

## **Speed enforcement using radar**

**Graham Richings with assistance from Roy Coole**

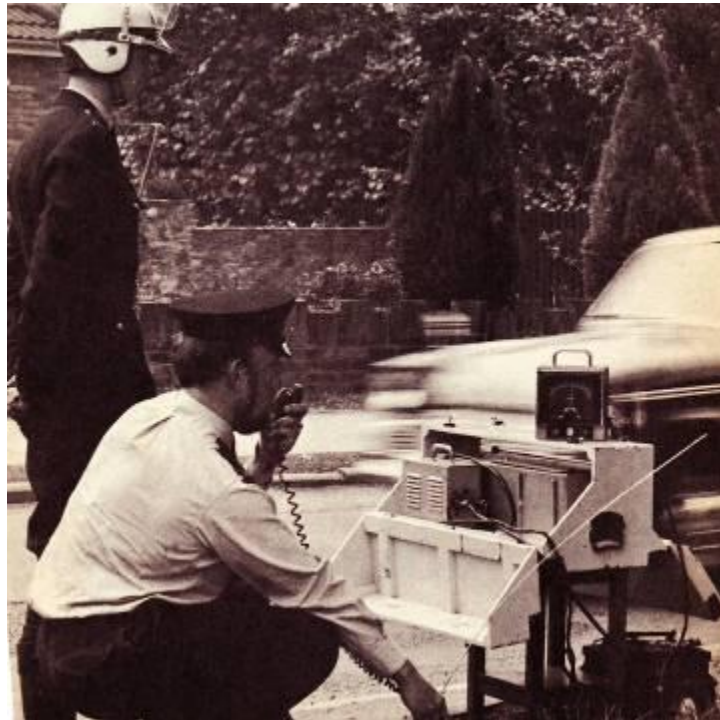


**Graham Richings pre-Traffic**

In 2013 the use of speed cameras either permanently situated at the roadside or in mobile vans has made speed detection sophisticated.

When I joined Traffic Department in 1967 the Force's main weapon against speeding motorists, other than patrol cars and motorcycles, was the PETA Speedmeter. From memory one of these units was shared between the Traffic Centres. The equipment consisted of a metal box containing the actual mechanics of the radar speed detection equipment. This measured approximately 2 feet x 6 inches x 9 inches with a carrying handle at each end. There was a 12 volt car battery in a carrying cradle to power the radar meter and a small metal box that held the actual speed indicator from which we would read the speed of an approaching vehicle. This plugged into the main box. Another vital piece of equipment was a wooden chair with the back support removed. This was to stand the main box of tricks on at the roadside! This equipment was carried in a mini van. The mini van and equipment moved around the Traffic Centres.

The team who would be allocated a special duty to operate this equipment comprised of someone to drive the van and usually one other plus at least one or (on a good day) two traffic motorcyclists. In the summer the team may be working an early turn but more often a day shift maybe 0800 to 1600 or a 0900 to 1700hrs. Radar sites would be allocated by a sergeant at various locations throughout the traffic centre area. Some of the locations may have been complaint sites and others that were known to be speeding hot spots and where we would get good results. About an hour would be spent at each site.



It was necessary to ensure that the equipment was reading accurately and one of the police traffic vehicles travelling with the team would be driven through the beam and past the meter before and after use to ensure its accuracy. The speedometers on these vehicles would in turn have been checked on a weekly basis over a measured quarter of a mile against a stop certified stop-watch at 30, 40 & 50mph. Records were kept of all of these checks and when an offender was reported details of the checks would be included in the evidence submitted. Traffic Sergeants normally supervised speedo checks on a Sunday morning.



The procedure at the roadside was as follows. The metering equipment would be set up where there was a good field of vision of approaching traffic. Following various stated cases we had to ensure that there were no metal fences or speeding trains etc that might have some influence on the speed recorded on the meter. One of the officers would be the meter operator. Another officer would position himself beyond the meter with a hand held radio and was the "Stopper" and it was his function to stop the offending driver, on request from the meter operator, so that he could be reported for the offence. A second officer who would have been watching the speed meter and estimating the offending vehicle's approach speed would then get on his motor cycle and go down and report the driver for the speeding offence. I believe that this procedure may have later been modified so that the Stopper could report the offender. He would complete a process card and this would be married up with one that the meter operator completed. The principle followed was always that a police officer would estimate the speed of the approaching vehicle and that this would be corroborated by the speed meter. The same principle applied when following a speeding vehicle in a police vehicle.

In the Chertsey Traffic Centre area there were many very productive sites and some of these would have been Christchurch Road, Virginia Water (before the roundabout was installed!), Tumpsgreen Road Virginia Water, A30 Sunningdale near what was the police house, A30 Jenkins Hill, Bagshot, Oatland Drive Weybridge, Ashley Drive Walton on Thames and many more. One of the sites in the Godstone Area that stands out was Stanstead Road, Caterham. I recall that one of the Parish Councillors who had complaint about the speed of traffic there being one of the first to be caught! A25 Bletchingly was another good site, particularly on a Brands Hatch race day!

Many of who operated this equipment have amusing or memorable stories surrounding these sites. Motorists travelling in the opposite direction and having seen the equipment would of course flash their headlights to try and warn drivers who were approaching the radar site. I can vividly recollect an Austin Healy 3000 travelling along Christchurch Road at Virginia Water well in excess of the 30mph speed limit. When the driver spotted the radar team ahead of him he braked hard and the car turned through 180 degrees before stopping facing from where it had just come.



Roy Coole who operated this equipment over a number of years at Chertsey Traffic Centre remembers an incident in Trumpsgreen Road. In Roy's own words "There was one humorous occasion when doing radar in Trumps Green Road, Virginia Water, to catch the people late for their train. I stopped a female driver who immediately burst into floods of tears as I opened the car door. I asked why she was so upset and she replied "My husband will kill me, he is always criticising my driving". I looked at the driving licence and said "I shouldn't worry love I have just done your husband for speed a few minutes ago and if he goes on at you too much point out to him that he was doing 10 M.P.H more than you". She left with a smile on her face and thanked me".

One of the perks of being on a radar team was that we of course needed a break between some sites and many a transport café benefited from our trade. "Mary's" at Bagshot, Sunningdale Railway station, the café on the A30 Sunningdale near West Drive are just a few of those that come to mind.

Some time later there followed the use of hand-held speed guns that were more easily portable and could even be carried by motorcyclists in their panniers and used as appropriate and without the need for a team of officers. This was pointed towards the oncoming traffic and a speed reading obtained allowing plenty of time to signal the offending vehicle to stop.

Radar was later supplemented by The Mercury Speed Meter that required the placing of two pneumatic cables across the road near the meter and again a stopper being used further down the road to report the offender. At around the same time VASCR was fitted to a number of patrol cars and officers were sent on courses. This equipment basically used time, speed and distance and an officer's eye to manually operate the switches from inside either a moving or stationary police car. When stopped the driver would be invited to have a look at the speed reading on the display in the car. A lot of training was done with this equipment to ensure that officers were accurate in its use.

I moved off Traffic Department on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1987, the night of the create storm, and so can not comment on speed equipment after this date.

**Photos from Robert Bartlett's collection  
April 2013**