charged by Roboam Roake with **assaulting and beating** him at Chertsey and was fined 10s with costs 16s or 14 days hard labour; allowed a fortnight to pay.[221]

> **1857 July 11: Chertsey Magistrates**: William Snelling brother of the above summoned by Henry Berryman with having a**ssaulted** him. Both parties it will be remembered were convicted of stealing geese about Christmas last and served four months. Berryman split on the other and was beaten. Defendant did not appear but sent his father to pay the fine. Warrant issued for his apprehension.[222]

> **1857 July 11: Chertsey Magistrates**: Isaac Martin was summoned by PC 54 Baxter Surrey Constabulary for **damaging fir trees** and had managed two or three cartloads of wood before being caught. Penalty and costs £1 6s [223]

[218] 1857 February 21: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[219] 1857 June 20: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[220] 1857 July 11: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[221] 1857 July 11: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[222] 1857 July 11: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[223] 1857 July 11: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser

1857 July 11: Chertsey Magistrates: Elizabeth Alston charged Stephen Taylor of Chobham with **aggravated assault** on her. The evidence given to the magistrate is totally unfair for publication but was not believed by the bench she being totally unworthy of credit and a most notorious bad character. The defendant caused much merriment amongst the persons present from the genuine Methodist parson style in which he told his tale respecting his amours with the lady in past times.[224]

1857 August 8: Summer Assizes: Robbery by a letter carrier at Egham: John Baverstock 42 a letter carrier pleaded guilty to stealing three post letters to property of the Post Master General at Egham. In consequence of numerous complaints of the non-arrival of letters an investigation led to the prisoner who was taken into custody and **Biddlecombe** on searching the prisoner's house discovered 29 letters and several newspapers, which the prisoner had abstracted. The prisoner pleaded mercy on the grounds of previous good character and his large family. His lordship spoke of the enormity of the offence and he sentenced the prisoner to 4 years penal servitude.[225]

1857 August 11: Summer Assizes: James Todman 33, a labourer and individual with a most forbidding countenance and who might have sat to any delineator of character for **the picture of an idiot** was charged with committing an **unnatural offence at Chertesy.** The evidence which of course is totally unfit for publication, left little doubt as to the perpetration of the offence and the main question was whether the prisoner was in such a state of mind as to be responsible for his actions. The jury acquitted on the grounds of insanity and he was ordered to be detained in custody until He Majesty's pleasure be known. [226]

1858 April 3: Surrey Lent Assizes: Burglary Chertsey at the house of Alice Hatchet by Thomas Boylett. Overnight the house was entered and clothing stolen; the prisoner was seen nearby. PC73 Beagley, Surrey Constabulary apprehended the prisoner about 7 in the evening 5 February and the prisoner said if he had done it he must have been very drunk. His boot marks matched marks at the scene and the coat he had on came from the burglary. Found guilty then pleaded guilty to a second similar offence in Chertsey and was sentenced to 15 months hard labour for the two offences. [227]

1858 April 17: Walton on Thames Serious case of the death of a child (Manslaughter?) An inquest was held at the Crown Inn respecting the death of Anne Redford aged 7 years. Anne lived with her father and stepmother and three other children. Mrs Redford came home at twenty to two in the morning and told her husband she had lost poor Anne. He understood that she was saying the child was dead and she asked" Will you get up and go with me after

[224] 1857 July 11: The Sussex Express, Surrey Standard Weald of Kent Mail, Hants and County Advertiser
[225] 1857 August 8 Surrey Comet Kingston, Richmond and Epsom Gazette
[226] 1857 August 11: The Sussex Advertiser Surrey Gazette
[227] 1858 April 3 Richmond Kingston and Epsom Gazette:

her?" He told her "I should not" and he then asked where the child was and she said in Chertsey Meadow. At this time he did not know if the child was dead nor did he ask but he sent his son Henry to go for a policeman to find the child. Mrs Redford went with Henry and returned at quarter to three with the body of Anne. Later that afternoon the wife told the Walton Inspector that she thought the child had died falling from a stile.

Inspector George Benge Whenam Surrey Constabulary stationed Walton on Thames. Between 9 and 10 am he received information about the death and went to the child's home. He looked at the dead child and saw some slight bruises on her face. He spoke with the mother who described where she had been and that she had bought two pennyworth of rum at Chertsey, giving the child some in water. They then went to Shepperton Range; she passed the stile, leaving the child behind her when she heard her call out that she had fallen and hurt herself. She lifted the child up and they walked on but after a short distance the child became insensible. The mother sat and held the child for some hours but the child remained insensible. Mrs Redford took off her petticoat and shawl and wrapped the child in them and went to inform her husband. She had to leave the child, as she was too heavy to be carried. PC James Middleton who was present during the interview then detained the mother. The post mortem found slight scratches and bruising but nothing to indicate violence. There may have been concussion of the brain. The coroner expressed his disapprobation that the police had removed the woman from the county of Surrey to a Metropolitan Police Court before the inquest and by this means preventing her appearance at the inquiry to answer on her own behalf. The mother was not at the inquest as she was detained at the Clerkenwell House of Detention and an application was made for her to appear.

Adjourned Inquest: Evidence from the public house and passers by was given and **Superintendent Biddlecombe** said he saw the child after death; there were some marks on the face, which I did not recognise **when I saw it lying on the ground in the meadow.** (Note: This is odd as the mother said with her son they took the child home during the night so how did Biddlecombe see the child in the meadow?) A **Metropolitan Police officer** PC V45 Lawn based in Shepperton met the mother walking home and spoke with her but she did not mention the child. Mrs Mary Ann Redford alias Tucker was present and said her head was confused and did not speak on her own behalf. Mr C Mott a surgeon who undertook the examination and post mortem said he found neither injury nor disease. He was of the opinion that the under nourished body, the deficiency of fat, the scanty clothing, the fact that they had walked several miles, the child had fallen from a stile, and was subsequently exposed for several hours on the open range at Shepperton on a very windy and cold night, she had no power to with stand the effects of such exposure and died as a consequence. Superintendent Biddlecombe examined the stile and took a range of measurements, which he gave to the court. The child would naturally step on a bank to go over the stile and the construction of the stile in the dark may have led to the scratches and may even have fallen from the 4 foot 6 inches height into the ditch. On the bank of the ditch there were some old nettle stumps that might have caused the scratches on the face.

The jury after deliberating for an hour returned the verdict " That the deceased died form exposure to the cold and from physical inability of the mother." The Coroner gave the woman a suitable admonition and told her she could go, but trusted this occurrence would be a warning to her in future particularly as to her conduct to the other step children.[228]

Reports of Inspectors of Constabulary 1858

Surrey

Area in acres	372,880
Population in 1851	108,792
Acres to each constable	3299
Population to each constable	262

The constabulary of Surrey was established in the beginning of 1851 and consisted of eighty four officers and constables; several augmentations have however since taken place and on the 29 September 1857 the force consisted of one hundred and thirteen officers and constables who are paid for by the county; one chief constable, six superintendents, six inspectors and one hundred constables and no alteration in the organisation or numbers have taken place since that date.

In the last year's return, however, the total number of Surrey Constabulary force was stated to amount to one hundred and thirty three officers and constables; but this number included twenty men paid by the Government for services in connection with the Aldershot Camp and who are incorporated with the constabulary of the county, and placed under the charge of the chief constable. Several of these men have since been discharged and there now only remain ten men paid by the government who are placed under the charge of the chief constable and these men are now enumerated with the regular police of the county as above named.

The general average meeting points of the constables whose districts adjoin each other is computed to be about two miles and a half, and a regular system of communication is established between the constables on the borders of the county and the constables on the borders of Berks, Hants, East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent.

In this county nine police stations each containing several well constructed cells and suited generally to accommodate one resident police officer, have been erected by the magistrates.

[228] 1858 April 17: Surrey Comet:

In two of the stations court rooms for the convenience of the magisterial business of the district have been added, and six of the stations have stables and cart-sheds attached to them.

The officers and constables are paid once every month at headquarters of their respective divisions when advantage is taken of the occasion to exercise the men in drill.

The clothing is of good quality and each officer and constable is provided with all necessary appointments and a book of instructions, and each member of the force is also required to keep a diary in which is entered a statement of all duties and occurrences of which a copy is transmitted to headquarters.

The office arrangements are of a satisfactory character and the duties appear to be well provided for, and I consider the force to be efficient in number and discipline.

Superintendent Biddlecombe resigned

In a bland one-line entry in General Orders of 1858 May 5: GO 140 it is recorded that Superintendent Biddlecombe resigned[229]

1858 May 8: Chertsey – police changes: During the past week the public hereabouts were much surprised to learn that Mr W.H. Biddlecombe has resigned the responsible position as Chief Superintendent of the Surrey County Constabulary after being in the service of the county with every satisfaction for the last twenty years. It must be truly gratifying to the late Superintendent to know that in his retirement from he force he carries with him the good wishes of the public generally, as also the esteem of a large circle of personal friends. The cause, which led to Mr Biddlecombe's resignation, was in order to enter upon the lessceeship (sic) of The Swan, Hotel. Mr Superintendent Murtell late of Godstone has been appointed to the Chertsey Division and has already entered upon his duties. PC Beagley who has acted as clerk to the late Superintendent has been removed to West Horsley.[230]

Biddlecombe resigns from the Surrey Constabulary

The Biddlecombe resignation as recorded in a General Order 1858 5 May GO 140 does not explain why he left the Surrey Constabulary whilst still relatively young. No local papers available in the archives give an explanation, no mention is made in the national media archives and nothing is said in the police committee minutes. It is unlikely that he fell out with the chief constable as he was in his new career as a publican to provide horse and fly for the HMI during his visits to the county and there was contact with the force through his work as clerk of the course at Egham races. It may be and is probably likely that the chief constable felt he had been at Chertsey long enough and tried to move him but he did not want to move. Possibly the owners of The Swan made him an offer he could not refuse given the growing family responsibilities; it may have been he liked his horses and the opportunity to be a clerk of the course was too good to pass over. It could be that he had enough of dealing with the

[229] Surrey Constabulary General Orders Book 1 1851-
[230] 1858 May 8 West Surrey Times

dead and dying and the mass of petty and more serious crime. Having resigned, crime did not disappear from his life.

1858 May 25: Surrey Adjourned Sessions: Court House Newington: On the magistrates assembling the Clerk of the Peace said in consequence of Mr Biddlecombe late Superintendent of the rural police having taken an inn at Chertsey, Mr Murtell Superintendent at Godstone had been removed to Chertsey and Mr Alfred Bungard from Guildford was appointed in Mr Murtell's place at Godstone, but it was necessary for the court to appoint him as Inspector of Weights and Measures for the Godstone Division. Mr Bungard was accordingly sworn in.[231]

1858 June 8: Testimonial Biddlecombe: On Thursday last the police officers of the Chertsey Division of Surrey assembled at the Swan Inn for the purpose of presenting a silver snuff box as a testimonial to their late Superintendent, Mr W.H. Biddlecombe who has now become the landlord of The Swan Inn, in this town. At four o'clock the men walked into the bowling green and having invited Mr Biddlecombe to accompany them they formed a circle and PC 40 Miller on behalf of his comrades presented the box. He dwelt on the deep feelings of attachment with which the force regarded their late superintendent, on account of his uniform kindness and in the manner in which he had instructed them in the performance of their duties. He believed they performed those duties in a manner satisfactorily to the chief constable. Many men in this force, but not in this division, would have contributed to the object had they an opportunity of doing so. He could assure Mr B that much regret had been felt at his leaving the force. After further expressing their good wishes of the force the officer presented the box which bore the following inscription: " Presented to W.H. Biddlecombe, June 3 1858 by the Chertsey Division of the Surrey Constabulary as a token of their respect to him, their late superintendent."

Mr Biddlecombe in returning thanks said it was with much pleasure that he had accepted the handsome token of respect. Kindness had a greater effect on cowing a man than any usage of a different character. Knowing nothing of their intention until ten minutes ago, he felt quite overpowered by their kindness. Originally he was plain police constable like themselves, but by dint of perseverance and exertion he attained the position, which he had, the honour of holding in the Surrey Constabulary which, he hoped he left in no way discreditable to himself. His rule had been to obey those under whom he served. His advice to them was to do likewise. Let them not be dissatisfied with their position but if they felt aggrieved let them appeal to their superiors and never let them throw themselves out of a situation before they had another. It afforded him pleasure to let him know that some of those men who served so faithfully under him had received some good appointments. He felt great pleasure in stating that this was the third tribute he had received since he filled the office of superintendent.[232]

A second report is included because it adds to the sense of the occasion and the high regard Mr Biddlecombe was held by those who worked closely with him. The West Surrey Times

[231] 1858 May 25 The Sussex Advertiser and Surrey Gazette
[232] 1858 June 8: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

quotes **PC Palmer:** "Sir, it is with great pleasure that I have to speak to you on this occasion with this box in my hand (silver snuff box). We have met here for the purpose of showing the respect that each one bear in our hearts towards you, and for the kindness shown to us during the time you were our superintendent and for the manner you have instructed us, for we all perform our duty with pleasure to ourselves, and we trust it has been with satisfaction to our Chief Constable. Many men in the force, not on this division, would have been delighted to have given towards this testimonial, if they only had the opportunity of doing so. Every man in this division and many in other divisions must recollect with gratitude the kind manner they have been treated by you. Now, Sir, allow me to present this small token that we have managed to get together as one of respect that we all bear towards you. I would it were more valuable but I am not addressing one that is not acquainted with our circumstances. I have only to add that it is the wish of each one before you that you may enjoy the blessings of good health through a long and prosperous life. (Cheers)

Mr Biddlecombe in reply said, "I accept this handsome token of your respect with much pleasure. I think at any times if a man shows cowardice it in returning thanks under these circumstances. I could take a thief, let him be ever so rough, but kindness kills me. I am perfectly taken by surprise. I had not the slightest idea of your intentions until within this last ten minutes. I have been like yourselves a Police Constable and by my own exertions worked my way up to the position I held in the Surrey Constabulary which I trust I am leaving to no discredit to myself. My rule has been to obey those under whom I am serving, go you and do likewise; never be dissatisfied with your position, but if you feel aggrieved appeal to your superiors and never foolishly throw yourself out of a situation before you have obtained another. It will ever be a pleasure to me to hear that those men who have served so faithfully under me have risen to some appointment. Accept my thanks for the handsome present, I feel it a great pleasure to be enabled to say it is the third that I have received during the time I have filled the office of Superintendent; mine has been a chequered life but I trust it will end well.

Mr Biddlecombe reply was received with loud cheers and many were the congratulations and good wishes offered for his success and prosperity in his present avocation. [233]

The Morning Post of the **4 Aug 1858** reports that at Guildford Assizes, Edward Morton was charged with **obtaining money by false pretences,** a sovereign, from Mr Biddlecombe of the Swan Inn formerly a very active police superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary. Simply, the man came to the inn pretending to be a vicar, said he was short of cash and Biddlecombe lent him the money. After his trial the conman was found guilty immediately by the jury and he was sentenced to 12 months hard labour.[234]

1859 August 6: Surrey Summer Assizes Croydon: Henrico Hamilton age 30 was charged with **uttering one forged £10** Bank of England note at Woking and another to Henry Longhurst and another to **William Henry Biddlecomb** (sic) both of Chertsey with intent to

[233] West Surrey Times 1858 June 12
[234] The Morning Chronicle (London, England), Wednesday, August 4, 1858; Issue 28565

defraud. The prisoner using a military rank called at the Albion Hotel, Woking and made enquires after a military man. Having spun a yarn he had lunch and offered the £10 in payment, which the landlord was reluctant to accept. The prisoner endorsed the note "H. Hamilton, Stoke Park, Berks." The landlord gave the change £9 17s 2d and he left in a gig. The next day the landlord gave the note to Superintendent Murtell.

The fly driver drove the prisoner to Chertsey where he visited a drapers and bought some white kid gloves, uttered the £10 note and change was given. Mr Biddlecombe came to the shop afterwards and he showed me another £10 note and I handed to Biddlecombe the one I had taken from the prisoner. After Biddlecombe left I saw the prisoner standing close to The Swan. Biddlecombe and I followed him into a yard when the draper asked if he had just handed him a £10 note, which he said he was. Biddlecombe asked the prisoner to go to the Swan with them, which he did. There was a scuffle with Biddlecombe when the prisoner trying to get his hand into his waistcoat pocket and Biddlecombe trying to prevent him. Evidence was given from a waiter at The Swan who received a £10 note from the prisoner, which he gave to Biddlecombe.

Mr Henry Biddlecombe said he kept The Swan Inn at Chertsey; the prisoner where he had lunch and paid with a £10 note, which the waiter brought to me. Later when he met the prisoner he told him he would have to return with me, as there was something wrong with the £10 note. There was a scuffle at the Inn when a porte-monnaie (a purse) fell from his pocket. This was opened in the presence of the police and found to contain money.

PC Fowler Surrey Constabulary went to the commercial room at the Swan where he found Biddlecombe and the draper holding down the prisoner. The prisoner admitted passing the notes but he did not know they were bad. Superintendent James Marshall Surrey Constabulary made enquiries into the background of the prisoner.

Found guilty and sentenced to six years penal servitude.[235]

1858 November 13: Biddlecombe the licensee of The Swan and on this date a court report appears where his ostler at The Swan was a witness in a case of dog stealing[236]

1859 December 3: Chertsey Petty Sessions: On Saturday last William Collier absconded from the services of WH Biddlecombe having embezzled sundry sums of money which he had taken as driver. He was taken before the magistrate on Wednesday and remanded until Saturday for Mr Biddlecombe to produce other witnesses.[237]

The Surrey Advertiser reports on **16 July1864** that readers will remember the capture by the late superintendent of police Mr Biddlecombe of a clever burglar living quietly in Bristol under the name Captain Smith who made a desperate escape at Chertsey shortly before his capture. At Winchester Crown Court John Goodenough alias Smith alias Williams was

[235] 1859 August 6 The Surrey Comet
[236] The Morning Post (London, England), Saturday, November 13, 1858; pg. 3; Issue 26491
[237] 1859 December 3: Windsor and Eton Express, Berk, Bucks and Middlesex Journal and West Surrey Gazette

charged with five burglaries in Hampshire and being at large before his fifteen years sentence to transportation had expired. The Judge said he would deal with the matter himself at the Central Criminal Court.[238] What was Biddlecombe up to? Was this a throw back from his time in the Force or was he working as a private detective for the wealthy and investigating a burglary?

On the 19 September 1864 Biddlecombe is reported at the Chertsey Autumn steeplechase[239] and in 1865 still licensee of the Swan Inn Chertsey and Clerk of the Course at the races in Chertsey. The arrangements for policing at the Chertsey racecourse were to lead to a falling out with the chief constable. Biddlecombe sought twelve men to keep the course clear and the chief constable agreed they could attend. The note responding to the request was sent the by route passed hand to hand by constables on the beat when they met an officer from an adjoining beat or station at a conference point; it arrived too late! Biddlecombe alleged he had suffered a loss because of this and took action against the chief constable to recover £19.19s but bigger questions were at stake i.e. could police be held responsible for non-attendance at an event etc. The case disappeared from the records and seems as if the chief constable made his point and the matter was dropped.

The Old Swan in modern times a 17th century coaching inn

On the **27 March 1865** the Dundee Courier & Argus [240] reported that Biddlecombe seems to have entered into something of a scandal or difficulty involving royalty: "Mr. W. H. Biddlecombe, landlord of the Swan Hotel, at Chertsey, and clerk of the course at the recent steeple-chases there, contradicts the statement that the Prince of Wales lost his watch." Nothing else but it is intriguing

Billeting soldiers in Chertsey was causing concerns to licensees including Biddlecombe and was reported in 1865 on 2 September in the Surrey Advertiser. Biddlecombe applied to the bench in hopes that the Quarter Sessions would offer some relief. No matter how busy their

[238] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[239] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[240] The Dundee Courier & Argus (Dundee, Scotland), Monday, March 27, 1865; Issue 3630

public houses and stables were, whenever soldiers were in the district the publicans had to provide billets and the allowances led to the making of a loss. [241]

The following references refer to items in the Surrey Advertiser: These are just for the years that have been indexed so there are likely to be more. What was Biddlecombe up to? There was a local police force but he seems in parts to be taking on a formal role. Was he selling his expertise by working on his own for employment? There is little doubt these are references to the former superintendent although later there is another Biddlecombe who was not closely related.

1864 April 16: Murderous attack by a burglar upon constables: Police Court – believed Bristol: John Smith alias Goodenough a middle aged, swarthy complexioned man of medium stature, but possessing a most villainous cast of countenance was charged with resisting his lawful apprehension under a warrant charging him with having committed a burglary at Alverstoke in the county of Southampton and stolen property of Samuel Wheeler and also with violently assaulting PCs 51, 199 and 200 with intent to do them grievous bodily harm. (A six shot revolver was involved) The Superintendent from Southampton had arrived in Bristol with a warrant for the arrest of the prisoner who he had been seeking for several months for five very clear cases of burglary. He now sought to take him to Southampton.

The bench wanted to keep the prisoner because of the serious assault charges and the Superintendent asked that he take his companion Stewart to Gosport and if he was discharged he would be brought back to Bristol. **Mr Hollington Superintendent of Chertsey** (Surrey Constabulary) said he would take the responsibility upon himself. (It is not clear why Hollington was involved).

Mentioned also in the report, which gives graphic information on the assault of the three officers, is **Biddlecombe, late chief superintendent Surrey Constabulary.** He said 8 years (1858) ago he had 25 cases of burglary against the prisoner. He was tried at Hertford and sentenced to 10 years transportation. He had been out 8 or 9 months and believed he had committed about 25 burglaries in his neighbourhood. He had broke out of more gaols than any other man in England. The prisoner was handed over to the police authorities to be conveyed to Gosport. Other men were then charged with trying to rescue the prisoner from PC199.[242]

One can only assume that the man was also wanted for the burglaries in Surrey and this was "a joint operation" with Southampton. Long retired Biddlecombe was probably there to identify the prisoner and prove he had convictions, as there was no other method.

1864 May 14: The Late Chertsey Steeple Chase – The Welchers and the Police: May 9 Guildford County Court Mr WH Biddlecombe of the Swan Hotel, Chertsey sued Captain Henry Cadogan Hastings chief superintendent (should read chief constable) for £19 19s. Mr Biddlecombe was the promoter of the Chertsey Steeplechases on the 23 and 24 March and

[241] 1865 on 2 September Surrey Advertiser
[242] 1864 April 16 The Western Daily Press

obtained the patronage of several influential noblemen and gentlemen as stewards. The races were open and Mr Biddlecombe who took the whole responsibility and cost, depended on gate money and ring tickets for is repayment of the added money and of course anticipated a remunerative return for his outlay. He applied to Captain Hastings the Chief Constable for the services of 12 constables to protect the money takers, and also to keep the ring clear from those pests of racecourses, the "welchers" and pickpockets, who always gather in force at similar meetings. Captain Hastings agreed to grant the services of the police but they did not appear and in consequence some hundreds of persons got onto the ground without paying. The ring was broken into and lawlessness and blackguardism became triumphant. The course was blocked up so much in one of the races when Lord Charles Ker was riding one of his own horses the animal bolted in consequence of the crowd rushing in when it was winning easily. The consequence was his lordship and his friends laid the blame on Mr Biddlecombe and probably would not again lend their countenance to the steeplechases. On the second day the police were in attendance and due order and regularity prevailed. The action was to recover damages consequent on the non-fulfilment of the contract by Captain Hastings that the police should attend as contained in the letter as follows from the Deputy Chief Constable to Mr Biddlecombe:

Guildford March 17 1864 to Mr Biddlecombe: Sir, In reply to your letter of the 16th inst., I am directed to acquaint you that you can have the services of 12 constables as requested on 23 and 24 inst., for the purpose of keeping the course.

On the 20th ult., Captain Hastings wrote "I was extremely vexed to hear that the constables whom I had ordered to be at Chertsey on the morning 23 inst., in compliance with your request did not receive their instructions to that effect in sufficient time to enable them to attend at the hour specified.

For the defence it was urged that that the defendant was not liable as being the agent of the magistrates and that in any event the plaintiff ought to have had experienced persons as money-takers and ring-keepers, and even if there was a contract which was argued there was not, it was only to "keep the course" and the defendant was not liable for damage or loss arising from persons getting on to the ground or into the ring without paying.

The jury awarded in favour of Biddlecombe [243]

1865 Biddlecombe: Licensee Swan Inn Chertsey and Clerk of the Course at the races in Chertsey Also arranged policing at the Chertsey racecourse – sought twelve men to keep the course clear Chief Constable said yes – and the note was sent by route – passed hand to hand by constables on the beat and it arrived too late! Biddlecombe alleged he had suffered a loss because of this and took action against the Chief Constable to recover £19.19s but bigger questions were at stake i.e. could police be held responsible for no-attendance at an event etc. The case disappeared from the records and seems as if the Chief Constable won this one.

[243] 1864 May 14 Bell's Life in London

16 September 1865: Reference to Biddlecombe, Chertsey and a domestic fire at confectioners[244]

In 1865 on the 23 December: Biddlecombe is mentioned at an Inquest on boy who was run over in Chertsey when shown as a landlord. The nine-year-old named Hawkins should have been at school but was hit by a fly with a grey horse that did not stop at the scene. Sergeant Cornelius Bundy made enquiries but no offender was caught. Biddlecombe hired a fly and grey horse but could show it was not his. [245]

1866 7 April: Biddlecombe appointed overseer[246]

1866 23 June and 25 June 1866[247] Biddlecombe Swan Inn- landlord of The New Line Addlestone

1866 September 21: Fraud: Biddlecombe, reported as of the Swan Hotel and former superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary along with the chief superintendent of the Windsor Borough police were on the track of a fraudster who they found fishing in the middle of the Thames between Chertsey and Weybridge and took him into custody at Windsor. The fraudsman was an ex army officer cashiered in 1865 moving to a hotel in Paris where he adopted a new name and the rank of captain. After cashing false cheques he decamped back to England where after a number of adventures and frauds he ended up before the bench in Windsor. Quite what was the responsibility of Biddlecombe is hard to judge. **[248]**

A further report of the case at The Mansion House: At this time Mr Eager the chief superintendent of the Windsor Borough Police and Mr Biddlecombe of the Swan Hotel at Chertsey (formerly superintendent Surrey Constabulary) were on his track, and he was discovered by them fishing from a punt on the Thames midway between Chertsey and Weybridge. The man was arrested and taken to Windsor.[249]

There is evidence that suggests that after his retirement Biddlecombe became a private investigator and it is likely that he became involved on behalf of a client.

1867 10 August: Biddlecombe v Gilkes solicitor Haynes. There had been a disturbance in the Swan and as a result Biddlecombe hurt his leg and tore his trousers and at the Chertsey County Court he was seeking £3.10s compensation. He was awarded ten shillings. [250]

1872 3 February: In a case Smith v Mayor of Godalming and others known as The Wharf case involving a claim that land was in the ownership of one person and the local authority

[244] Newspaper Detective http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[245] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[246] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[247] http://www.newspaperdetectives.co.uk/surreyindex.htm
[248] The Hull Packet and East Riding Times (Hull, England), Friday, September 21, 1866; Issue 4261
[249] 1866 September 21 Leicester Journal
[250] Surrey Advertiser 8 October 1867

were claiming rights over it. Biddlecombe was brought from retirement to recall when he was superintendent of police he collected tolls for use of the land.[251]

In Durrant's small book of 1951 on the 100th anniversary of the Surrey Constabulary there is mention that Biddlecombe from The Swan would hire carriages to carry the chief constable with the HMI from Weybridge to Chertsey. The book also comments that Biddlecombe was linked to the Tichborne case being employed by the family to find the true identity of the claimant. This he did but was unable to persuade Lord Onslow who was supporting the claimant of that fact. [252] The story concerns Roger Tichborne, disappointed in love who is then lost at sea, and a man who, more than a decade later, appears from the Australian outback claiming to be the missing heir. The civil and criminal trials, which followed held the record as the longest court case in British legal history until the mid 1990s.

1873 11 August: The Standard: Biddlecombe advertises when living off the King's Road in south west London which is likely to mean he has departed from the licensing trade and gone back to being a detective a job he did well. It is interesting that he says he is a retired chief superintendent which he no doubt was but seemed to have dropped the designation when serving, resurrecting it on retirement.


TWO NOBLEMEN, Proctors, Solicitors, and Others.—CONFIDENTIAL INQUIRIES made into matters of importance, with secrecy and discretion, in town and country, by W. H. BIDDECOMBE (late Chief Superintendent of Surrey Constabulary), 164, Oakley-street, King's-road, S.W.

Biddlecombe began to advertise in The Standard during 1873 and 1874 when he joined forces with retired Chief Inspector Charles Field late of the Metropolitan Police and one of the most famous detectives of his day.[253] In 1855 Charles Dickens visited a group of detectives at Scotland Yard long before they became a part of the new CID. He was very impressed and wrote about the officers including Field who he referred to as Inspector Wield: " --a middle aged man of a portly presence with a large moist, knowing eye, a husky voice, and a habit of emphasising his conversation by the air of a corpulent fore-finger which is constantly in juxta-position with his eyes or nose."[254]

Dickens was to use Field as his model for Inspector Bucket in his novel Hard Times[255] and was well placed to establish himself as a private enquiry agent it being probably very beneficial for both Field and Biddlecombe to come together.

[251] Surrey Advertiser 3 February 1872
[252] Durrant 1951 Surrey Constabulary 1851-1951 page 5
[253] 07 October 1873 The Standard et seq.
[254] The Scotland Yard Files Paul Begg and Keith Skinner 1992 page 43
[255] The Invention of Murder Judith Flanders 2010 page 178


NOTICE.—The PRIVATE INQUIRY OFFICE established in 1852 by Mr. C. F. Field, late Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Detective Police, and Mr. C. Nicholls, has secured the valuable ASSISTANCE of Mr. W. H. BIDDLECOMBE, late Chief Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary.—C. NICHOLLS, Principal, 33, Essex-street, Strand.


larger premises, 16, CORNHILL, next door to Birch's.
NOTICE.—The SERVICES of Mr. W. H. BIDDLECOMB (late Chief Superintendent of the Surrey Constabulary) have been ADDED to the PRIVATE INQUIRY OFFICE, established in 1852 by Mr. C. F. Field, late Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Detective Police, and Mr. C. Nicholls.—Offices removed from Devereux-court to 33, Essex-street, Strand.

At present nothing is known other than the Tichborne case of the career of Biddlecombe as a private detective but given the company he kept it was likely he was involved in a number of significant cases.

Possible family links[256]

Marriage: 1840 17 December Godalming: William Biddlecombe and Harriett Inwood (GRO ref 1840 Dec Guildford 4 16 name shown as Beddlecombe

1855: It is likely that his first wife Harriett died in Chertsey in 1855 GRO ref 2a17

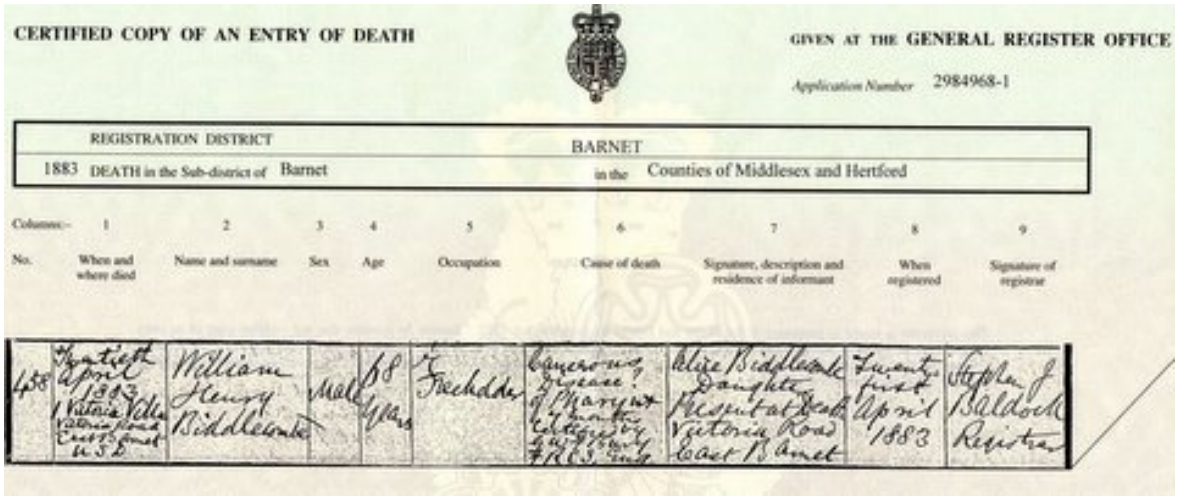
1871 census: William H Biddlecombe is living at Ranvills Farm, Romsey, Hants, aged 56 born Gatcombee IoW with his wife Elizabeth aged 50, born Ripley, Surrey and daughter Alice, age 19, born Reigate, Surrey. His occupation is given as 'Farmer' of 185 acres with 4 labourers and a boy. There may be some link here with the term freeholder at his death.

1878: Possible death of a second wife Elizabeth in 1878 March Barnet 3a98 aged 57 (no trace of this marriage has been found)

1881 census: Biddlecombe a retired police superintendent born Gatcombe aged 66 is a widower living at 1 Victoria Villas, Victoria Road, Barnet with his sister Elizabeth, independent aged 75 born Gatcombe and his daughter Alice independent aged 27 born Reigate

Family History: The death certificate gives an occupation of freeholder, which is a surprise as it could be expected to say “Active former police superintendent”

[256] Email from John Molyneux 9 February 2011 and from Chris Atkins 15 February 2011



CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 2984968-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT BARNET

1883 DEATH in the Sub-district of Barnet in the Counties of Middlesex and Hertford

Columns:– 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
458	Twentieth April 1883 1 Victoria Villa Victoria Road East Barnet	William Henry Biddlecombe	Male	68 Years	Freeholder	Cancerous disease of Pharynx 6 months certified by [illegible]	Alice Biddlecombe Daughter Present at Death Victoria Road East Barnet	Twenty first April 1883	Stephen J Baldock Registrar

Death Certificate[257] Barnet 20 April 1883, 1 Victoria Villa, Victoria Road, East Barnet. Daughter Alice present at death, which was caused by cancer of the pharynx at the back of the mouth, aged 68. Occupation given as freeholder

Afterthought: when a police house building programme was begun in the 1950's one was built for the Weybridge Superintendent and its first occupant, 'Dutchy' Holland had it named Biddlecombe after Surrey's first appointed officer. [258]

[257] Copy of death certificate from Mr Christopher Atkins QPM 15 February 2011
[258] Email to the editor from retired ACC Chris Atkins to editor 6 February 2011